

THE BOOK OF JONAH
Lesson 3, Chapter 1 Continued

We left off in verse 4 of Jonah chapter 1 last time. After all the preliminaries of the first 3 verses to set-up the sea saga of Jonah, we get down to brass tacks in verse 4 as God hurls violent storm winds towards the ship carrying Jonah and crew with the idea of impeding its progress.

I said in the Introduction to the Book of Jonah that it is generally agreed among Bible academia that it is perhaps the most complex and challenging book of the Bible to properly translate and interpret, even though on the surface it seems to be not too much more than a basic child's story about a man falling overboard and getting swallowed by a whale. Therefore, I will warn you in advance that in today's lesson things are going to get necessarily technical and detailed so that we can ascertain the true meaning of Jonah's story and then be able to apply it to our understanding of God and His very nature. This meaning is wrapped up in how the world operated in the 8th century B.C., and so what goes on was well understood by the earliest hearers and readers of Jonah; yet, it is nothing like the culture and worldview of modern times. I liken some of what we'll study today as when in elementary school we had to learn our multiplication tables. This wasn't anything any of us were excited to undertake. And yet, without learning it, our ability to use math could not progress any further. To get there, we'll take a couple of short detours, with one involving a seemingly simple conversation Jonah has with some sailors on the ship he's hired to take him to Tarshish. It involves him revealing his identity.

Let's re-read Jonah chapter 1 beginning with verse 4.

RE-READ JONAH CHAPTER 1:4 – end

The crux of verse 4 is that the ship Jonah is on is in real danger of sinking because Yehoveh caused a storm to pummel it. The dangerous storm was caused by Him throwing a large volume of wind against the sea. Keep in mind that Jonah is in full-blown rebellion, refusing to obey God's command to go to Nineveh and speak the oracle that God wants conveyed to its gentile citizens. Jonah's misguided and stubborn reaction is to try to run and hide from God, and God is having none of

it. Every aspect of what is happening, and what is about to happen, then, is at the direct hand of God in order to deal with the rebellious Jonah. Thus, if we ever want to ask the question: "does God **cause** catastrophes and troubles to happen?". And, "can the innocent as well as the guilty be affected by it?", the answer is a definitive "yes" on both counts. We find such a thing in several Bible stories. Who could forget the Great Flood, for example? Without doubt, every last person on planet Earth was not equally wicked, just as without doubt Noah and his family were not perfectly and entirely innocent. Yet, all were affected; the guilty at all levels were destroyed, and the righteous to some level (all 8 of them!) were saved. It was entirely Yehoveh's call to determine this, and it is His right to do so, because He is the author of life.

Sometimes we forget (or we sort of minimize) that as we advance towards the later stage of the End Times period, Yehoveh is going to crush this planet like a grape under the fury and weight of His wrath. Everyone still alive will be affected in one terrible way or another, and to some degree or another. This will include those who, after the Rapture event, finally see the truth and trust in Yehoveh and His Son Yeshua. This is not a part of God's character that is often well-accepted among modern Believers. The preferred notion is that while in the past, pre-Jesus, that might have been the case when God the Father (a harsh and rules-oriented God,) was in charge, after the Cross things have now changed. The erroneous belief is that Yeshua is now in charge and He no longer does the will of His Father but rather of His own will; therefore, the governing dynamic has completely changed (this is part of the outcome of the Dispensational Doctrine Church philosophy). The logic presented is that Jesus is all about grace concerning all things; and since Christ is our friend as much as, or more than, our Master, what true friend would cause or participate in a divinely inspired calamity to befall their friends? And if Messiah is love, then how does love allow, let alone intentionally generate and direct, disasters on people? Bottom line: that old era has passed and we live in one in which God showers ONLY His grace and mercy upon us and we have no reason to fear Him. Well, I remind you of what I told you last week that even the Apostle Paul survived not one, not two, but three calamities...all involving the sea...and involving everyone on board those 3 vessels. God either changes or He doesn't. And since He is inherently perfect, the notion of God changing is an oxymoron. God the Father is still in charge with His Son Yeshua as His agent. God still causes...in some cases allows... various

disasters to occur in order to achieve His own purposes and to advance His goal of redeeming His creation, even though most times we might not know He did so except in hindsight when those purposes become revealed. I cannot say it strongly enough, fellow Believers: it is not our position to put God on trial to see if His true character is right or fair, or to ask Him to change His character to fit our ever-evolving parameters. Jonah is in the midst of discovering that as well, even though clearly he doesn't really get that.

