

11.

Yom Kippur

Don't Lose the Forest for the Trees

*Keeping Your Eye on the Prize Is the
Way to Win the Game of Life*



*Dedicated in loving memory of
Mrs. Rachel Awerbach Zippel, רחל בת חיים אשר ע"ה, marking her
yahrtzeit on 5 Elul.*

*May the merit of the Torah study worldwide accompany her soul in
the world of everlasting life and be a source of blessings to her family
with much health, happiness, nachat, and success.*

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year—the day on which we are closest to G-d and to the quintessence of our own souls. It is the Day of Atonement—“For on this day He will forgive you, to purify you, that you be cleansed from all your sins before G-d” (Leviticus 16:30).

For nearly twenty-six hours—from several minutes before sunset on 9 Tishrei to after nightfall on 10 Tishrei—we “afflict our souls”: we abstain from food and drink, do not wash or anoint our bodies, do not wear leather footwear, and abstain from marital relations.

Before Yom Kippur we perform the *kaparot* atonement service. We request and receive honey cake,

in acknowledgment that we are all recipients in G-d’s world, and in prayerful hope for a sweet and abundant year. We also eat a festive meal, immerse in a *mikveh*, and give extra charity. In the late afternoon we eat the pre-fast meal, following which we bless our children, light a memorial candle as well as the holiday candles, and go to the synagogue for the Kol nidrei service.

In the course of Yom Kippur we hold five prayer services: *maariv*, with its solemn Kol Nidrei service, on the eve of Yom Kippur; *shacharit*—the morning prayer, which includes a reading from Leviticus followed by the Yizkor memorial service; *musaf*, which includes a detailed account of the Yom Kippur

Temple service; *minchah*, which includes the reading of the Book of Jonah; and *ne'ilah*, the “closing of the gates” service at sunset. We say the *al chet* confession of sins eight times in the course of Yom Kippur and recite Psalms during every available moment.

The day is the most solemn of the year, yet an undertone of joy suffuses it: a joy that revels in the spirituality of the day and expresses the confidence that G-d will accept our repentance, forgive our

sins, and seal our verdict for a year of life, health, and happiness. The closing *ne'ilah* service climaxes in the resounding cries of “Hear O Israel . . . G-d is One.” Then joy erupts in song and dance (a Chabad custom is to sing the lively “Napoleon’s March”), followed by a single blast of the *shofar*, followed by the proclamation, “Next year in Jerusalem.” We then partake of a festive after-fast meal, making the evening after Yom Kippur a *yom tov* (festival) in its own right.

I. A WHALE OF A TALE

Jonah on Yom Kippur

TEXT 1

TALMUD TRACTATE MEGILAH, 31A

ביום הכפורים . . . במנחה קורין בעריות ומפטירין ביונה.

On Yom Kippur, during the afternoon service, the portion dealing with sexual impropriety is read, followed by the story of Jonah for the *haftarah*.

TEXT 2

RABBI SIMCHAH BEN SHMUEL, MACHZOR VITRY 355

והשלישי מפטיר ביונה משום תשובת נינוה.

The third person called to the Torah reads the story of Jonah because of the repentance of the inhabitants of Nineveh.

Babylonian Talmud

A literary work of monumental proportions that draws upon the legal, spiritual, intellectual, ethical, and historical traditions of Judaism. The 37 tractates of the Babylonian Talmud contain the teachings of the Jewish sages from the period after the destruction of the 2nd Temple through the 5th century CE. It has served as the primary vehicle for the transmission of the Oral Law and the education of Jews over the centuries; it is the entry point for all subsequent legal, ethical, and theological Jewish scholarship.

Simchah of Vitry d. 1105

French Talmudist, one of the chief pupils of Rashi, and compiler of the *Machzor Vitry*. *Machzor Vitry* is an important early work of law and custom, along with responsa by Rashi and other authorities. Various additions were afterward made to this *machzor* by other authors.

TEXT 3

RABBI YISRAEL MEIR HAKOHEN KAGAN, SHAAAR
HATZIYUN, ORACH CHAYIM 622, CH. 6

וכונתם כי האדם חושב כמה פעמים לייאש את עצמו שאין יכול לתקן בשום אופן, ועל כן יתנהג תמיד באופן א' ואם יגזור עליו הקדוש ברוך הוא למות, ימות. אבל טעות הוא, שסוף דבר יהיה כל מה שהקדוש ברוך הוא רוצה מנפשו שיתקן מוכרח הוא לתקן, ויבוא עוד פעם ופעמיים לעולם הזה ובעל כרחך יוכרח לתקן. ואם כן, למה לו כל העמל למות ולסבול חיבוט הקבר ושאר צרות ולחזור עוד הפעם!?

