

WESTERN WISDOM BIBLE STUDY

A Study in Values—Jonah and Peter

THERE IS A DIVINE LAW of balance by which we all live. It keeps the universe in balance. Under this law, solar systems have a given course to follow, as do the planets. Life provides a way for man to learn about himself, who he really is—his true identity. As he blunders through many incarnations, using trial and error as his guide, he develops certain skills and a “know how” to see himself through. When he errs on a detour, off the middle road, opportunities are provided through the spiritual laws of evolution to bring his attention salient points that direct him back on the path that is pointed to the one Reality and its gradual incorporation in the pilgrim. This requires an open mind, one that can discern between outmoded racial customs, religions and beliefs that interfere with progress.

An illustration of this type of guidance is revealed in the story of Jonah of the Old Testament and Simon Bar-Jonah in the New Testament. Jonah of the Old Testament was a prophet who lived close to the Divine Self. One day he was counselled inwardly to go to the Ninevites to tell them that destruction was at hand because of their wicked ways. Jonah thought they were not worth saving; so he impulsively fled to Joppa and boarded a ship that was just leaving harbor. A violent storm arose, and the captain thought the ship and crew would be lost. The sailors prayed as did the captain, and finally lots were cast to see who was responsible for their great danger. The lot fell to Jonah who confessed his guilt. He told the sailors to cast him overboard. They did. Water is symbolic of the emotions—the Desire World. It has two divisions; one is related to the personality, the form self, which is where the hells of life are experienced as the winds of experience drive it thither

and yon. The higher Desire World is the region of soul life, soul light and soul power. The great fish that swallowed Jonah was prophetic of the Fish-Wisdom (of the Piscean Age) centuries ahead. Jonah said he was in hell. He was in the agony of his lower desires. He was overwhelmed with regret. He lost contact with his soul. What *is* the soul? It is the storehouse of virtues developed during many incarnations, qualities such as honesty, thoughtfulness, kindness, patience, humility and love. Jonah said his soul fainted. He lost contact with the Higher Self. When there is no other place to go in thinking, we DO look up. In that instant Jonah faced himself. He realized that divine assignments cannot be ignored; and with that understanding he was ready to fulfill his mission.

Jonah went to the City of Ninevah and delivered the message that destruction would be coming within forty days as a consequence of the Ninevites' evil ways. Deeply impressed, and surely in dread, they reformed. When Jonah saw the people were not going to be destroyed, he was displeased; his prophecy would not come to pass and his pride suffered. He went to the gates of the city to indulge in self-pity. A large-leaf gourd plant grew up over night to provide shade from the hot sun, and Jonah was very pleased; but a worm came and caused the plant to wither. Jonah grieved over the plant that was destroyed. He wished that he were dead. Then Inner Guidance counselled him, showing his inconsistency: for he lamented over the gourd that grew in one night and was quickly destroyed, yet he saw no value in helping a people who had been thousands of years in developing.

The story closes with Jonah needing more time to get his bearings in values. He had strayed from the Path. Or we may say, that straying, errant action, is itself part of the path. It takes much experience,

many types of contacts, to learn what is right and true; and so consciousness requires many environments and a multitude of events to teach the laws of God and his creation, and to develop aptitudes. Truth always proves itself.

Hundreds of years passed. The advent of a new Teacher brought a Wayshower who presented new ideas and truths. Among those hearing the new testimony was Simon Bar-Jonah. He was a fisherman who spent most of his life on and by the sea. He heard the Teacher speak of two laws that should govern how we live: To love God and to love others as our selves. Simon was going to have to prove this. When the Teacher asked His disciples: "Who do you say I AM?" Simon replied: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." The Teacher said: "Simon Bar-Jonah, the Father within you has given you this insight. Your name now is Peter! On this Rock (recognition of the Divine within) I will build a new temple." Christ in Peter recognized Christ in Jesus.

One of the last acts of Christ in teaching His disciples, was to counsel Peter once again. Peter was asked: "Lovest thou Me?" Peter assured Christ that he did; and he was told: "Feed my sheep." A second and a third time Peter was asked the same question: "Lovest thou me?" Three times Peter declared himself. This incident served as a link with the past and had important bearing on the Peter's future ministry.