Verse 5 begins a split between the way the ship's crew handles the sudden tempest, versus the way Jonah does. The crew is depicted as afraid and panicked, while Jonah is virtually oblivious to it. The crew's reaction is to cry out "each man to his own gods". Actually, what the verse says is "each man to his own **elohim**". In the study of the Book of Amos I pointed out that very probably it is a poor translation to translate the Hebrew **elohim** as "god" or "gods" and I went to some depth to explain why that is. Rather, a much better translation that better brings across the mindset of the ancient writers would be **elohim** as meaning something like "divine being" (or beings). You can go to that lesson for the teaching on **elohim**. The reason that understanding and using the term "divine being" instead of "god" or "gods" is because when a typical Judeo-Christian encounters the term "gods" in our Bible, we subconsciously prefix it with the word "false"...false gods. That is, the **elohim** are "false" or "non-existent" gods...non-existent spiritual beings...they are just a human fantasy. Yet, clearly the Holy Scriptures (Old and New Testaments) confirm their existence. So, whatever exactly the **elohim** are, they are not something like the Greek pantheon of gods of mythology, nor are they only figments of the imaginations of ancient people. They have existed since before the Creation of the physical Universe and form a kind of divine council that the Godhead delegates certain tasks to. Of the hierarchy of spiritual beings, they are the highest, with only the Godhead being above them.

These sailors were calling out to their own divine beings...their **elohim**...actual divine beings who were given charge over each particular nation of people...whom the sailors thought had the power to help them.

By throwing the cargo overboard, the crew lightened the ship, which made it more buoyant and sitting higher in the water thus making it less subject to waves

washing across the deck. To do so was rather standard procedure in a sea emergency such as this one. It is for us to presume that they had already called out to their own *elohim* for help, but no help had arrived...the storm had not abated... so now they take matters into their own hands and start throwing valuable cargo overboard. Make no mistake; throwing cargo overboard is a drastic, last-ditch effort to save their lives and their vessel. The cargo is the point of the voyage in the first place...it is what they are being paid to do... so to jettison it is a very serious and expensive matter.

Another plot angle that we need to bake-into the story is that it would have taken some time for the crew to throw sufficient cargo overboard to do any good. The sequence of events that we read in the story is not bang, bang, bang like the brevity of the narration makes it feel like. So, time passed between the decision to jettison cargo, then to start retrieving it from the cargo hold, then next to go down and confront Jonah as he lay asleep in the lowest part of the ship's hold.

My take is that Jonah was merely pretty tired and exhausted; nothing unusual. That is, this was not a spiritual matter per se whereby God was giving Jonah an inner peace. When he could stay awake no longer he went to the only place a passenger *could* go (one of the cargo decks below), and found a space to sit or maybe to lay down just as the storm erupted. To the ship's crew, Jonah was but human cargo; it was not his duty or job to help them with the ship.

As the crew climbed up and down from the upper deck to the cargo hold to grab cargo and throw it overboard, the captain of the ship suddenly comes upon the sleeping...or at least dozing...Jonah, who must have found a place between some crates or baskets of goods to rest. The captain confronts him and wants to know why (maybe how) he is sleeping through all this turmoil. He insists that Jonah call upon his own personal *elohim* for help, noting that perhaps Jonah's god will care enough to do something about their perilous situation. In the English language and in the culture of the modern West, the words said to Jonah probably sound like the captain is frustrated or that he is incredulous over Jonah's casual behavior towards this life-threatening situation; that might not be the case. This may be (most likely is) the narrator's typical economy of words at play, but in our knee-jerk Western cultural bent we sort of expect some kind of cordial conversation to ensure that nothing that is said can be seen as rude,

unless rudeness is intended. So, was the captain being rude? I think he was surprised to find Jonah dozing and calm, and so asked him to immediately wake up and beseech his *elohim* for help since everyone else has, but to no avail, because the boat could sink at any moment. In fact, in the biblical idiom of the era, the Hebrew *mah lekha* (how can you or why are you sleeping?) expresses more emotion and insistence than how that same term is used today in modern Hebrew. That is, *mah lekha* today is generally just a common bland question asking for information; it's also used as a polite greeting. Considering the gravity of the situation, I imagine every word spoken by the crew members is filled with the emotions of urgency and terror.