וראיה מיונה, שהקדוש ברוך הוא רצה מאתו שילך וינבא והוא מיאן בזה ונס לים . . . וראינו שנטבע בים ונבלע בדג והיה שם במעיו כמה ימים, ולפי הנראה בודאי לא יכול להתקיים דברי ה' יתברך, ומכל מקום ראינו שסוף דבר היה שרצון ה' יתברך נתקיים וילך וינבא. כן הוא האדם בעניניו.

**Rabbi Yisrael Meir
Hakohen Kagan
(Chafetz Chayim)
1839–1933**

Pre-WWII Polish halachist and ethicist. Rabbi Kagan was the dean of the illustrious yeshiva in Radin, Poland. A prolific author on topics of halachah and ethical behavior, he is often called *Chafetz Chayim* after his first work, a comprehensive digest of laws pertaining to ethical speech. His magnum opus, on which he worked for 28 years, is *Mishnah Berurah*, a concise commentary on the first section of the Shulchan Aruch. He also authored *Bi'ur Halachah*, on the Shulchan Aruch, and numerous other works.

The idea is that oftentimes, people are prone to giving up on themselves, assuming they are beyond repair. They resign to certain behaviors and think that if G-d eventually decrees their death, so be it.

This is a grave mistake, for at the end of the day, whatever G-d intends for that person to repair *will* get repaired; if it requires that person to arrive in this world again and again until it happens, so be it—regardless, the repair must be carried through. If so, why should a person endure so much pain and suffering and be compelled to return to this world?

Jonah's story is case in point. G-d wanted him to go to Nineveh, and he refused, fleeing to the sea. . . . What happened? He was swallowed by a fish and remained there for a number of days. By all standards, it didn't look like G-d's plan would be carried out. Ultimately, we know that G-d's

plan *did* come to fruition, as Jonah proceeded to deliver the prophecy.

The same is true in every person's life.

TEXT 4

RABBI YEHOShUA IBN SHUAIB, DERASHOT IBN SHUAIB, SERMON FOR YOM KIPPUR

באה נבואת יונה בן אמיתי להורות כי ה' יתעלה רחמיו על כל מעשיו . . . ולכן אנו מפטירין אותה בזה היום בשעת מנחה שהיא שעה רצויה . . . למדנו מזה העניין כי ה' מלא רחמים, ואפילו שהיו גויים ועושים חמס גדול קיבל ה' תשובתם, כל שכן אנו עם מרעיתו וצאן ידו שיחמול ויקבל אותנו בתשובה.

Jonah's prophecy teaches us that G-d is compassionate to all creatures. . . . Thus, we read the story during the afternoon prayer, which is an especially propitious time. . . .

G-d Communicates with Jonah

TEXT 5

YONAH (JONAH) 1:1-2

וַיְהִי דְבַר ה' אֶל יוֹנָה בֶן אֲמִיטַי לֵאמֹר. "קוּם לְךָ אֶל נִינְוֵה הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה וְקֹרֵא עָלֶיהָ, כִּי עָלְתָה רָעָתָם לִפְנֵי";

The word of G-d came to Jonah son of Amittai, "Get up and go to Nineveh, the populous city, and proclaim to its residents that their wickedness has come before Me."

Rabbi Yehoshua ibn Shuaib

ca 1280–ca 1340

Spanish scholar, kabbalist, and preacher. A pupil of the famed Rashba, Rabbi Shlomo ben Aderet, like many of his other students, Shuaib is notable for his book of sermons on the Torah, which he seems to have written for preaching in a synagogue, containing moral lessons, laws, and other ethical and theological themes.

Why Didn't Jonah Want to Go?

TEXT 6

RABBI DON YITZCHAK ABARBANEL, YONAH (JONAH) 1

וְזֶה טַעַם שְׁלִיחוֹת יוֹנָה אֶל נִינְוָה לְקַרְא אֵלֶיהָ "כִּי עָלְתָה רָעָתָם
לְפָנָיו", לֹא מֵאַהֲבַת ה' אוֹתָם וְחֹשֶׁק בָּהֶם, אֲלֵא כְּדֵי לְהַצִּילָם
מִהֲרָעָה, כְּדֵי שִׁיְהִיוּ מְעוֹתָדִים נְכוֹנִים לְמוֹעֲדֵי רִגְלֵי שְׂרָאֵל.
וְהִנֵּה יוֹנָה הִבִּין אֲמִתּוֹת הָעֲנָן הַזֶּה.

When G-d sent Jonah to warn Nineveh's inhabitants that their wickedness had arisen before Him, it was not motivated by love or care for them. Rather, it was to save the Assyrians from punishment so that they would be available to vanquish the Jews. Jonah fully understood the [underlying objective].

