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## An account of Yunus ibn Matta and his respected father

Says Almighty in the Holy Qur'an:

***"And wherefore was there not a town which should believe so that their belief should have profited them but the people of Yunus? When they believed, We removed from them the chastisement of disgrace in this world's life and We gave them provision until a time. (10:98)***

He asserts at another place:

And Yunus when he went away in wrath, he thought that We would not straiten him, so he called out among afflictions: "There is no Allah but Thou, glory be to Thee; surely I am of those who make themselves to suffer loss."

***So We responded to him and delivered him from his grief and thus do We deliver the believers. (21:87-88)***

Imam al-Ridha is reported to have said that: He (Yunus As, the fish-related Prophet) was convinced that We (Allah Almighty) would not narrow down his provision. Some have said that he had imagined that, on his error of leaving the preferable (*Tark al-Awla*), We (Allah) would not take him to task. Hence it is related from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir that he (Yunus) cried out in the darkness and Imam al-Ridha has said that he cried out in the (triple) darkness of the night, the sea and the inside of the fish (which had swallowed him up): "O My Lord! There is no Allah except You, I glorify You, clear You from all things which are not becoming You (you are absolutely faultless). Doubtlessly I have erred in walking away from the people while it was better to remain among them." Or he uttered these words by way of humility without having indulged in any sin or undesirable deed. Imam al-Ridha is reported to have said that when Yunus remembered Allah with so much peace of mind in the belly of the fish and said that "I have never worshipped Allah like this before" then (Allah said) "We accepted his prayer and delivered him from grief and sorrow and We relieve Believers like this from grief and sorrow whenever they seek

Our shelter uttering these words.” As reliably and authentically said by Imam as-Sadiq.

And Allah says at another place:

**“And Yunus was most surely of the apostles.”**

**“When he ran away (from the midst of his people) to a ship completely laden (with passengers and their goods).”**

**“So he shared (with them), but was of those who are cast off.** (So lots were drawn between the voyagers when a fish blocked their way and he became among the defeated as his name came out in the lots). ”

**“So the fish swallowed him while he did that for which he blamed himself.”**

**“But had it not been that he was of those who glorify (Us), he would certainly have tarried in its belly to the day when they are raised.”**

**“Then we cast him on to the vacant surface of the earth (where there was neither tree nor greenery) while he was sick”** (It is said that his body had become as soft and weak like that of a newborn baby).

**“And We caused to grow up for him a gourd plant (which cast its shadow on him) and we sent him to a hundred thousand rather they exceeded”** (that is, in the land of Nineveh, which is one of the cities of Mosul. Some say, in this verse, the word (AV) means (VA) meaning ‘and’, indicating one lakh and more. Some say it means we sent him toward many groups, and that if anybody would see them they would say they were one-lakh men or more. About this ‘more’ some are of the opinion that it meant twenty thousand and according to some thirty thousand, and in the opinion of some even seventy thousand.

**“And they believed, so we gave them provision until a time”** (that is, until they completed their ages of life we deferred our chastisement from them). (37: 139– 148)

And at another place He says:

**“Were it not that favor from his Lord had overtaken him, he would certainly have been cast down upon the naked ground while he was blamed. Then his Lord chose him, and He made him of the Good.”** (68: 49-50)

According to reliable narrations Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq is reported to have said that Allah has never deferred from any people His chastisement after its signs had become apparent except in the case of the community of Yunus. Yunus went on inviting his people toward Islam and they continued to deny. Finally he intended to curse them. There were two men. One of them was a worshipper and the other

was scholar. The name of the worshipper was Tahoka and that of the scholar Roobeel.

The worshipper said "do curse" but the scholar insisted that they should not be cursed. He said to Yunus "Though Allah will not turn down your curse He would also not like to annihilate His slaves." Yunus accepted the talk of the worshipper and cursed his community.