Here is our first detour. Let's address how the world of the gods was thought of throughout the biblical era, at least in the Middle Eastern area of the world, in order to better understand the captain's and crew's thought processes and reactions. Nearly without exception, everyone was a polytheist. Atheists were non-existent as were pure monotheists (those who believe there is only one God in all the Universe). Nearly all people believed in and approached a number of gods in their own god-system, and also fully accepted and respected the notion of other people legitimately having their own systems that approached some different gods. Generally speaking, there were 3 different kinds or categories of gods. There were family gods, usually belonging to the extended clan or perhaps even the entire tribe. Then there were national gods that were seen as the protectors or the authorities over an entire nation that had identifiable geographical boundaries. And finally, there were personal gods who were only concerned with individuals or immediate family. So, we can understand that each person had a whole cupboard full of gods each serving different purposes, as well as the sum total of those many gods existing in a hierarchy of status and powers. The Israelites believed no differently. Jonah believed no differently. While Yehoveh was their national god, and for some Israelites He doubled as their family and personal god, this by no means meant to them that there weren't many other legitimate gods worshipped by other people and nations. Therefore, we have to set aside our modern and automatic negative response to the notion of other gods existing, because the existence of all these gods is how people thought about it and wrote about it (including Israel) even through the New Testament era. Therefore, it made complete sense to the captain to ask Jonah to plead with his personal God to save them all.

Since the crew figured that it was someone's personal god involved in hurling this perilous storm at them, the next issue was to try to discern which one of the people on board had in some way angered or offended his own personal god sufficiently to cause that god to react in a way that endangered them all. They chose the method of drawing lots. Lots were not seen as random or as a matter of chance or luck. Rather, this was divination. What were "lots"? Lots were one of a few ways in ancient times to solicit a clear answer from the gods for a situation that needed to be resolved immediately. It is a kind of irony that although Yehoveh prohibited any kind of fortune telling or witchcraft in Israel, the use of lots was acceptable. In the Bible lots was used for choosing Israel's first king, and for determining the distribution of goods, animals, and even people captured from an enemy, even for settling some disputes (we find lots used to help determine territory in the Promised Land that would be given to each Israelite tribe). The famous *Urim* and *Thummim* that the High Priest of Israel used at times to determine specific answers for specific questions about God's will were really just a kind of lots. Probably what the sailors used was something like dice, and Jonah would have had no issue with that because it perfectly fit with his Hebrew faith.

CJB Proverbs 18:18 *Casting lots puts an end to strife and separates powerful disputants.*

CJB Proverbs 16:33 *One can cast lots into one's lap, but the decision comes from ADONAI.*

Jonah 1:7 says that indeed they cast the lots and Jonah was selected as the clear-cut culprit. Now that Jonah is found out, they want to understand better what is happening and why. Therefore, the sailors ask 4 questions of Jonah: 1) what is your mission; that is, what is your purpose for traveling to Tarshish, 2) where do you come from (this means where he has been residing most recently), 3) what do you call your homeland (where is his national birthplace), and 4) to what people do you belong (his ethnic loyalty)? These 4 questions when answered essentially establish Jonah's identity. While we might see some of these questions as overlapping, if not just 2 ways to say the same thing, that's not how it was to them.

The crew, from various homelands and ethnicities, had some inkling that Jonah was from an area not far from the port from which they had sailed (Joppa). It is probably a good assumption that all the sailors spoke a common language (probably a Canaanite dialect such as Aramaic) and that it was a language that Jonah was familiar with enough that they could hold a rather complex dialog. Jonah perfectly understands the reason for the 4 questions and so he answers quite forthrightly in verse 9. This begins the part of today's talk that I warned you about at the beginning, which gets quite technical. I know you all can grasp it if you'll just focus for the next few minutes. I assure you that it will make a practical difference in your understanding of the Bible in general if you will hang in there.

Jonah responds to the captain's questions by saying "I am a Hebrew". That seems to be pretty clear and straightforward, however that simple phrase is only rarely found in the Bible. Perhaps only here and then in the NT as uttered by Paul in Philippians 3:5. That ought to alert us that something limited or odd is being addressed with those words. But, what we typically take from it is actually somewhat different from how people of the 9th and 8th centuries B.C. understood it. We're going to begin that other detour I mentioned to discuss and hopefully flesh-out what that term (Hebrew) and a couple of others used to describe something about the family line of descendants of Abraham, which continued on through his son Isaac, meant to people of the biblical era and in the process discover why and how we find these 3 different terms used in the Scriptures at different times in history and for various situations. They are by no means synonymous nor did their meaning remain the same over the centuries, even though most standard Bible versions tend to treat those 3 terms as if they were essentially parallel and interchangeable at all times.

