

Listen to God – ‘Cause There’s PLENTY More Fish in the Sea
The Jonah Play

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Cast of Characters

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrator • God • Jonah • Elissa, sailor • Hano, sailor • Jezebel, sailor • Tabnit, Captain • Angel 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angel 2 • Jellyfish • Rab, Great person of Nineveh • Larso, Small person of Nineveh • King of Nineveh • Bush/Gourd • Worm |
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Narrator: A long, long time ago – some say the 8th century BC – there lived a man named Jonah.
(enter Jonah. He waves.) He was a prophet of Israel under a wicked king.

Jonah: I said to him, I said, “Jeroboam II, cut it out with all the idol worship. God doesn’t like it.”

Narrator: Did it work? Did he stop?

Jonah: *(hangs his head)* No. He kept being really evil.

Narrator: Well, that’s disappointing.

Jonah: Yeah, but I did deliver the word of the Lord to the king. God said our borders would be restored and they were. Even though Jeroboam was leading people away from God!

Narrator: During that time, Israel had a lot of wars with the southern kingdom and other empires. But even though they were fighting, they were also really prosperous.

Jonah: You’re telling me! The king gets victory and suddenly he’s the greatest thing since sliced manna! And, boy is he wicked! He boasts, he oppresses the poor, he builds palaces of luxury – just stuffed to the gills with apes and peacocks!

Narrator: What – why? Why would you even want that?

Jonah: I dunno, because he can. Money and politics – every time.

God: *(angel sound)* Jonah! *(Jonah kneels.)*

Narrator: Sweet, heavenly host! It’s the voice of God!

God: Jonah!

Jonah: Yes, Lord. Here I am! Lead me! Guide me!

God: Jonah, go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me. *(angel sound)*

Narrator: Well, well, well! It looks like you're getting a second chance!

Jonah: A second chance?

Narrator: Well, yeah! You can preach about their wickedness – maybe make a difference!

Jonah: For Nineveh?! Do you even know the first thing about Nineveh?

Narrator: (*shuffling papers*) Umm...if I could just look through my notes here. Hmm...nope, nothing here about Nineveh.

Jonah: You're kidding me! Not only is Nineveh wicked and violent and lawless –

Narrator: (*interrupts him*) And that's why they need you!

Jonah: (*glaring at narrator*) BUT, it's the capital city of Assyria. You've heard of Assyria – big, proud, blood-thirsty empire. Constantly trying to expand its borders and trample on smaller nations. Well, it might interest you to know that WE'RE a smaller nation!

Narrator: Riiiiight...

Jonah: Plus, God is merciful – there's no way that God would actually destroy a whole city without warning. Forget this mess, I'm not gonna play God's game.

Narrator: Do you think that's wise? Not listening to the word of the LORD seems like a not so good idea.

Jonah: I know what I'll do – I'll go far, far away – across the sea. Further than any Israelite has ever gone before.

Narrator: Farther.

Jonah: (*angrily*) Further and farther! I'm going to Tarshish – so far away even God won't be able to find me!

Narrator: So, he went to Joppa to hitch a ride on a boat.

(*Enter Elissa, Hano, Jezebel*)

Elissa: All aboard the *Phoenician Queen*!

Hano: Finest boat in all of Joppa!

Jezebel: You want goods? We've got purple – to die for! (*hammy pause*) We've got glass that will blow your mind! (*hammy pause*) We've got carpets so lush, you'll try to feed them treats and take them for walks! You get it? Car-pets? (*hammy pause*)

Elissa: You're not funny.

Jezebel: No?

Hano: No.

Jonah: (*approaches the sailors*) I need a boat.

Elissa: Why we just so happen to have a boat!

Jezebel: Right here.

Hano: Behind us.

Jonah: Where are you going?

Elissa: Where are we going? Where aren't we going? We go everywhere!

Jezebel: We're going to Leptos, Byblos, Sidon, Sicily.

Hano: Carthage, Crete, Cadiz.

Elissa: Cyprus, Cyrene –

Narrator: (*interrupts*) They did, indeed, go everywhere. Johnny Cash had nothing on these traders.

Jonah: Are you going to Tarshish?