Allah revealed to him that His chastisement would come down on them on such and such day of such and such month of such and such year. When the day drew near Yunus went out of the community with the worshipper. But the scholar remained among the people. Seeing the signs of the Divine punishment he advised his people: "Cry and pray to Allah. Perhaps He will defer His anger. Maybe He will shed His Mercy on you." People asked him how they should appeal to Allah. He said, "Leave your homes and go to the forest. Make children separate from their mothers also separate the little ones of sheep and goats and cows from their mothers and weep earnestly with humility before Allah." All did likewise. They went to the jungle and cried and wept and lamented profusely. Allah became kind to them and deferred His chastisement, even though its time had almost arrived. Then Yunus came there to see how they were destroyed. But what he saw was a farmer ploughing his field. He asked him "What happened to the people of Yunus?" They did not recognize Yunus and replied that: "He (Yunus) had cursed his community. Allah accepted his curse and His chastisement almost arrived on their heads, but then the people gathered and cried and wept and repented in the presence of their Lord. He became kind to them, showed His mercy and sidetracked the chastisement from them and made it scatter over the mountains.

Now the people were searching for Yunus so that they could put faith in him." Hearing this Yunus became angry and walked towards the seashore frowning. He saw a ship which was loaded and was about to sail. He got into it with the permission of the ship owners. In mid sea Allah sent a huge fish which blocked the way of the ship. Seeing the fish Yunus became fearful and others who were also frightened exclaimed: "Surely a sinner has got into our ship. Let us see who he is." They drew lots which revealed the name of Yunus, so they threw him into the mouth of the fish which went away into the seawater.

A Rabbi once asked Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali: "Which prison went around the world with its inmate." He replied, "The fish in which Allah had imprisoned Yunus." That fish went in the Red Sea or the Arabian Sea; from there it went to the river of Egypt. Therefrom it reached Tiberius, and then entered the river Tigris in Baghdad. Then it dived under the earth until it reached Qarun (Korah). Discussion of Yunus with Qarun have already been mentioned in the events of Qarun. Allah ordered an angel in charge of Qarun to withhold chastisement from him during his worldly days. Anyhow, Yunus cried out in the belly of the fish.

Allah responded to his prayer and ordered the fish to disgorge him onto the shore. His flesh and skin had dissolved. So Allah caused a gourd tree to grow near him which cast its shadow on him so as to protect him from the heat of the Sun. Then He moved the tree away from him. When the heat of the sun

caused him pain, Yunus became restless and complained. Allah revealed to him saying: “O Yunus! you did not feel pity for over a lakh of people yet you have started complaining within a short painful time.” Yunus submitted: “O My Lord! Forgive me and pardon my error.” Finally Allah gave him health and he came back to his people. All put faith in him. Yunus has remained in the belly of the fish for nine hours.

According to another narration attributed to Imam al-Baqir, Yunus remained in the belly of the fish for three days, and all that time, continued to invoke. Allah responded to his supplication. The fish disgorged him and Allah provided a gourd tree as shade for his weak body. Yunus sucked it like a mother’s breast and lived under its shade. Hair on his body had fallen down. He glorified Allah and kept remembering Him throughout the day and night. When he got his strength back and his body became vigorous Allah created an insect which ate out the root of the gourd tree which then dried up. This made Yunus restless and sorrowful.

Allah asked him: “O Yunus! Why are you grief-stricken?” He replied, “My Lord! This tree was benefiting me. You imposed an insect on it and it made it dry.” Allah asserted: “O Yunus! You are grieving for this tree though you had neither sown it nor watered it. You had neither attended to it nor worked for it. Yet you are concerned why it dried up though you are no more in need of it. But you did not worry for over a lakh people of Nineveh and wanted that chastisement should fall on them though all of them had become faithful and had given up sins. So now go to them.” Hearing this, Yunus went back to his community. When he arrived near Nineveh, he felt ashamed of entering the city. He saw a shepherd and asked him: “Go into the city and announce that Yunus has arrived here.” The shepherd said, “You are lying. Are you not ashamed of speaking such an untruth? Yunus has drowned in the sea and vanished.” Yunus said, “This sheep will testify that I am Yunus.” Then as commanded by Allah, the sheep said, “This is Yunus.” The shepherd took that sheep in his arms and ran toward the town. When he cried out that Yunus had arrived, people took him to be a joker and rushed forward to beat him up. But the shepherd boy said, “This sheep testifies that Yunus has indeed come.” Then that sheep spoke up: “This shepherd tells the truth; Almighty Allah has indeed sent Yunus to you.” The people rushed toward Yunus and brought him to town and proclaimed their faith in him. Their faith was better and fruitful. Allah kept them alive until He had destined and protected them from his punishment.

