

Have you ever felt as though things are just too much for you, that you are in a situation you see no way of getting out of? Do you look at problems in our world today and wonder how they can ever be solved? The mission of Prophet Yunus is a timeless story that tells us there is a way out, if only we have faith.

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وَإِنَّ يُونُسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾

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And indeed, Jonah was among the messengers.

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إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلِ الْمَشْحُونِ ﴿١٤٠﴾

Sahih International

[Mention] when he ran away to the laden ship.

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فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾

Sahih International

And he drew lots and was among the losers.

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فَالنَّمَمَةُ الْخَوْتُ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ ﴿١٤٢﴾

Sahih International

Then the fish swallowed him, while he was blameworthy.

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فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ ﴿١٤٣﴾

Sahih International

And had he not been of those who exalt Allah ,

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لَلْبَيْتِ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

Sahih International

He would have remained inside its belly until the Day they are resurrected.

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فَنَبَذْنَاهُ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ ﴿١٤٥﴾

Sahih International

But We threw him onto the open shore while he was ill.

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وَأَنْبَتْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِّنْ يَقْطِينٍ ﴿١٤٦﴾

Sahih International

And We caused to grow over him a gourd vine.

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وَأَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ مِائَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ ﴿١٤٧﴾

Sahih International

And We sent him to [his people of] a hundred thousand or more.

37:148

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فَآمَنُوا فَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿١٤٨﴾

Sahih International

And they believed, so We gave them enjoyment [of life] for a time.

The stories of the Anbiyaa have been preserved and every scenario and challenge we go through in our lives can be found in the lives of these amazing people, even though they lived in a different era in lands foreign to us. Allah(SWT) reminds us of their stories for a reason - He says:

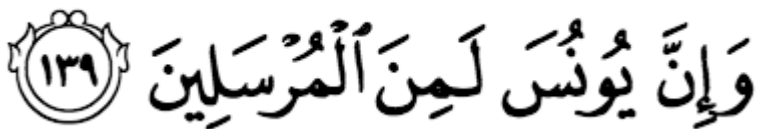
لَقَدْ كَانَتْ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ قُلْ

“Indeed in the stories of these men, is a lesson for those of understanding.” [Surah Yusuf 12:111]

The word *'ibra* means lessons for us, and the root of this word comes **'abir which means tear drop** and **'uboor meaning to move across**. So what we are being told is that these stories are so powerful that if you were to listen to them with your hearts, you may just be moved to tears. May Allah(SWT) give us the tawfique to benefit from these stories wanting to take guidance from these stories.

Yunus (AS) was named 6 times in the Qur'an and the 10th Surah is named after him. This iconic story is told in a number of places in the Qur'an - Surah as-Saaffaat, Surah al-Anbiya, and Surah Yunus. Sayyidina Yunus ibn Matha (AS) was also known as Saahibil Hoot and Dhun-Noon (the possessor of the whale).

The most extensive telling of the story is Surah Saafat which begins stating:



And indeed, Yunus (AS) was among the messengers. [37:139]

Allah (SWT) sent Yunus to call the people of **Nineveh** - a great city with 120,000+ people in it, the capital of Assyria who spoke the native Akaddian language. Nineveh is situated in current day northern Iraq and southeastern Turkey. The Assyrian people claimed to be **descendants of Ibrahim(AS)**, yet they had forgotten most of his teachings and were involved in **all sorts of wrong, worshipping their pop(ular) idols**.

Yunus(AS) reminded them about their Creator, Allah(SWT) and called them to good. Despite his warm, loving call where he would ask them to recognise Allah(SWT) in worship and obedience, they rejected him and would not accept this message. Instead, they began to mock him and behave badly with them. **How do we handle rejection?** Even the best of us may hold ourselves with some dignity initially but we couldn't face that day in day out. Some may resort to giving as good as we get and others may go totally beyond control - violence, weapons totally #beastmode. Not the Messengers of Allah(SWT) - they showed us how to manage our conduct, control our anger and have grit and persistence.

