



This book is a short story about a man who tries to run from God. Jonah did not want to deliver the Lord's warnings to the people of Nineveh as the Lord commanded him. The Lord used a great fish and a vine to teach this reluctant prophet about the nature of God's mercy.

Jonah Runs from the LORD

1 One day the LORD told Jonah, the son of Amittai, ² to go to the great city of Nineveh and say to the people, "The LORD has seen your terrible sins. You are doomed!"

³ Instead, Jonah ran from the LORD. He went to the seaport of Joppa and bought a ticket on a ship that was going to Spain. Then he got on the ship and sailed away to escape.

⁴ But the LORD made a strong wind blow, and such a bad storm came up that the ship was about to be broken to pieces. ⁵ The sailors were frightened, and they all started praying to their gods. They even threw the ship's cargo overboard to make the ship lighter.

All this time, Jonah was down below deck, sound asleep. ⁶ The ship's captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep at a time like this? Get up and pray to your God! Maybe he will have pity on us and keep us from drowning."

⁷ Finally, the sailors got together and said, "Let's ask our gods to show us[>] who caused all this trouble." It turned out to be Jonah.

⁸ They started asking him, "Are you the one who brought all this trouble on us? What business are you in? Where do you come from? What is your country? Who are your people?"

⁹ Jonah answered, "I'm a Hebrew, and I worship the LORD God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."

¹⁰ When the sailors heard this, they were frightened, because Jonah had already told them he was running from the LORD. Then they said, "Do you know what you have done?"

¹¹ The storm kept getting worse, until finally the sailors asked him, "What should we do with you to make the sea calm down?"

¹² Jonah told them, "Throw me into the sea, and it will calm down. I'm the cause of this terrible storm."

¹³ The sailors tried their best to row to the shore. But they could not do it, and the storm kept getting worse every minute. ¹⁴ So they prayed to the LORD, "Please don't let us drown for taking this man's life. Don't hold us guilty for killing an innocent man. All of this happened because you wanted it to." ¹⁵ Then they threw Jonah overboard, and the sea calmed down. ¹⁶ The sailors were so terrified that they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made all kinds of promises.

¹⁷ The LORD sent a big fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

Jonah's Prayer

2 From inside the fish, Jonah prayed to the LORD his God:

² When I was in trouble, LORD,

I prayed to you,
and you listened to me.
From deep in the world
of the dead,
I begged for your help,
and you answered my prayer.

3 You threw me down
to the bottom of the sea.
The water was churning
all around;
I was completely covered
by your mighty waves.

4 I thought I was swept away
from your sight,
never again to see
your holy temple.

5 I was almost drowned
by the swirling waters
that surrounded me.
Seaweed had wrapped
around my head.

6 I had sunk down below
the underwater mountains;
I knew that forever,
I would be a prisoner there.

But, you, LORD God,
rescued me from that pit.

7 When my life was slipping away,
I remembered you—
and in your holy temple
you heard my prayer.

8 All who worship worthless idols
turn from the God
who offers them mercy.

9 But with shouts of praise,
I will offer a sacrifice
to you, my LORD.
I will keep my promise,
because you are the one
with power to save.

¹⁰The LORD commanded the fish to vomit up
Jonah on the shore. And it did.

Jonah Goes to Nineveh

3 Once again the LORD told Jonah ² to go to that
great city of Nineveh and preach his message
of doom.

³Jonah obeyed the LORD and went to Nineveh.
The city was so big that it took three days just to

walk through it. ⁴After walking for a day, Jonah
warned the people, "Forty days from now, Nineveh
will be destroyed!"

⁵They believed God's message and set a time
when they would go without eating to show their
sorrow. Then everyone in the city, no matter who
they were, dressed in sackcloth.

⁶When the king of Nineveh heard what was
happening, he also dressed in sackcloth; he left the
royal palace and sat in dust. ⁷⁻⁹Then he and his officials
sent out an order for everyone in the city to
obey. It said:

None of you or your animals may eat or
drink a thing. Each of you must wear sackcloth,
and you must even put sackcloth on your animals.

You must also pray to the LORD God with all
your heart and stop being sinful and cruel.
Maybe God will change his mind and have
mercy on us, so we won't be destroyed.

¹⁰When God saw that the people had stopped
doing evil things, he had pity and did not destroy
them as he had planned.

Jonah Gets Angry at the LORD

4 Jonah was really upset and angry. ²So he
prayed:

Our LORD, I knew from the very beginning
that you wouldn't destroy Nineveh. That's why I
left my own country and headed for Spain. You
are a kind and merciful God, and you are very
patient. You always show love, and you don't
like to punish anyone, not even foreigners.

³Now let me die! I'd be better off dead.

4 The LORD replied, "What right do you have to
be angry?"

⁵Jonah then left through the east gate of the city
and made a shelter to protect himself from the sun.
He sat under the shelter, waiting to see what would
happen to Nineveh.

⁶The LORD made a vine grow up to shade Jonah's
head and protect him from the sun. Jonah was very
happy to have the vine, ⁷but early the next morning
the LORD sent a worm to chew on the vine, and
the vine dried up. ⁸During the day the LORD sent a
scorching wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's
head, making him feel faint. Jonah was ready to die,
and he shouted, "I wish I were dead!"

⁹But the LORD asked, "Jonah, do you have the
right to be angry about the vine?"

"Yes, I do," he answered, "and I'm angry enough
to die."

¹⁰ But the LORD said:

You are concerned about a vine that you did not plant or take care of, a vine that grew up in one night and died the next. ¹¹ In that city of

Nineveh there are more than 120,000 people who cannot tell right from wrong, and many cattle are also there. Don't you think I should be concerned about that big city?

Notes

- ▷ **1.7** *ask ... show us*: The Hebrew text has "cast lots."