According to another hadith, when Allah instructed Yunus emphatically to intimate his community contrary to what he had told them (about the arrival of Divine chastisement), he left them in their own condition. He imagined that even if he did not convey this latter message Allah would not question him. (The Imam) said Archangel Gabriel had made an exception regarding the chastisement and had not finished but Yunus did not hear the exception.

It is reported through reliable chains that Imam as-Sadiq said, “One day Umm-Salamah heard the holy Prophet praying in these words: ‘My Lord! Never leave me on my own for a split second’, Umm-Salamah asked: ‘O Messenger of Allah! You too are asking like this?’ The Holy Prophet replied, ‘How can I rest assured when Yunus bin Matta did what he did when he was left to himself just for a split

second'!"

It is mentioned in another reliable tradition that Abu-Basir asked Imam as-Sadiq what made Allah to defer His chastisement from the community of Yunus even when it was hovering on their heads? Such thing had never happened in the case of any other people? (Imam replied): The Divine knowledge had got it that He would defer the chastisement due to their repentance. Yunus did not know this. So He desired that he (Yunus) should be spared in the belly of the fish so that he may qualify for His Reward.

According to an authentic tradition the same Imam is reported to have asserted that when Allah had sent His chastisement upon any people He never deferred it except in the case of the people of Yunus. The audience asked: "Had the chastisement come down near their heads?" He said, "Yes, it had been so near that a hand could reach it." They asked: "Then why did Allah defer it? Why did He not cause it to rain down on them suddenly as had been done in the case of other defiant communities?" Imam said, "Because it had occurred in the secret (hidden) knowledge of Allah that He would spare them due to their repentance and this thing (would happen) was not made known to anyone."

It is mentioned that when Yunus went toward the hilly land of Rohaa he was reciting: "My Lord! I have come running to you and have accepted Your call, O Reliever of all sorrows and hardships!"

In a reliable tradition it is mentioned that Imam Muhammad al-Baqir said, "The first person for whom a lot was drawn was Maryam. Thereafter it was for Yunus when he entered a ship with a group and when that ship was stalled in midstream. Lots were drawn thrice then and on every occasion it came out in the name of Yunus. So Yunus came to the middle portion of the ship and saw a giant fish was facing them with its mouth wide open. He jumped off into its mouth."

It is recorded through Ya'foor that once Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq raised his hand toward the heavens and said, "My Lord! Do not leave me on my own even for the twinkling of an eye, neither a little more than that nor a little less" and tears ran down his cheeks and rolled on his beard. Then he turned toward me and said, "O Son, Abi Ya'foor! Allah had left Yunus for much less than a split second when he left the better option). Had he died in the same condition (without Divine care) his status would have gone down very much."

Ibn Babawayh has said, "Yunus is called Yunus because when he became angry with his people he went out of them and took up 'uns' (liking) for his Lord and thereafter when he returned to his community he became their 'moonis' (admirer)."

It is recorded from reliable chains that Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali said, "Allah presented my Wilayah (obedience) to all the residents of the heavens and the earth. Those who wanted to accept it accepted it and those who did not want to did not. Yunus too did not accept it as it deserved to be accepted. Allah imprisoned him in the belly of a fish. Thereafter he accepted it as rightly as it deserved."

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq has according to reliable sources, said that when Yunus observed the misdeeds

of his community he admonished them, but they did not heed him. Becoming angry he went away from them, reached the seashore and entered a ship with a group of men. A fish blocked the way of that ship to overthrow it. Yunus said, "This fish wants me. So throw me out." Those in the ship hesitated and said, "You are better than all of us. Why should the fish want you?" Then they drew lots. Yunus 's name appeared in the lot thrice. Then they threw him out into the sea and the fish swallowed him. Allah revealed to the fish that Yunus was not its food and that it should neither eat his flesh nor break his bones. The fish took him around the high seas and Yunus continued to pray to Allah in the darkness. When the fish reached the river containing Qarun he heard a voice which he had never heard before and asked the angel overseeing him about it.