TEXT 7

MECHILTA, PARSHAT BO, INTRODUCTION

אָמַר יוֹנָה, "אֲנִי יוֹדֵעַ שֶׁהַגּוֹיִם קְרוּבֵי תְּשׁוּבָה הֵם. עֲכָשְׁיוֹ אִם אֵלֶיךָ
בְּשְׁלִיחוֹתוֹ, מִיַּד יַעֲשׂוּ תְּשׁוּבָה. וְהַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶרְךָ אַפַּיִם וְרַב
חֶסֶד, וּבָעֵת שִׁיעֲשׂוּ תְּשׁוּבָה מִיַּד יְרַחֵם. וְיִקְצוֹף הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל... שִׂיאֵמַר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, 'הַגּוֹיִם, שֶׁלֹּא נִתְּנִי לָהֶם
חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים, בְּעֵת שֶׁאֲנִי גוֹזֵר עֲלֵיהֶם גְּזִירָה וְהֵם יוֹדְעִים, מִיַּד
הֵם שׁוֹבִים. וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא כֵן, שֶׁבְּכָל עֵת אֲנִי שׁוֹלַח לָהֶם נְבִיאִי, וְהֵם
קָשִׁי עוֹרֵף".

Rabbi Don Yitzchak Abarbanel 1437–1508

Biblical exegete and statesman. Abarbanel was born in Lisbon, Portugal, and served as a minister in the court of King Alfonso V of Portugal. After intrigues at court led to accusations against him, he fled to Spain, where he once again served as a counselor to royalty. It is claimed that Abarbanel offered King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella large sums of money for the revocation of their Edict of Expulsion of 1492, but to no avail. After the expulsion, he eventually settled in Italy, where he wrote a commentary on Scripture, as well as other venerated works.

Mechilta

A halachic Midrash to Exodus. Midrash is the designation of a particular genre of rabbinic literature usually forming a running commentary on specific books of the Bible. The name *Mechilta* means "rule" and was given to this Midrash because its comments and explanations are based on fixed rules of exegesis. This work is often attributed to Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha, a contemporary of Rabbi Akiva, though there are some references to later sages in this work.

Jonah said, “I know that the nations are quick to repent. Now, if I travel [to Nineveh] and pronounce G-d’s message, they will immediately repent. G-d, Who is slow to anger and Who is abundantly kind, will immediately have mercy [and rescind the decree].

“Moreover, this turn of events will cause G-d to be wrathful against Israel. . . . For He will say, “The nations to whom I have not given the Torah’s edicts and laws repent as soon as they learn that I issued a decree against them. Not so with Israel: I dispatch to them My prophets at all times [imploring them to repent], and yet they stubbornly cling to their ways.”

TEXT 8a

YONAH (JONAH) 1:3

וַיִּקָּם יוֹנָה לְבָרַח תַּרְשִׁישָׁה מִלְּפָנֵי ה' . וַיֵּרֶד יָפוֹ וַיִּמְצָא אֲנָיָה בָּאָה
תַּרְשִׁישׁ, וַיִּתֵּן שְׂכָרָהּ וַיֵּרֶד בָּהּ לְבוֹא עִמָּהֶם תַּרְשִׁישָׁה, מִלְּפָנֵי ה' .

Jonah arose to go to Tarshish, to flee from before G-d. He went to [the port of] Jaffa where he found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the ship’s fare and boarded it to travel with [his fellow seafarers] to Tarshish—to flee from before G-d.

The Great Escape

TEXT 8b

IBID. 1:4-2:1

וְהָטִיל רוּחַ גְּדוּלָה אֶל הַיָּם, וַיְהִי סַעַר גְּדוֹל בַּיָּם, וְהָאֲנִיָּה חֲשׂוּבָה
לְהִשָּׁבֵר. וַיִּירָאוּ הַמַּלְחִים, וַיִּזְעְקוּ אִישׁ אֶל אֱלֹהָיו, וַיִּטְלוּ אֶת הַפְּלִים
אֲשֶׁר בָּאֲנִיָּה אֶל הַיָּם לְהַקֵּל מֵעֲלֵיהֶם. וַיּוֹנֶה יָרֵד אֶל יָרִכְתִּי הַסְּפִינָה,
וַיִּשְׁכַּב וַיָּרֶדֶם.

וַיִּקְרַב אֵלָיו רַב הַחֹבֶל, וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ, "מַה לָּךְ נִרְדָּם! קוּם קְרָא אֶל
אֱלֹקֶיךָ, אוּלַי יַתְעִשֶׂת הָאֱלֹקִים לָנוּ וְלֹא נֹאבֵד."

