8. The Day After the Storm

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VERSES 11-15

"[As the storm continued to worsen] the sailors asked [Yona]: – What should we do with you to stop this storm? 'Throw me to the sea', answered Yona, 'and calm will return. I know that I am the only one to blame for this terrible storm that stalks you'. The sailors rowed hard to try to take the ship to the mainland, but the storm was so violent that they did not succeed. Then they cried out to HaShem, the God of Yona: 'O HaShem' they begged, 'do not let us die for this man's sin, neither hold us responsible for his death. HaShem, You have sent this storm over him and only You know why'. Then the sailors took Yona and threw him into the raging sea, and the storm [finally] stopped!

THE LESSON OF THE STORM

Every day when we recite the Shema Israel (*vehayá im shamoa'*…), we mention that rain is a blessing from HaShem, and its absence, drought, a synonym of starvation and death. But when rain is excesive is not a blessing anymore. The reward from heaven becomes a dangerous storm that causes destruction. In Yona's story the storm is a means of Divine intervention, which, as we can see in the verses mentioned above, achieves its pedagogical objective: to teach Yona that he should not run away from a special mission he has to accomplish.

THE BEFORE AND THE AFTER OF YONA

Before the storm, Yona thought that he could escape from God. That where His word is not heard—outside of Erets Israel—His Presence is not manifested. Now Yona discovers that God is Omnipresent.

Before the storm, Yona ignored the direct call of HaShem, His "voice". Now, Yona is able to decipher God's subtle call in an extreme climate event.

Before the storm, Yona disobeyed God. Now he is ready to "jump into the sea" and entrust himself to the mission assigned by him.

And what seems more significant:

Before the storm, Yona does not think it is important to save the lives of the thousands of pagan inhabitants of Nineveh.

The new Yona, however, is willing to sacrifice his own life to save a handful of sailors.
Thus, reading the text very carefully we discover that the Yona that we find after the storm is not the same Yona that we met before the storm. In an ironic sense, the escape and the storm helped Yona to be more prepared for his mission.

STORMS AND TORMENTS

There are several types of storms. There are weather storms and life storms. King David in Tehillim (127) used the metaphor of storms and floods to describe life challenges whose solution are beyond our control.
Storms are sometimes caused by ourselves: our bad habits, our bad decisions, like associating with those we should not, as happened to Shimshon with the Philistines.
Sometimes our torments are caused by other people, like Yosef who was sold as a slave by his own brothers. Something that unleashed an indescribable storm of collateral damages and pain not only to Yosef but also to his father and his entire family.
The storms, can also be isurim (□□□□□ □□□□□□), providential sufferings not related to anything wrong we had done. Difficulties beyond our responsibility.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM YONA AND THE STORM?

Storms and challenges we face in our lives teach us and define us. And many times they show us who is who. A friend of mine, a physician, learned this lesson from a real weather storm. New York. “Sandy”. October 2012. The terrible storm destroyed his medical office, and it would take months to fix or find a different location. At that time a professional of the same specialty “took advantage” of my friend’s problem to promote his own practice, trying to steal some of his patients. But on the other hand, another colleague offered my friend a small space in his own office, so he can still see his patients until he has his own office back.
Storms that we live are also opportunities for change. They transform us and sometimes, like Yona, they help us to rediscover our own Divine call: the power to help others. Recently, a friend of mine suffered one of those storms, cancer, and after a painful period of thunder, lightning and hail, the storm ended. And he, BH, survived. Now he is a different person. And among other things he dedicates to

helping those who go through these types of storms. And he became their savior. Because for those who are drowned under an endless rain of medical problems, there is nothing better than being helped by someone whose clothes are still wet.
Finally, we also learn from the story of Yona that even the most powerful and destructive storm, eventually stops.