The angel told him: "It is the voice of the Prophet Yunus who is remembering Allah in the belly of a fish." Qarun asked: "Do you permit me to talk with him?" The angel agreed. So Qarun asked: "O Yunus! What has happened to Harun?" Yunus said, "He has died." When Qarun inquired about Musa Yunus replied, "He too has expired." Qarun wept. So Allah commanded (through a revelation) the angel in charge of Qarun to reduce his punishment as he had mourned his near relatives. According to other narrations, Allah revealed to that angel to withhold punishment until this world lasted. Imam as-Sadiq said, the holy Prophet used to say that it is not befitting for anybody to say that due to my ascension to the heavens I have become nearer to Allah than Yunus who has remained in sea because in view of Allah the heavens and the sea are same. Allah had taken me to the heavens to show me His marvels there and He took Yunus into the sea to show him the marvels of the under water world.

It is narrated that Imam al-Baqir said, "It is written in some of the books of Amir al-Mu'minin that "The holy Prophet told me that Allah had informed him (Muhammad) through Archangel Gabriel that He had appointed Yunus son of Matta over his community when he was thirty years old. He was very strong but did not possess much patience and did not care much for the people. He did not engage himself in bearing the burden of Messengership rather he wanted to remain away just as a young camel runs away from carrying a load. Anyway he remained among his community for 33 years and continued to invite them toward his Messengership and obedience but they did not believe, nor follow him.

The only exception was that of two persons one was Roobeel and another Tanookhaa. Roobeel belonged to a family having knowledge and Prophethood and wisdom and had lived with Yunus since long before he became a Prophet. Tanookhaa was a constant worshipper and a devout ascetic. He prayed a lot but was lacking in intelligence and wisdom. Roobeel used to graze sheep for a living. Tanookhaa used to fetch wood from the forest and sell it. Yunus held Roobeel in higher esteem than Tanookhaa because he had wisdom and intelligence and was living in his service since long. When Yunus saw that his community did not obey him and did not put faith in him, he became very sorry. His heart was restless and he complained to Allah about this state and said, O Lord! You made me a Messenger for this community when I was thirty years old. I lived among them for 33 years and conveyed to them Your Message and invited them toward Your oneness (Tawhid) and requested them to testify my Prophethood. I warned and threatened them of Your Punishment and anger but they denied

me, did not believe in me and made a mockery of me. They continued to threaten me. I am afraid they may kill me.

So send Your chastisement on them as these are people who will not believe. Allah sent a revelation to him saying there are pregnant women, minor children, weak men and women and unintelligent persons among them and I am Just Sovereign Ruler. My Mercy surpasses my Anger. I do not punish the young due to the sins of the elders. O Yunus! All of them are My slaves. They have been made and created by Me. They live in My city and they eat My provisions. I want to delay their punishment and continue to be kind to them and wait for maybe they will repent. I have appointed you over them so that you may watch over them, protect them and be kind to them due to the relation you have with them and to deal smoothly with them with the patience of a Prophet and treat them kindly like a sympathizing doctor. But you became harsh toward them and did not treat them kindly and did not behave with them like a merciful messenger. Now when you are no more able to keep your patience you have become angry and straightaway ask for their chastisement.

