

## YONA and the whale

*A story of courage*

Designed and written by Sorah Cohen.

Once upon a time there was a man named Yona (Jonah). He was a good man and liked helping people. One day, Hashem (God) told Yona, "I want you to go to the city of Ninveh and tell the people to change their ways." The people in Ninveh were not being kind to each other. They were hurting each other's feelings and not caring. This had to stop. Hashem asked Yona to speak to the people and encourage them to be better. When Yona heard what Hashem had asked him, he was afraid the people wouldn't listen to him. He thought, 'Maybe they will laugh at me, or maybe even hurt me'. Yona did not want to go.

Yona loved doing the right thing, but this felt too scary. He decided he would go for a walk. He walked and walked all the way to the shore. There, he saw a big ship waiting at the dock. The ship was travelling to a far away land. Yona thought 'If I get on this ship, I won't have to go to Nineveh. What a good idea!' He paid the captain and boarded the ship.

As the ship started sailing on the water, a big wind started to blow. The wind made big waves, which sent the ship up, up, up and then crashing down. The people on the ship started to worry. 'This ship is going to break', they said.

All the passengers on the ship started to pray and ask Hashem to save them from the big storm. Yona wasn't able to pray, because he hadn't done what Hashem had asked him to do.

"Why aren't you praying?" asked one of the sailors on the boat.

Yona told the truth in a sad voice, "Because I have not listened to what Hashem has asked me to do. If you want the storm to stop, then throw me off the boat."

The people did not want to throw Yona off the boat. They tried to sail back to shore so they could let Yona off the boat instead of throwing him into the ocean. But the waves were too high and the boat wouldn't move. The storm grew stronger and stronger, until they had no choice but to throw Yona into the water.

Splash!

As soon as Yona was off the boat, the wind stopped, and the ship sailed away on calm waters.

Yona found himself in the deep blue ocean...full of fish and sea creatures. He was swimming around in the waters when a whale appeared and swallowed Yona in its huge mouth! Yona felt himself being squeezed down a long, dark and very smelly passage. He was very uncomfortable and wanted to get out.

Yona felt lonely inside the whale and wanted to connect with Hashem. Yona started, "Hashem, you asked me to go to Nineveh to speak to the people about changing their ways. I was afraid of going. What if the people would laugh at me or hurt me? I felt too afraid to go, and so I went on a ship, and then the storm came and then I was thrown off the boat, and now I am in a whale's belly. I am sorry for not doing what you asked. Can you help me?"

Hashem answered Yona, "I can see you are afraid. But you have nothing to be afraid of. I will be with you and I will help you. You can rely on me."

Yona thought about what Hashem said. He felt courage seep into his heart and even though he was still afraid, he knew he could do it with Hashem's help.

With fresh courage in his heart, Yona felt himself being pushed out of the whale's stomach. A blast of fresh air met his face as he landed softly on the sand of a beach. Yona knew what he had to do. With strong steps, he walked towards Nineveh.

Yona walked in to the town center and gathered the people. He told them Hashem's message, "You need to change your ways and start being respectful and kind." The people listened to Yona's words and started being better. They tried being good listeners, caring and sharing and loving their friends.

Yona was happy. He felt proud of himself. He overcame his fear and did what Hashem had asked him to do. And Hashem was proud of Yona too.

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

#### **Prayer:**

What can we do when we feel scared or worried? We can talk to Hashem and ask him to help us. We can share our fears and worries with Hashem.

#### **Courage:**

What does it mean to have courage? It is when you do something even when you feel afraid. How did Yona gain courage? He prayed to Hashem.

Examples of bravery:

- If you're scared to do something, and you try even though you're scared.
- You feel shy to talk in front of the class, and you try.
- You ask someone to play with you.

#### **Being Kind:**

What does it mean to be kind? To be friendly and generous with yourself and others.

What are ways that we can be kind to ourselves, parents, siblings and friends?

- Speak kindly, with manners and gratitude.
- When you see someone needs help, you can offer to help.
- When a friend is sad, you can offer them a hug.
- Say no when something doesn't feel right. Have healthy boundaries.

#### **Fish and Sea animals:**

What do whales eat? [tiny animals, called plankton, krill]

#### **Ships:**

How do ships move? [with sails and wind, motors]

### **FRIENDSHIP SONGS:**

The more we get together,  
together, together,

The more we get together,  
the happier we'll be.

'Cause your friends are my friends and my friends are you friends.

The more we get together,  
the happier we'll be.

Let's be friends and join together.

Let's be friends now and forever,

Let's be friends and join together,

Oh let's be friends,

'cause that's the Torah way.

Let's be friends, make amends,

Now it's time to say I'm sorry.

Let's be friends, make amends,

Please say you'll forgive me.

Ten days of Teshuva

Time to make up, time to daven

Take my hand, I'll take yours

Let's be friends forever.