



Prophet Yunus (2)



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One day he came to the canal where he used to labor as a slave. Many people were bathing and/or washing clothes. He started prophesying to them on the bank; but they were busy washing and bathing and did not give attention to him.

Then, he saw a row of male slaves pulling upstream a boat heavily laden with coal and an old slave at the rudder. An overseer with a whip was following the row of the slaves. The prophet trembled when the overseer looked at him. This had happened several times before. Whenever he came across a scene of a slave or a group of slaves being maltreated in forced labor, he would panic as if he were a slave on the run and the overseer would identify and catch him on the spot. Then he would realize that he was no longer a slave and feel anger at himself for not having overcome this trauma yet. But such was the dread that was engraved in his mind from having once been a slave.

He wondered if slavery was not a sin: “If slavery is indeed a sin, is it one of the sins of Ninuwans that Allah required me to help them repent and drop? If not...would it not be better rather for the miserable hopeless slaves if the entire Ninuwa is demolished including themselves than that all the Ninuwans are saved and continue maltreating them with renewed confidence? For what does it profit the slaves if they are preserved alive but tormented until the day of their death?”

Yunus walked alongside the canal, all the while chanting the prophecy. Soon he came across a row of several female slaves carrying a jar on their heads. Strong smell of hot coal tar attacked Yunus’s nose. One of the women turned her head toward him, but the jar tilted and spilled some black viscous liquid onto her shoulder. She cried and flinched as if she anticipated a whip coming on her. The overseer scolded her harshly but did not strike her in fear of causing her to drop the jar. Yunus would have stopped the overseer, had he whipped the woman, for she resembled his wife.

The row went away, and Yunus started prophesying again. A group of men and women were praying to the westering sun standing in the water of the canal knee-deep. When Yunus was nearby, one of the men overheard his prophecy and asked him who Allah was. He replied that he was the god who created the earth, heaven and the sea. “Did he create the sun too?” the man asked. “Yes, everything in the sky, day or night. Everything on earth and everything in the sea too.” “Where can we go to see him?” “You cannot see him. He lives and is omnipresent, that is, he is everywhere at the same time; so you cannot capture his busy body in any particular substance, not in a statue or in a picture, nor in the sun – not even in universe, for universe was created by him. ...It might even be possible that you cannot capture Allah the Almighty by any particular

religion.” “If he is everywhere at the same time, he is in Ninuwa too. How is it then that he will destroy himself by destroying Ninuwa?” “That, my friend, is why he ordered me to preach and rescue Ninuwa. He created every person in his likeness, and thus every person is his physical part. So, every punishment he inflicts upon a man he feels it upon himself, too. As the old saying goes, ‘if your tongue sins, pull it off,’ but the pain is yours too.”

By now several men and women and children had gathered and formed a crowd listening to Yunus, some in the water and others on the bank. “Each one of you is an irreplaceable part of Allah, alleluia. So, treat each other as you would treat the Most High.”

Then the crowd began to move on the bank or in the water so as to make space, for another boat was approaching, pulled by slaves. The bodies of the slaves, tied to the boat with long tensed ropes, were aslant forward and sweating profusely. The thick ropes ground into their callous skin. An overseer with a whip followed the slaves on the bank.

This time Yunus determined he would not budge but face the overseer. He thus did not make way for them but chanted his prophecy and shouted, “Allah Almighty forbids all slavery! It’s a sin!” The overseer came and gave Yunus a whipping and threatened to give another. But two of the slaves passed between the overseer and the prophet so that their tight ropes pushed the two away from each other. Then the prophet continued, “All men are created equally by Allah in the likeness of Him; so, disgracing any man or woman is an act of disgrace to Allah, alleluia!” The overseer called out for help to another overseer who was in charge of the boat following this one.

Yunus went into the canal and crossed it by wading all the way, and rested on the opposite bank. He had known the path in the water which enabled a person to cross the canal on foot when the water level was normal. The overseers of the slaves did not pursue him. Yunus continued to prophesy there in wet clothing.

When his clothes were only half dry, loud sounds of cymbals and drums began to echo all round, and people began hurrying to public squares and temples for the afternoon prayers. Yunus stayed on the bank, but two temple policemen came and whipped him to a temple. He chanted his song in the temple, and alarmed the priests and laymen by overturning the tables of corruption.

Thus, he preached Allah’s words wherever he went. He visited a hamlet inhabited by people with skin diseases. He spent a cold night in straws in a stable, and early in the following morning he went out to the farms and chanted to the slaves, who were reaping to harvest, as well as to animal herders, who were on their way to pastures with the animals. Tax collectors were busy visiting the houses of the villagers’. No one stopped to give ear to Yunus. Then he joined the poor who came to glean the fallen ears on the harvested

farms.