The patience of My slave Noah was more than yours. His behavior with his people was much better, his tolerance was much higher and his excuse for chastisement was perfect. Hence I chastised his community for his sake when he became angry with them. I accepted his prayer when he prayed. Yunus said, "My Lord! I became angry with them only because they opposed You and I cursed them only when they defied Your commands. So, by Your Grandeur and Honor, I cannot be kind to them now nor will I admonish them kindly, now that during this period, they have become unbelievers and are denying Your oneness and are denying my Prophethood. So now send Your punishment on them as they will never believe." Allah said, "O Yunus! they numbering over one lakh are My creation.... They flourish My cities and will cause more of My slaves to come into the world. I prefer to wait and be lenient with them as certain things have come to My knowledge and as My Planning and Resolution is different from your planning and resolution and as you are a message conveying Prophet and I am the Wise Lord, My knowledge regarding them is secret and hidden. The Unseen things known to Me are such that no one else knows its limits and your knowledge and awareness is limited to the apparent, you do not know the beginning and its end. So, O Yunus! I accept your prayer regarding them and will send chastisement to them but the acceptance of your prayer will not add to the Reward from My side, nor will it raise your status and nearness to Me. The chastisement will fall on them on a Wednesday of the month of Shawwal after sunrise. So inform them of this. Hearing this Yunus became very glad. He did not become sorry nor did he what would be its end result. Then he came to the worshipper Tanookhaa and informed him about the chastisement to fall on his community. He asked him to accompany him for informing the people. Tanookhaa said, "Leave it. Where is the need of warning them. It is better if the chastisement rains on them while they are unaware because of their sinfulness and Kufr (denial)." Yunus said, "Let us go to Roobeel and obtain his opinion." So they went to Roobeel. Yunus told Roobeel: "Allah has informed me that He will send his chastisement on my people at such and such time. What is your opinion about my going and informing them of this?" Roobeel said, "Go back and like a tolerant Prophet and a merciful messenger request your Lord to forgive and pardon them. Recommend to your Lord to

withhold the Divine punishment because the Lord is surely not in need of punishing them. He prefers to remain kind and merciful toward them. This will be more beneficial to you too as it will make you nearer to Him and raise your status in His view. Perhaps your community will give up denial and Kufr (faithlessness). They may put faith in you. So be patient and wait.”

Then Tanookhaa retorted: “Woe unto you, O Roobeel! What contingency is there that makes you think that it is in favor of Yunus? How do you imagine it is beneficial to recommend in favor of those persons who denied Allah and opposed the Prophethood/Messengership of Yunus and drove him out and who wanted to stone him to death?” Roobeel said, “Keep silent, you are merely a worshipper and do not have wisdom.” Then turning toward Yunus he asked: “Tell me, if Allah sends his punishment will it kill all or only some?” Yunus said, “It will kill all and I have asked for the same from Allah, as I do not feel any pity for them so that I may recommend the deferring of punishment to them.” Roobeel said, “O Yunus! It is possible that when the chastisement comes upon them and they see its signs and seek forgiveness of Allah and repent maybe Allah will be kind to them as He is the Kindest of the Kind. He may defer the chastisement from them and then all may think that you were a liar.”

Tanookhaa said, “Woe unto you, O Roobeel! How do you utter such things to a divine messenger who has received a Revelation that chastisement will fall on his people. Rather you have rejected the Word of Allah. You have doubted in both the Divine and the Prophetic Words. Go away. Your deeds have become fruitless.” Roobeel said, “O Tanookhaa! Your opinion is weak.” Then he told Yunus: “Is it not possible that, when the chastisement falls on your people and all are annihilated, Allah will remove your name from the list of His messengers and your Prophethood will vanish and you will become like any ordinary person because nearly a lakh of people would have been killed due to you?” Finally, Yunus did not accept the advice of Roobeel and went away from the city along with Tanookhaa.

Then Yunus came back and warned his people that Divine chastisement would fall on them on such and such day after sunrise. Hearing this, the people denied him and insulted him and drove him out of the city. So Yunus and Tanookhaa went far away from the population and waited for the Divine chastisement. Roobeel continued to live with the people. When the first of Shawwal arrived, Roobeel climbed up a high hill and called the people and cried: “I am Roobeel. I pity you. I am kind to you. The month of Shawwal has begun and your Prophet, the messenger of Allah, that is, Yunus has already informed you that Allah has revealed to him that after sunrise on the middle Wednesday of this month Divine punishment would befall you. Allah never does contrary to what He says to His Prophets. So now think seriously about what you should do?”

