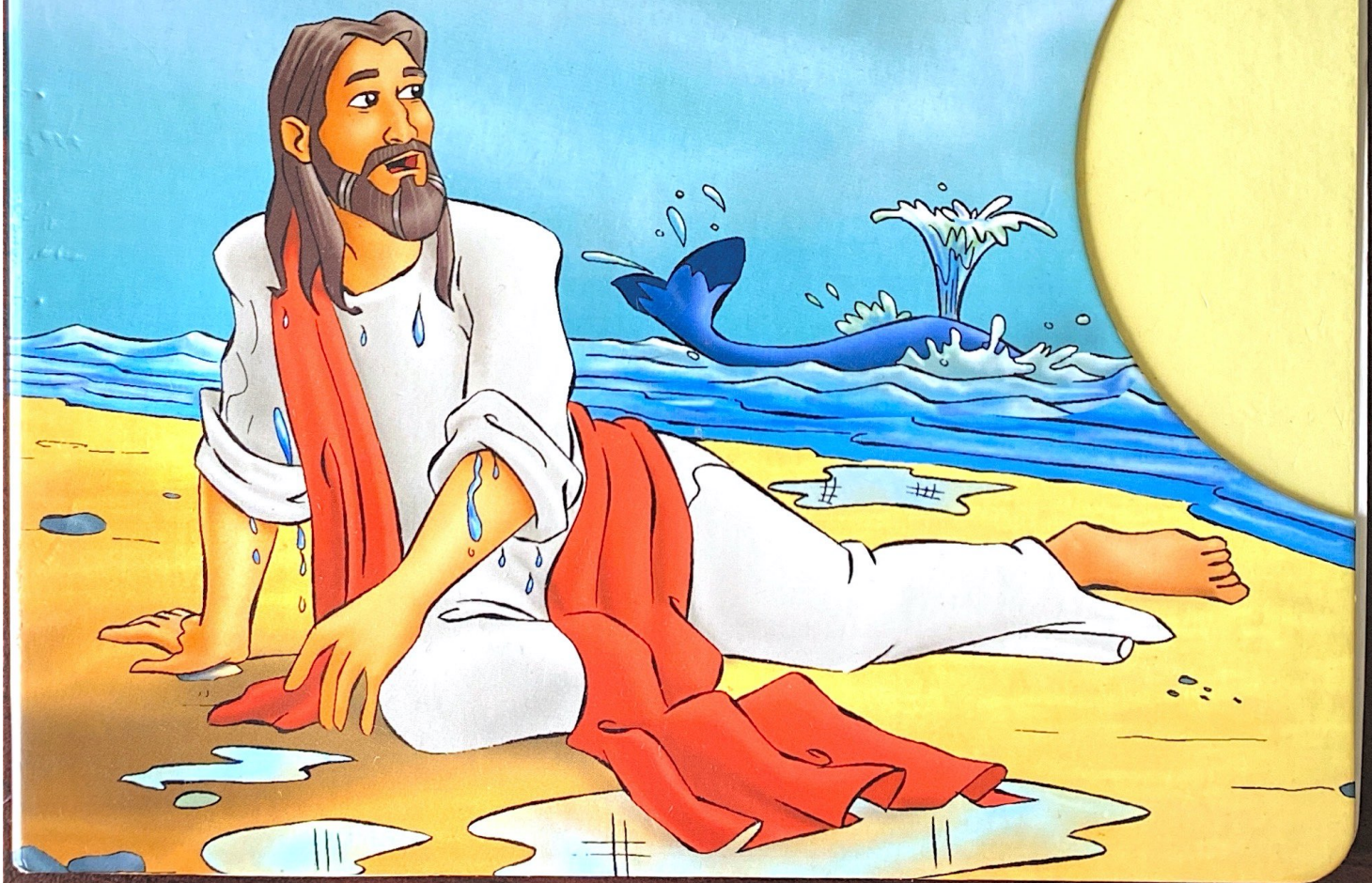


JONAH & THE WHALE



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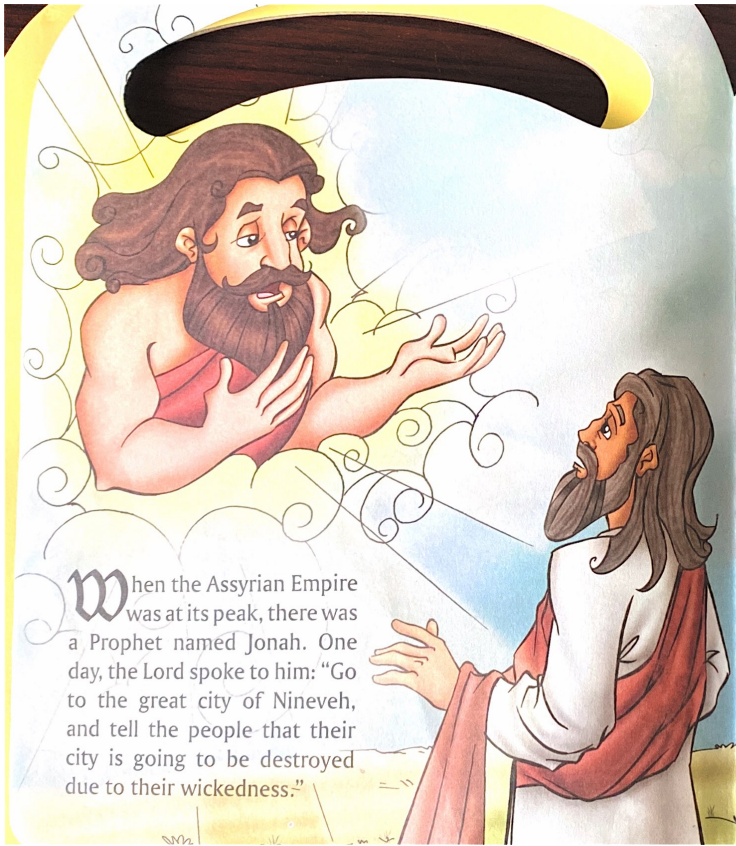
Rewritten by May Kerr

Music composed and performed by Nick Cartledge • Narrated by Katharine Wood

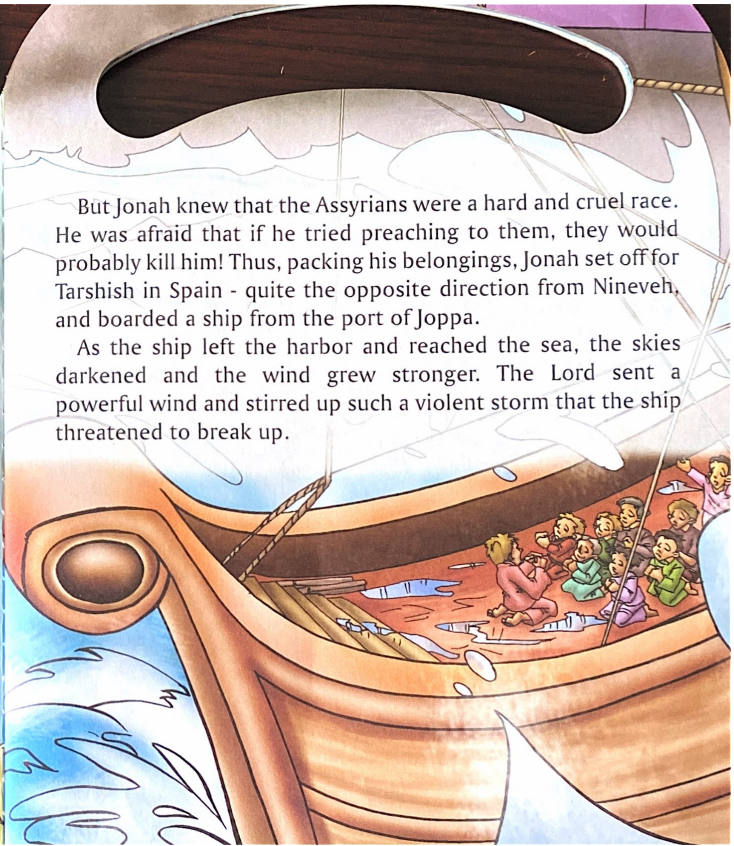
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When the Assyrian Empire was at its peak, there was a Prophet named Jonah. One day, the Lord spoke to him: "Go to the great city of Nineveh, and tell the people that their city is going to be destroyed due to their wickedness."



But Jonah knew that the Assyrians were a hard and cruel race. He was afraid that if he tried preaching to them, they would probably kill him! Thus, packing his belongings, Jonah set off for Tarshish in Spain - quite the opposite direction from Nineveh, and boarded a ship from the port of Joppa.

As the ship left the harbor and reached the sea, the skies darkened and the wind grew stronger. The Lord sent a powerful wind and stirred up such a violent storm that the ship threatened to break up.