Yunus (AS) persisted for many years until Allah(SWT) revealed that His punishment was just

about to come. He quickly rushed to his people and said, submit to Allah(SWT) but they still rejected him.

Allah(SWT) tells us in Surah Al Anbiyaa:

وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ

“And [mention] the man of the fish, when he went off in anger and thought that We would not decree [anything] upon him.” [21:87]

After many years of rejection and warning of a sure punishment, he became frustrated and angry with them. Ibn ‘Aashoor said this is **more intense than ghaadhib** - he was so angry with them and can have the meaning that **they were both angry** - the people with him as well.

But they wouldn’t listen to him and so Yunus left them, but without express approval from Allah(SWT). Even though he was a prophet, Yunus was still a man and he stormed off out of the city when he didn’t achieve what he had hoped. He even felt that he knew what these people deserved. We can identify with Yunus here, can’t we? On a human level, we often give up too soon, and we often stomp off when we don’t get what we want. On a spiritual level, we see lots of wickedness in the world and think we know how the evildoers should be treated.

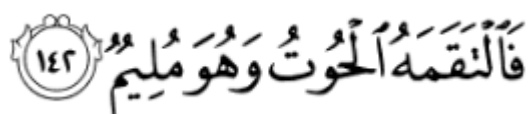
Having left the city behind, he wanted to get as far away as possible so he boarded a boat to get away to sea - described as fulkin mash-hoon - a fully-laden ship, full with cargo travelling through the Mediterranean sea. On the sea- journey, the wind picked up and the waves raised higher and higher and they feared it would capsize. A storm mounted and the sea smashed against the sides of the ship so the crew decided that they had to lighten the load on the ship to try to stabilise it. They threw all of their luggage and weight off the ship but still the storm continued to wreck the ship.

Out of desperation, they agreed that they would have to throw off people to continue to lighten the ship and they decided to put all the names into a bag and then pick one out at random to decide who to throw out so it remains fair. The first name they drew out was that of Sayyidina Yunus (AS). When they drew his name out, all of the crew couldn’t believe it - a young, good man who was well respected amongst them all - they couldn’t throw him out. So they threw his name back in and mixed up the bag again to pick out a second name. To

their surprise, the name that came out again was Yunus. Perhaps, just a random coincidence so they tried again. Third time and again, it ended up being Yunus (AS).

Now Sayyidina Yunus (AS) knew this is from Allah(SWT) and the people loved him too much to harm him, so in the middle of the ocean - bismillahir Rahmaan ar-Rahaam - and he jumped overboard himself into the sea.

The Qur'an then states:



“Then the fish swallowed him, while he was blameworthy (muleem).” The decision to leave his people was not the right one. Ibn Kathir explains that this huge whale came up from the depths of the ocean and its huge body split the water into two and it lunged at Sayyidina Yunus (AS) and swallowed him up whole, imprisoning him with its ivory teeth as locks to the world as he knew it. Allah(SWT) inspired it not to break his bones nor tear at his flesh.

Sayyidina Yunus (AS) fell unconscious and on waking, he found himself in darkness and assumed he was in the grave, dead. But that impression did not last long as he began feeling around him and found it wet and soft. He could hear the sounds of the whale - the majestic sounds of the ocean which I'm sure we have all heard of. Ibn Kathir explains that Allah(SWT) that this innahadha tasbeeh dawaa bil bahr - this is the tasbeeh of the creatures of the sea.

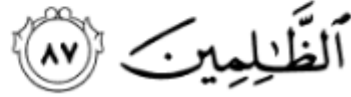
On recognising he was alive, he moved his legs and immediately tried to find some space to do one thing. What would we do in this moment of desperation? Not panic? Yunus is filled with total despair. How can he possibly survive this disaster? What way out of his situation could there possibly be? He is engulfed by darkness: the darkness of the creature's stomach; the darkness of the deep; and, worst of all, the darkness of despair. No chance to phone a friend. He made space to do sujud and call out to Allah(SWT). Now how long do you think he remained in this state ? Most of the scholars are agreed that it was for a period of 40 days!