Hearing these words of Roobeel the people became frightened and then were convinced that Allah’s wrath would fall on them. So they rushed to Roobeel and requested for his opinion concerning them. They said, “You are a wise and intelligent man and you have always been kind to us. We heard that you had made many recommendations in our favor to Yunus. So now we are prepared to do whatever you ask.” Roobeel said, “My opinion is that at the appointed time (for Divine chastisement), i.e.. at daybreak

on the mid-month Wednesday, separate women and suckling babies and non-suckling children from one another. Keep the women in wait in the valley of the mountain, stall the children in the way of the flooding river, and also separate the offspring of animals from their mothers and all this should be done before daybreak. Then when you see a yellowish dust coming from the east, cry out all of you elders and youngsters in supplication to Almighty Allah, weeping and praying and repenting. Raise your heads toward the heavens and say: "O Our Lord! We have oppressed our own selves. We denied Your Messenger. We repent over our sins wholeheartedly. If You will not pardon us and if You will not be kind to us we shall surely be caught in Your chastisement and we will be the losers. O Lord! accept our repentance and shed Your Mercy on us, O the Most Merciful One!" You must not be meanwhile crying and weeping and repenting and persist in so doing until either the sunsets or the punishment is warded off from you.

All agreed with Roobeel. On the appointed day, Yunus went out of the city and stood at a place wherefrom he could hear the sounds of all, and when chastisement fell he could see it. The people too, did as advised by Roobeel. When the sun rose and a strong, harsh, yellowish and blackish wind began to blow with a frightening noise, all cried and wept together and engaged themselves in constant prayers and repentance. Babies began to cry for their mothers, young ones of animals also began to shriek for their mothers' milk. Cattle moved to get grass. Yunus and Tanookhaa hearing these noises and voices were cursing that Allah may punish them even more harshly.

On the other hand Roobeel heard their cries and prayed to Allah for the withdrawal of His chastisement. At the time of Zuhr (midday) the gates of the heavens were opened up. Allah's anger subsided. Allah showed His Mercy to them and pardoned them all. He had responded to their prayers. Allah accepted their repentance and forgave them their sins. He revealed to the Israfil: "Since the community of Yunus has wept and repented and begged My Pardon I have pardoned them as I am the Greatest Acceptor of repentance and I am very kind to my slaves. I accept soon the repentance of those who become ashamed of their misdeeds. As my slave Yunus had wished chastisement for his people and as he did not ask for their actual killing, I ordered a punishment on them. Now, you go and turn away the chastisement."

Israfil said, "My lord! the chastisement has already reached their shoulders and it is about to kill them. By the time I go there they would have been killed." Allah Almighty said, "I have commanded the concerned angels to keep the punishment hanging over their heads until they get my final Word. So, O Israfil you go there and turn the chastisement from over their heads and rain it down on the mountains adjoining that city's rivers and springs as they (mountains) have become proud of their height which is more than the other surroundings and so make them mild and disgraced; turn them into iron." Israfil came down, opened his wings and removed the chastisement from the city and made it fall on the mountains as commanded by Allah. All those mountains are in the vicinity of Mosul and they have become like iron until Dooms Day (the Resurrection Day).

When the community of Yunus saw that the chastisement had been removed from them, they came down from the hills and entered their homes and brought back their families and property. The next Saturday when Yunus and Tanookhaa did not hear their voices they understood for sure that chastisement had befallen them and they wished to see their condition as to how they were killed. When they came near the city they saw that woodcutters and shepherds were arriving and that the city folk were busy in their work us usual.

Yunus told Tanookhaa: "What has happened actually is contrary to what was revealed (about punishment) to me. Now the city folk will call me a liar and henceforth will not give me any respect." So he turned back from that spot angrily and went toward the sea in such a way that nobody would recognize him. He was trying to hide himself from the people of his community who would call him a liar. However, Tanookhaa entered the city. Then Roobeel asked him: "Whose opinion was more sound, yours or mine?" Tanookhaa said, "Your opinion was better and whatever you said was the opinion of the wise and the learned intelligentsia. I always thought that I was better than you as my worship and prayer rituals were more than yours. Now your grace has come to my notice because of the knowledge given to you by Allah and I have now understood that wisdom with god's fear is better than piety and that worship which is not complete without knowledge." Then they became one–another's companions and began to live with their community. Yunus reached the seashore on Thursday and remained under the gourd tree for seven days. A week after that he returned to his community. People put their faith in him and testified to his Messengership and obeyed him.