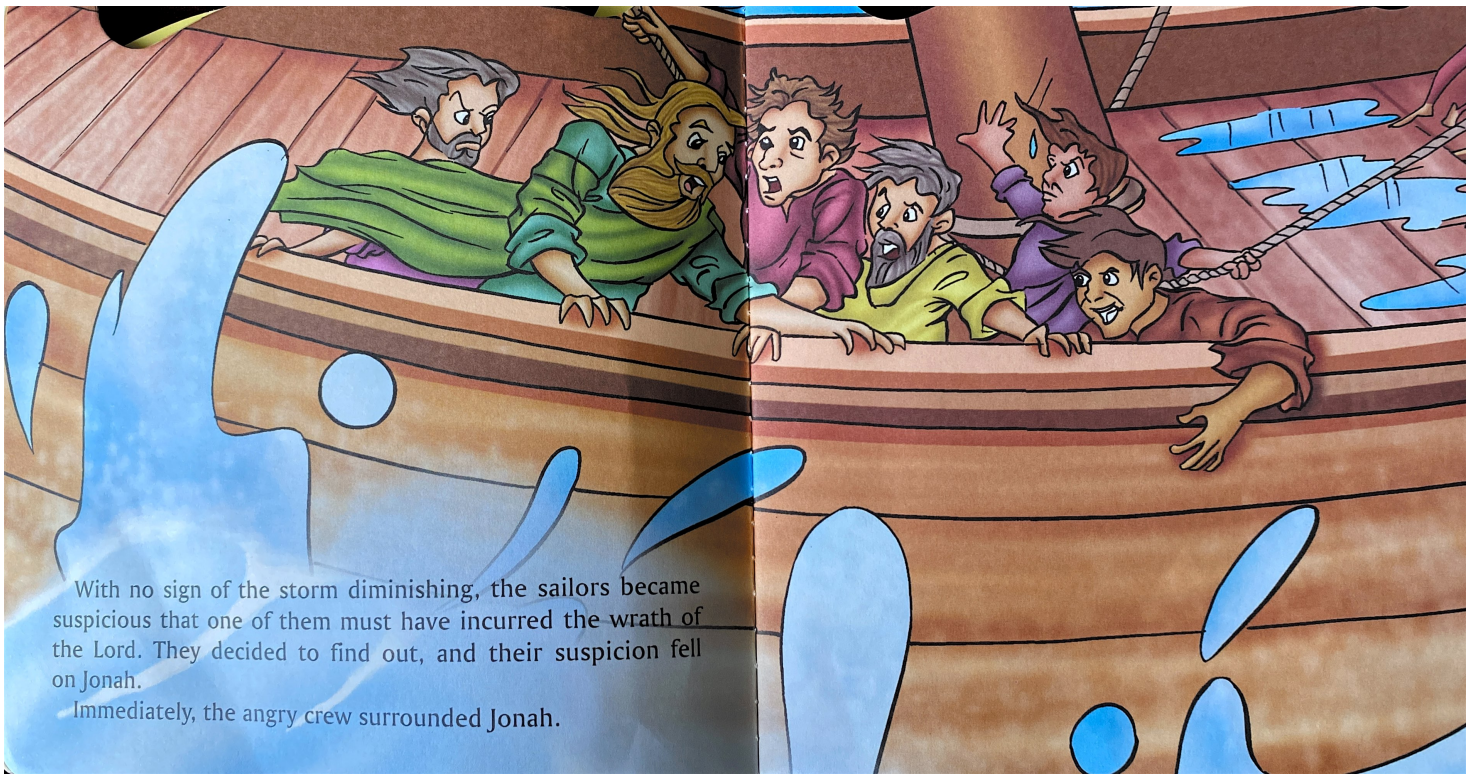


All the sailors were afraid, and each prayed to his own God. They threw most of the cargo overboard in an attempt to lighten the ship. However, the storm only seemed to get worse.

The captain instructed all his men to go down on their knees, and beg to their Gods to save them all. But Jonah went below the deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep at such an hour? Get up and pray to your God! Maybe He will take notice of us, and we will not perish."

Jonah got up, trying to understand what was happening.





With no sign of the storm diminishing, the sailors became suspicious that one of them must have incurred the wrath of the Lord. They decided to find out, and their suspicion fell on Jonah.