One day, while Peter was visiting his friend, Simon, the Tanner, in Joppa, he went to the roof to rest. He fell asleep and dreamed that the heavens opened and a vessel, like a sheet, descended. All kinds of four-footed beasts were in the boat; and a voice said: "Peter, kill and eat" Peter replied: "Not so Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean." The voice said to him: "What God hath cleansed, call that not unclean." Three times the dream was repeated, and each time the vessel was received back into heaven. While all this was happening, three men had called at the door asking for Peter. The voice within Peter counselled: "Arise and go forth with them, for I have sent them." The men told Peter that Cornelius, a Centurion, had been praying for a teacher and was



Die Bibel in Bildern, Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1789-1853)

"What God Hath Cleansed, Call Not Thou Common"

As Jonah initially refused to bring God's message to the wayward Ninevites, so did Simon Bar-Jonah at first protest to preach the Gospel of Christ to the Gentiles, for he judged them "unclean".

told by a divine messenger to send for Peter who was at Joppa. He would teach Cornelius and his household. Cornelius had been waiting for his guest to arrive. He had called together his kinsmen and their friends. As Peter entered Cornelius' home he said: "It is unlawful for a Jew to keep company with one of another nation; but God hath showed me I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore I came to you as soon as you sent for me. Why have you asked me to come?" Cornelius told of his prayers and fasting and how he was counselled by a "man in bright clothing" (divine messenger, or, his higher Self which gives right direction) to hear the word of God. Peter then observed: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, a man who fears God and worketh righteousness is accepted." Peter then remembered those final words of Christ: "Feed my sheep," and his dream: "What God hath cleansed, call thou not unclean."

Cornelius and his household were given the message of the Great Teacher without further questioning. Peter remained with Cornelius for several days and then returned to Jerusalem to the Temple where he was reprimanded by the disciples because he mingled with Gentiles, the uncircumcised or

unclean. Peter told them of the events that led up to his journey—his dream, Cornelius' dream, the response of Cornelius' household who gratefully received the testimony of the coming of Christ, whose message was for the healing of all mankind. He closed with the words: "Who am I that I could withstand God?" It was clear to the disciples that the message of Christ is for all people.

The Bible does not say anywhere that Simon Bar-Jonah of the New Testament was Jonah of the Old Testament; but the two stories are surely linked together as they reveal how spiritual law provides opportunities for guiding the pilgrim back to the direct path to leads to divine Being.

Astrologically, the sign of the Fish, Pisces, is the twelfth in the zodiacal plan as it is related to the Laws of Cause and Effect, also known as Karma, the law that balances all "unfinished business" to make ready for a new beginning. There is no fatalism involved here; but there is a law of "ripe fate" where past debts and misunderstandings are brought to attention to be balanced at a given time. The values represented by the Jonah consciousness were carried forward in the New Testament in the story of Peter, who, after hearing the teachings of Christ, learned through personal experience "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for all are free in Christ." A new depth of understanding was added to Christ's teaching "Love one another." Jonah's unfinished business was completed in the ministry of Simon Bar-Jonah. □



—Gene Sande

THE TWO "DOVES" AND

THE TWO HALVES OF THE EARTH EPOCH

Jonah means dove, a well recognized symbol of the Holy Spirit. During the three "days" comprising the Saturn, Sun, and Moon revolutions of the Earth Period, and the "nights" between, the Holy Spirit with all the Creative Hierarchies worked in the Great Deep perfecting the inward parts of the earth and men, removing the dead weight of the moon. Then the Earth emerged from its watery stage of development in the middle Atlantean Epoch, and so did "Jonah, the Spirit Dove," accomplish the salvation of the greater part of

mankind.

Neither the earth nor its inhabitants were capable of maintaining their equilibrium in space, and the Cosmic Christ therefore commenced to work with and on us, finally at the baptism descending as a dove (not in the form of a dove but as a dove) upon the man Jesus. And as Jonah, the dove of the Holy Spirit, was three Days and three Nights in the Great Fish (the earth submerged in water), so at the end of our involutory pilgrimage must the other dove, the Christ, enter the heart of the earth for the coming three revolutionary Days and Nights to give us the needed impulse on our evolutionary journey. He must help us to etherealize the earth in preparation for the Jupiter Period. Thus Jesus become at his baptism, "a Son of the Dove," and was recognized by another, "Simon Bar-Jonah," (Simon, son of the dove). At that recognition, by the sign of the dove, the Master calls the other "a rock," a foundation Stone, and promises him the "Keys to Heaven." These are not idle words nor haphazard promises. These are phases of soul development involved which each must undergo if he has not passed them.

What, then, is the "sign of Jonah" which the Christ bore about with Him, visible to all who could see, other than the "house from heaven" wherewith Paul longed to be clothed; the glorious treasure house wherein all the noble deeds of many lives glitter and glisten as precious pearls? Everybody has a little "house from heaven." Jesus, holy and pure beyond the rest, probably was a splendid sight, but think how indescribably effulgent must have been the vehicle of splendor in which the Christ descended; then we shall have some conception of the "blindness" of those who asked for "a sign." Even among His other disciples He found the same spiritual cataract. "Show us the Father," said Philip, oblivious to the mystic Trinity in Unity which ought to have been obvious to him. Simon, however, was quick to perceive, because he himself had by spiritual alchemy made this spiritual *petros* or "stone" of the philosopher which entitled him to the "Keys of the Kingdom"; an Initiation making usable the latent powers of the candidate evolved by service. □

—Max Heindel