He made a dua so powerful that it was heard by the angels circling the throne of Allah(SWT).

The Qur'an states *fa naadaa fidhulumaat* he called out in the darknesses - layer upon layer

of trial and darkness - submerged in the depths of the ocean, black far removed from sunlight. Darkness of the ocean, darkness of whale, darkness of its stomach. In this place, he called out desperate and broken saying Yaa Rabb, I am making sujood to you in a place where no-one has made sujood to you before - the stomach of a whale, and then he continued...

وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغْضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ



“There is no-one worthy of worship except you. Glory be to You. Indeed I was of those who did wrong.” Learn this dua, it’s a beautiful dua - use it in your salaah. But what made this call so special? Allah(SWT) loves that we recognise our dependence on Him alone and no other - laa ilaaha illAllah. He chooses words that will please Allah(SWT) and then sees Subhaanak - You are completely flawless. This implicitly says, You are without any mistakes and I am full of mistakes. We can say this at any time. Then, he (AS) says, I blame myself - I know I am at fault and recognise my weakness.

These words are special. But why didn’t he ask Allah(SWT), save me, that’s his real need? Why not say it explicitly - he recognised his own weakness and Allah’s greatness but doesn’t ask to be saved from the whale. Why not? Allah’s forgiveness is more important than anything else - more important than being saved in this world. As long as you are happy, yaa Rubb, just like the dua of the Prophet(SAW) at Ta’if. The way you ask Allah(SWT) is as important as what you ask from Allah(SWT) - have a conversation with Allah(SWT).

Allah(SWT) knows your personal situation - your work challenge, your exams, your family situation, your children not listening to you, your parents being difficult with you. Allah(SWT) wants to see you turn to Him in your times of need and recognise Him. Even if you dont spell out your need, he knows your need.

Sa’d ibn abi Waqas (RA) reported that the Prophet (SAW) said, “The supplication made by the Companion of the Fish (Prophet Yunus (as)) in the belly of the fish was (the above). If any Muslim supplicates in these words, his supplication will be accepted/responded to.” In

another report, Prophet[SAW] says "I know words that will cause Allah to remove one's distress. These are the words (of supplication) of my brother Yunus[AS] "[at-Tirmidhi; an-Nisa'I, al-Hakim]

The mistakes you make in your life should not dictate your future.

Remain humble. Abu Huraira reported: The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, **"No servant should say that I am better than Jonah son of Mata."** In another narration, the Prophet said, **"Whoever says that I am better than Jonah son of Mata has told a lie."** Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 3234, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2373

Don't be worried about what people think of you, be worried about what Allah(SWT) thinks of you. 'Ataa mentioned there's a story about a man who was praying and the masjid was empty. While in his prayer, he heard the door open and so he improved his prayer and lengthened it so that he may be seen as one of the pious. On completing his salaam he turned around to see who had been observing his lengthy prayer, only to see that it was a stray dog who had entered the masjid. Don't waste your life trying to impress others on Insta, Snapchat, Facebook or Youtube - they will never be satisfied with you.

Rather than just complaining of our weakness in Iman, we need to recognise that we too will have ups and downs like Yunus (AS). In our times of challenge, instead of turning to people and complaining, turn to Allah(SWT). Like Ya'qub (AS) complain to Allah(SWT) and rely on Him. Reliance on Allah(SWT) - tawakkul - is a muscle that we need to train. How do you win a race - practice, trying and improving - challenging yourself. What do you do when you go to the gym? You try heavier weights - the stress helps you grow.