2 of those 3 terms are "Hebrew" and "Israelite". The 3rd term is usually said by Jewish and Christian scholars to be "Jew". This 3rd term is a bit more problematic and complex to deal with than the first 2. Therefore, I'll start by first dealing with the term that Jonah described himself... as a "Hebrew"...confronting it as it was used in the early days of the Bible...that is, long before the New Testament era. In the ancient use of the Hebrew language the word is *ibri*. It is derived from an older Semitic word that means "to cross over". It refers to a well-known group of people led by Abraham who formerly resided in *eber*; however, they crossed

over (they migrated across) the Euphrates River to a land on the other side of it. **Eber** was a known term meaning the general region on the northern and eastern side of the Euphrates River. The reason they referred to that land as **eber** is because it is named for their famous ancestor, Eber, who (as listed in the Bible list of generations) was 14 generations removed from Adam, and 7 generations removed from Enoch. Thus, even if people of that era didn't fully know the complete story of Abraham and its spiritual and religious implications, they were aware enough to know that, historically speaking, a famous man leading some people who crossed over the Euphrates River to the south and west went on to become an entirely new, large and influential ethnic group called **ibri**: Hebrews. They also knew that the Hebrews were separate enough and culturally distinct enough from all other of the world's ethnicities to be seen as unique among humanity in general, and therefore they were not well understood. Let me say this another way: in that era the easiest and surest way for an Israelite like Jonah to explain his identity to a foreigner was to label himself a Hebrew...an **ibri**. It is similar to the way a citizen of the USA who is visiting a foreign country might explain his identity; he would likely use the very broad term "American", which nearly everyone on our planet would understand; no further information is needed.

A 2nd term, **Israelite**, refers to a person that is descended from the family of a man named Jacob. The biblical Hebrew term for Israelite is **bene Yisrael**. While it literally means son or child of Israel, what it meant in that era was that this person belongs to the identifiable *nation* of Israel. So, while the term **Hebrew** explains about a person's original ethnicity (separate and distinct from all other ethnicities), the term **Israelite** speaks of **which** identifiable nation...a geographical place and a political entity...that a person owes their allegiance to. Now for the problematic 3rd term, Jew. This is a bit confusing, but it is important especially for good, serious Bible study and for proper doctrine, to untangle.

Biblically, the Hebrew language terms that are nearly always translated into English as "Jew" are **yehud** or **Yehudi**. Initially it referred to a person who was an actual member of the specific tribe of Judah (the tribe of **Yehuda**). It was based purely on a tribal affiliation (the tribe which sprang from the 3rd son of Jacob). Over time, the meaning evolved. After Israel entered the Promised Land, it evolved slightly to include living in a particular geographical territory that the

members of the tribe of Judah occupied. So; we have a progression in the Bible of what that word meant based on which time in biblical history we're exploring. Put another way: at first, Judah was simply the name of an individual... Jacob's 3rd son. Once Judah's own family grew large enough to become its own tribe (which took many generations to grow to that size), then the term Judah came to refer to his extended family, a specific tribe (the tribe of Judah). However, once the tribe of Judah migrated and entered the Promised Land, and was assigned its own territory, the term more referred to that specific territory but it also included the identity of the people who counted themselves as residents of the territory of Judah. Later still, after David's and then King Solomon's death in the 10th century B.C., Judah went from being a tribal territory to become its own full-fledged sovereign and recognized nation, with its own king. At that point the meaning of the Hebrew terms **yehud** and **Yehudi** evolved into indicating a particular nationality called Judah or Judahite in English. A long time after that...after the Northern Kingdom of Israel was exiled from their own national territory by Assyria... and later after Judah's exile to Babylon and then later still after their return to their former territory, the terms **yehud** and **Yehudi** were used to describe the returned exiles and all who accompanied them (and we know that some of the exiles of the Assyrian conquest...some from the group we call The 10 Lost Tribes of Israel)...joined those coming home from Babylon. The English word adopted to identify this group, still called **yehud** or **Yehudi**, was Jew. More time passed and the terms **yehud** and **Yehudi** further evolved to more refer to the peculiar religion that was practiced and had less to do with exactly where those folks were located. Again, the word chosen by most English translators remained "Jew". I realize that none of this might matter to a casual Bible reader. But for you serious students of God's Word, these differences are a significant ingredient to properly understand what we're being told. It truly matters.

