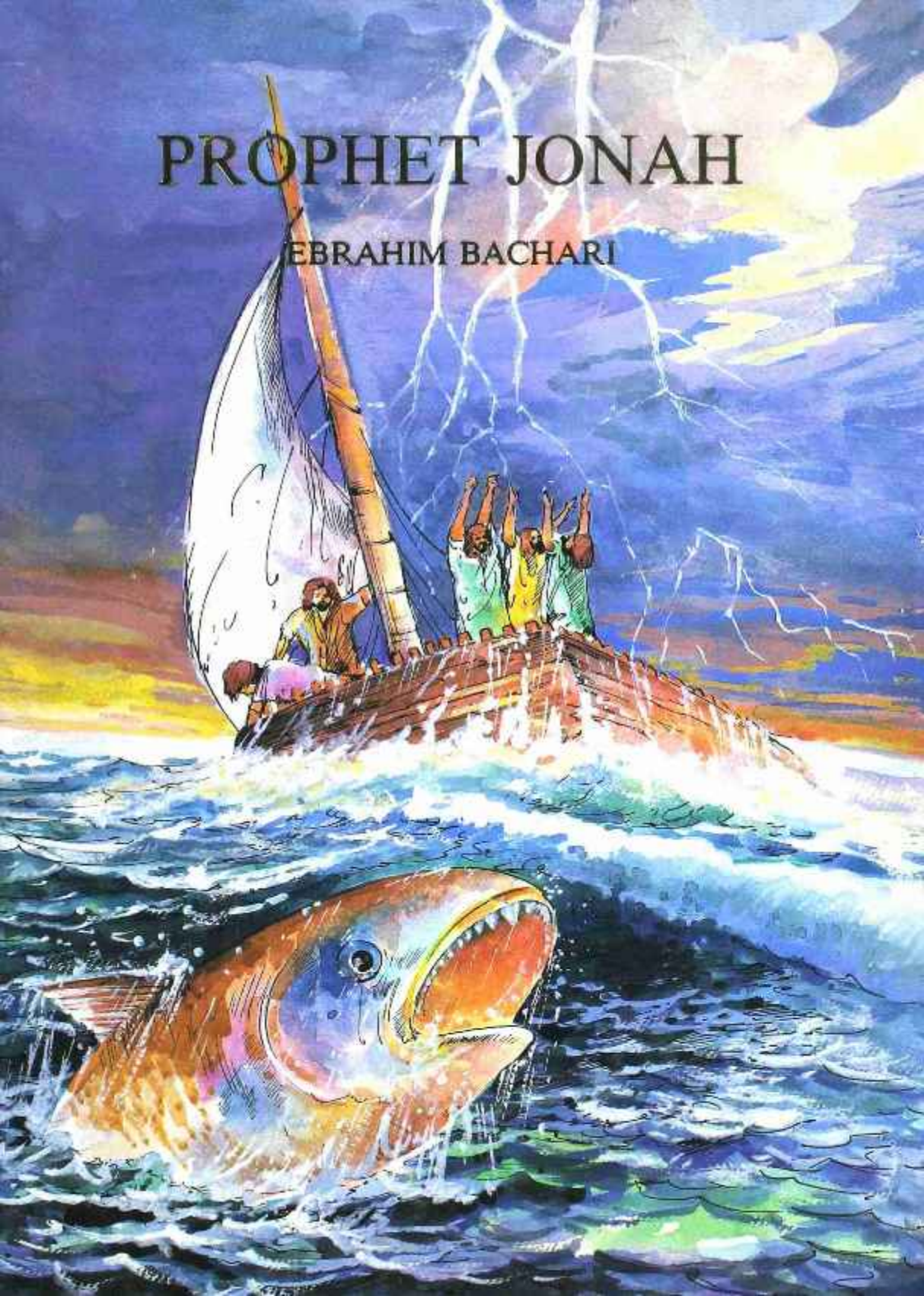


PROPHET JONAH

EBRAHIM BACHARI



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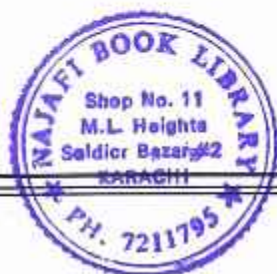
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PROPHET JONAH

by

Ebrahim Bachari

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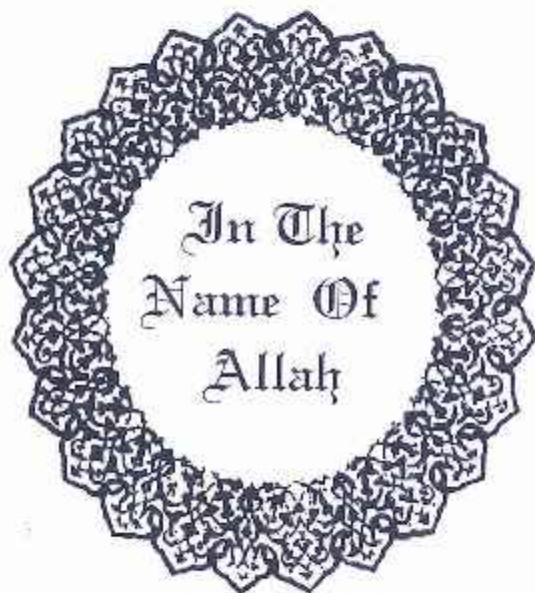
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In The
Name Of
Allah

Many years ago Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was a great and populous city. Its population reached approximately one hundred thousand people.

The people of Nineveh who were the Children of Israel, worshipped God, but as time passed, they went astray and forgot their Lord and became wrongdoers disobeying the commands of God. Eventually immorality and corruption prevailed in Nineveh and indeed in the whole country.

