**King James Bible**

**Old Testament stories, misc. for AP**

**Samson and Delilah --------------------------------------------------------------**

Judges xiii: 1, to xvi: 31

After Jephthah three judges ruled in turn, named Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. None of these were men of war, and in their days the land was quiet.

But the people of Israel again began to worship idols; and as a punishment God allowed them once more to pass under the power of their enemies. The seventh oppression, which now fell upon Israel, was by far the hardest, the longest, and the most widely spread of any, for it was over all the tribes. It came from the Philistines, a strong and warlike people, who lived on the west of Israel upon the plain beside the Great Sea. They worshipped an idol called Dagon, which was made in the form of a fish's head on a man's body.

These people, the Philistines, sent their armies up from the plain beside the sea to the mountains of Israel, and overran all the land.

They took away from the Israelites all their swords and spears, so that they could not fight; and they robbed their land of all the crops, so that the people suffered for want of food. And as before, the Israelites in their trouble cried to the Lord, and the Lord heard their prayer.

In the tribe land of Dan, which was next to the country of the Philistines, there was living a man named Manoah. One day an angel came to his wife, and said, "You shall have a son; and when he grows up he will begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines. But your son must never drink any wine or strong drink as long as he lives. And his hair must be allowed to grow long, and must never be cut, for he shall be a Nazarite under a vow to the Lord."

When a child was given especially to God, or when a man gave himself to some work for God, he was forbidden to drink wine, and as a sign, his hair was left to grow long while the vow or promise to God was upon him. Such a person as this was called a Nazarite, a word which means "one who has a vow," and Manoah's child was to be a Nazarite, and under a vow, as long as he lived.

The child was born, and was named Samson. He grew up to become the strongest man of whom the Bible tells. Samson was no general, like Gideon or Jephthah, to call out his people and lead them in war. He did much to set his people free; but all that he did was by his own strength, without any help from other men.

When Samson became a young man he went down to Timnath, in the land of the Philistines. There he saw a young Philistine woman whom he loved, and wished to have as his wife. His father and mother were not pleased that he should marry among the enemies of his own people. They did not know that God would make this marriage the means of bringing harm upon the Philistines, and of helping the Israelites.

As Samson was going down to Timnath, to see this young woman, a hungry young lion came out of the mountain, growling and roaring. Samson seized the lion, and tore him in pieces as easily as another man would have killed a little kid of the goats; and then went on his way. He made his visit, and came home, but said nothing to any one about the lion.

After a time Samson went again to Timnath, for his marriage with the Philistine woman. On his way he stopped to look at the dead lion; and in its body he found a swarm of bees, and honey which they had made. He took some of the honey, and ate it as he walked; but told no one of it.

At the wedding-feast, which lasted a whole week, there were many Philistine young men; and they amused each other with questions and riddles.

"I will give you a riddle," said Samson. "If you answer it during the feast, I will give you thirty suits of clothing. And if you cannot answer it, then you must give me thirty suits of clothing."

"Let us hear your riddle," they said. And this was Samson's riddle for the young men of the Philistines to answer:

"Out of the eater came forth meat.

And out of the strong came forth sweetness."

They could not find the answer, though they tried to find it, all that day, and the two days that followed. And at last they came to Samson's wife, and said to her, "Coax your husband to tell you the answer. If you do not find it out, we will set your house on fire, and burn you and all your people."

And Samson's wife urged him to tell her the answer. She cried and pleaded with him, and said, "If you really love me, you would not keep this a secret from me."

At last Samson yielded, and told his wife how he had killed the lion and afterward found the honey in its body. She told her people, and just before the end of the feast they came to Samson with the answer. They said, "What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?"

And Samson said to them, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you had not found out my riddle."

By his "heifer"—which is a young cow—of course Samson meant his wife. Then Samson was required to give them thirty suits of clothing. He went out among the Philistines, killed the first thirty men whom he found, took off their clothes, and gave them to the guests at the feast. But all this made Samson very angry. He left his new wife and went home to his father's house. Then the parents of his wife gave her to another man.

But after a time Samson's anger passed away, and he went again to Timnath to see his wife. But her father said to him, "You went away angry, and I supposed that you cared nothing for her. I gave her to another man, and now she is his wife. But here is her younger sister; you can take her for your wife instead."

