

Jonah 4:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.

Analysis

And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. The first of four divinely "prepared" things (plant, worm, wind, city—4:6,7,8; 3:2). The Hebrew vayeman YHWH-Elohim qiqayon vaya'al me'al le-Yonah lihyot tsel al-rosho lehatsilo mera'ato demonstrates God's patient teaching through object lesson. Qiqayon (קִיקְיָה) is likely castor oil plant or similar fast-growing vine providing broad leaves for shade.

"The LORD God prepared" uses both covenant name YHWH and creator title Elohim—emphasizing both personal relationship and sovereign power. God tends to His angry prophet like a father caring for a stubborn child. "To deliver him from his grief" (lehatsilo mera'ato) uses hatsil (הַצֵּל), the salvation/deliverance verb. God "saves" Jonah from discomfort the same way He just saved Nineveh from destruction—demonstrating consistent grace. The irony: Jonah accepts deliverance from heat but resents Nineveh's deliverance from judgment.

"Exceeding glad" (vayismach...simchah gedolah, שָׁמַחַת...שְׁמַחַת הַגְּדוֹלָה literally means "great joy"—hyperbolic delight over vegetation providing shade. This phrase appears only twice in Jonah: here (joy over plant) and 4:1 (great evil/anger over Nineveh's salvation). Jonah's emotional energy is wildly disproportionate—furious at 120,000 souls saved, ecstatic about personal comfort. This exposes sinful self-centeredness masquerading as theological concern.

Historical Context

The fast-growing plant provided immediate relief from Middle Eastern heat. Temperatures in Mesopotamia routinely exceeded 100°F (38°C) in summer. The plant's sudden growth may have been miraculous acceleration or simply fast-growing vegetation God providentially arranged. Ancient agriculture was familiar with plants like gourds, castor beans, or vines that could grow rapidly and provide shade. God uses this ordinary provision to teach extraordinary lesson about His character—He cares for all creation, from prophets to plants to pagan cities.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's patient teaching through the plant demonstrate His commitment to transform stubborn hearts rather than merely punish?
2. What does Jonah's disproportionate joy over comfort versus horror at salvation reveal about our own misplaced values?
3. In what ways do we accept God's blessings for ourselves while resenting His generosity toward others?