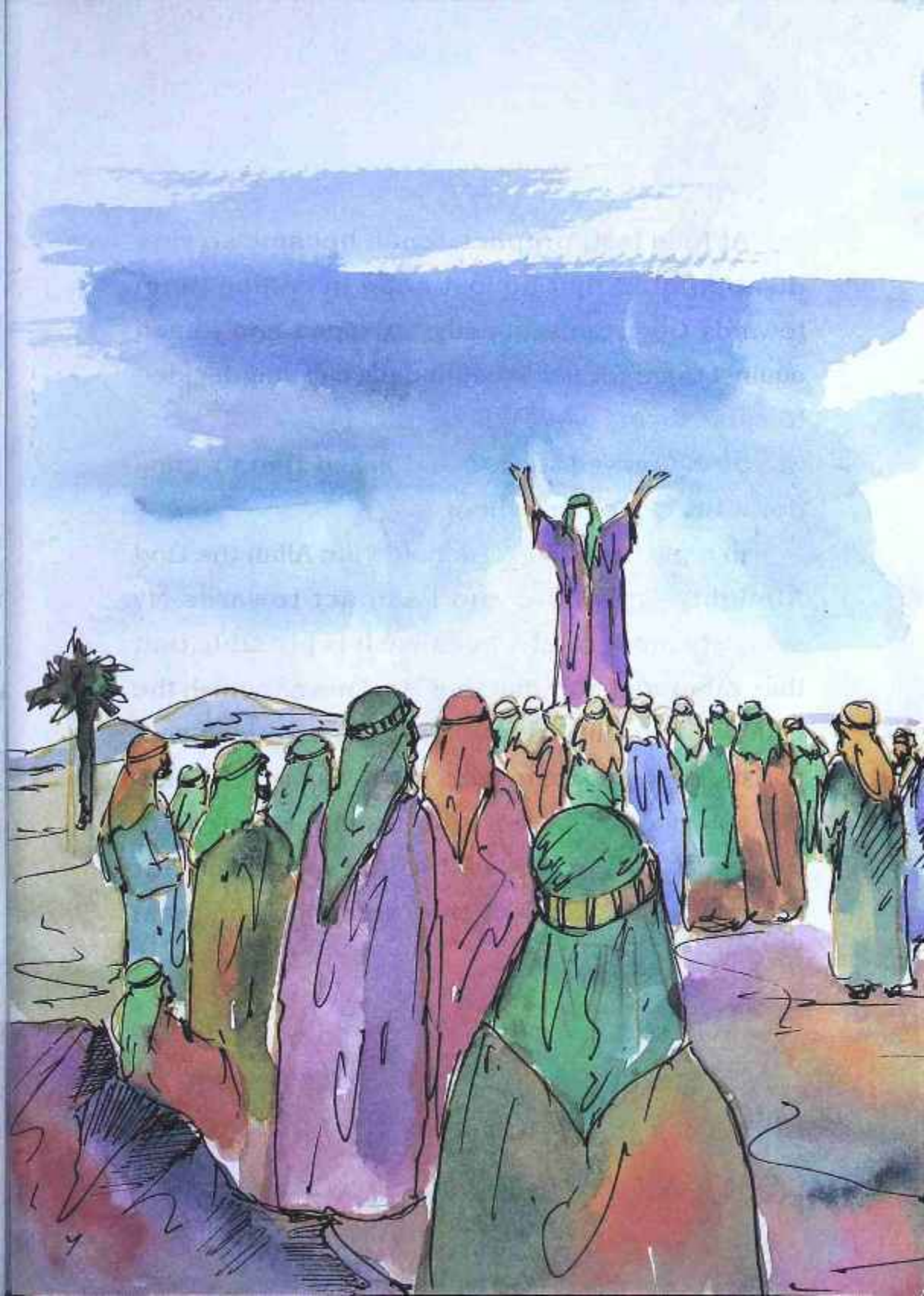
The people of Nineveh had become idol worshipers. They had forgotten God the One Who created the earth and the heavens and everything else in between. They were lost in their deviant

ways. It was at this time that God appointed Jonah as His prophet to go to Nineveh to call these misled people to Monotheism and show them the straight path so as to save them from punishment.

Prophet Jonah was therefore sent as one of God's Messengers to the Children of Israel. He went to Nineveh and called the people to God, he warned them of His chastisement and commanded them to stop their bad deeds which had caused God's wrath.

He would summon the people and would preach to them, but they would not listen to him and would not stop their bad deeds. Prophet Jonah continued to remind them of God's punishment and always wanted them to worship God alone.

Try as much as he may, they would not take heed and listen to his words and no one cared to answer his call.



