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**evil in the
book of Jonah**

Background

- Most literarily sophisticated book in the Old Testament
- Considered a “masterpiece”: multiple devices and genres at work throughout
- Ultimately Didactic: Meant to teach the reader certain lessons about God and themselves.



Background

- Jonah: Prophet of the Lord during the reign of Jereboam II
- Access to the temple, well off, highly educated, part of the cultural “elite.”
- Takes place approx 780-760 BC .



Starting thought:

- God gives Jonah a job to do...but its far less about the job than it is about Jonah.
- Lets read Jonah 1...

The Stairway of Rebellion

Jonah learns God's heart on a matter Jonah is passionate about...and Jonah disagrees.





Jonah 2

- How honest is Jonah's prayer?
- How much of Jonah's current situation is God's fault?

Jonah 3

- God doesn't let us skip steps (3:2)
 - Caught in a loop? What's the last thing God told you to do?
- Shortest prophecy in the bible:
 - 8 words in English and 5 words in Hebrew
 - and it gets the largest single incident response....est. 120,000+ people repent

Jonah 4

Grace and the problem of “ra’ah”



רָעָה

“EVIL:”

“ra’ ah” (hebrew)

“evil / disaster / discomfort”

“evil:” (“ra’ah”) in Jonah

- 1:2- The Lord confronts Jonah with the **evil** of the city Nineveh.
 - God sees **Evil**, tells Jonah to go...as a vehicle of Grace - Jonah runs
- 1:7 - The sailors decide to cast lots to find the source of the **evil** they experience.
 - The sailors recognize something has “brought this evil (disaster)” on them - its God
- 1:8 - The sailors confront Jonah, wondering why **evil** has come upon them.
 - The sailors realize someone is the source of this current “evil” - its Jonah

“evil:” (“ra’ah”) in Jonah

- 3:8 - The Ninevite king calls for inhabitants of the city to turn from **evil**.
 - Nineveh turns from its “evil” in hopes that God will turn from sending “evil” on them
- 3:10 - God sees the city turn from **evil**, and he relents from the **disaster** he was sending.
 - the Ninevites turn from their evil, and God turns his evil away

“evil:” (“ra’ah”) in Jonah

- 4:1 - God’s gracious response to Nineveh **displeased** Jonah greatly.
- Jonah sees God turn away the “evil” He was sending, and Jonah feels “evil” about it
- 4:2 - Jonah’s anger arises from the fact that God relents from **disaster.**
- Jonah is angry specifically because He feels God is too typically Gracious - God often turns away “evil” from “deserving” people
- 4:6 - The Lord appoints a plant to save Jonah from his **discomfort.**
- God sends a plant to rescue Jonah from his “Evil.”

Occurrences of the key word (ra 'ah; "evil"/"disaster"/"discomfort") in Jonah

- 1:2 The Lord confronts Jonah with the **evil** of the city Nineveh.
- 1:7 The sailors decide to cast lots to find the source of the **evil** they experience.
- 1:8 The sailors confront Jonah, wondering why **evil** has come upon them.
- 3:8 The Ninevite king calls for inhabitants of the city to turn from **evil**.
- 3:10 God sees the city turn from evil, and he relents from the **disaster** he was sending.
- 4:1 God's gracious response to Nineveh **displeased** Jonah greatly.
- 4:2 Jonah's anger arises from the fact that God relents from **disaster**.
- 4:6 The Lord appoints a plant to save Jonah from his **discomfort**.

Jonah needs to GROW UP

- Chapter 4:6
 - As long as the means by which God “saves us from our “ra’ah” makes us happier or life easier, we welcome it
 - But what if our current “discomfort” (ra’ah), is what God is going to use to get at the “ra’ah” in your heart?

Turning the Story on us:

- What if the “Fish” is saving your life?
- What if God is more concerned about exposing your “ra’ah” and dealing with it, than providing you with shade?



And the LORD said, “You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?”

- Jonah 4:10-11 ESV



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דָּדָה

(evil)