When he made that dua, the angels said to Allah(SWT) - **Yaa Rubb, hadha sowtun da'eefun ma'roofun min bilaadin ghareeba** - this is the voice of a person, familiar to us, a broken, weak voice from a strange place. Allah(SWT) asked dont you know who this is? **Hadha 'abdee Yunus.**

They were shocked to hear that he was in such a dangerous place - The stomach of any animal is filled with acids to break down their food and these were eating away at the flesh of Yunus (AS), yet he was oblivious and focused in his call to Allah(SWT).

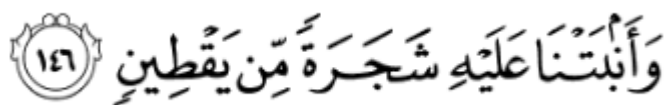
So the angels asked Yaa Rabb, isn't this the same man who continuously does good deeds that are accepted and the man who dua is never rejected. Allah said yes it is him. Then the angels said, O Allah, have Mercy on him who remembers you in times of ease, so remember him in his time of need.

Allahu akbar. Thats such a beautiful statement – the angels are making dua on his behalf and they plead for him because of one point – his remembrance of Allah(SWT) in good times.

Allah (SWT) also made it known that had it not been for Yunus’s (peace be upon him) sincere repentance and his invocations to Him, he would have stayed in the whale’s stomach till the Day of Judgment!

Allah(SWT) responded and commanded the whale to spit him out and he was washed on to a shore. Here he lay recovering from his injuries. Just as Allah had used it to save Yunus from the storm and from drowning in the sea, so He also uses it to bring Yunus safely to land again.

And there is more. Yunus is feeling sick and sore as he lies on the sand in the scorching heat, still not knowing what will become of him. He was in a very desperate and distressful condition, which arose from the physical injuries he suffered in the acidic belly of the whale, including loss of hair, peeled skin and bleached hands and face. Allah (SWT) takes even more care of him and causes a plant to grow up over him and to cover Yunus with its shade.



And We caused to grow over him a gourd vine. [37:146] Allah(SWT) caused a plant to grow over him, so imagine how intense and long his recovery was – the gourd tree – with long, extensive branches spread its shade over him and the leaves are very soft to touch – this all sped up his recovery. Even the fruit of this tree – the gourd tree carries yaqteen – pumpkins – the fruit of this tree was his food and drink providing nourishment so he did not have to travel for food. Pumpkins are also known for keeping flies away and they can be eaten raw and even their skin can be eaten too. There are other medical benefits of pumpkin that have come to light, including in helping to reduce swellings, cooling down fever, helping with digestion, eliminating bile etc. Its seeds also contain essential fatty acids that help maintain healthy blood vessels, nerves and tissue. It also include anti-diabetic, antioxidant, anti-carcinogenic and anti-inflammatory properties.

Meanwhile, back in his hometown of Nineveh, the people began to question what they had done. They asked themselves what have we done that Yunus (AS), the best from us, has left us. They came out of their homes and they too saw the same storm and dark clouds on the horizon – the same which had beset Yunus (AS). They looked up at the sky and remembered the punishment he had warned them off and the threat of Yunus kept ringing in their heads

and they became regretful, beseeching Allah(SWT) - all of them, the men, the women and even the children. These were the one of the few nations who, as a result of their tawbah (repentance), were averted from punishment. Allah removed His wrath and showered His blessings upon them once again. When the threatening storm was lifted, they prayed for the return of Yunus so that he could guide them.

Yunus (AS), once he recovered, realised his mistake and returned to his people. To his amazement, they had been guided in his absence.

وَأَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ مِائَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ زَيْدٍ مِّنْ ذَلِكَ

And We sent him to [his people of] a hundred thousand or more. [37:147]

The mistakes you make in your life don't make you less of a person IF you repent to Allah(SWT). All of us make mistakes - I make mistakes, you make mistakes. But sometimes our mistakes continue to haunt us and we feel we can never change - these mistakes stop us becoming great people. We live in the past. Here is a person infinitely better than us, who made a mistake, but as soon as he realised his mistake - he turned to Allah(SWT).