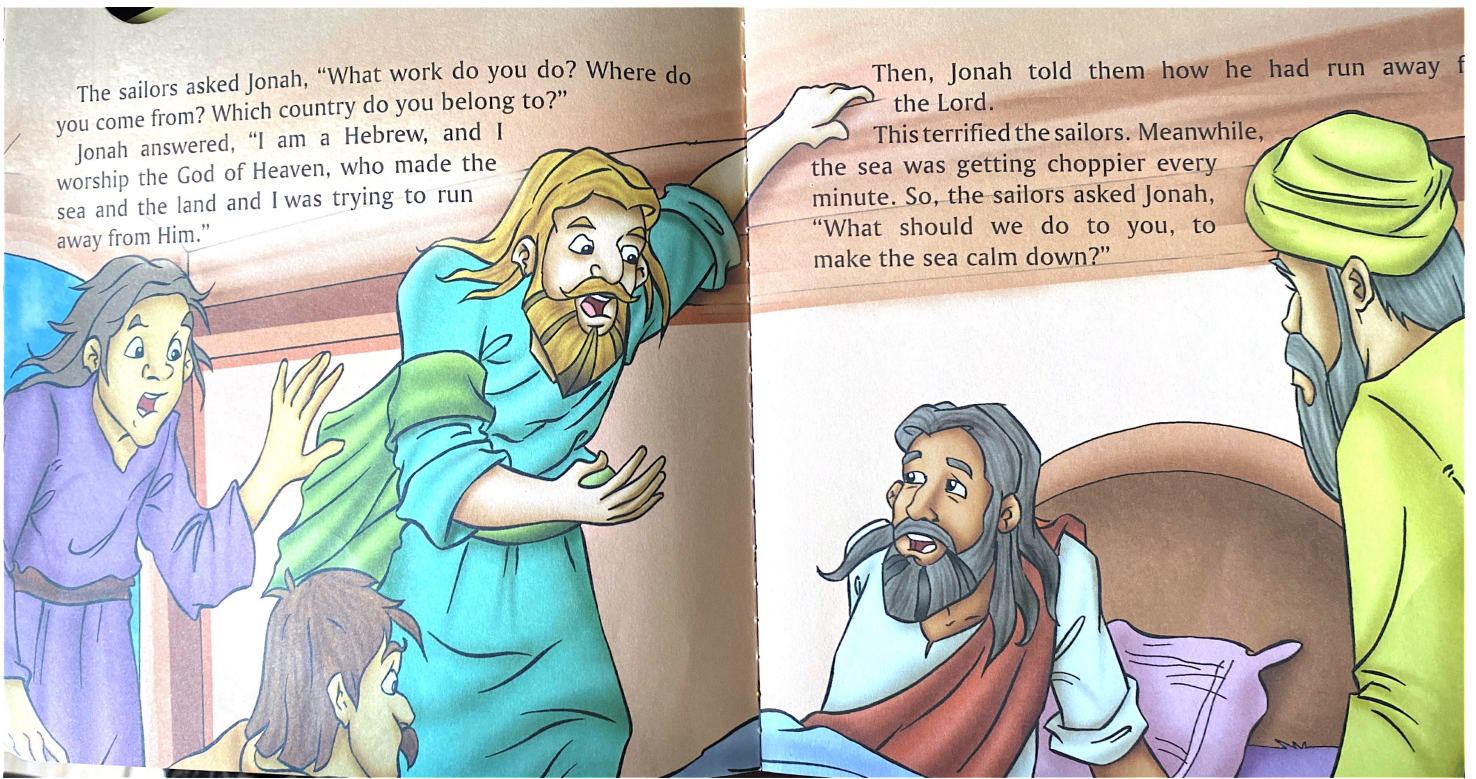
Immediately, the angry crew surrounded Jonah.

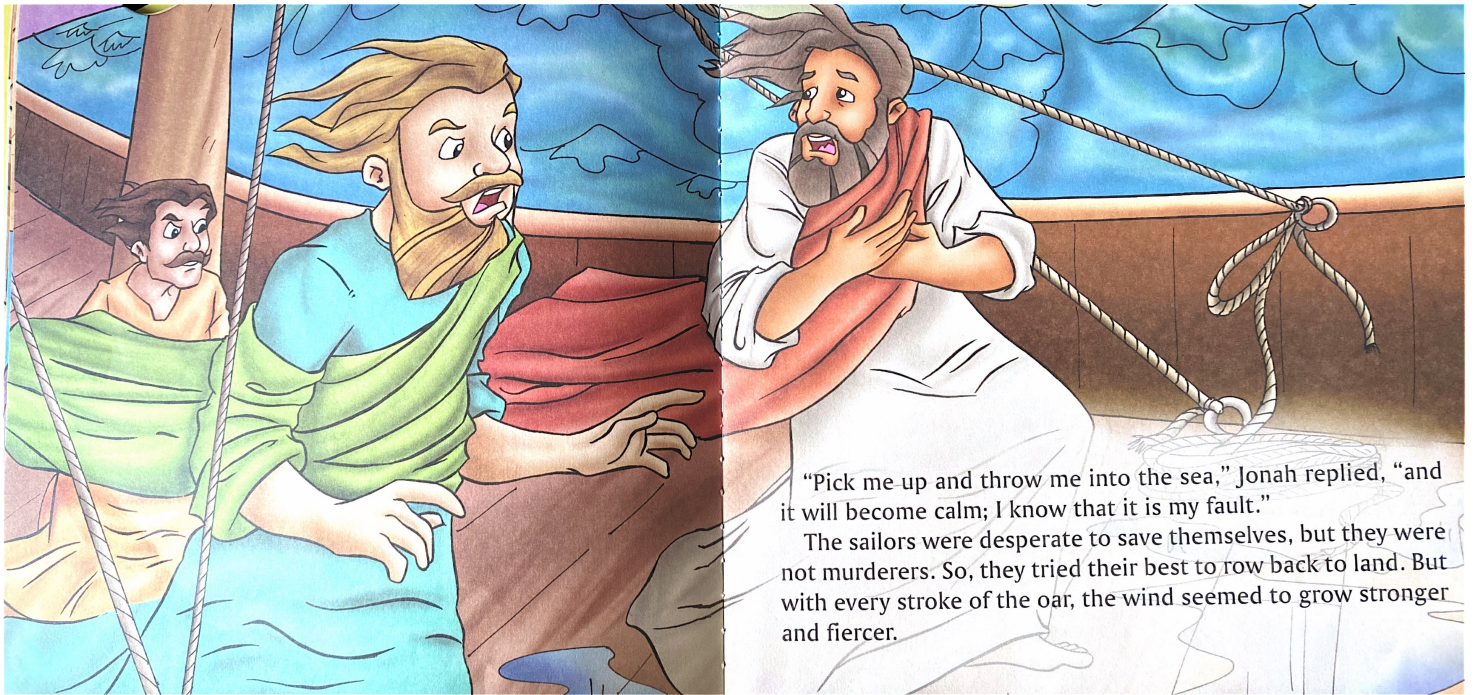
The sailors asked Jonah, "What work do you do? Where do you come from? Which country do you belong to?"