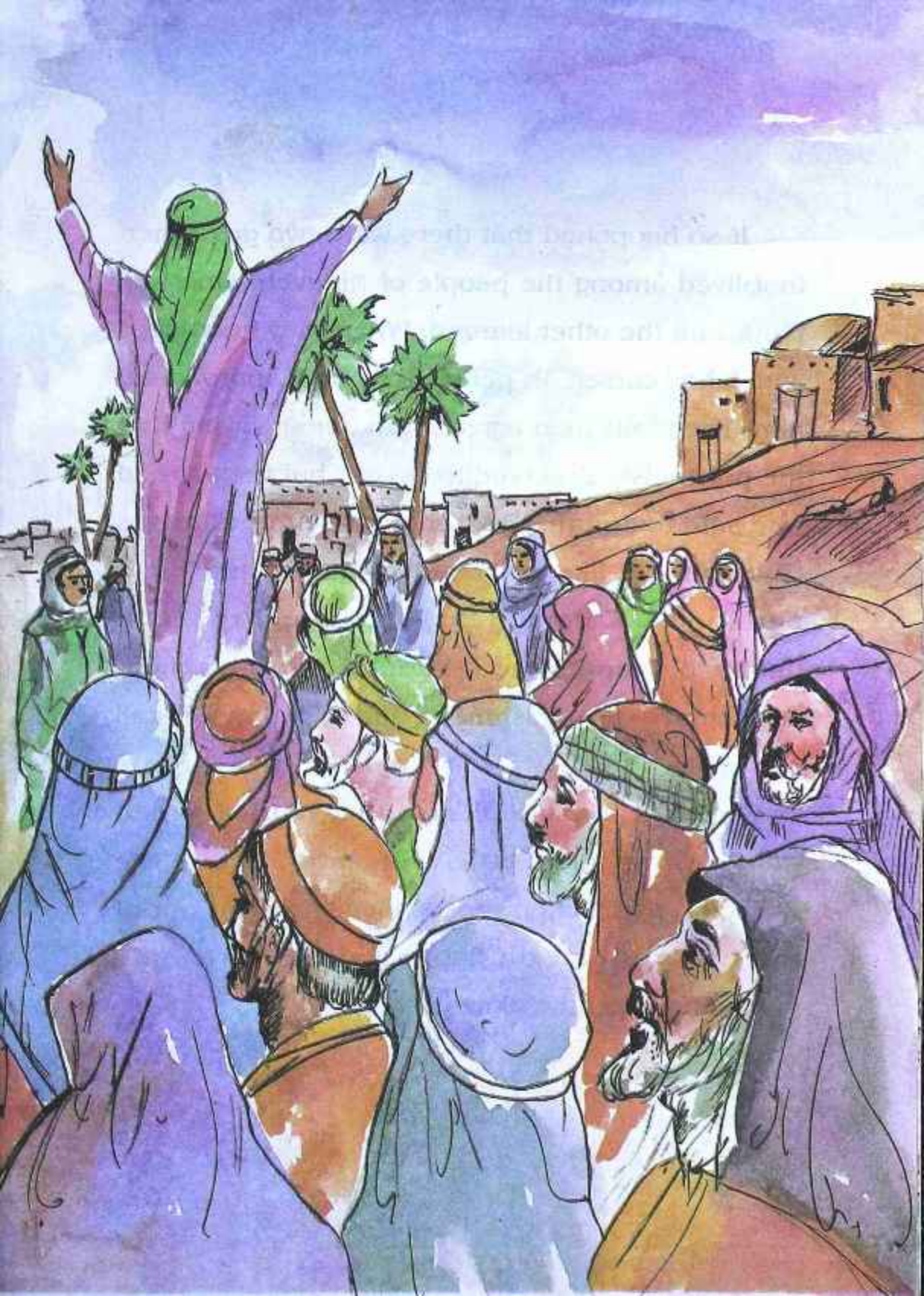
At long last, prophet Jonah became so very disappointed that he lost hope in calling them towards God. Consequently, he raged and fumed against them for not accepting his call and decided to curse them.

So he prayed to God and asked Him to bring down His curse upon them.

In reply God said, "O Jonah! I am Allah the God Almighty and Wise, and I will act towards My servants moderately, because it is possible that they may repent of what they do. I never punish the children because of what their parents do. I sent you to those people to guide them to the right path but you did not forbear and asked me instead to punish them. However, I will respond to your prayer. My chastisement shall descend upon them by dawn."

