

Jonah 2:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas;
and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy
waves passed over me.

Analysis

For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

Jonah describes his drowning experience with vivid poetic imagery drawn from Psalms. "Thou hadst cast me" (vatashlikheni metzulah, וַתִּשְׁלִיכֵנִי מִצּוֹלָה) attributes the action directly to God, though technically the sailors threw him (1:15). Jonah recognizes divine sovereignty behind human agency—God ordained his descent into the sea through the sailors' hands.

"Into the deep, in the midst of the seas" (metzulah bilevav yamim, מִצּוֹלָה בְּלִבָּב יָמִים) uses metzulah (מִצּוֹלָה), meaning the depths, abyss, or deep waters. The phrase "heart of the seas" (levav yamim) appears in Exodus 15:8 and Ezekiel 27:4, 25-27, depicting the deepest, most dangerous parts of the ocean. Jonah sank far beneath the surface, beyond human rescue.

"The floods compassed me about" (venahar yesobeveni, וַנִּהַר יְסֻבֵּנִי) uses nahar (נִהַר), meaning river, stream, or current. The verb sabav (סָבַב) means to surround or encircle—the currents surrounded him on every side. "All thy billows and thy waves passed over me" (kol-mishbareka vegalleka alay avaru, כָּל-מִשְׁבָּרֶיךָ וְגַלֶּיךָ עָלַי אָבְרוּ) directly quotes Psalm 42:7. The possessive "thy" recognizes God's ownership of the ocean's fury—these aren't random natural forces but instruments of divine discipline.

This verse demonstrates that God disciplines His rebellious children through difficult circumstances (Hebrews 12:5-11). Jonah fled God's presence, so God pursued him into the depths. Yet even this judgment contained mercy—the fish was already prepared (1:17). God's discipline aims at restoration, not destruction.

Historical Context

Ancient Israelites feared the sea, viewing it as chaotic, dangerous, and associated with death. Unlike Phoenicians who were master sailors, most Hebrews avoided maritime travel. Jonah's descent into the sea's depths would have been understood as entering the realm of death itself. The prayer's language borrows heavily from Israel's worship tradition (Psalms), showing that even in extremity, Scripture shaped Jonah's cries to God.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing God's sovereignty in difficult circumstances ("thou hadst cast me") change our response to trials?
2. What does Jonah's use of Scripture in prayer teach about letting God's Word shape our communication with Him?
3. How does God's discipline of His children differ from His judgment of the unrepentant?

Interlinear Text

וַתִּשְׁלֹךְ נִי	מִצּוֹלָה	בְּלִבִּי ב	יַם ים	וְנֶהָר
For thou hadst cast	me into the deep	in the midst	of the seas	and the floods
H7993	H4688	H3824	H3220	H5104
כָּל	מִשְׁבֵּר יָם	וְגַל יָם	עָלָיו	עָבְרוּ:
compassed	me about all thy billows	and thy waves		passed over
H5437	H4867	H1530	H5921	H5674

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 42:7 (Parallel theme): Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.

Lamentations 3:54 (Parallel theme): Waters flowed over mine head; then I said, I am cut off.