Jonah answered, "I am a Hebrew, and I worship the God of Heaven, who made the sea and the land and I was trying to run away from Him."

Then, Jonah told them how he had run away from the Lord.

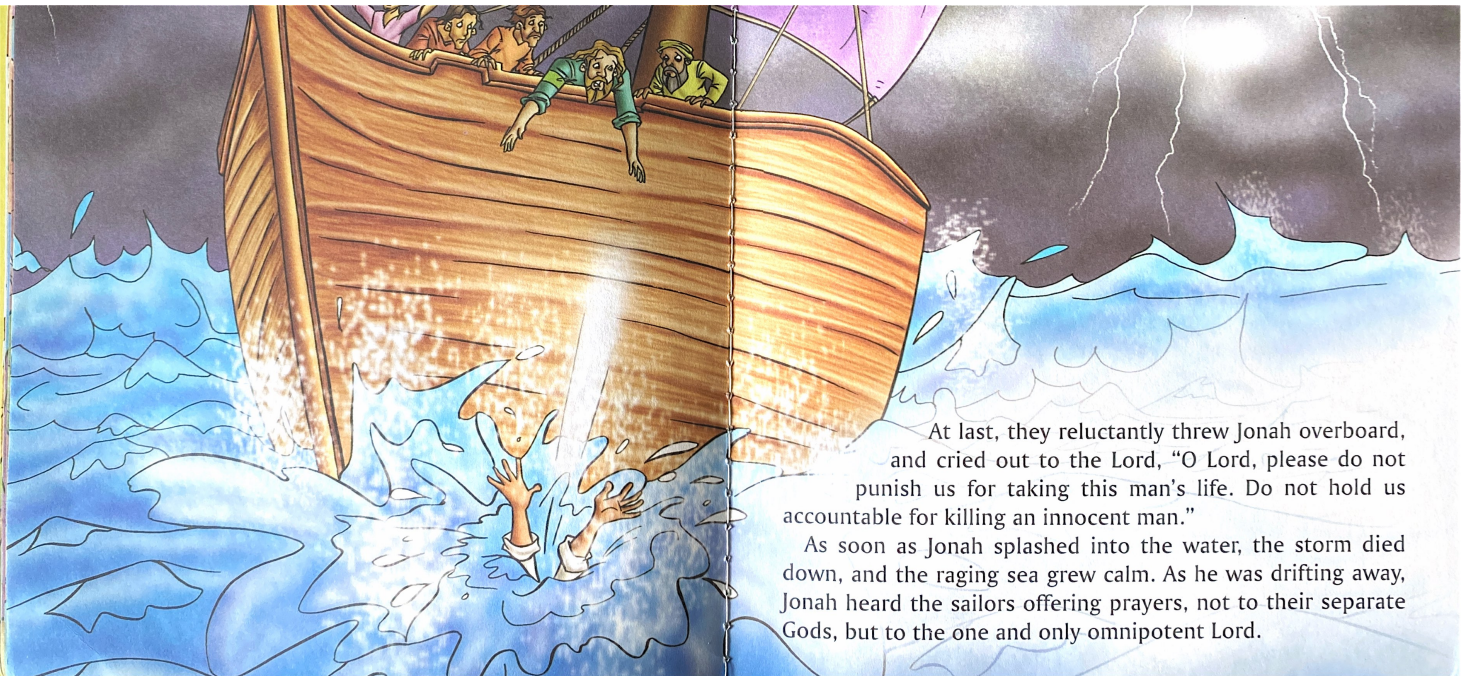
This terrified the sailors. Meanwhile, the sea was getting choppy every minute. So, the sailors asked Jonah, "What should we do to you, to make the sea calm down?"





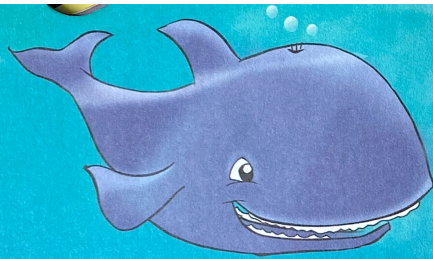
"Pick me up and throw me into the sea," Jonah replied, "and it will become calm; I know that it is my fault."