A few decades after the 70 A.D destruction of Jerusalem, the era of the Rabbis and along with it the term Jew acquired a broader meaning as generally anyone who followed a religion that was now more formally known as Judaism. Today, in the 21st century, after nearly 2 millennia of adding new Traditions and customs, and of Jewish people migrating to every part of the planet, even the Rabbis can't agree on exactly *what* a Jew is or how to define the term! Must it include a genetic attachment to Jacob? If so, how could that ever be proved? Does it only refer to a practicing member of their religion (Judaism)? Or, might it be a person

whose family history shows that some of them practiced Judaism, regardless of their own ethnic background (that is, no genetic tie to Jacob was needed)? Does one have to even believe in the God of Israel to be considered a Jew (in modern times the answer is a firm "no", depending on which Rabbi you might talk to)? So, in our day, the term "Jew" is a very flexible and hazy one that mostly indicates some level of identity with, or claim of allegiance to, a group of people that historically practiced some level of Jewish Traditions and laws that began with the return of the exiles from Babylon. Therefore, there has been a pretty contentious ongoing debate among Jewish leadership in modern Israel as to what to call, and how to consider, the exiles of the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom of ancient Israel (something that is completely separate from the Babylonian conquest of the Southern Kingdom of Judah) who are now coming home to Israel in ever increasing numbers. Many of those folks do NOT want to be called Jews, primarily because they see the term in its ancient sense, as meaning a combination of a member of the tribe of Judah (which they aren't) along with the religion they uniquely practice appropriately call Judah-ism. Rather, many of these returning exiles of the so-called 10 Lost Tribes have practiced, and intend to continue to practice, a somewhat different set of faith Traditions that they see as the truer and older religion that is called for by the same Hebrew Scriptures that adherents of Judaism claim to follow. Complicated, isn't it? But this is the reality and if we don't understand all this then we completely misconstrue what we read in the Bible about Abraham's descendants.

Here's the thing for us to grasp today; at no time in the Bible, Old or New Testaments, did the term "Jew" mean what it means today. It's an anachronistic term; this means that while we use it today, we shouldn't read it back into the Bible because it was not in use then. Rather, whether in Hebrew or in its Greek equivalent, the term **yehud** or **Yehudi** mostly referred to residents of the territory belonging to the tribe of Judah. Once we get to the Roman era (that is the time of the New Testament) the Greek language became dominant and the term **Ioudaios** was used because of the spread of the Greek language as the preferred language throughout the Roman Empire. Therefore, we find the Greek word **Ioudaios** in the New Testament as a replacement for the Hebrew **yehud** or **Yehudi**. Depending on the biblical context in which it is used, **Ioudaios** meant either a person who followed the religion that the people of Judah did, and/or it meant a person who was a resident of the Roman Province called Judea. When we read

the New Testament we find that those folks claiming family ties to Jacob who live in Judea called themselves Judeans to distinguish themselves from other descendants of Jacob (other Israelites) who lived places other than Judea. For example, folks descended from Jacob who lived in the Roman Province of Galilee (such as Yeshua all of His 12 disciples) called themselves Galileans. Other descendants of Jacob who resided in far-away places in the vast Roman Empire, but had next to no connection to the Holy Land simply because of the great distance from it that they lived, yet still identified themselves to some level to the Israelites living in the Holy Land, were also called **Ioudaios**. So, here's what we need to understand when reading the New Testament: **Ioudaios** was a general, catch-all Greek term for those various folks that saw themselves as member of a distinct Hebrew heritage, culture and religion apart from all other people on the planet.

As challenging as this can be to visualize, the reality is that languages have always evolved (this includes English), and circumstances and history have also always evolved, and so labels for people and ethnicities did the same as concerns their meaning. As concerns the use of our 3 biblical terms Hebrew, Israelite, and Jew, we don't have any significant confusion in the Old Testament except that caused by agenda driven reasons for using English words that do not accurately reflect the real meaning of the Hebrew word at that time. The confusion exists mainly in the New Testament. Should we encounter the English word Jew in the Old Testament it is a poor translation that ought to be simply thrown out and replaced (in English) by the word Judean nearly every time. I know that's a lot to take in. So, now let's get back to our lesson and apply what you just learned to verse 9. Jonah identified himself as Hebrew, which immediately told his counterparts on the ship that he was very different from them. They would immediately know that Jonah has a different god and god system from theirs. Next Jonah says he fears (that is, his religious allegiance is to) "The Lord, the God of Heaven". This is another incorrect English translation. Even though (generally speaking) every English Bible one can consult uses these same or similar words, it misses the mark in a crucial way. First, the English term Lord (**Adonai** in Hebrew) doesn't actually appear here. Rather the word that appears in the Holy Scriptures is Yehoveh; God's formal name. This is critical because if Jonah didn't give the captain and the multi-ethnic crew a formal name for His particular god, then those sailors he was talking to would have no idea which god

he was talking about. And, which god was entirely the crux of what they were asking Jonah about.

