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KnoWhy #526 - How Were Jonah and the Brother of Jared Able to Find Comfort?

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Abstract: Seeing how Jonah and the Brother of Jared both turned to the Lord in their moment of crucial need in facing an impending death allows us to more boldly liken these verses to ourselves. When Jonah and the Brother of Jared were each in deep distress, they remembered to cry unto the Lord for relief, just as we can today.



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“Jonah Cast on Shore by the Fish” by Antonius Wierix II via The Met Collection

HOW WERE JONAH AND THE BROTHER OF JARED ABLE TO FIND COMFORT?

“Now behold, O Lord, and do not be angry with thy servant because of his weakness before thee; for we know that thou art holy and dwellest in the heavens, and that we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually; nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee that from thee we may receive according to our desires.”

Ether 3:2

THE KNOW

Ether 3 contains the prayer of the Brother of Jared in which he asks the Lord to help him provide light inside their barges so that his people will not have to cross the oceans in darkness. The first verse of this prayer is

remarkably similar to Jonah 2, and this verse may have been modeled after the Psalm contained in the chapter.

Ether 3:1–2 describes what the Brother of Jared said to the Lord when bringing the 16 stones to the Him. The

beginning of his prayer is like the prayer of Jonah in Jonah 2:2–10, as laid out in the chart below:

Ether 3:1–2	Jonah 2:2-10
The Brother of Jared “cried again unto the Lord, saying:	Jonah “ <i>cried</i> by reason of mine affliction <i>unto the Lord</i> , and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.
O Lord, thou hast said that we must be <i>encompassed about</i> by the <i>floods</i>.	For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the <i>floods compassed</i> me <i>about</i> : all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.
Now behold, O Lord, and do not be angry with thy servant because of his weakness before thee;	Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight;
for we know that thou art <i>holy</i> and dwellest in the heavens,	yet I will look again toward thy <i>holy</i> temple.
and that we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil <i>continually</i>,	The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me <i>for ever</i> .
nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must <i>call upon thee</i>	yet <i>hast thou</i> brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and <i>my prayer</i> came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.
that from thee we may receive according to our desires.”	They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.”

There are a number of similarities between the passages:

Both Ether 3 and Jonah 2 begin by stating that the person “cried unto the Lord.” Jonah and the Brother of Jared were each in a difficult position in these verses and were “crying to the Lord” for help.

Both people discuss being surrounded by the deep waters and being “encompassed” / “compassed” by “floods,” to use their words.

Both characters are depicted expressing concern over their relationship with God. The Brother of Jared asked that God, “not be angry with thy servant because

of his weakness before thee” and Jonah expressed concern that he was “cast out of (God’s) sight,” presumably because God was angry with him.

Both books then discuss the dwelling-place of the deity. Ether 3 states, “for we know that thou art holy and dwellest in the heavens,” while Jonah 2 states, “I will look again toward thy holy temple.”¹

Both Jonah and Ether then discuss being cut off from Gods’ presence and our need for deliverance, although this connection is less obvious at first. Ether 3 states, “we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually.” Jonah 2, on the other hand, states that “the waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever.”

In the ancient Near East, waters in rivers and oceans were sometimes associated with chaos and evil.² In addition, the Hebrew word translated as “went down” in Jonah 2 is sometimes translated as “fall.”³ Ether 3’s reference to the “fall” and to our natures becoming evil may then be an interpretation of this passage in Jonah as a reference to the fall.

Both Jonah and Ether then talk about calling upon God. Ether 3 states, “nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee,” and Jonah 2 states that “when my soul fainted within me ... my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.”

Finally, Ether asserts that, “from thee we may receive according to our desires,” while Jonah states that people will give offerings to the Lord, thanking Him for all He has done, the appropriate response after receiving blessings from the Lord.

Noticing more clearly the linguistic similarities in Ether 3:1–2 and Jonah 2:2-10 can help us understand more deeply the prayers and profound experiences of Jonah and the Brother of Jared.

THE WHY

Seeing how Jonah and the Brother of Jared both turned to the Lord in their moment of crucial need in facing an impending death allows us to more boldly liken

these verses to ourselves. When Jonah and the Brother of Jared were each in deep distress, they remembered to cry unto the Lord for relief, just as we can today.

When the Brother of Jared realized that he was going to be surrounded by difficult challenges, being encompassed by the floods of the ocean as he and his people were about to attempt to cross the sea, he called upon God for help. Although we may not literally be surrounded by the sea, as were Jonah and the Brother of Jared, we may all feel overwhelmed and be called upon to swim in deep waters in our lives in various other ways and will need God's help.

When we feel distant from God, and feel far from his presence, we can especially turn towards His temple and find healing and relief. Jonah realized that he had wrongly tried to run away from the difficult calling he had received to preach repentance in the powerful, hostile capital city of Ninevah in Assyria. In his moment of truth, Jonah promised that, if he could somehow be saved, he would return faithfully to the Lord's temple. The Brother of Jared, likewise, recognized his fallen and evil condition, but had faith that by keeping the Lord's command he could assuredly receive from the Lord according to his righteous desire.

When any of us are burdened down by the weight of our own inadequacies or mistakes, we can still cry out sincerely to the Lord in faithful prayer and feel the ennobling and restoring power of the Atonement in our lives. Reading these two powerful passages together can help us feel closer to God in our extremity and find peace in times of trouble.

FURTHER READING

Book of Mormon Central, "[Where did the Brother of Jared Get the Idea of Shining Stones?](#)," *KnoWhy* 240 (November 28, 2016).

Book of Mormon Central, "[Why Does Jacob Choose a 'Monster' as a Symbol for Death and Hell?](#)" *KnoWhy* 34 (February 16, 2016).

David R. Scott, "[The Book of Jonah: Foreshadowings of Jesus as the Christ](#)," *BYU Studies Quarterly*, 53 no. 3 (2014):161–180.

NOTES

1. This is interesting in light of other imagery in the chapter: see Book of Mormon Central, "[Where did the Brother of Jared Get the Idea of Shining Stones?](#)" *KnoWhy* 240 (November 28, 2016).
2. See Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (London: SPCK, 1972), 56, 73–75. See also Book of Mormon Central, "[Why Does Jacob Choose a 'Monster' as a Symbol for Death and Hell?](#)" *KnoWhy* 34 (February 16, 2016).
3. See George Wigram, ed., *The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament: Coded with the Numbering System from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1980), s.v., yrd.