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ, "לָכֵן וְנִפְלָה גּוֹרְלוֹת, וְנִדְעָה בְּשִׁלְמֵי הָרָעָה
הַזֹּאת לָנוּ." וַיִּפְּלוּ גּוֹרְלוֹת, וַיִּפֹּל הַגּוֹרֵל עַל יוֹנָה. וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו,
"הֲגִידָה נָא לָנוּ בְּאֲשֶׁר לָמִי הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת לָנוּ, מַה מַּלְאכְתָּךְ וּמֵאֵין
תִּבּוֹא? מַה אַרְצָךָ וְאִי מִזֶּה עִם אֶתָּה?"

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם, "עֲבֹרִי אֲנֹכִי. וְאֶת ה' אֱלֹקֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם אֲנִי יָרָא, אֲשֶׁר
עָשָׂה אֶת הַיָּם וְאֶת הַיַּבְשָׁה." וַיִּירָאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים יְרָאָה גְּדוּלָה, וַיֹּאמְרוּ
אֵלָיו, "מַה זֹּאת עָשִׂיתָ?" כִּי יָדְעוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים כִּי מַלְפָּנֵי ה' הוּא בָרַח,
כִּי הִגִּיד לָהֶם.

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו, "מַה נַּעֲשֶׂה לָּךְ, וַיִּשְׁתַּק הַיָּם מֵעֲלֵינוּ? כִּי הַיָּם
הוֹלֵךְ וְסַעַר."

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם, "שְׂאוּנִי וְהִטְלֵנִי אֶל הַיָּם וַיִּשְׁתַּק הַיָּם מֵעֲלֵיכֶם, כִּי
יִדְעַ אֲנִי כִּי בְּשָׁלִי הַסַּעַר הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה עָלֵיכֶם."

וַיַּחֲתְרוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים לְהִשִּׁיב אֶל הַיַּבְשָׁה, וְלֹא יָכְלוּ, כִּי הַיָּם הוֹלֵךְ וְסַעַר
עֲלֵיהֶם. וַיִּקְרָאוּ אֶל ה' וַיֹּאמְרוּ, "אָנָּה ה'! אֵל נָא נֹאבֵדָה בְּנַפְשׁ
הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה וְאֵל תִּתֵּן עָלֵינוּ דָם נָקִיא, כִּי אֶתָּה ה' פֹּאֲשֶׁר חִפְצָתָ
עָשִׂיתָ." וַיִּשְׂאוּ אֶת יוֹנָה וַיִּטְלֵהוּ אֶל הַיָּם, וַיַּעֲמֵד הַיָּם מִזְעַפּוּ...

וַיִּמַן ה' דָּג גְּדוֹל לְבַלְעַ אֶת יוֹנָה. וַיְהִי יוֹנָה בְּמַעֵי הַדָּג שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים
וּשְׁלֹשָׁה לַיְלוֹת.

G-d sent a mighty wind upon the sea, and a violent storm erupted, threatening to destroy the boat. The sailors were terrified, and each one prayed to his god. They cast the boat's cargo into the sea to lighten the boat. Jonah, however, descended to the boat's bowels, where he lay down and fell into a deep slumber.

The ship's captain approached Jonah and said to him, "How can you sleep! Get up and call out to your G-d. Perhaps He will take note of us, and we will not perish."

The passengers said one to another, "Let us cast lots to determine who is responsible for this calamity." They cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. So they said to him, "Tell us please, whom have you wronged, causing this evil to befall us? What is your work, and from where do you come? What is your land, and of what people are you?"

Jonah responded, "I am a Hebrew, and I worship the L-rd, the G-d of heaven, Who made the sea and the dry land."

The men were very frightened, and they asked, "What have you done?" The men knew that he was fleeing from before G-d, because he had told them so.

They said to Jonah, "The sea is becoming stormier. What can we do with you so that it will subside?"

Jonah replied, "I am quite aware that this mighty storm is on my account. Pick me up and cast me into the sea, and it will subside."

The men rowed vigorously in an attempt to return to dry land, but they could not, because the sea was becoming even stormier. So they called out to G-d and said, "Please, O G-d, do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not

hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for G-d, Your will has been done.” They then picked up Jonah and cast him into the sea. And the storm subsided. . . .

G-d arranged for a mammoth fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

II. NOWHERE TO RUN

Fleeing Prophecy, Not G-d

TEXT 9

MIDRASH, TANCHUMA, VAYIKRA (LEVITICUS) 8

”וַיִּקְרָא יוֹנָה לְבְרוּחַ תַּרְשִׁישָׁה וְגו’.” וְכִי מִלְפָּנֵי ה’ הוּא בּוֹרַח?
וְהֵלֵא כְּבָר נֹאמֵר: ”אֲנָא אֱלֹהֵי מְרוּחָהּ וְגו’” אִם אֶסְק שָׁמַיִם שָׁם
אֲתָהּ וְגו’ אֲשָׂא כְּנָפַי שָׁחָה, גַּם שָׁם יָדָהּ תִּנְחַנֵּי וְגו’,” ”עֵינַי ה’ הִמָּה
מִשׁוֹטְטוֹת בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ” (זְכַרְיָה ד, י)? ...
אֲלֹא אָמַר יוֹנָה: ”אֱלֹהֵי בְּחוּצָהּ לָאָרֶץ, מִקּוֹם שָׂאִין הַשְּׂכִינָה
שׁוֹרָה וְנִגְלִית.”