The sailors were desperate to save themselves, but they were not murderers. So, they tried their best to row back to land. But with every stroke of the oar, the wind seemed to grow stronger and fiercer.



At last, they reluctantly threw Jonah overboard, and cried out to the Lord, "O Lord, please do not punish us for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man."

As soon as Jonah splashed into the water, the storm died down, and the raging sea grew calm. As he was drifting away, Jonah heard the sailors offering prayers, not to their separate Gods, but to the one and only omnipotent Lord.



Jonah began to sink under the water and thought that everything was over.

But the Lord had other plans. He sent a whale to swallow Jonah. Soon, Jonah was swimming inside the dark, wet, cave-like belly of the whale! And there he stayed for three days and three nights.



Inside the whale, Jonah prayed to the Lord: "Whenever in distress, I called to You, my Lord and You answered me and saved me."

"Oh Lord," he prayed, "I thought I could run away from You. But I forgot that there is no place where You couldn't see me!

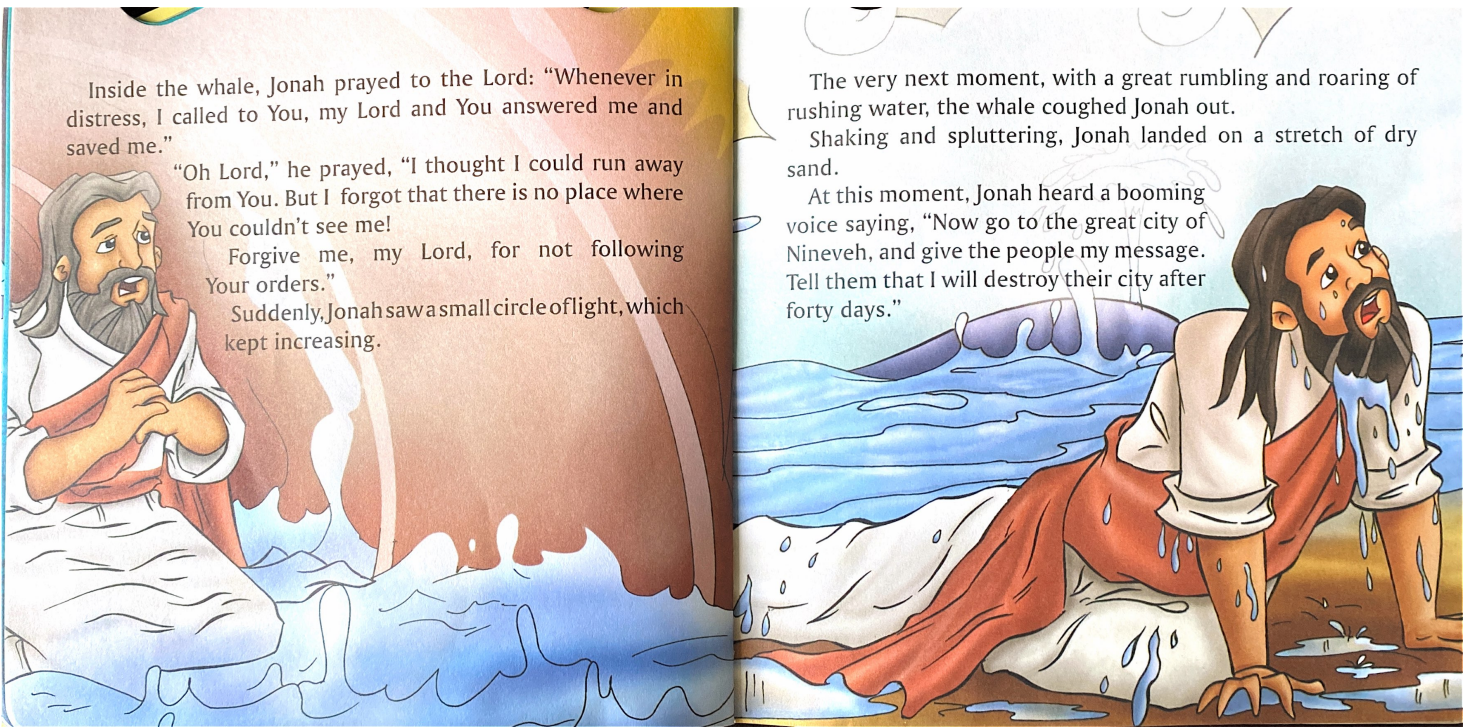
Forgive me, my Lord, for not following Your orders."

Suddenly, Jonah saw a small circle of light, which kept increasing.

The very next moment, with a great rumbling and roaring of rushing water, the whale coughed Jonah out.