He came across an area where there were houses of prostitutes, and he chanted the warning news to them as well as their customers, male and female. Many bandits lived there and threatened to kill him unless he went away.

Thus he departed and came to a graveyard, where he met an outcast man suffering from a mental disease, and they prophesied to each other. In response to Yunus's chanting of the prophecy the man cried, "Alas, what a song! Woe to me! It makes me feel like being a cymbal ready to clamor! And what do you want with me?! I know who you are - a man of God, for I felt all the dead lying underground roll over in response to your preaching. As such, what choice have I got but to repent and drop wrongdoings? But, alas, man, for all my eagerness to repent and drop wrongdoings, I cannot do so, for I am not alone. I am only one of many. I am merely one of us, of whom some are good and others are not. I cannot control us and sooner or later some other self of us will come up to replace me and may start doing evil. So, leave me alone and do not torture me with your preaching!" At this Yunus held the man's hands and said, "I know Allah, *alleluia*, would never punish you so long as you, even *yourself alone*, would repent and drop wrongdoings." A gravedigger came and took the man to let him help digging for a burial of a wealthy person. As they went, the man started chanting Yunus's prophecy over and over again.

Joining the funeral ceremony, Yunus met them again and chanted the prophecy, but the man did not chant it anymore.

Then, he arrived at a marketplace where many street performers were active, and, joining them, he sang his warning song. By and by musicians started accompanying him with various instruments and he found a tambourine would make a good aid to his prophesying. Many gathered to listen to the session and Yunus could earn some money, with which he bought a tambourine from one of the musicians and also got a new pair of sandals from a shoe seller in the market.

He would chant the prophecy whenever he found a listener, and when none, he would even preach to animals.

The forty days passed away, and yet nobody but a very few had repented. He had disclosed his successful career as a prophet in Samaria, but it did not make a difference. No change occurred and nothing improved in Ninuwa; people kept being unafraid of Allah and repeating fraudulence, theft and violence. Every day Yunus saw slaves maltreated at various places and children trafficked in the market places. He condemned the slave owners and traders at the cost of being whipped, prophesying that so long as they continued to treat slaves as non-humans there should come no salvation to Ninuwa.

He also condemned the execution of prisoners of war. He condemned bandits who sacked foreign

communities and brought home captives, cattle and spoils. He condemned those who abused animals.

One year passed, and yet Yunus was alone. Ninuwa was the same, as bad as ever. He forced himself to go and witness the abominable ritual of child sacrifice whenever it was perpetrated, and condemned the murderers and the onlookers and received whippings and jeers in response. He condemned every god that demanded human sacrifice.

Then he began to condemn self-professed prophets who were telling the citizens that there should be no destruction of the city but that the gods would give them lasting prosperity; he said their gods were false and hence their prophecies too. Yunus also condemned other self-professed prophets who were foretelling the destruction of the city like himself; he said their gods were loathsome idols unable to do anything but decay, and that only Allah the Almighty could destroy the city and all in it. Some hired prophets went to the palace and reported to the king about this. Then, the ration of bread stopped coming to Yunus.

Day by day he got more irritable. He condemned everybody who blasphemed Allah, and threatened them with fist, shouting “none has the right to be worshipped but Allah!” He condemned even those who practiced magic or told fortunes in the markets or on the streets. Eventually, he condemned everyone, Ninuwan or Israelite, that did not agree with him and repent.

He condemned idols and said that all of them together with their altars should be destroyed and burnt. He condemned the human idols too for allowing themselves to be worshipped and misguiding the citizens, and demanded that they should be banished or destroyed. He condemned the militants who worshipped weapons as their idols, which, he said, deceived them and led them into error. He said word of Allah is stronger than weapons. Likewise, he condemned the merchants who worshiped idols cast on the coins. He condemned the lawyers and officials who worshipped laws made by men as their idols. He condemned anyone who was worshipping an idol. He further condemned those who made idols and those who traded in them.

However, this last condemnation caused people to gradually stop giving him alms, for idol worshipping was the basis of the religions of Ninuwans and, moreover, idol-related trades constituted a huge guild profiting a large part of the citizens. From engraving a charm to building a statue, many citizens, from children to elderly, were involved in the guild somehow for earning their bread. In short, to the Ninuwans, from top to bottom, religion was more of a business than anything else.

Hence Yunus was virtually ostracized and became penniless, and was left to nearly starve. He continued to repeat his prophecy but got so hungry that he even could not concentrate on the meaning of what he was reciting. Yet he was able to say the prophecy correctly; he had repeated it so many times that he had come to be able to say it without thinking.

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