

The Story of Yunus (alayhis salam)

Yunus (alayhis salam) was a righteous and devoted servant of Allah who lived in the large town of Nineveh, on the shores of the sea. He was appointed by Allah Ta`ala to be His messenger and to call to the oneness of Allah and to performing good deeds.

But the people laughed at him and paid no attention to his call. Yunus (alayhis salam) became angry and lost patience; he was so disgusted with the attitude of his people that he decided to leave Nineveh and take to the sea.

Hardly had he left the city when the skies began to change color and looked as if they were on fire. The people were filled with fear by this sight. They recalled the destruction of the people of Ad, Thamud and Nuh. Was theirs to be a similar fate? Slowly, faith entered their hearts. They all gathered on the mountain and started to ask Allah for His mercy and forgiveness. The mountains echoed with the sound of their cries. It was a special moment, filled with sincere repentance. Allah removed His wrath and showered His blessings upon them once again. When the threatening storm was lifted, they prayed for the return of Yunus (alayhis salam) so that he could guide them.

Meanwhile, while Yunus (alayhis salam) was aboard the ship, it was rocked by a storm and he was thrown overboard and Allah Ta`ala commanded a whale to swallow him up.

As he lay in the belly of the fish, Yunus (alayhis salam) wondered why he was being punished when Allah Ta`ala had chosen him to be His messenger; where had he gone wrong? He then realized that he

should not have acted in haste, because Allah Ta`ala wished that he be patient and more persuasive.

He prayed for forgiveness and for another opportunity to prove himself. And cried through the depths of darkness, "There is no Lord but You: glory be to You: I was indeed wrong!" (21:87)

His prayer was this:

لا اله الا انت سبحانك اني كنت من الظالمين

La ilaha Illa Anta Sub-Hanaka Inni Kuntu Minaz-Zalimeen

Allah Almighty saw the sincere repentance of Yunus (alayhis salam) and heard his invocation in the whale's stomach. Allah commanded the whale to surface and throw Yunus (alayhis salam) onto an island. The whale obeyed and swam to the farthest side of the ocean.

His body was inflamed because of the acids inside the whale's stomach. He was ill, and when the sun rose, its ray burned his inflamed body so that he was on the verge of screaming for the pain. However, he endured the pain and continued to repeat his invocation to Allah.

Almighty Allah caused a vine to grow to considerable length over him for protection. Then Allah Exalted caused Yunus to recover and forgave him. Allah told Yunus that if it had not been for his praying to Him, he would have stayed in the whale's stomach till the Day of Judgment.

Allah Ta`ala told Yunus (alayhis salam): "Had your Lord so wished, all people everywhere would have been believers. But that is not His way, so do not force anyone to take to Our path unless they do so willingly." [Surah Yunus: 99-100]