5. Who loaded the dice?

Yona's ship is caught in a terrible storm and about to collapse. The whole crew is trying to get the water out and praying. But Yona fell asleep. The captain of the ship finds Yona and rebukes him:

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VERSE 6: *"What are you doing asleep?" He says. "Get up and cry out to your God. Maybe God will pay attention to us and will help us to escape death. "*

Yona is deeply immersed in his own denial. But he does not know it. Many times we need someone from the outside to awaken us, to save us from ourselves. The Gemara describes this type of situation with the following words: □□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□ □□□□□□□ "An individual can not free himself from prison, on his own". The Sages use this expression metaphorically. This is what Ribbi Yochanan said when he explained why he asked for the physical and emotional help of Ribbi Chanina Bar Chama to restore him from the serious deterioration of his health. To understand the beauty and precision of this expression, remember that in ancient times "jails" were not like modern prisons. In the case of Yosef, for example, we see that prisons were "pits" (□□□□ □□□) and you can only get out of a pit with the help of someone outside the pit. Imagine a person who suffers, for example, drug-related addiction. For him or her is like falling into a pit, and hitting rock bottom. Even if that person now decides to restore his life, it will be very difficult for him –if not impossible– to free himself on his own. He needs someone else to pull him from the outside of the pit, to free him from his "prison" (addiction, depression, escapism, etc.).

Returning to Yona, the ship's captain awakens Yona literally and psychologically. He awakens him from his sleep and makes him aware of the danger that he and the entire crew are in. It is also ironic that the captain of a ship – a gentile –is the one that "wakes up" and encourages the prophet of Israel, "a professional awakener", and encourages him to pray to God. is it possible that at this point, Yona begins to change his negative opinion about the gentiles of Nineveh, whose lives he refused to save? Perhaps Yona sees now that not everyone is evil in the "Sin City" of the 8th century BCE.

And what does Yona do once he wakes up?

We still do not hear any word from Yona. The prophet is no longer in the bottom of the ship, he is on the surface with the other crew members. But mysteriously (or not), the text remains silent regarding Yona's reaction. Does this mean that Yona was still not praying? He keeps escaping the Divine call, and now ignoring God's calls for his attention (the storm)?

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VERSE 7: *"Then the sailors said to each other, come, let us cast lots to know for whose sake this calamity has come to us. And they cast lots, and the lot fell on Yona. "*

The sailors somehow understand that the storm is not fortuitous, and they decide to cast the lots (*goral*) in order to find by the omens who is responsible for this tragedy. This type of practice, divination through oracles, was very common among pagan peoples. The Torah, however, forbids it.

Why? Let's think about throwing a coin or casting lots.

1. When the intention of the person tossing the coin is "to

reveal the Divine will" through the coin, the Torah considers it as a form of Aboda Zara, called in Hebrew *nichush*, "divination". One might think, for example, that if God is Almighty and Omnipresent, chance does not exist. And if chance does not exist, it is God who decides on which side the coin will fall. And if God intervenes in the way the coin falls, I can reveal His will with the coin. "Heads, means that God wants me to do X; and tails, means that God wants me to do Y." This is essentially an idolatrous reasoning (□ □□ □□□□□, or *cleromancy*): the mechanism through which pagan peoples "forced the gods to express their will". (For more see Maimonides, MT Aboda Zara, chapter 11) and therefore is strictly forbidden.

2. Now, casting a lot is allowed as a way to resolve, and especially "avoid", conflicts. For example, when flipping a coin is agreed by the parties as an objective way of assigning something, such as when they flip a coin in a football game to decide who starts the game, etc. In this case, the parties previously agreed to settle the matter surrendering themselves to equal statistical probabilities, with no intention of cleromancy, i.e., to force the revelation of the Divine will. This type of resolution is common in Jewish tradition (division of lands, allocation of the functions of the Kohanim, etc.) and King Solomon mentioned it positively in Mishle 18:18 "□□□□□□ ,□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□". "The *goral*, [= flipping a coin, etc.] solves conflicts and separates [peacefully] the contenders."

But unexpectedly in the case of Yona, HaShem, "changes the rules of the game" and loads the sailor's dices to assign the blame into Yona