According to another hadith, "The community of Yunus harassed him. He cursed them. Allah promised that He would send chastisement on them. So, on the first day their faces turned yellow, next day black and chastisement came so near to them that their spears could approach it. They separated babies from their mothers. They also separated animal kids from their mothers. They wore rough and thick clothes, put ropes around their necks, threw dust on their heads and started weeping all together simultaneously before the Lord and announced: "Our Lord! we put faith in the Allah of Yunus." So Allah turned the chastisement toward the mountains. Next morning Yunus thought that all had been annihilated. But when he saw that all were well he became angry and turned towards the sea. He got into a ship. Two more persons were with him in that ship. The ship began to swing in mid sea. The boatman said a renegade has boarded the ship. Yunus said, "I am that fugitive; I have run away from my Lord." He stood up and prepared to jump into the sea when he saw that a giant size fish was facing him with its mouth wide open. Seeing this all were frightened and the two men clung to Yunus saying: "Perhaps one of us is the cause of this trouble to the ship." So they drew a lot. It came in the name of Yunus. Thence the practice of drawing lots came into vogue with a guess that if the lot has three arrows it never fails. Anyhow, Yunus threw himself into the sea and the fish swallowed him and carried him under water for seven days. Finally it entered river Masjoor where Qarun was being punished (by Allah). When he heard the voice of Yunus praising and sanctifying Allah he asked the angel who was punishing him: "Whose voice is it?" He said, "It is the voice of Yunus who has been imprisoned in the belly of a fish." Qarun asked could he talk with him. The angel permitted. So Qarun asked Yunus: "O Yunus! what has

happened to Musa?" Yunus said, "He has died." Then Qarun asked: "What about Harun?" Yunus said, "He too has expired." Hearing this Qarun wept much and complained to Allah. So Allah ordered that the angel should defer his chastisement until the world existed because Qarun had mourned his near and dear ones.

It is recorded from authentic chains that Imam al-Ridha said, "When Allah ordered Yunus to inform his people about the impending chastisement, and when the chastisement came upon them they created separation between women and children and animals and began to weep. When their cries reached heaven Allah deferred the punishment from them and Yunus angrily went towards the sea where a fish swallowed him. The fish carried him for three days and ferried him in the seven seas. Finally when he came out of the belly of the fish his flesh and skin had faded. Allah caused a gourd tree to grow for him. It provided shade to him. When his body became strong, the tree began to dry up. Yunus (as.) complained O Allah! the tree which was giving me shade has dried up! Divine Revelation said, O Yunus! you are becoming restless for a tree which was providing you shade but you are not feeling sorry for over a lakh of people and want them to be chastised.<sup>1</sup>

Abu Hamza Thumali has narrated that one day 'Abdullah bin Umar approached Imam Zayn al-'abidin and said, "You say that "My grandfather 'Ali's Wilayah was presented to Yunus but he was reluctant so Allah dropped him in the belly of a fish." Imam said, No doubt. I did say so. May your mother sit in mourning for you." 'Abdullah said, "If what you say is true, then show me some sign supporting it." (Abu Hamza says:) Imam put a band on his ('Abdullah's) and my eyes and after a few moments asked us to open the bands. When we untied the bands what we had a vision was that we were on seashore. Its waves were rising high. 'Abdullah bin Umar said, "O my leader! My blood (responsibility of my death) will be upon you." Yunus said, "Do not become restless. I want to show you the sign of my truthfulness." Then he called upon the fish.

