

Jonah 2:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

Analysis

When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. At the point of death, Jonah finally turns to God in genuine prayer. "When my soul fainted within me" (behit'atef alay nafshi, בְּהִתְעַטֵּף עָלַי נַפְשִׁי) uses ataf (עֲטַף), meaning to grow faint, feeble, or weak. The reflexive form indicates self-induced weakness—as Jonah's life ebbed away, consciousness fading, at that extremity he "remembered the LORD" (et-YHWH zakarti, אֶת־יְהוָה זָכַרְתִּי).

"Remembered" (zakar, זָכַר) in Hebrew means more than mental recollection—it implies calling to mind with intention to act. When God "remembers" Noah (Genesis 8:1), Rachel (Genesis 30:22), or His covenant (Exodus 2:24), He acts to deliver. When humans "remember" God, they return to covenant faithfulness. Jonah's remembering involves turning back to the Lord he'd been fleeing, acknowledging His authority, and crying out for mercy.

"And my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple" (vatavo eleka tefillati el-hekhal qodsheka, וַתָּבוֹא אֵלַיךָ תְּפִלָּתִי אֶל־הֵיכַל קֹדֶשְׁךָ) recalls verse 4's determination to look toward the temple. Now Jonah reports that his prayer actually reached God's dwelling place. The verb bo (בּוֹא—"came in") suggests entrance, arrival, or being received. Despite praying from the fish's belly at the ocean bottom, Jonah's prayer penetrated to heaven's throne room. This demonstrates that God hears prayers from any location, any depth, any darkness. No distance, barrier, or circumstance can prevent prayers from reaching God's ears.

This verse's theology anticipates New Testament teaching: God hears wherever we cry out in faith (Hebrews 4:16, 1 John 5:14-15). Christ's high priestly intercession ensures our prayers reach the Father (Hebrews 7:25). The temple no longer matters because Christ Himself is the meeting place between God and humanity (John 2:19-21, Hebrews 10:19-22).

Historical Context

The connection between prayer and the temple reflects Solomon's dedication prayer (1 Kings 8), where he asked God to hear prayers directed toward the temple from any location—land, sea, captivity, or distress. Faithful Israelites like Daniel continued this practice (Daniel 6:10). Jonah's prayer from the fish's belly demonstrates this theology in action—even from impossible distance and desperate circumstances, prayer directed toward God's dwelling reaches Him.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to "remember the LORD" in the biblical sense, and how does this differ from mere mental acknowledgment?
2. How does Jonah's prayer reaching God's temple from the ocean depths encourage us when we feel distant from God?
3. In what ways has Christ's work eliminated the need for a physical temple while fulfilling the temple's purpose?

Interlinear Text

בְּהִתְעֵטִי רָ	עָלַי	נַפְשִׁי י	אֶת	יְהוָה	זָכַרְתִּי
fainted	H5921	When my soul	H853	the LORD	within me I remembered
H5848		H5315		H3068	H2142
וַתָּבֹא וְאֵלַי יְיָ	תַּפִּלָּתִי י	אֶל	הֵיכַל	קִדְשְׁךָ:	
came in	H413	and my prayer	H413	temple	unto thee into thine holy
H935		H8605		H1964	H6944

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 18:6 (Temple): In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.

2 Chronicles 30:27 (Holy): Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven.

Psalms 11:4 (Holy): The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

1 Samuel 30:6 (References Lord): And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

Psalms 143:5 (Parallel theme): I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands.

Psalms 27:13 (References Lord): I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

Psalms 20:7 (References Lord): Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

Psalms 65:4 (Holy): Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