“Jonah arose to go to Tarshish, [to flee from before G-d]”:
Was Jonah thinking that he could flee from G-d?

Is it not written, “Where can I escape Your spirit? Where
can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to the heavens, You
are there; if I make my bed in the depths, behold, You are
there. If I take up the wings of dawn, if I dwell at the end
of the west, even there Your hand will guide me, and Your
right hand will hold me fast”?

[And is it not written,] “The eyes of G-d rove throughout all
the earth” (Zachariah 4:10)? . . .

However, Jonah said, “I shall leave the Land of Israel and
go to a place where the Divine Presence neither dwells nor
is revealed.”

Tanchuma

A Midrashic work bearing the name of Rabbi Tanchuma, a 4th-century Talmudic sage quoted often in this work. “Midrash” is the designation of a particular genre of rabbinic literature usually forming a running commentary on specific books of the Bible. *Tanchuma* provides textual exegeses, expounds upon the biblical narrative, and develops and illustrates moral principles. *Tanchuma* is unique in that many of its sections commence with a halachic discussion, which subsequently leads into nonhalachic teachings.

TEXT 10

THE REBBE, RABBI MENACHEM MENDEL
SCHNEERSON, SICHOT KODESH 5737, P. 257

יונה האט דאָ געוואוסט אז אויב ער וועט ניט מקיים זיין דעם
אויבערשט'נס ציווי (גיין אין נינה), איז הרבה שלוחים למקום,
דער אויבערשטער וועט דאס סיי ווי קענען טאן . . . קען דאָ זיין
דער קטרוג אפילו אן דעם וואס יונה וועט גיין אהין לפועל און
וועט זיי זאגן אז זיי דארפן תשובה טאן . . . איז לכאורה ניט מובן:
האסט באקומען א ציווי פון דעם אויבערשטן, זיי דאס מקיים!
וואס דארפסטו מאכן חשבונות אז דערפון קען ארויסקומען א
קטרוג אויף אידן וכו' – בהדי כבשא דרחמנא למה לה?

אך על פי כן זעט מען אז יונה האט זיך איינגעשטעלט, און האט
ניט געוואלט מקיים זיין דעם אויבערשט'נס ציווי, ביז אז "ויקם
יונה לברוח תרשישה מלפני ה'" – ווייל ער האט ניט געוואלט
זאגן בדיבור אזא זאך וואס דערפון קען דערנאך ארויסקומען
(אין א אופן של גרמא אפילו) א קטרוג אויף אידן, אף על פי אז
ער האט געוואוסט אז דער קטרוג קען זיין אויף אן אים, אף על
פי כן האט ער אבער ניט געוואלט אז ס'זאל קומען דורך אים.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson 1902–1994

The towering Jewish leader of the 20th century, known as “the Lubavitcher Rebbe,” or simply as “the Rebbe.” Born in southern Ukraine, the Rebbe escaped Nazi-occupied Europe, arriving in the U.S. in June 1941. The Rebbe inspired and guided the revival of traditional Judaism after the European devastation, impacting virtually every Jewish community the world over. The Rebbe often emphasized that the performance of just one additional good deed could usher in the era of Mashiach. The Rebbe’s scholarly talks and writings have been printed in more than 200 volumes.

Jonah knew that if he refused G-d’s instruction to travel to Nineveh, G-d, Who has many agents at His disposal, would nonetheless be able to do as He wishes. . . . The indictment could thus have occurred even without Jonah traveling to Nineveh and instructing them to repent. . . . Jonah’s behavior is thus puzzling: he received an instruction from G-d; he ought to have fulfilled it! Why did he consider the consequences, the possibility that an indictment against the Jews might emerge from it? Who put him in the position—or gave him the right—to mix into G-d’s business?

Nevertheless, we see that Jonah was steadfast in his position and refused to fulfill G-d's instruction, to the point that "Jonah arose and fled to Tarshish from before G-d." He did not want to utter a word that could cause—even indirectly—an indictment against the Jews. Although he knew the indictment could happen without him, he was nevertheless unwilling to allow for it to come through him.