But Samson would not take his wife's sister. He went out very angry, determined to do harm to the Philistines, because they had cheated him. He caught all the wild foxes that he could find, until he had three hundred of them. Then he tied them together in pairs, by their tails; and between each pair of foxes he tied to their tails a piece of dry wood which he set on fire. These foxes with firebrands on their tails he turned loose among the fields of the Philistines when the grain was ripe. They ran wildly over the fields, set the grain on fire, and burned it; and with the grain the olive-trees in the fields.

When the Philistines saw their harvests destroyed, they said, "Who has done this?"

And people said, "Samson did this, because his wife was given by her father to another man."

The Philistines looked on Samson's father-in-law as the cause of their loss; and they came, and set his house on fire, and burned the man and his daughter whom Samson had married. Then Samson came down again, and alone fought a company of Philistines, and killed them all, as a punishment for burning his wife.

After this Samson went to live in a hollow place in a split rock, called the rock of Etam. The Philistines came up in a great army, and overran the fields in the tribe-land of Judah.

"Why do you come against us?" asked the men of Judah. "What do you want from us?" "We have come," they said, "to bind Samson, and to deal with him as he has dealt with our people."

The men of Judah said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines are ruling over us? Why do you make them angry by killing their people? You see that we suffer through your pranks. Now we must bind you, and give you to the Philistines; or they will ruin us all."

And Samson said, "I will let you bind me, if you will promise not to kill me yourselves; but only to give me safely into the hands of the Philistines."

They made the promise; and Samson gave himself up to them, and allowed them to tie him up fast with new ropes. The Philistines shouted for joy as they saw their enemy brought to them, led in bonds by his own people. Little did they know what was to happen. For as soon as Samson came among them he burst the bonds as though they had been light strings; and picked up from the ground the jawbone of an ass, and struck right and left with it as with a sword. He killed almost a thousand of the Philistines with this strange weapon. Afterward he sang a song about it, thus:

"With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps,

With the jawbone of an ass, have I slain a thousand men."

After this Samson went down to the chief city of the Philistines, which was named Gaza. It was a large city; and like all large cities was surrounded with a high wall. When the men of Gaza found Samson in their city, they shut the gates, thinking that they could now hold him as a prisoner. But in the night, Samson rose up, went to the gates, pulled their posts out of the ground, and put the gates with their posts upon his shoulder. He carried them twenty miles away, and left them on the top of a hill not far from the city of Hebron.

After this Samson saw another woman among the Philistines, and he loved her. The name of this woman was Delilah. The rulers of the Philistines came to Delilah, and said to her:

"Find out, if you can, what it is that makes Samson so strong; and tell us. If you help us to get control of him, so that we can have him in our power, we will give you a great sum of money."

And Delilah coaxed and pleaded with Samson to tell her what it was that made him so strong. Samson said to her, "If they will tie me with seven green twigs from a tree, then I shall not be strong any more."

They brought her seven green twigs, like those of a willow-tree; and she bound Samson with them while he was asleep. Then she called out to him, "Wake up, Samson, the Philistines are coming against you!"

And Samson rose up, and broke the twigs as easily as if they had been charred in the fire, and went away with ease.

And Delilah tried again to find his secret. She said, "You are only making fun of me. Now tell me truly how you can be bound."

And Samson said, "Let them bind me with new ropes, that have never been used before; and then I cannot get away."

While Samson was asleep again, Delilah bound him with new ropes. Then she called out as before, "Get up, Samson, for the Philistines are coming!" And when Samson rose up, the ropes broke as if they were thread. And Delilah again urged him to tell her; and he said:

"You notice that my long hair is in seven locks. Weave it together in the loom, just as if it were the threads in a piece of cloth."

Then, while he was asleep, she wove his hair in the loom, and fastened it with a large pin to the weaving frame. But when he awoke, he rose up, and carried away the pin and the beam of the weaving-frame, for he was as strong as before.

And Delilah said, "Why do you tell me that you love me, as long as you deceive me, and keep from me your secret!" And she pleaded with him day after day, until at last he yielded to her, and told her the real secret of his strength. He said:

"I am a Nazarite, under a vow to the Lord not to drink wine, and not to allow my hair to be cut. If I should let my hair be cut short, then the Lord would forsake me, and my strength would go from me, and I would be like other men."

Then Delilah knew that she had found the truth at last. She sent for the rulers of the Philistines, saying, "Come up this once, and you shall have your enemy; for I am sure now that he has told me all that is in his heart."

Then, while the Philistines were watching outside, Delilah let Samson go to sleep, with his head upon her knees. While he was sound asleep, they took a razor and shaved off all his hair. Then she called out as at other times, "Rise up, Samson; the Philistines are upon you."