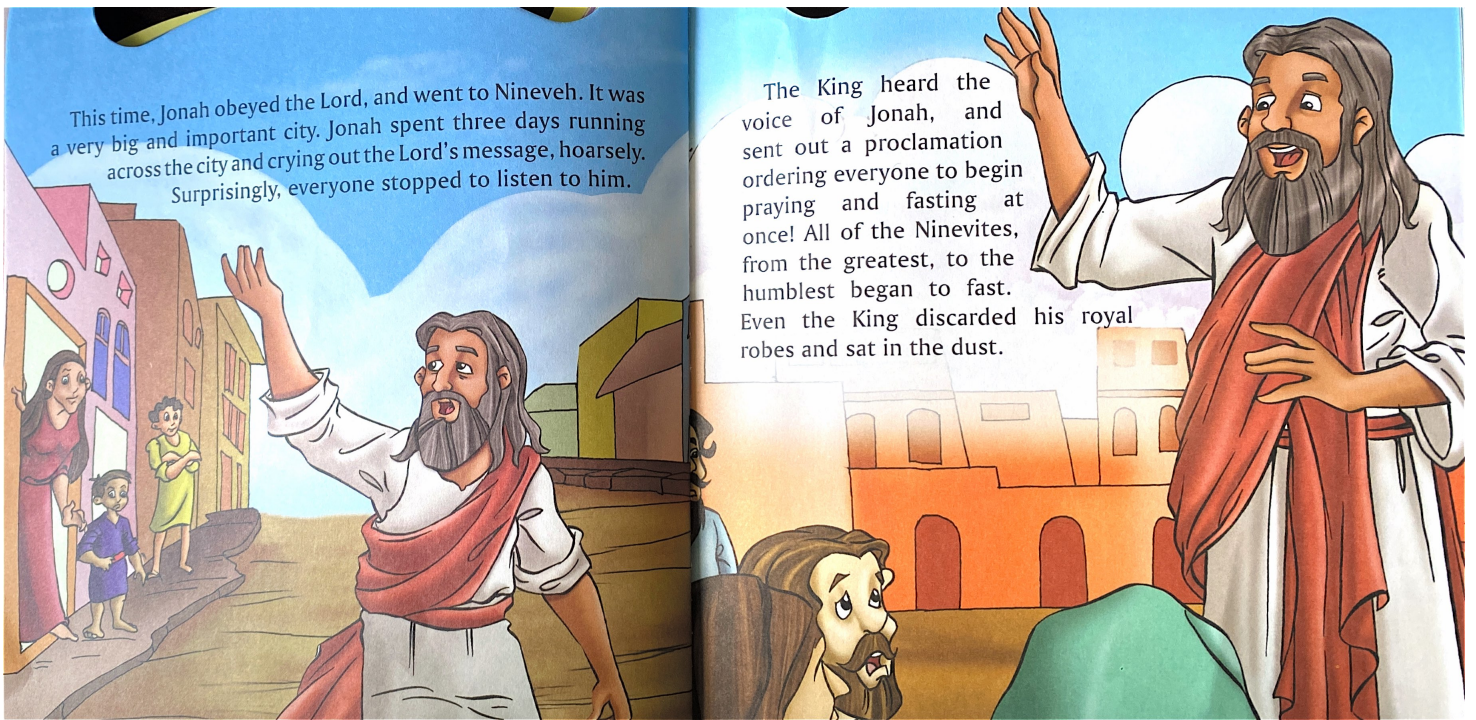
Shaking and spluttering, Jonah landed on a stretch of dry sand.

At this moment, Jonah heard a booming voice saying, "Now go to the great city of Nineveh, and give the people my message. Tell them that I will destroy their city after forty days."



This time, Jonah obeyed the Lord, and went to Nineveh. It was a very big and important city. Jonah spent three days running across the city and crying out the Lord's message, hoarsely. Surprisingly, everyone stopped to listen to him.