Putting Himself on the Line for the People

TEXT 11

TALMUD TRACTATE SANHEDRIN, 89A

הַכּוֹבֵשׁ אֶת נְבוֹאָתוֹ, וְהַמְוֹתֵר עַל דְּבַרֵי נְבִיא, וְנִבִּיא שֶׁעָבַר עַל דְּבַרֵי
עֲצָמוֹ – מִיתָתוֹ בְּיַדֵי שָׁמַיִם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "אֲנֹכִי אֶדְרֹשׁ מֵעַמּוֹ."
הַכּוֹבֵשׁ אֶת נְבוֹאָתוֹ, כְּגוֹן יוֹנָה בֶּן אֲמִיטַי.

One who does not relay his prophetic message, one who disregards the instructions of a prophet, and a prophet who transgresses his own prophecy, their deaths are at the hands of Heaven, as the verse says [regarding these people], "I will hold him accountable."

An example of a person who refused to relay his prophecy is Jonah, son of Amittai.

TEXT 12

MECHILTA, PARSHAT BO, INTRODUCTION

לֹא הִלֵּךְ יוֹנָה אֶלָּא לְאֲבֹד עֲצָמוֹ בַּיָּם, שְׁנֹאמֵר: "וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֵיהֶם,
שְׂאוּנִי וְהִטִּילוּנִי אֶל הַיָּם".

וְכֵן תִּמְצָא הָאֲבוֹת וְהַנְּבִיאִים הָיוּ נוֹתְנִין עֲצָמָם עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל. בְּמוֹשֶׁה
מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר: "וְעַתָּה אִם תִּשָּׂא חַטָּאתָם, וְאִם אֵין, מִחֲנִי נָא
מִסְפָּרָךְ אֲשֶׁר כָּתַבְתָּ..."

בְּדוֹד מָה הוּא אוֹמֵר: "הֲנִי אֲנִי חַטָּאתִי וְאֲנִי הָעֹוִיתִי, וְאֵלֶּה הַצֹּאֵן
מָה עֲשׂוּ? תְּהִי נָא יָדְךָ בִּי וּבְבֵית אָבִי".

Jonah boarded the ship with the intention of perishing at sea. Therefore, he said, "Pick me up and cast me into the sea."

Similarly, we see that our ancestors and prophets were willing to forfeit their lives for the sake of the Jews. What did Moses say? "And now, if You forgive the Jews' sin [of worshipping the golden calf, all is well]. But if not, please erase me from Your book that You have written."

What did King David say? "I have sinned and done wrong; but these sheep [i.e., the Jewish flock whom I shepherd], what have they done? Please, let Your hand [of judgment] fall on me and my family [alone]."

III. THE JEW AND TORAH

First Things First

Question for Discussion: Jonah prioritized his nation's well-being over fulfilling the will of G-d. Was Jonah justified in obstructing divine justice?

TEXT 13a

MIDRASH, TANA DEVEI ELIYAHU RABAH 14

פַּעַם אַחַת הָיִיתִי עוֹבֵר מִמְּקוֹם לְמִקְוֹם, מִצָּאֲנִי אָדָם אֶחָד שְׂיִישׁ
בוּ מִקְרָא וְאִין בּוּ מִשְׁנָה, וְאָמַר לִי: "רַבִּי . . . שְׁנֵי דְבָרִים יֵשׁ בְּעוֹלָם
וְאִנִּי אוֹהֵבֵם בְּלִבִּי אֶהְבֶּה גְמוּרָה, וְאֵלּוּ הֵן: תּוֹרָה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל. אֲבָל
אִינִי יוֹדֵעַ אֵיזָה מֵהֶם קוֹדֵם."

אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ: "בְּנִי, דְרָכֶן שָׁל בְּנֵי אָדָם אוֹמְרִים הַתּוֹרָה קְדָמָה, שְׁנֵאָמַר:
'ה' קִנְנִי רֵאשִׁית דְּרַפּוֹ וְגו'" (מְשָׁלִי ח, כב). אֲבָל אֲנִי אוֹמֵר, יִשְׂרָאֵל
קְדָמוֹ, שְׁנֵאָמַר: 'קוֹדֵשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל לָהּ, רֵאשִׁית תְּבוּאָתָה' (יְרֵמִיָּה
ב, ג)."

Tana Devei Eliyahu

A Midrashic work, sometimes referred to as *Seder Eliyahu*. Midrash is the designation of a particular genre of rabbinic literature usually forming a running commentary on specific books of the Bible. This work deals with the divine precepts, their rationales, and the importance of knowledge of Torah, prayer, and repentance. The work is divided into 2 sections (*sedarim*): *Eliyahu Rabah* and *Eliyahu Zuta*.

One day, as I was traveling, I encountered a man who knew the Bible but not the Talmud. He said to me, "My teacher, . . . there are two things in this world, Torah and Israel, that I love with all my heart. But I don't know which is of greater importance."