He awoke, and rose up, expecting to find himself strong as before; for he did not at first know that his long hair had been cut off. But he had broken his vow to the Lord, and the Lord had left him. He was now as weak as other men, and helpless in the hands of his enemies. The Philistines easily made him their prisoner; and that he might never do them more harm, they put out his eyes. Then they chained him with fetters, and sent him to prison at Gaza. And in the prison they made Samson turn a heavy millstone to grind grain, just as though he were a beast of burden.

But while Samson was in prison his hair grew long again; and with his hair his strength came back to him, for Samson renewed his vow to the Lord.

One day a great feast was held by the Philistines in the temple of their fish-god Dagon. For they said, "Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hands. Let us be glad together and praise Dagon."

And the temple was thronged with people, and the roof over it was also crowded with more than three thousand men and women. They sent for Samson, to rejoice over him; and Samson was led into the court of the temple, before all the people, to amuse them. After a time, Samson said to the boy who was leading him:

"Take me up to the front of the temple, so that I may stand by one of the pillars, and lean against it."

And while Samson stood between two of the pillars, he prayed to the Lord God of Israel, and said, "O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and give me strength only this once, O God; and help me, that I may obtain vengeance upon the Philistines for my two eyes!"

Then he placed one arm around the pillar on one side, and the other arm around the pillar on the other side; and he said, "Let me die with the Philistines."

And he bowed forward with all his might, and pulled the pillars over with him, bringing down the roof and all upon it upon those that were under it. Samson himself was among the dead; but in his death he killed more of the Philistines than he had killed during his life.

Then in the terror which came upon the Philistines the men of Samson's tribe came down and found his dead body, and buried it in their own land. After that it was years before the Philistines tried again to rule over the Israelites.

Samson did much to set his people free, but he might have done much more, if he had led his people, instead of trusting alone to his own strength; and if he had lived more earnestly, and not done his deeds as though he was playing pranks and making jokes upon his enemies. There were deep faults in Samson, but at the end he sought God's help and found it; and God used Samson to begin to set his people free.

The tribe to which Samson belonged was the tribe of Dan, a people who lived on the edge of the mountain country, between the mountains and the plains by the sea-coast, which was the home of the Philistines. The tribe-land of Dan was northwest of Judah, southwest of Ephraim, and west of Benjamin. Samson ruled over his own tribe, but not much over the other tribes. Yet his deeds of courage and strength kept the Philistines, during his lifetime, from getting control over the lands of Judah and Benjamin; so that Samson helped to save Israel from its enemies.

**David & Goliath --------------------------------------------------------------**

I Samuel xvii: 1 to 54

All through the reign of Saul there was constant war with the Philistines, who lived upon the lowlands west of Israel. At one time, when David was still with his sheep, a few years after he had been anointed by Samuel, the camp of the Philistines and the Israelites were set against each other on opposite sides of the valley of Elah ready to fight each other. In the army of Israel were the three oldest brothers of David, who were soldiers under King Saul.

Every day a giant came out of the camp of the Philistines, and dared some one to come from the Israelites' camp and fight with him. The giant's name was Goliath. He was nine feet high; and he wore armor from head to foot, and carried a spear twice as long and as heavy as any other man could hold; and his shield-bearer walked before him. He came every day and called out across the little valley:

"I am a Philistine, and you are servants of Saul. Now choose one of your men, and let him come out and fight with me. If I kill him, then you shall submit to us; and if he kills me, then we will give up to you. Come, now, send out your man!"

But no man in the army, not even King Saul, dared to go out and fight with the giant. The Israelites were mostly farmers and shepherds, and were not fond of war, as were the Philistines. Then, too, very few of the Israelites had swords and spears, except such rude weapons as they could make out of their farming tools. Forty days the camps stood against each other, and the Philistine giant continued his call.

One day old Jesse, the father of David, sent David from Bethlehem to visit his three brothers in the army. David came, spoke to his brothers, and gave them a present from his father. While he was talking with them, Goliath, the giant, came out as before in front of the camp, calling for some one to fight with him.

The Israelites said to one another, "If any man will go out and kill this Philistine, the king will give him a great reward and a high rank; and the kings' daughter shall be his wife."

And David said, "Who is this man that speaks in this proud manner against the armies of the living God? Why does not some one go out and kill him?"

David's brother Eliab said to him, "What are you doing here, leaving your sheep in the field? I know that you have come down just to see the battle."