There are many more lessons. Nineveh, the great city on the bank of the Tigris and the capital of a great empire, doesn't even exist anymore. Scholars say it lies in Iraq on the other side of the river from the city of Mosul, but its temples and monuments have gone. All worldly power will go the same way. Even today's superpowers, who behave as though they are Allah, and believe that everyone must obey them, will one day wither and fade and, like all great empires before them, cease to exist. Remember, Allah is in control, not this country or that. Allah will decide the course of events.

Another lesson from the story of Prophet Yunus (peace be upon him) is that we never know the effect our deeds will have on others. We, like Yunus, are called to tell others about Islam, but the results might never be known to us. A word we say to one person might touch them deeply and yet we may never see the effect of that word. But we must keep trying. We never know what effect our *da`wah* will have. We shouldn't get down-hearted or angry when our efforts seem to fail. Muslims trust in Allah. In His own time and in His own way, He will deal with those who do evil, just as He will reward the righteous:

Allah uses all things to work out His plan. In the story of Prophet Yunus (peace be upon him), He not only uses Yunus, but He uses the sailors and the whale and the plant, to do His

will. So we should never presume to know the will of Allah, nor to make decisions on His behalf.

Finally, if you have ever felt as though you are in the belly of the whale, surrounded by darkness and with no way out, do what Prophet Yunus did.[He cried through the darkness](Al-Anbiyaa' 21:87) and admitted that there is no god but Allah and that only Allah can rescue.

Never give up. Trust in Allah. He can use us and all situations to do great things beyond our wildest imagination. It is by Allah's will that we are Muslim. Just as [his Lord chose him and made him of the righteous,] (Al-Qalam 68:50) so we, too, like Prophet Yunus can respond to the call of Almighty Allah and make a difference in our world.

68:48

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فَأَصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُنْ كَصَاحِبِ الْحُوتِ إِذْ نَادَىٰ وَهُوَ مَكْظُومٌ ٤٨

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Then be patient for the decision of your Lord, [O Muhammad], and be not like the companion of the fish when he called out while he was distressed.

68:49

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لَوْلَا أَن تَدَارَكَهُ نِعْمَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ لَنُبِذَ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ مَذْمُومٌ ٤٩

Sahih International

If not that a favor from his Lord overtook him, he would have been thrown onto the naked shore while he was censured.

68:50

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فَأَجْنَبَهُ رَبُّهُ، فَجَعَلَهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ٥٠

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And his Lord chose him and made him of the righteous.

Anger is punishable: Allah tells us, about the anger of Prophet Yunus in the Quran “and (he) imagined that We shall not punish him!” (Surah Yunus). Indeed Allah (SWT) did punish Prophet Yunus (AS), by sending a storm like no other! When we get angry incorrectly, remember that this is an emotion which is disliked by Allah(SWT) and we too could.

Tawakkul, like Iman, is a muscle: Oftentimes, we read these terms as nouns, but in the Arabic language they are verbs. They require action and training to develop. Jumping from a

ship in the midst of an ocean during a harrowing storm requires some serious Iman and Tawakkul which will not emerge without due training. The more you actively trust (*verb*) in Allah(SWT), the more your trust (*noun*) in Allah(SWT) increases. The Sahaba would gather and actively work out on their Iman - Mu'adh ibn Jabal, *may Allah be pleased with him*, used to say: "Sit with us, so that we may have iman for an hour."

Umayr ibn Habib al-Khatmi, *may Allah be pleased with him*, used to say: "Iman increases and decreases." Someone asked: "What increases it and what decreases it?" He replied: "If we remember Allah, praise Him, and declare His perfection; that is what increases it. If we are heedless, squander and forget; that is what decreases it."