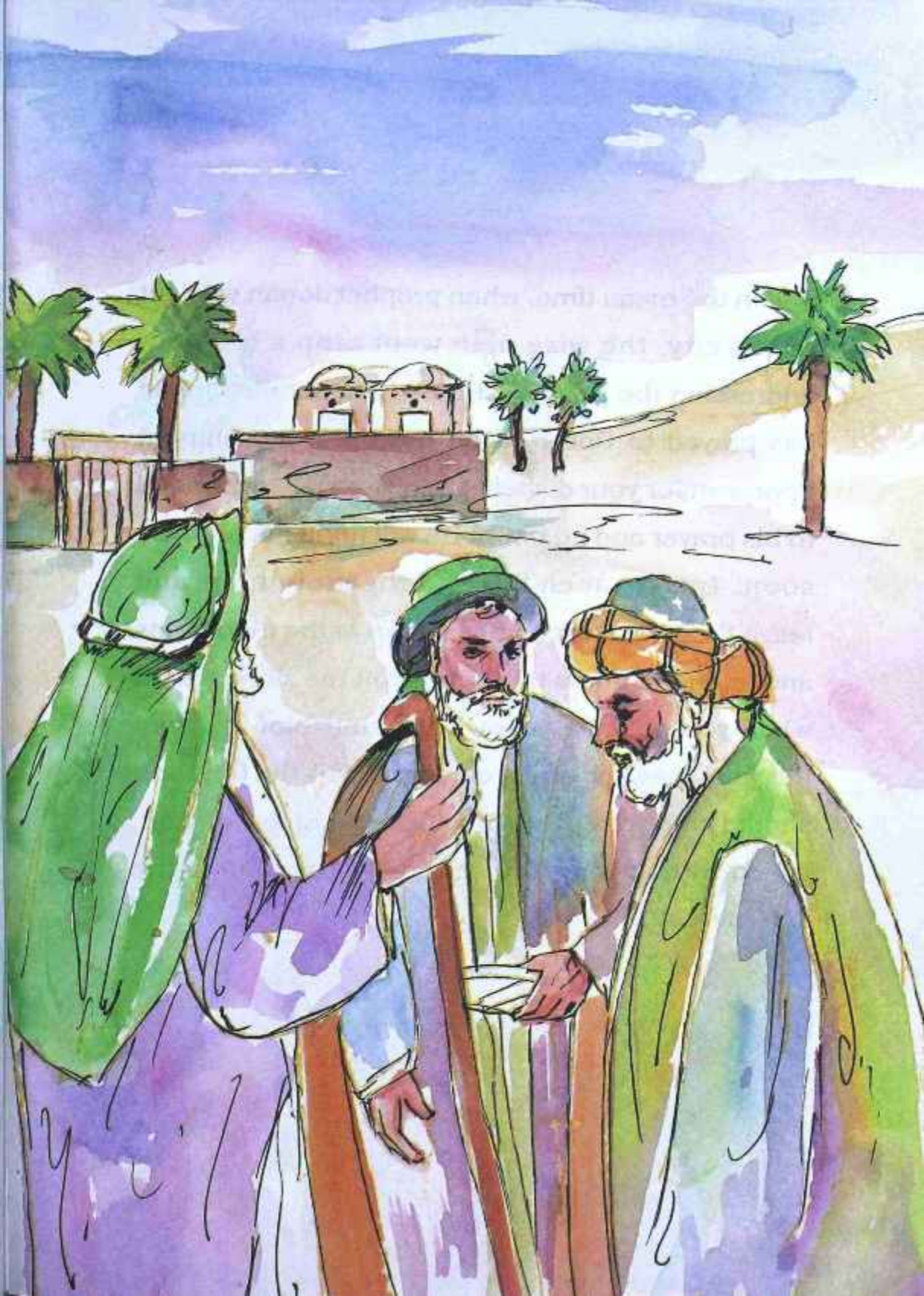


Prophet Jonah then declared to his people, "O people! God had sent me to you to show you the straight path and warn you of your bad deeds and call you to Monotheism, but despite all my efforts you did not answer my call. You left me no choice but to curse you and now God has responded to my prayer and His chastisement will descend upon you by dawn."

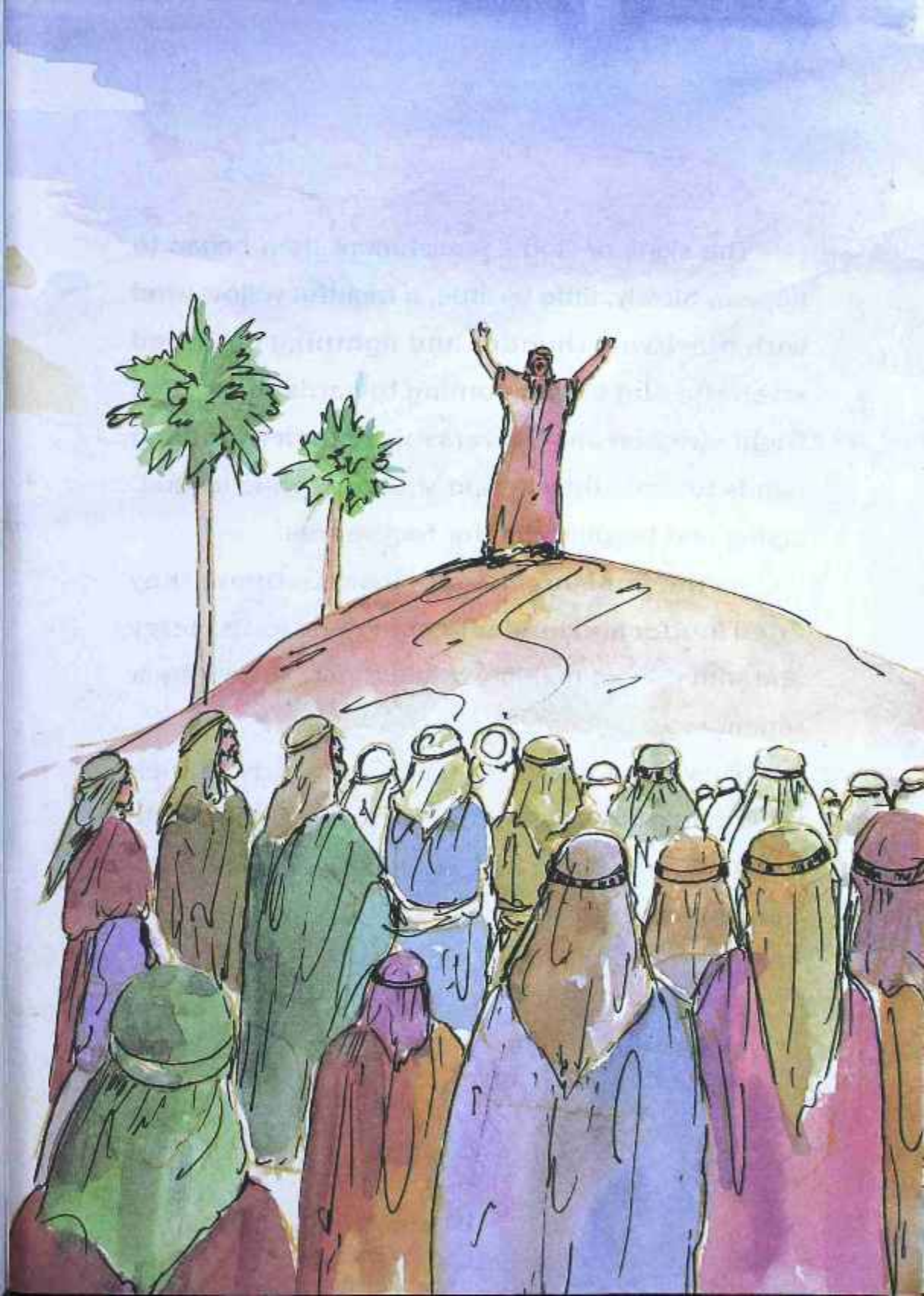


It so happened that there were two great men that lived among the people of Nineveh. One was pious and the other learned. When they heard that Jonah had cursed his people they both approached him. The pious man agreed with Jonah saying that the polytheists deserved to perish, but the learned one said to Jonah, "Do not curse your people as God does not like to put any of His creatures into perdition.", "O Jonah! Do you not realize that if people did repent, God is bound to forgive them and remove His punishment, and then they will call you a liar."

Prophet Jonah took no notice of the learned man's words and a little while later, before the expected punishment descended, he went out of the city and sat on a hill waiting for God's punishment to take place .