But David did not care for his brother's angry words. He was thinking out some way to kill this boasting giant. While all the men were in terror, this boy thought of a plan. He believed that he knew how to bring down the big warrior, with all his armor. Finally, David said:

"If no one else will go, I will go out and fight with this enemy of the Lord's people."

They brought David before King Saul. Some years had passed since Saul had met David, and he had grown from a boy to a man, so that Saul did not know him as the shepherd who had played on the harp before him in other days.

Saul said to David, "You cannot fight with this giant. You are very young; and he is a man of war, trained from his youth."

And David answered King Saul, "I am only a shepherd, but I have fought with lions and bears, when they have tried to steal my sheep. And I am not afraid to fight with this Philistine. The Lord saved me from the lion's jaw and the bear's paw, and he will save me from this enemy, for I shall fight for the Lord and his people."

Then Saul put his own armor on David, a helmet on his head, and a coat of mail on his body, and a sword at his waist. But Saul was almost a giant, and his armor was far too large for David. David said:

"I am not used to fighting with such weapons as these. Let me fight in my own way."

So David took off Saul's armor; for David's plan to fight the giant did not need an armor, but did need a quick eye, a clear head, a sure aim, and a bold heart; and all these David had, for God had given them to him. David's plan was very wise. It was to make Goliath think that his enemy was too weak for him to be on his guard against him; and while so far away that the giant could not reach him with sword or spear, to strike him down with a weapon which the giant would not expect, and would not be prepared for.

David took his shepherd's staff in his hand, as though that were to be his weapon. But out of sight, in a bag under his mantle, he had five smooth stones carefully chosen, and a sling,—the weapon he knew how to use. Then he came out to meet the Philistine. The giant looked down on the youth and despised him, and laughed at him.

"Am I a dog," he said, "that this boy comes to me with a staff! I will give his body to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field."

And the Philistine cursed David by the gods of his people. And David answered him:

"You come against me with a sword and a spear and a dart; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel. This day will the Lord give you into my hand; I will strike you down, and take off your head; and the host of the Philistines shall be dead bodies, to be eaten by the birds and the beasts; so that all may know that there is a God in Israel, and that he can save in other ways besides with sword and spear."

And David ran toward the Philistine, as if to fight him with his shepherd's staff. But when he was just near enough for a good aim he took out his sling, and hurled a stone aimed at the giant's forehead. David's aim was good, the stone struck the Philistine in his forehead. It stunned him, and he fell to the ground.

While the two armies stood wondering, and scarcely knowing what had caused the giant to fall so suddenly, David ran forward, drew out the giant's own sword, and cut off his head.

Then the Philistines knew that their great warrior in whom they trusted was dead. They turned to fly back to their own land; and the Israelites followed after them, and killed them by the hundred and thousand, even to the gates of their own city of Gath.

So in that day David won a great victory; and stood before all the land as the one who had saved his people from their enemies.

**Elijah --------------------------------------------------------------**

After Jeroboam and Nadab, his son Baasha reigned as king of Israel. But he did as Jeroboam had done before him, disobeying the word of the Lord and worshipping idols. Therefore the Lord sent a prophet to Baasha, saying, "Thus saith the Lord to Baasha, king of Israel, I lifted you up from the dust and made you the prince over my people Israel. But you have walked in the way of Jeroboam, and have made Israel sin. Therefore your family shall be destroyed, like the family of Jeroboam."

When Baasha died, his son Elah became king; but while he was drinking wine and making himself drunk, his servant, Zimri, came in and killed him, and killed also all his family, and all the house of Baasha, so that not one was left.

Zimri tried to make himself king, but his reign was short, only seven days. Omri, the general of the Israelite army, made war upon him, and shut him up in his palace. When Zimri found that he could not escape, he set his palace on fire and was burned up with it. After this there was war in Israel between Omri and another man, named Tibni, each trying to win the kingdom. But at last Tibni was slain, and Omri became king.

Omri was not a good man, for he worshipped idols, like the kings before him. But he was a strong king, and made his kingdom great. He made peace with the kingdom of Judah, for there had been war between Judah and Israel ever since Jeroboam had founded the kingdom. Omri bought a hill in the middle of the land, from a man named Shemer; and on the hill he built a city which he named Samaria, after the name of the man from whom he had bought the hill. The city of Samaria became in Israel what Jerusalem was in Judah, the chief city and capital. Before the time of Omri the kings of Israel had lived in different cities, sometimes in Shechem, and sometimes in Tirzah; but after Omri all the kings lived in Samaria; so that the kingdom itself was often called "the kingdom of Samaria."