I said to him, "My son, it is the way of people to say that the Torah comes first, as it is written, 'G-d acquired me [the Torah] at the beginning of His way.' I, however, contend that the Jew comes first, for it is written, 'Israel is holy to G-d, the first fruit of His harvest.'"

TEXT 13b

IBID.

מִשָּׁל לְמֶלֶךְ בְּשׂוֹר וְדָם שְׂיִישׁ לוֹ בָּנִים וְעַבְדִּים הִרְבֵּה בְּתוֹךְ בֵּיתוֹ,
 וַיֵּשׁ לוֹ לְמֶלֶךְ עֶבֶד זָקֵן בִּינְיָהֵם שֶׁהוּא מְלַמֵּד אֶת בָּנָיו דְּרָכִים נְאִים
 וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים. וּבְכָל יוֹם וַיּוֹם כְּשֶׁנִּכְנְסִין בָּנָיו וְעַבְדָּיו לְפָנָיו, מְנִיחַ
 הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת כּוֹלָם וְאוֹהֵב אֶת הָעֶבֶד הַזָּקֵן שְׂיִישׁ לוֹ בְּתוֹךְ בֵּיתוֹ.
 וְאָמְרוּ לוֹ עַבְדָּיו: "לָמָּה אֶהְבֵּת אֶת הָעֶבֶד הַזָּקֵן יוֹתֵר מִן הַכָּל?"
 וְאָמַר לָהֶם הַמֶּלֶךְ: "אֲלֵמָּלְא עֶבֶד זָקֵן זֶה, שֶׁהוּא מְלַמֵּד אֶת בָּנֵי
 דְּרָכִים נְאִים וְנִעְיָמִים וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים, מַה יִּהְיֶה עֲלֵיהֶן?"
 כִּן דְּבַרֵי תוֹרָה, הוֹאִיל וּמְכַרְיַעִין אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְכַף זְכוּת, וּמְחַנְכִין
 אוֹתָן בְּמִצְוֹת, וּמְבִיאִין אוֹתָן לַחַיֵּי עוֹלָם הַבָּא, לְפִיכָּה חֲבִיבִין דְּבַרֵי
 תוֹרָה עֲלָיו עַל הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

There was a king who had many children and servants in his court. [Among them was] one old servant who mentored the king's children and taught them to behave in a beautiful manner. Every day, when the children and servants would enter, the king would shower affection on the old servant.

"Why do you love this old servant above all?" the other servants asked.

"If not for his teaching my children beautiful ways and manners," the king replied, "what would become of them?"

The same is true regarding Torah. It causes Israel to be meritorious, teaches them the *mitzvot*, and brings them to merit life in the World to Come. Therefore, the words of Torah are precious to G-d.

TEXT 14

MIDRASH, SHEMOT RABAH 47:9

אָמַר לְהַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: "וְעַתָּה אִם תִּשָּׂא חַטָּאתָם." אָמַר לְפָנָי
הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, כָּל הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁנִּתְּתָה לִי הִיא: "וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה,
דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל," "צִו אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל," "אָמַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל."
אִם הֵם כְּלִים, מָה אֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה בְּתוֹרָתְךָ?

When Moses said to G-d, "And now, if You forgive the Jews' sin, etc.," he argued as follows: All of the Torah that You gave me consists of, "And G-d spoke to Moses, [saying,] 'Speak to the Children of Israel. . . Command the Children of Israel. . . Say to the Children of Israel.'" If they are wiped out, of what use would there be in having my name in the Torah?

TEXT 15

RABBI SHMUEL SCHNEERSOHN, CITED IN HAYOM YOM, ENTRY FOR 8 AV

וּאָס אִיז דִּי פֿעוּלָה פֿון חֲסִידוּת און יִרְאַת שָׁמַיִם, אַז עָס פֿעֲלֵט
דער עיקר – אַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, און נאָך גוֹרֵם זײַן חֵס וְשָׁלוֹם צֶעֶר
אֶל הַזּוּלָּת!

What good is piety and the study of Chasidic texts if the main quality—*ahavat Yisrael*, love of one's fellow—is lacking, even to the extent of, G-d forbid, causing anguish to another!

Shemot Rabah

An early rabbinic commentary on the Book of Exodus. "Midrash" is the designation of a particular genre of rabbinic literature usually forming a running commentary on specific books of the Bible. *Shemot Rabah*, written mostly in Hebrew, provides textual exegeses, expounds upon the biblical narrative, and develops and illustrates moral principles. It was first printed in Constantinople in 1512 together with 4 other Midrashic works on the other 4 books of the Pentateuch.

Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn (Rebbe Maharash) 1834–1882

Known by the acronym "Maharash"; 4th Chabad rebbe and leader of Russian Jewry. Born in Lubavitch, Russia, he was the youngest son of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (the *Tzemach Tzedek*). Much of his leadership was devoted to combating anti-Jewish policies. His discourses have been collected and published as *Likutei Torah: Torat Shmuel*.

In Family

List the steps you take during the course of your regular work-day, from when you wake up until you return home from work (it can be more or less than ten):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

TEXT 16a

ZOHAR 2:199A

יוֹנָה דְנַחַת לְסַפִּינָה, דָּא אִיהִי נִשְׁמַתָּא דְבַר נֶשׁ דְנַחַתָּא לְהָאֵי עֲלָמָא
 לְמַהוּי בְּגוֹפָא דְבַר נֶשׁ. אֲמַאי אֶתְקַרֵי יוֹנָה? בְּגִין דְכִיּוֹן דְאִשְׁתַּתְּפַת
 בְּגוֹפָא, כְּדִין אִיהִי יוֹנָה בְּהָאֵי עֲלָמָא . . .
 וּכְדִין, בַּר נֶשׁ אֲזִיל בְּהָאֵי עֲלָמָא כְּסַפִּינָה בְּגוֹ יַמָּא רַבָּא דְחֻשְׁבִּית
 לְאַתְּבָרָא, כְּמָה דְאֵתְ אֲמַר: "וְהָאֵנִיָּה חֻשְׁבָּה לְהִשְׁבֵּר."

Jonah boarding the boat is a metaphor for the human soul that descends to this world, symbolized by the sea, to reside in the human body, symbolized by the boat. Why is the soul called Jonah? Because the Hebrew word *yonah* also means “deceived,” and when the soul partners with the body in this world, it is constantly deceived [by the body].

Thus, man traverses this world like a boat on the high seas that is threatened with destruction, as it is written [regarding Jonah, that *the storm*] *threatened to destroy the boat*.

Zohar

The seminal work of kabbalah, Jewish mysticism. The *Zohar* is a mystical commentary on the Torah, written in Aramaic and Hebrew. According to the Arizal, the *Zohar* contains the teachings of Rabbi Shimon bar Yocha'i, who lived in the Land of Israel during the 2nd century. The *Zohar* has become one of the indispensable texts of traditional Judaism, alongside and nearly equal in stature to the Mishnah and Talmud.

TEXT 16b

IBID.

וְבַר נֶשֶׁה, כִּד אֵיהוּ בְהָאֵי עֲלָמָא חָטִי, וְחָשִׁיב דְּעֵרַק מִקְמֵי מְאָרִיָּה
 וְלֹא אֲשַׁגַּח בְּהֵהוּא עֲלָמָא, וְכִדִּין אֲטִיל קוּדְשָׁא בְרִיךְ הוּא רִנַּח
 סְעָרָה תִּנְקִיפָא.

While residing in this world, we at times behave in an unbecoming manner, for we believe [like Jonah] that we have effectively fled our Master's presence, and we fail to consider the [accounting we must give to our Creator in the] World to Come. G-d then dispatches a mighty storm [that creates upheaval in our lives].

TEXT 16c

IBID.

כִּיּוֹן דְּאַתְפֹּס בַּר נִשׁ עַל יָדָא דְהֵיא סְעָרָה בְּבֵי מְרַעִיָּה, מַה כְּתִיב?
 "וַיִּזְנֶה יָרֵד אֶל יַרְכְּתֵי הַסְּפִינָה, וַיִּשְׁכַּב וַיִּרְדָּם." אַף עַל גַּב דְּבָר נִשׁ בְּבֵי
 מְרַעִיָּה, נִשְׁמַתָּא לֹא אֲתַעֲרַת לְאַתְבָּא קַמִּי מְאָרִיָּה לְמַפְרָק חוּבִי.
 מַה כְּתִיב? "וַיִּקְרַב אֵלָיו רַב הַחוּבִיל." מֵאֵן רַב הַחוּבִיל? דָּא יֵצֵר טוֹב
 דְּאֵיהּ מְנַהֵיג כָּלָא. "וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ: 'מַה לָּךְ נִרְדָּם? קוּם קְרָא אֶל אֱלֹקֶיךָ
 וְגו'" , לֹא שְׁעָתָא הוּא לְמַדְמָה!"

When we are caught in the maelstrom, what happens then? *Jonah descended to the boat's bowels, where he lay down and fell into a deep slumber.* Although we are engulfed in suffering, we slumber and fail to be aroused to return to our Master and discharge our duties.

What happens next? *The ship's captain approached Jonah.* Who is the captain? It is our conscience. . . . *He said to him, "How can you sleep! Get up, call out to your G-d!"* Now is not the time for sleep!