Hano: How could we not?

Jonah: Great! You're hired – or I want to buy a ticket or however this works. (*To the narrator*) I've never been on a boat before.

Narrator: No?

Jonah: Nope – I can't swim and I'm afraid of sea monsters.

Narrator: I really don't think this is gonna work out for you, Jonah.

Jonah: Oh, you! It'll be great. (*to the sailors*) Let's go!

(They enter the boat where Tabnit is. The boat is a cardboard cut out shaped like a boat that they stand behind. There is a stepladder that Jezebel uses to be the look out.)

Tabnit: Greetings, traveler! My name is Tabnit and I'm the captain of this boat. I see you've met Elissa,

Elissa: Hullo!

Tabnit: Hano,

Hano: Hiya!

Tabnit: And Jezebel.

Jezebel: I'm the look out man!

Elissa & Hano: We're rowers!

Jonah: Ah, good for you. I'm taking a nap.

Narrator: But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea.

(Angel 1 and Angel 2 wave wind sticks)

Tabnit: I don't like the looks of that wind.

Elissa: What does wind look like?

Hano: *(very seriously)* Scary. *(Elissa nods in agreement)*

Elissa & Hano *(singing)*: Row, row, row your boat in the mighty storm. Scarily, scarily, scarily, scarily – this is not the norm.

(Angel 1 and Angel 2 each grab one end of a blue sheet stretched across the front of the stage. They shake them to simulate water for the waves)

Jezebel: *(climbs up the ladder, calls down)* No crows in the crow's nest. Keep rowing!

Tabnit: The storm is so bad it feels like the ship is going to smash into a million pieces. Quick! Everyone cry out to your god!

Elissa: Oh, Yamm! I *am* not gonna die today!

Hano: Oh, Baal! Bail us out of this, please!

Jezebel: Oh, Astarte! Would you a-start to save us now? *(pauses for a moment)* It's not working, captain! The storm looks just as bad from up here.

Tabnit: Throw the cargo into the sea – anything that'll lighten the load and keep us afloat!

Elissa: Bye bye, Looney Tunes anvil!

Hano: Later days, fluffy linen!

Tabnit: We don't need a play-by-play! Just throw everything!

(Elissa, Hano, and Tabnit throw bunches of stuffed animals of the chancel. Jezebel throws change from her pocket onto the boat)

Jezebel: *(to congregation)* I'm helping!

Tabnit: Where's that Jonah guy? Maybe if he prayed... *(comes over to Jonah, yelling)* What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your God! Perhaps your God will spare us a thought so that we don't all...I dunno...die today!

Jonah: *(sleepily)* I don't wanna.

Elissa: Come on, let's cast lots and then we can find out who to blame when we all die in this horrible storm.

Hano: *(calls up to Jezebel)* Jezz! We're casting lots!

Jezebel: Okaay. *(throws down big fuzzy dice as everyone's eyes track the dice from the top of the ladder to the ground where they fall)* It's that guy! *(points to Jonah)*

Hano: Why on earth is this terrible thing happening to us? What's your job?

Elissa: Where are you from?

Jezebel: For goodness sakes, who are your people?

Jonah: *(stands up)* I am a Hebrew. I worship the LORD, the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land. And...not sure if this is related or not, but I decided not to do what God asked me to and I'm running away from the presence of the LORD.

(Tabnit, Elissa, and Hano huddle together in fear)

Tabnit: What have you done, you crazy fool! What should we do to you so that the sea will quiet down for us?

Jezebel: Guys, the sea is getting more and more tempestuous...

(Angel 1 and Angel 2 grab a second blue sheet that is also stretched across the chancel so that one hand is on each sheet. They should shake them at alternating intervals – when one is up, the other is down etc.)

Hano: Someone's been spending extra time in the library.

Jonah: Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will quiet down for you. This storm is all my fault.

Narrator: But, Jonah! You can't swim!

Tabnit: Throw a man overboard?! Not on my watch! Row, row, row us back to land!

Elissa & Hano: Row, row, row your boat, through this great typhoon. Warily, warily, warily, warily, Captain is a loon.

Tabnit: I heard that.

Jezebel: *(calls down)* I don't think this is working!