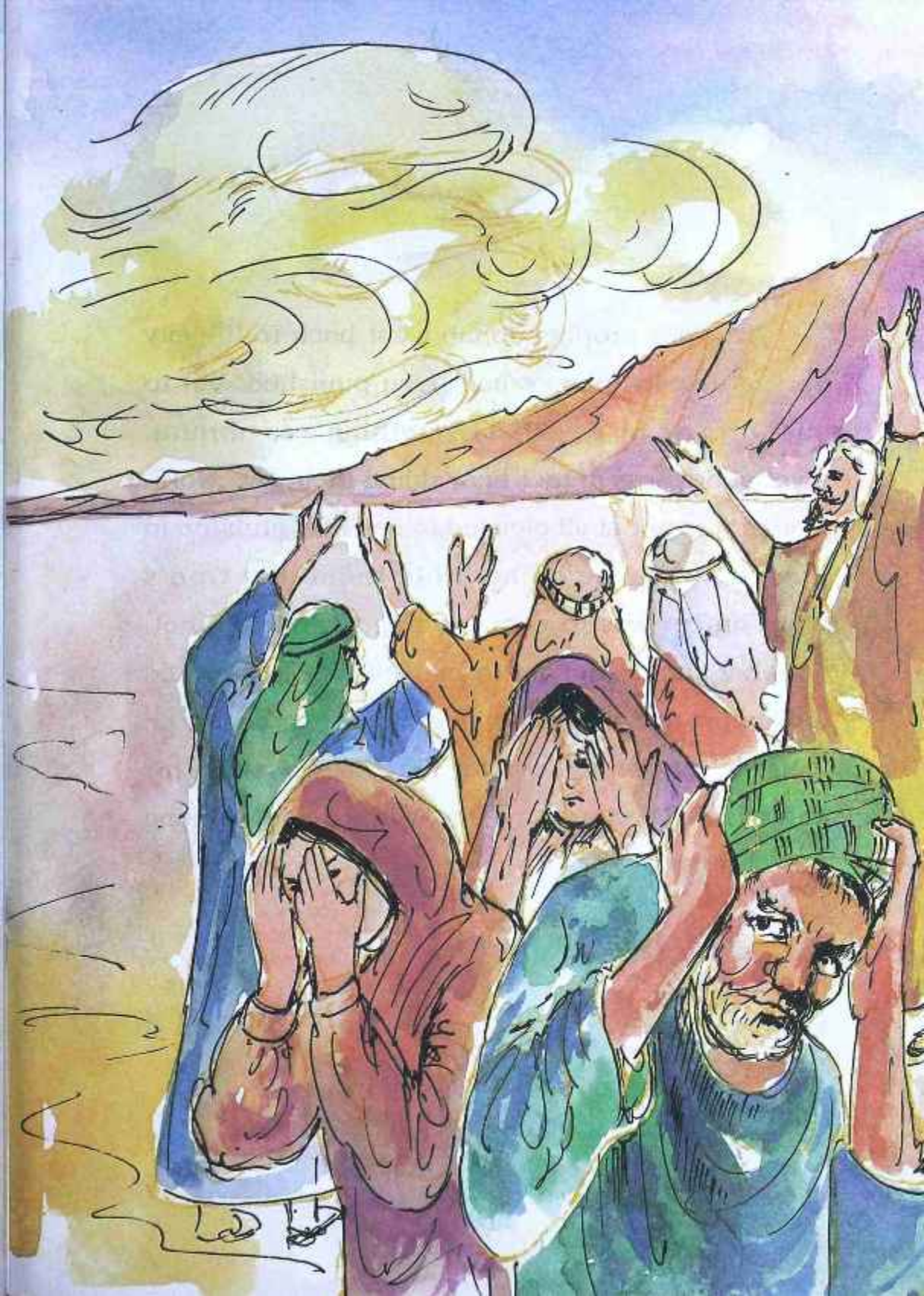
In the mean time, when prophet Jonah was out of the city, the wise man went atop a hill and, addressing the people, shouted, "O people! Jonah has prayed to God to send down His punishment upon you for your disbelief and God has responded to his prayer and no doubt He will fulfill His promise soon. Take your children to the mountains and leave them in between the cracks of the mountains and let the mothers take refuge on the slopes; then when you notice a yellow wind start blowing from the west, howling and groaning, that is the time you should start to repent. Beg the forgiveness of God, crying with all sincerity, and do not stop until the sun has set."



