



Oh No, Jonah!

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{ **What is forgiveness?** }

A Whale of a Tale

What a crazy story! Jonah hides on a ship; a huge storm starts; he gets thrown overboard, only to be swallowed by a giant fish. He finally delivers God’s message to Nineveh, but then fights with God over a plant! Jonah is a complicated character – he doesn’t even seem to want to be a prophet. When we think about Jonah’s position, we may understand why he tries to “take a trip” away from his responsibilities. Jonah says that preaching means “ragging, nagging everyone” – not so fun. Jonah doubts anyone will listen to him, so he doesn’t even want to try. Maybe the first step toward becoming a leader is believing in yourself. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/ohnojonah.

HANDS ON!

Make an Origami Fish for Your Own Fish Tale

Supplies:

An 8.5-inch by 8.5-inch sheet of paper (origami paper is great, but you can also cut an 8.5-inch by 11-inch sheet of paper to size)

Markers

Your imagination

- Fold the upper left corner to the lower right, then unfold.
- Fold the upper right corner to the lower left, then unfold.
- Fold the top half down to the bottom, then unfold.
- Bring the left and right sides together so that the paper collapses into a triangle.
- Turn the triangle so that the top points to the left.
- Fold the bottom corner up a little above the center.
- Fold the top flap over the bottom one.

Turn the paper over. Voila – it’s a fish! Draw a face on your fish and whatever other markings you’d like to make. Now the real fun begins! Tell the story of Jonah from the fish’s perspective: What was it like to be swimming in the ocean during the big storm? How did the fish feel about having Jonah in its belly? You can also make up an even fish-ier tale!

Can You Turn It Around?

This retelling of the story of Jonah is fun, but the original version is read on the most serious day of the Jewish year: Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), which follows Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year). These High Holidays are a time to ask for forgiveness for our mistakes and to resolve to do better in the coming year. The Hebrew word for repentance, teshuvah, means “return,” and refers to turning ourselves around to try to do better – which is exactly what the Ninevites do when they hear that their city is doomed. The story of Jonah showcases two different responses to our mistakes: while Jonah flees from responsibility, the Ninevites take ownership of their actions, exemplifying teshuvah.

Forever Forgiving

This story portrays big emotions: fear, anger, sadness, remorse, relief, happiness. It also involves big changes in the characters’ situations. However, there is one constant throughout the story’s ups and downs: God’s essential nature as “compassionate . . . and full of lovingkindness.” Jonah does not understand why God “let those sinners off,” so God has to remind him that God’s job is to forgive those who “have changed their ways.” That is not being “too soft”; it’s the very definition of compassion.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

DO you think Jonah just has bad luck, or does he create bad situations for himself? Can you point to examples?

WAS God right to forgive the people of Nineveh? Why or why not?

WHICH creature from nature, the giant fish or the little worm, was more important to the story? Why do you think so?