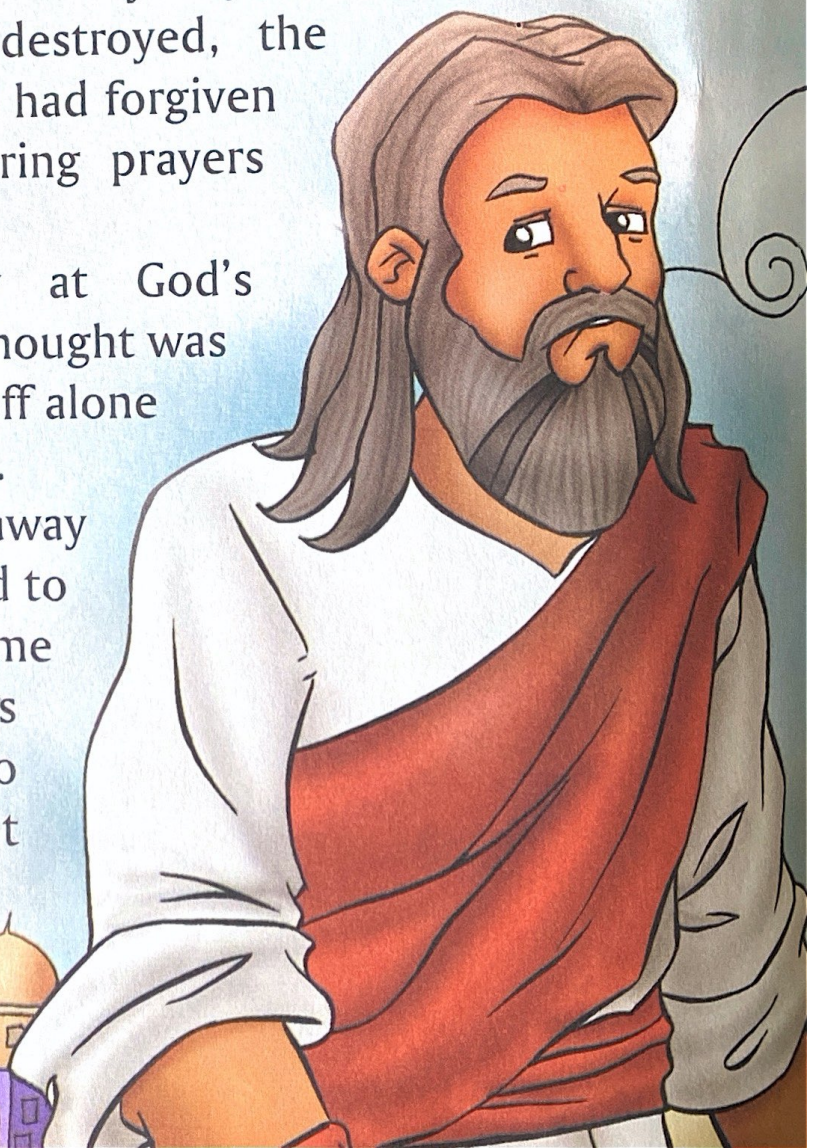
The King heard the voice of Jonah, and sent out a proclamation ordering everyone to begin praying and fasting at once! All of the Ninevites, from the greatest, to the humblest began to fast. Even the King discarded his royal robes and sat in the dust.



When God saw the Ninevites praying and repenting for their evil ways, He was filled with compassion and did not destroy the city. When forty days had passed and yet the city had not been destroyed, the Ninevites realized that God had forgiven them. They rejoiced, offering prayers and sacrifices to God.

But Jonah was angry at God's forgiving a nation that he thought was undeserving. So, he went off alone into the desert, and sulked.

"That's why I tried to run away to Tarshish," he complained to God. "What's the point of me warning them if You always go on forgiving people? No one will ever believe what I say!"

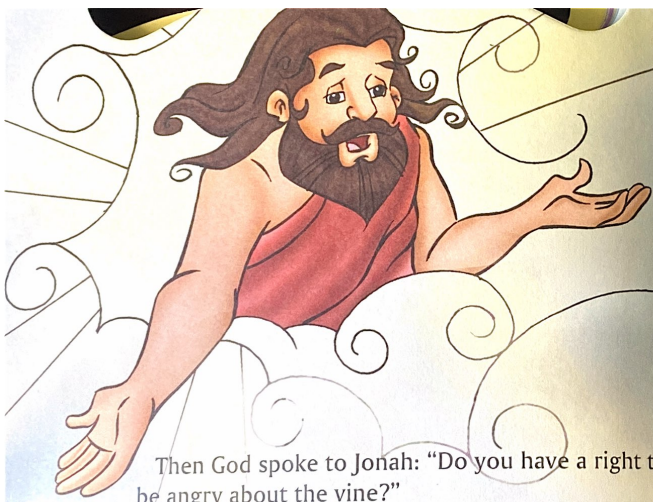


As Jonah sat in the desert, the Lord made a vine grow in such a way that it gave shade to Jonah from the scorching sun. Jonah was very glad of the shade that the vine gave him.

However, the next day, God sent a worm to attack the vine, so that it withered and died. Jonah felt sorry for the vine.

As the sun rose it glowered down on Jonah, he became more and more uncomfortable, and after some time, felt faint and dizzy. He cried aloud, "It would be better for me to die than to live! O' Lord, why did You have to kill the vine? It was a useful plant. You could have let it live!"





Then God spoke to Jonah: "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?"

"I do," Jonah said. "I am angry enough to die."

"But," said the Lord, "you have been concerned about this vine, though you did not plant it, or care for it. It sprang up overnight, and died overnight. But Nineveh has thousands of people, and many innocent cattle as well, all of whom are my own creations and who have passionately repented for their sins. Should I not be concerned about them?"

At last, Jonah realized that, just as a gardener loves all the plants in his garden, so God loves all the people He has created. He cares for all the nations equally, and His kingdom stretches over the whole earth.