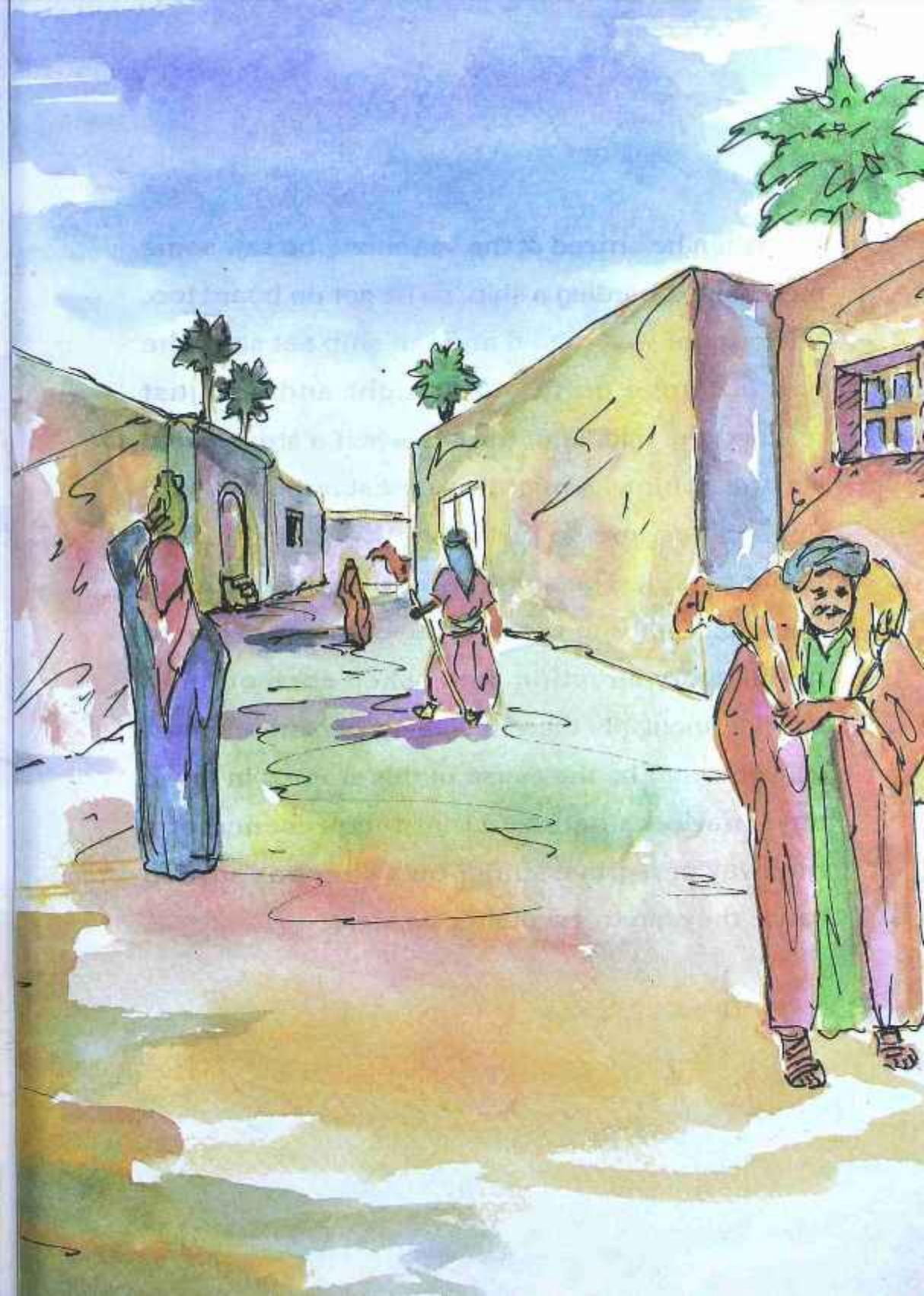
The signs of God's punishment then began to appear. Slowly, little by little, a frightful yellow wind with horrifying thunder and lightning gathered strength, and began coming towards them. The fright stricken unbelievers raised their trembling hands towards the sky and started praying to God, crying and begging Him for forgiveness.

As the punishment got closer to them, they cried louder and louder begging for God's Mercy and with utmost humility asked Him to accept their repentance.

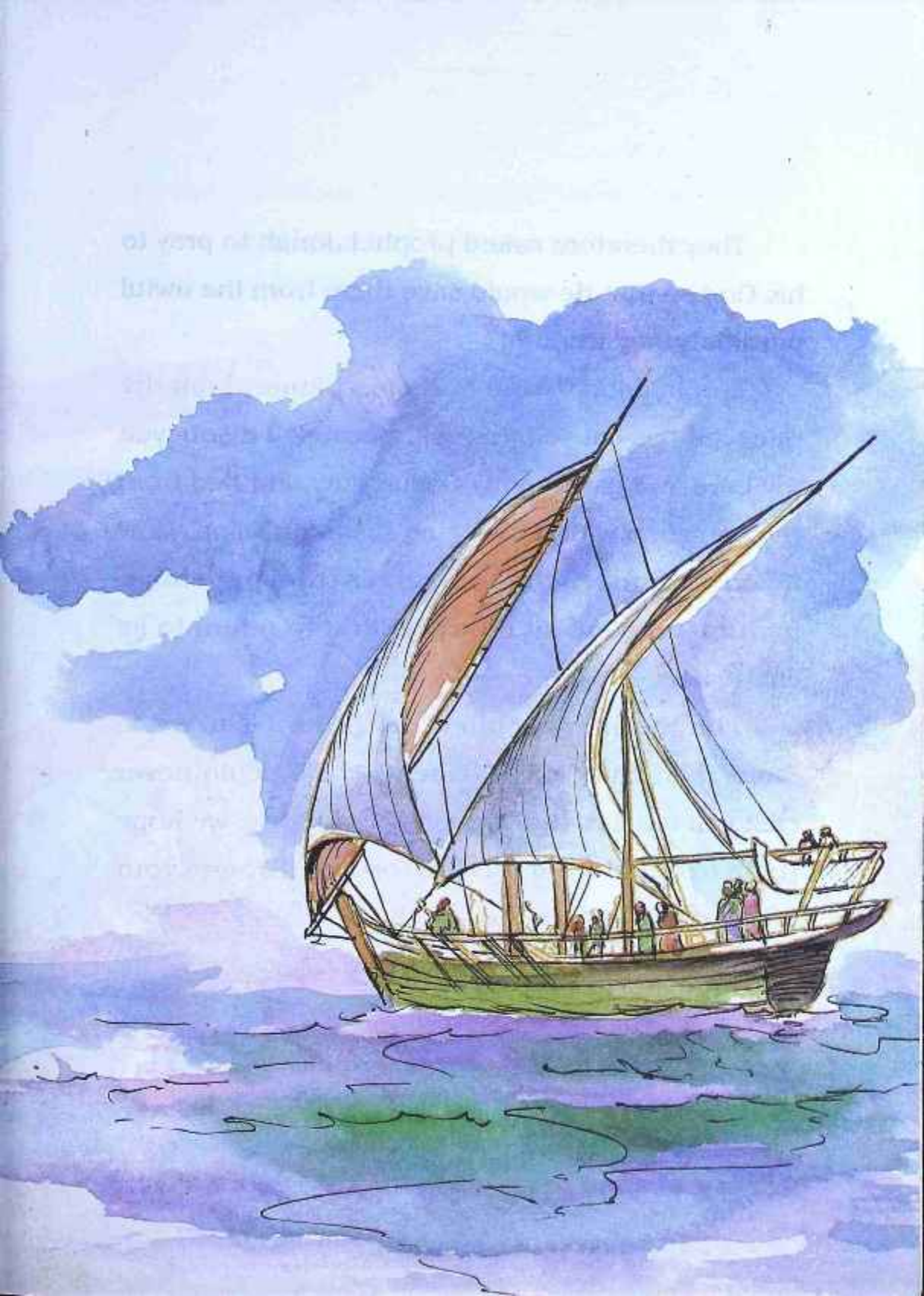
They cried and cried until God accepted their repentance and ceased the punishment that was to descend upon them and instead diverted it to the mountains of Mosul.