Elissa: *(to Hano)* You know, she's really not much of a look out man.

Jezebel: Guys, the waves! LOOK OUT, MAN!!! *(everyone ducks. Angel 1 and Angel 2 throw a third blue sheet onto the boat at everyone's heads.)*

Tabnit: Time to pray! *(everyone kneels in prayer)*

Elissa: Please, O Lord God of that guy cowering in the corner –

Hano: Do not let us die because of this man's life choices!

Jezebel: Do not make us guilty of innocent blood.

Tabnit: God, you're doing what pleases you. Just don't forget us. Over and out. *(everyone stands. To Jonah)* You're sure you're okay with us throwing you into the sea?

Jonah: I'm as okay with it as I'll ever be. Just do it.

Narrator: So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging.

(Elissa and Hano throw Jonah overboard and the angels set down the waves.)

Tabnit: Jezebel, come down from there. We're going to offer sacrifices and make vows to the Lord God of Jonah – now there's a God who gets things done.

Tabnit, Hano, Elissa, and Jezebel: Holy, holy, holy – best God ever. Amen.

(Sailors pick up boat and walk off with it to the fellowship hall.)

Narrator: But the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah.

(Angel 1 and Angel 2 hold up a cloth with the image of the big fish on it and hum menacing aquatic predator music while they chase after Jonah.)

Jonah: Sea monster! No, no, no!

Angel 1 & Angel 2: Yes, yes, yes!

Narrator: And the fish swallowed up Jonah and he was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

(Angel 1 and Angel 2 wrap the sheet around Jonah to swallow him, guide him up to center stage. When they unwrap the sheet, they flip it around to reveal the image of the inside of the fish's belly and a large, dangling uvula. Enter Jellyfish)

Jellyfish: Hi, I'm a jellyfish! Welcome to the belly!

Jonah: What? Where am I?

Jellyfish: Well, we're in the belly of a fish, right?

Jonah: I guess so.

Jellyfish: And every time the fish's mouth opens, we can see out a bit.

Jonah: Yeah, you're right. So, what do you call it?

Jellyfish: A womb with a view!

Jonah: Ugh, I think I might be in hell.

Jellyfish: Nonsense! We're still alive and I am a faithful servant of the Lord God of Israel.

Jonah: Well, that's a coincidence...

Jellyfish: I don't think so. I was wondering how I came to be here. Now I know that it was for just such a time as this. Look, you've been running away from God and you need to stop. Pray! Ask for forgiveness! The God who has saved you and kept you safe will surely get you through this!

Jonah: I don't even know what to pray at this point.

Jellyfish: Well, why not pray from the psalms? I'll help you when you get stuck. Come on, now. Pray! *(Jonah kneels but doesn't say anything. Jellyfish sighs and hands him a slip of paper.)*

Jonah: *(nods gratefully to the jellyfish)* In my distress I called on the Lord. Out of the belly of... *(pauses for a moment; jellyfish gives another slip)* the Pit I cried and you heard my voice. You cast me into the deep sea, into the heart of the seas. *(pauses for a moment; jellyfish gives another slip)* All your waves and billows have gone over me. *(pauses for a moment; jellyfish gives another slip)* Then I said "I am driven away from your sight." The waters closed in over me *(jellyfish gives another slip)* the deep surrounded me. *(jellyfish gives another slip)* Even from the depth of the earth you will bring me up again, O LORD. *(jellyfish gives another slip)* When my spirit is faint, I remember the Lord and my prayer reaches you in your holy temple. *(jellyfish gives another slip)* *(to jellyfish)* Oh, yeah. Good one, jelly! Those who worship vain idols forsake your loving kindness. But I worship the LORD with the voice of thanksgiving. What I have vowed, I will pay. Deliverance belongs to the LORD!

God: *(angel sound)* Great fish, you know what to do. *(angel sound)*

Narrator: And the fish spit Jonah out onto the dry land.

(Angel 1 and Angel 2 push Jonah to the left with the cloth and walk off to the fellowship hall with the jellyfish)

Jonah: *(calls back)* Thanks, jelly! I couldn't have done it without you!

Narrator: And so, the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time.

