

## JONAH

A concise translation, for dramatic reading (narrators read text, personae read the relevant words in quotations)

Characters:

Narrator ch. 1-2

Narrator ch. 3

Narrator ch. 4

God

Jonah

captain

sailors

king of Nineveh

*(Chapter 1: The Flight)*

The word of Adonai came to Jonah ben Amittai:

“Get up and go to Nineveh, that great city, and make an announcement against it, for their badness has come to my attention.”

But Jonah got up and fled to Tarshish, away from Adonai. He went down to Yafo and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid his fare and went down into the ship, to go with them to Tarshish, away from Adonai.

Then Adonai hurled a great wind into the sea, and there was such a fierce storm it seemed the ship was about to break up. The sailors were frightened, and they cried out, each man to his own god. They also threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship.

Jonah had gone down into the hold and was lying fast asleep. The captain came to him and said,

“What do you mean by sleeping? Get up and call upon your god, so maybe the gods will think of us, and we won’t die!”

They all said to each other,

“Come, let’s cast lots, so we’ll find out who is responsible for this bad thing.”

So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

They said to him,

“Please tell us who is responsible for this bad thing? What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And what is your people?”

He said to them,

“I am a Hebrew, and I worship Adonai, God of heaven, who made the sea and the land.”

The men were terrified, and they said to him,  
"What is this you have done?"  
They knew he had fled from Adonai, because he told them so.

Then they said,  
"What shall we do to you so the sea will quiet down for us?"  
for the sea grew wilder and wilder.

He said,  
"Take me and throw me into the sea, so the sea will quiet down for you, because I know this great storm is upon us because of me."

The men rowed hard to bring the ship to land, but they couldn't, because the sea grew wilder and wilder against them. So they called out to Adonai, saying,  
"We beg you, Adonai, we beg you not to destroy us for this man's life and not to hold us guilty of innocent blood, for you, Adonai, have done as you saw fit."

And they took Jonah and threw him into the sea. And the sea stopped raging.  
Then the men had great respect for Adonai. They made sacrifices to Adonai and made vows.

(Chapter 2: The Fish)

Adonai prepared a big fish to swallow Jonah up. Jonah was in the belly of  the fish for three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed to Adonai his god from the fish's belly. He said,

From my trouble I cried out to Adonai,  
and he responded.  
From the belly of the underworld I cried,  
and You heard my voice.

You threw me into the depths of the sea,  
and the flood was all around me.  
All Your waves and billows  
passed over me.  
I said, 'I have been thrown out of Your sight,  
but I will look again at Your holy temple.'  
The waters surrounded me,  
even to my soul.  
The abyss was all around me,  
and the weeds were wrapped around my head.  
I went down to the bottom of the mountains,  
the earth locked me in forever,  
but You brought me up from the pit,

Adonai my god.  
When my soul was fainting,  
I remembered Adonai,  
and my prayer reached You  
in Your holy temple.

People who care for deceitful nothings  
abandon their own good.  
But I will make sacrifice to You,  
speaking thanks.  
I will pay what I vow.  
Rescue comes from Adonai.

Then Adonai spoke to the fish, and it spit Jonah out on the dry land.

(Chapter 3: Nineveh)

The word of Adonai came to Jonah a second time:

“Get up and go to Nineveh, that great city, and make the announcement, as I told you.”

So Jonah got up and went to Nineveh, as Adonai told him.

Now Nineveh was a very large city, three days across. One day into it, Jonah announced,  
“In 40 days, Nineveh will be demolished!”

The people of Nineveh believed God. They announced a fast and put on sackcloth, everyone from great to small. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne and took off his robe and covered himself with sackcloth and ashes. He made an announcement by royal and noble decree, throughout Nineveh, saying:

“Neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, may taste anything; they may not feed or drink water. They must be covered with sackcloth, man and beast, and cry loudly to God. Everyone must change his harmful and violent ways. Who knows if God will change and be sorry and turn away from this fierce anger, so we won’t perish.”

God saw what they did, that they changed their harmful ways, and God was sorry for the harm God had intended—and didn’t do it.

(Chapter 4: The Gourd)

This very much annoyed Jonah. He was angry, and he prayed to Adonai, saying:

“Please Adonai, wasn’t this what I said when I was still in my own country? That’s why I fled at first to Tarshish, because I knew You were a gracious and merciful God, patient and loving, who is sorry for harm. So now, Adonai, take my life. It’s better for me to die than to live.”

Adonai said,  
"Are you so angry?"

Jonah left the city and stayed off toward the east. He made a hut for himself  and sat in the shade of it to see what happened to the city. Adonai, God prepared a gourd and made it grow up over Jonah to shade him and preserve him from harm. So Jonah was very pleased with the gourd.

But then God prepared a worm, and at daybreak it destroyed the gourd, and it withered. When the sun rose, God prepared a fierce east wind, and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he fainted and asked to die.

"It is better for me to die than to live," he said.

God said to Jonah,  
"Are you very angry about the gourd?"

He said,  
"I'm deathly angry."

Adonai said,  
"As you are sorry for the gourd, for which you did no work, nor did you make it grow, which came up in a night and died in a night, so should I not be sorry for Nineveh, that great city, where there are more than 120,000 people who don't even know their right from their left, and also many animals?"