A giant fish like a big mountain raised its head out of water saying: "Labbaik, O Wali of Allah!" Imam asked it: "Who are you?" It replied, "I am the fish of Yunus." Imam said, "Narrate the story of Yunus to us." It said, O my leader! Right from Adam up to your grandfather Muhammad Allah had not appointed any Prophet to whom the Wilayah of you, Ahl al-Bayt was not presented. The one who accepted it remained protected and the one who denied it was involved in trouble until Allah sent Yunus with His Message and asked him through revelation to accept the Wilayah of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali and thereafter of the rightly-guided Imams born of 'Ali's lineage along with other matters revealed to him. Yunus said, How can I accept the Wilayah of those whom I have not yet seen nor know! Then he came to the shore of the sea. Allah revealed to me to swallow him but without damaging his bones. Yunus remained in my belly for forty days. I ferried him in rivers and oceans and darkness and he was crying: *laa illaah anta subhaanaka innee kuntu minaz zscholareen* (and continued to pray to Allah Almighty) that I have accepted the Wilayah of Amir al-Mu'minin and of the rightly guided Imams from his progeny. When he put faith on the Wilayah of you gentlemen, Allah ordered me to throw Yunus out so I disgorged him on the shore. Hearing this Imam said, "O fish! Go back to your abode." So it went away. The waves settled

down and the water became calm. [2](#)

According to a reliable tradition Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq said, “The Prophet Dawud prayed to Allah: O My Lord! In Heaven, who will be like me and equal to my status? It was revealed to him: He will be Matta, the father of Yunus. Dawud sought permission to visit him. Allah allowed him. So he, along with his son Sulayman went to his house. They saw that the house was made of the leaves of a date tree. On inquiry they were told that he had gone to the bazaar. The people in the bazaar said he must be coming now. So they sat there waiting for him. Soon he arrived with a load of wood on his head. People arose to give him respect and they welcomed him. Matta put down the load and thanked Allah and asked: Is there anyone who would purchase a pure thing with pure money? Hearing this one person offered a price. Another said somewhat more than that. Finally he sold his wood to some body. Then Dawud and Sulayman came forward to meet him and saluted him and said, *Salaamun alaikum*. He responded to the salaam and took both of them to his house. He bought wheat or barley from what he had earned. He reduced it to flour himself, made a fire and prepared loaves. Then he sat down to talk. He broke the loaves into pieces and put them in a vessel and put some salt on them. He kept a bowl of water with him and sat down on hams uttering ‘*bismillaahirrehmaanirraheem*’ (In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful) and put a morsel of bread in his mouth and ate it chewing thoroughly and said, *alhamdu lillaah* (Praise be to Allah), then he took another morsel and did the same thing. Next he took up water saying ‘*bismillaah*’ (in the name of Allah), drank it and said ‘*alhamdu lillaah*’. Then he said, “O My Lord! To whom else have you given so much bounty. You have given me a healthy body, eyes and ears. You gave me enough strength to go to the tree which I did not plant nor took any trouble in protecting it. You made it my provision. It is you who sends me a purchaser for the wood who buys it and then I purchase my food from it which also I did not sow. You made the fire subservient to me in which I baked my loaves. You made it so nice that I ate it willfully so that I may get enough strength to worship you. So praise belongs only to you. Then he wept. Dawud said to Sulayman: Get up, O my son! We have never seen a slave who is more thankful than this person.

[1.](#) It is difficult to collect different traditions regarding the stay of Yunus in the belly of a fish. Perhaps some of the common among them might have been narrated by way of Taqiyyah (hiding of facts to avoid trouble). The error of Yunus was that of ‘Tark al-Awla’ (giving up the preferable) and an undesirable deed, because Allah had permitted him to stop preaching and had promised that chastisement would overtake them. Then it was not obligatory for him to return to his people until Allah ordered him to preach to them again. A better course was to be kind to the community despite all of its evils and to recommend their case before the Lord and await the Divine decision. But he did not do that. So Allah, by way of discipline, raised his status by showing the marvels of the underwater world and made it like a Me’raj (ascension). His anger was against the misdeeds of the community. He was not displeased with Allah Almighty. He believed that the Merciful and kind Allah would not frown on him. Other reasons have also been recorded in various traditions and commentaries.

[2.](#) Possibly Allah might not have made it absolutely compulsory for the Messengers to accept the Wilayah of the pure Imams so that ignoring it might become a sin. Or, perhaps all accepted it and some did not. Allah knows better. Shaykh al-Tusi has recorded in ‘Misbaah’ that Allah brought Yunus out of the fish on the ninth of Muharram and this is contrary to some traditions.

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