After Omri came his son, Ahab, as king of Israel, reigning in Samaria. He was worse than any of the kings before him. Ahab took for his wife Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Zidon, on the coast of the Great Sea; and Jezebel brought into Israel the worship of Baal and of the Asherah, which was far more wicked than even the worship of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan. And Jezebel was so bitter against the worship of the Lord God of Israel that she sought out the prophets of the Lord everywhere, and slew them; so that to save their lives the prophets hid in caves among the mountains.

You remember that when Joshua destroyed and burned the city of Jericho, he spoke a curse, in the name of the Lord, upon any man who should ever build again the walls of Jericho. In the days of Ahab, king of Israel, five hundred years after Joshua, the walls of Jericho were built by a man named Hiel, who came from Bethel, the place of the idol-temple. When he laid the foundation of the wall his oldest son, Abiram, died; and when he set up the gates of the city his youngest son, Segub, died. Thus came to pass the word of the Lord spoken by Joshua.

In the reign of King Ahab a great prophet suddenly rose up, named Elijah. He came from the land of Gilead, beyond the river Jordan, and he lived alone out in the wilderness. His clothing was a mantle of skin, and his hair and beard were long and rough. Without any warning, Elijah came into the presence of King Ahab, and said, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not fall upon the ground any dew or rain until I call for it."

And then he went away as suddenly as he had come. At the Lord's command he hid himself in a wild place by the brook Cherith, which flows down from the mountains into the river Jordan. There he drank of the water in the brook, and every day the wild birds, the ravens, brought him food.

It came to pass as Elijah had said, that no rain fell upon the land, and there was not even any dew upon the grass. Every day the brook from which Elijah drank grew smaller, until at last it was dry, and there was no water. Then the Lord spoke to Elijah again, and said, "Rise up, and go to Zarephath, which is near to Zidon, by the Great Sea, on the north of the land of Israel. I have commanded a widow woman there to care for you."

So Elijah left the brook Cherith and walked northward through the land until he came near to the city of Zarephath. There, beside the gate of the city, he saw a woman dressed as a widow picking up sticks. Elijah said to her, "Will you bring to me some water, that I may drink?"

She went to bring him the water, and Elijah said again, "Bring me also, I pray you, a little piece of bread to eat."

And the woman said to Elijah, "As sure as the Lord your God lives, I have not in the house even a loaf of bread; but only one handful of meal in the barrel, and a little oil in a bottle; and now I am gathering a few sticks to make a fire, that I may bake it for me and my son; and when we have eaten it, there is nothing left for us but to die."

Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah, and he said to the woman, "Fear not; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake, and bring it to me, and afterward make for yourself and your son. For thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, 'The barrel of meal shall not waste nor the bottle of oil fail, until the day when the Lord sends rain upon the earth.' "

And the widow woman believed Elijah's word. She took from her barrel the meal and from her bottle the oil, and made a little cake for the prophet, and then found enough left for herself and for her son. And the barrel always had meal in it, and the bottle held oil every day. And the prophet, and the woman, and her son had food as long as they needed it.

After this, one day the son of the widow was taken very ill, and his illness was so great that there was no breath left in him. The boy's mother said to Elijah, "O man of God! Have you come here to cause my son to die?"

And Elijah said to her, "Give me your son."

And Elijah carried the boy up to his own room, and laid him on the bed. Then he cried to the Lord, and said, "O Lord God, hast thou brought trouble upon this woman, by taking away the life of her son?"

Then he stretched himself upon the child's body three times, and cried to the Lord again, "O Lord God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again!"

And the Lord heard Elijah's prayer, and the child became living once more. Then Elijah carried the living boy back to his mother; and she said, "Now I am sure that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord which you speak is the truth."

**Jonah and the “Whale” --------------------------------------------------------------**

though Syria went down, another nation was now rising to power, Assyria, on the eastern side of the river Tigris. Its capital was Nineveh, a great city, so vast that it would take three days for a man to walk around its walls. The Assyrians were beginning to conquer all the lands near them, and Israel was in danger of falling under their power. At this time another prophet, named Jonah, was giving the word of the Lord to the Israelites. To Jonah the Lord spoke, saying, "Go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it, for its wickedness rises up before me."