God: *(angel sound)* Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you. *(angel sound)*

Narrator: And *this* time, Jonah went to Nineveh. *(Jonah starts to walk; Rab, Larso, and King enter. Rab and Larso stand stage right, King sits on a chair)* Look at him go! I'm so proud of him! Now, Nineveh was a great city – great in size, great in buildings, great in number of people! It was so large, it took three days to walk across it!

(Jonah approaches Rab and Larso)

Jonah: *(to Rab and Larso)* Forty days more and Nineveh shall be overthrown! *(Jonah walks off to sit by himself on the steps)*

Rab: Larso, what did that guy say?

Larso: He said Nineveh would be overthrown!

Rab: Well, we don't want that, do we?

Larso: No, sir, we don't!

Rab: As a great man of Nineveh – I say we do something about this!

Larso: As a small woman of Nineveh – I agree. We should fast so God isn't angry with us.

Rab: Yeah, and wear sackcloth.

Larso: And maybe stop sinning so much?

Rab: Right, I think God likes that.

Larso: Rab, you're big and important – make sure the king knows about this!

(Larso and Rab goes over to the King)

Rab: I bring news, sire! Some guy that I've never met and never heard of before said that Nineveh would be overthrown in forty days!

King: Did you get his name?

Rab: Nope.

King: This sounds serious! I need sackcloth! I need ashes.

Narrator: And the king rose from his throne, the seat of his power. He removed his fancy robe and he covered himself with sackcloth and ashes. *(King stands, removes robe, gets sackcloth from Rab. Larso and Rab help dress the king and sprinkle him in ashes i.e. confetti.)*

King: Let there be a proclamation in all of Nineveh: by the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock shall eat anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. Who knows? God may relent and turn from fierce anger so that we do not perish.

Narrator: God saw what they did – how they turned from their evil ways and God decided not to bring calamity on them. *(King and Rab exit)* But Jonah didn't like this one bit and he got angry.

Jonah: O LORD! Isn't this exactly what I said while I was still in my own country – that you would never destroy Nineveh so there was no point in me even going! That is why I fled to Tarshish in the first place! I know that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to

anger, abounding in steadfast love – always ready to relent from punishing. And now – I’m so angry, O God, why don’t you just take my life from me!

God: (*angel sound*) Jonah, is it right for you to be angry like this?

Narrator: Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down to the east of it. He made a little booth for himself and sat under its shade, waiting to see what God would do with the city. And the Lord appointed a bush to grow over Jonah.

(*Enter bush*)

Bush (*wearing a vine of leaves like a boa*): Hi, I’m a gourd plant! You can call me Gordy!

Jonah: Go away! I’m grouchy.

Bush: But God sent me to grow over your head. See how much nicer my leafy shade is than your crappy little booth? No more sun burns – just green, leafy peace.

Jonah: Ooh, you’re a great bush. You’ve made me so happy!

Bush: Don’t be so touchy next time! Listen to the word of the gourd!

(*Jonah relaxes and reclines under the shade of the bush*)

Narrator: (*Enter the worm*) When dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that ate the bush.

Worm: (*nibbling on leaves*) Ooh, a bush! In the middle of the desert?! I am so blessed! Yummy, yummy, yummy! (*Grabs the boa of leaves around the bush and walks off to the fellowship hall*)

Narrator: After the worm ate the bush, it withered. When the sun came up, God prepared a hot, dry east wind and the sun beat down on Jonah’s head so much that he got faint.

Jonah: Harumph! Everything is miserable and nothing matters. I might as well die!

God: (*angel sound*) Is it right for you to be this angry about the bush?

Jonah: (*stands up defiantly*) Yes, angry enough to die!

God: You are so concerned about the bush, but you didn’t work for it – you didn’t cause it to grow. It came to life in a night and it perished in a night.

Jonah: What’s your point?

God: Well, shouldn't I be concerned about Nineveh – that great city? It has more than 120,000 people who barely have any sense! And there are a lot of animals there, too.

Narrator: (*cast enters*) And Jonah didn't say a word. But we can see his story and remember that everyone great and small, near and far is a child of God and a part of God's good creation. Let all God's people say:

Cast: Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Amen.