Imagine that you and I are having a conversation about cars. Out of curiosity you ask me what car I drive and I say "it's an automobile". That imparts no information whatsoever. What you are asking for, of course, is the formal name...the particular brand and model...of the car I drive. It works the same in the Bible as regards gods. When the term god or lord or **elohim** appears, these are all somewhat generic terms like the way we use the word "car". For anyone of the biblical era, no matter their culture, what mattered is the NAME of one's god, lord, or **elohim** so that that particular one is properly identified since there were so many of them. Jonah told the sailors that the particular god He worshipped as a Hebrew is named Yehoveh. But even more, where in our Bibles it has Jonah continue to further explain His God's identity with "The God of Heaven who made the sea and the dry land", this is also misleading and a poor English translation. The Hebrew word that Jonah uses is actually "The **Elohim** of Heaven"; and **elohim** does not mean God, it means divine being. Or even more specifically, it is referring to a particular named category of spiritual beings. Jonah then goes on to explain WHICH **elohim** of Heaven he bows down to because it was understood that there is more than one. Jonah's god is the **elohim** (above all other **elohim**) who uniquely made (who created) the sea and the dry land. That is, Jonah says that Yehoveh his **elohim** is the One who literally made planet earth. Yehoveh is the Creator. As I have stated before; **elohim** is not the Hebrew for God. **Yah** is the specific Hebrew word for the God of the Bible; the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **Yah** refers ONLY to Yehoveh. My conclusion is that **elohim** as "god" or "gods", it is that Bible translators didn't know what **elohim** actually meant, or perhaps it's because to acknowledge it challenges long established Christian doctrines. Or, perhaps, it could cause us to veer away from a Greek cultural understanding of what is meant (Greek is the perspective of understanding the Bible that is virtually universal in Roman Western Christianity). I urge you to look up the Torah Class lessons on the Book of Amos, lesson numbers 10 and 11, to get a more thorough understanding on the meaning of **elohim**.

Verse 10 begins, literally, with "the men feared a great fear". That is, Jonah's admission took their already heightened anxieties to yet another level. These

men were caught as collateral damage in a power struggle between Jonah's offense of some sort, and His God's violent reaction to it. The crew was powerless because this god was unknown to them, even though they may well have heard of Him. In an odd irony, we have a situation whereby Jonah fears Yehoveh (in the sense of fear as meaning recognizing His sovereignty), yet openly rebels against Him. But, the crew of the ship fears Yehoveh (in the sense of being in terror of Him and His power), but don't recognize His sovereignty over them. This is an excellent illustration of how the ancients thought that the gods worked, and how their personal relationships with gods operated.

Jonah is confronted by a fearful crew that is now angry. "What have YOU done?" they tell him. That is, they have figured out that their ordeal is because of this Hebrew, Jonah, that they are transporting. They had no idea when he booked passage that he was in the midst of angering his personal god. Since these men were religious, they fully understood just how serious Jonah's actions were. It was as if they were innocently tied to a person that has weighted himself down with rocks, intent on jumping into deep water to commit suicide.

The final words of verse 10 no doubt came after some further interrogation of Jonah whereby he confessed that his offense against his god was that he refused to do as he was told and decided to run away from him. "Great", they thought! "Now what?" The "now what?" starts to take form in verse 11. The crew's hope is that since Jonah is a Prophet of this god, he might know how to appease him in order to save their collective lives. No doubt each of these men worship one or another of the Ba'als and so thought in those terms. They beseech Jonah to explain to them what they need to do, since they are unfamiliar with how Jonah's particular god operates. When we realize the terrible and dangerous situation they're in, and that it is Jonah's fault, the crew is actually behaving rationally and is not seeking vengeance against Jonah.

The lightening of the load by throwing heavy cargo overboard seems to have bought the crew some time. Jonah's solution to their dilemma that opens verse 12 was absolutely shocking to the men: "Pick me up and throw me into the sea", he said. Jonah says that the only solution is for the crew to kill...to essentially execute...him as just punishment for Jonah offending his god. This is where we'll stop for today and pick up next time.