But Jonah did not wish to preach to the people of Nineveh, for they were the enemies of his land, the land of Israel. He wished Nineveh to die in its sins, and not to turn to God and live. So Jonah tried to go away from the city where God had sent him. He went down to Joppa, upon the shore of the Great Sea. There he found a ship about to sail to Tarshish, far away in the west. He paid the fare, and went on board, intending to go as far as possible from Nineveh.

But the Lord saw Jonah on the ship, and the Lord sent a great storm upon the sea, so that the ship seemed as though it would go in pieces. The sailors threw overboard everything on the ship, and when they could do no more, every man prayed to his god to save the ship and themselves. Jonah was now lying fast asleep under the deck of the ship, and the ship's captain came to him, and said, "What do you mean by sleeping in such a time as this? Awake, rise up, and call upon your God. Perhaps your God will hear you, and will save our lives."

But the storm continued to rage around the ship, and they said, "There is some man on this ship who has brought upon us this trouble. Let us cast lots, and find who it is."

Then they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. They said to him, all at once, "Tell us, who are you? From what country do you come? What is your business? To what people do you belong? Why have you brought all this trouble upon us?" Then Jonah told them the whole story: how he came from the land of Israel, and that he had fled away from the presence of the Lord. And they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the storm may cease?" Then Jonah said, "Take me up, and throw me into the sea; then the storm will cease, and the waters will be calm; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you."

But the men were not willing to throw Jonah into the sea. They rowed hard to bring the ship to land, but they could not. Then they cried unto the Lord, and said, "We pray thee, O Lord, we pray thee, let us not die for this man's life; for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee." At last, when they could do nothing else to save themselves, they threw Jonah into the sea. At once the storm ceased, and the waves became still. Then the men on the ship feared the Lord greatly. They offered a sacrifice to the Lord, and made promises to serve him.

And the Lord caused a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was alive within the fish for three days and three nights. Long afterward, when Jesus was on the earth, he said that as Jonah was three days inside the fish, so he would be three days in the earth; so Jonah in the fish was like a prophecy of Christ. In the fish Jonah cried to the Lord; and the Lord heard his prayer, and caused the great fish to throw up Jonah upon the dry land.

By this time Jonah had learned that some men who worshipped idols were kind in their hearts, and were dear to the Lord. This was the lesson that God meant Jonah to learn; and now the call of the Lord came to Jonah a second time.

"Arise; go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it what I command you."

So Jonah went to the city of Nineveh, and as he entered into it, he called out to the people, "Within forty days shall Nineveh be destroyed." And he walked through the city all day, crying out only this, "Within forty days shall Nineveh be destroyed."

And the people of Nineveh believed the word of the Lord as spoken by Jonah. They turned away from their sins, and fasted, and sought the Lord, from the greatest of them even to the least. The king of Nineveh arose from his throne, and laid aside his royal robes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes, as a sign of his sorrow. And the king sent out a command to his people, that they should fast, and seek the Lord, and turn from sin.

And God saw that the people of Nineveh were sorry for their wickedness, and he forgave them, and did not destroy their city. But this made Jonah very angry. He did not wish to have Nineveh spared, because it was the enemy of his own land, and also he feared that men would call him a false prophet when his word did not come to pass. And Jonah said to the Lord:

"O Lord, I was sure that it would be thus, that thou wouldest spare the city; and for that reason I tried to flee away; for I knew that thou wast a gracious God, full of pity, slow to anger, and rich in mercy. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

And Jonah went out of the city, and built a little hut on the east side of it, and sat under its roof, to see whether God would keep the word that he had spoken. Then the Lord caused a plant with thick leaves called a gourd to grow up, and to shade Jonah from the sun; and Jonah was glad, and sat under its shadow. But a worm destroyed the plant; and the next day a hot wind blew, and Jonah suffered from the heat; and again Jonah wished that he might die. And the Lord said to Jonah, "You were sorry to see the plant die, though you did not make it grow, and though it came up in a night and died in a night. And should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city, where are more than a hundred thousand little children, and also many cattle, all helpless and knowing nothing?"

And Jonah learned that men, and women, and little children, are all precious in the sight of the Lord, even though they know not God.

In most of the books of the Old Testament, we read of the Israelite people, and of God's care of them; but we do not find in the Old Testament much about God as the Father of all men of every nation and every land. The book of Jonah stands almost alone in the Old Testament, as showing that God loves people of other nations than Israel. Even the people of Nineveh, who worshipped images, were under God's love; God was ready to hear their prayer and to save them. So the book of Jonah shows us God as "our heavenly Father."