Next day prophet Jonah went back to the city to see how his people had been punished, but to his surprise he saw that everything was normal. Every body was in fact busy doing their own work. Jonah was not at all pleased to see this situation in the city because he had told them that God's punishment was to come to them and it did not. Prophet Jonah thought to himself that they would now most certainly call him a liar; so, in anger, he fled the city setting out for the sea, forsaking his duties as a Messenger of God without even seeking His permission.



When he arrived at the sea shore, he saw some merchants boarding a ship, so he got on board too. The anchor was raised and the ship set sail. She had not gone quite out of sight and had just reached the middle of the sea when a strong wind started to blow. A mighty tempest appeared and the sea became so turbulent that the ship was about to sink. The shipmaster and the mariners became frightened and confused. They began to run in every direction, and asked each other in bewilderment, "Is there a sinning person amongst us who could be the cause of this storm?" In those days mariners believed that the presence of a runaway or a grave sinner on a ship was sure to cause the ship to encounter danger.

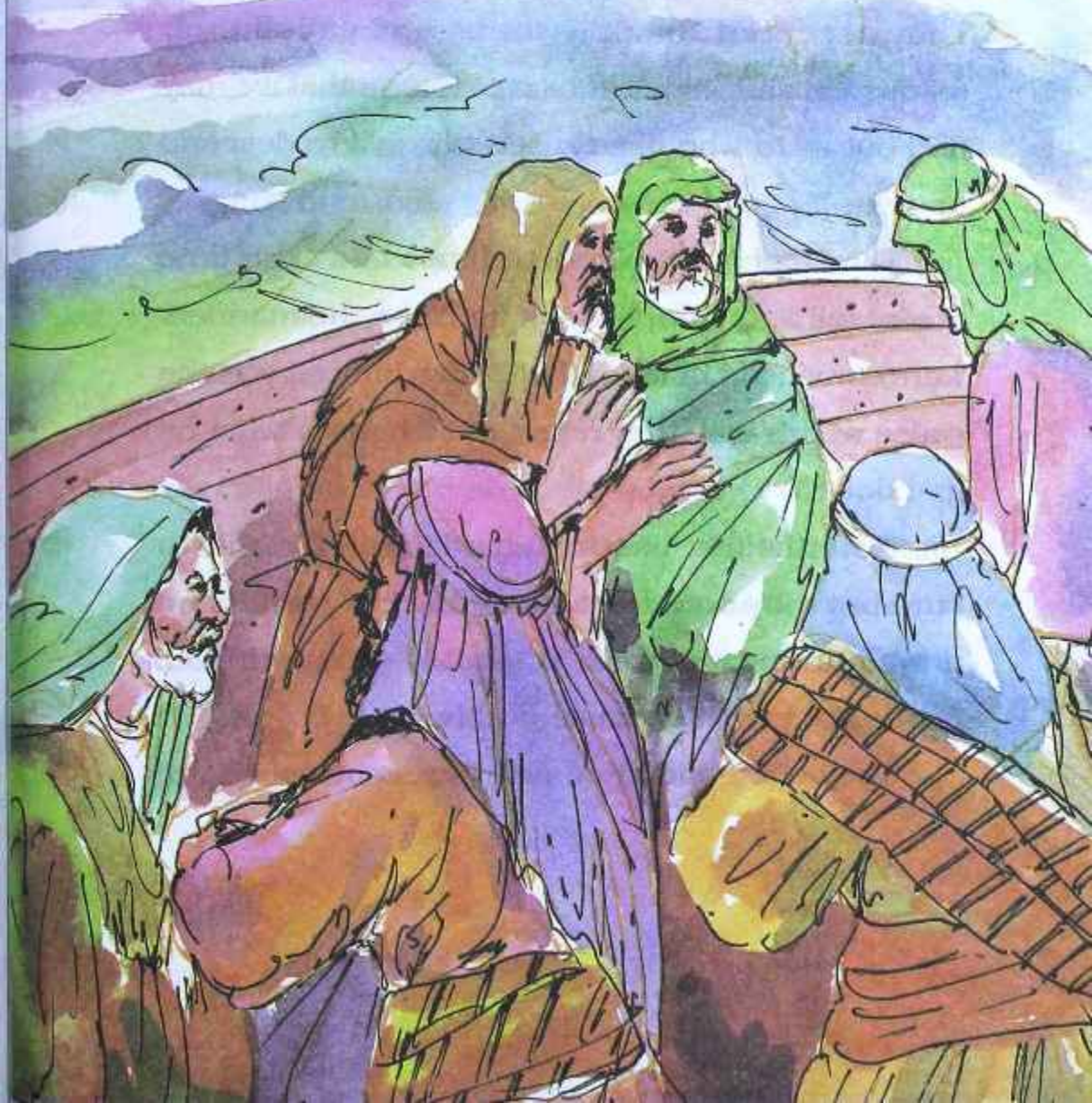


They therefore asked prophet Jonah to pray to his God so that He would save them from the awful perdition they were in.

Prophet Jonah said to them, "I know, I am the one who has caused this evil, because I disobeyed my Lord and gave up my Divine duty and fled from His presence without seeking His permission. Now if you want to rescue yourselves from perishing, then cast me out into the sea for it to return to its calm state."

The mariners replied, "O Jonah! You are a pious man and God's Messenger. We could never cast you out into the sea. On the contrary, we hope to be rescued from this misfortune through your blessed prayer."

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Prophet Jonah then said, "You will never be saved from sinking unless you cast me out into the sea. However, if you have any doubt about this, then cast lots to see upon whom the lot will fall." They accepted Jonah's words, and called their fellowmen and said, "Let us cast lots so that we may find out as to who has caused this evil to descend upon us."

They then cast lots three times and each time the lot fell upon prophet Jonah. When the mariners were convinced that prophet Jonah himself was the cause of this evil, they reproached him for what he had done.

Nevertheless, they tried hard to row the ship to land but they could not succeed. They cried and prayed to God and said, "O Lord! We beseech You. Let us not perish because of this man."

They cried and cried and beseeched the Lord

but to no avail. At last, they decided to cast prophet Jonah into the sea. Although they hated doing it, they had little choice, they were just about to sink and the prophet himself had insisted that he be cast into the sea. Soon after they cast him into the sea it became calm, and they thanked God for saving them from destruction.

Just then a big fish appeared and swallowed up prophet Jonah. God commanded the fish saying, "O Fish! Jonah is not your bait but We have made your belly a prison for him. Therefore, you must take good care of him and treat him with the same affection as a mother would treat her child."

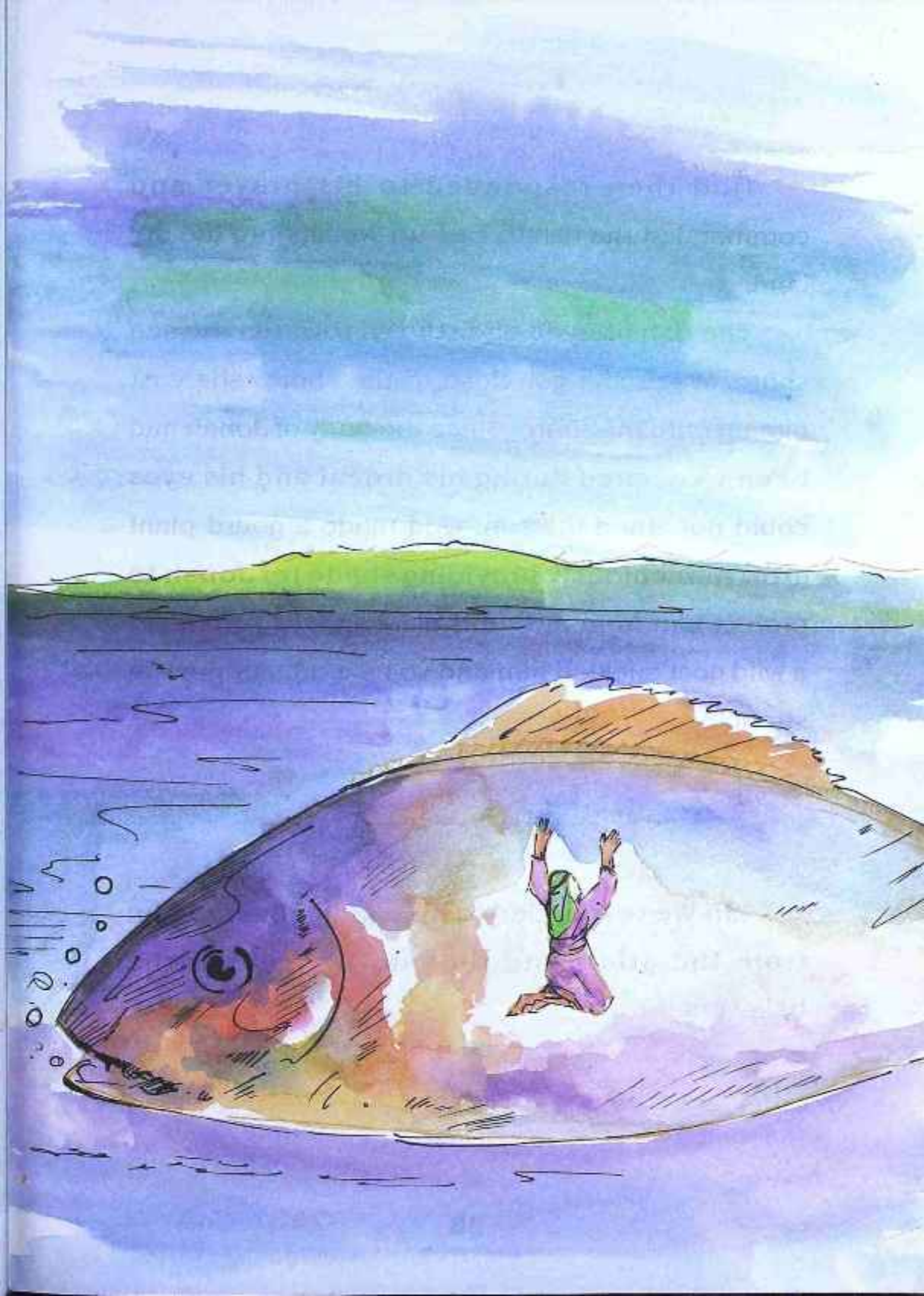
The fish in obedience to the Divine Command would take its head constantly out of the water so that prophet Jonah could breathe fresh air, and it did not shut its mouth so as not to cause him shortness of breath.

Prophet Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three nights and during all that time he did not have anything except water to drink. He would blame his own soul because of what he had done and would pray to God begging Him humbly for forgiveness.

God says:

وَذَا التُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغْضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ
أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

"When Jonah went away in wrath, he thought that We would not straiten him, so he called out among afflictions: There is no god but You, glory be to You, surely I am of those who make themselves to suffer loss."



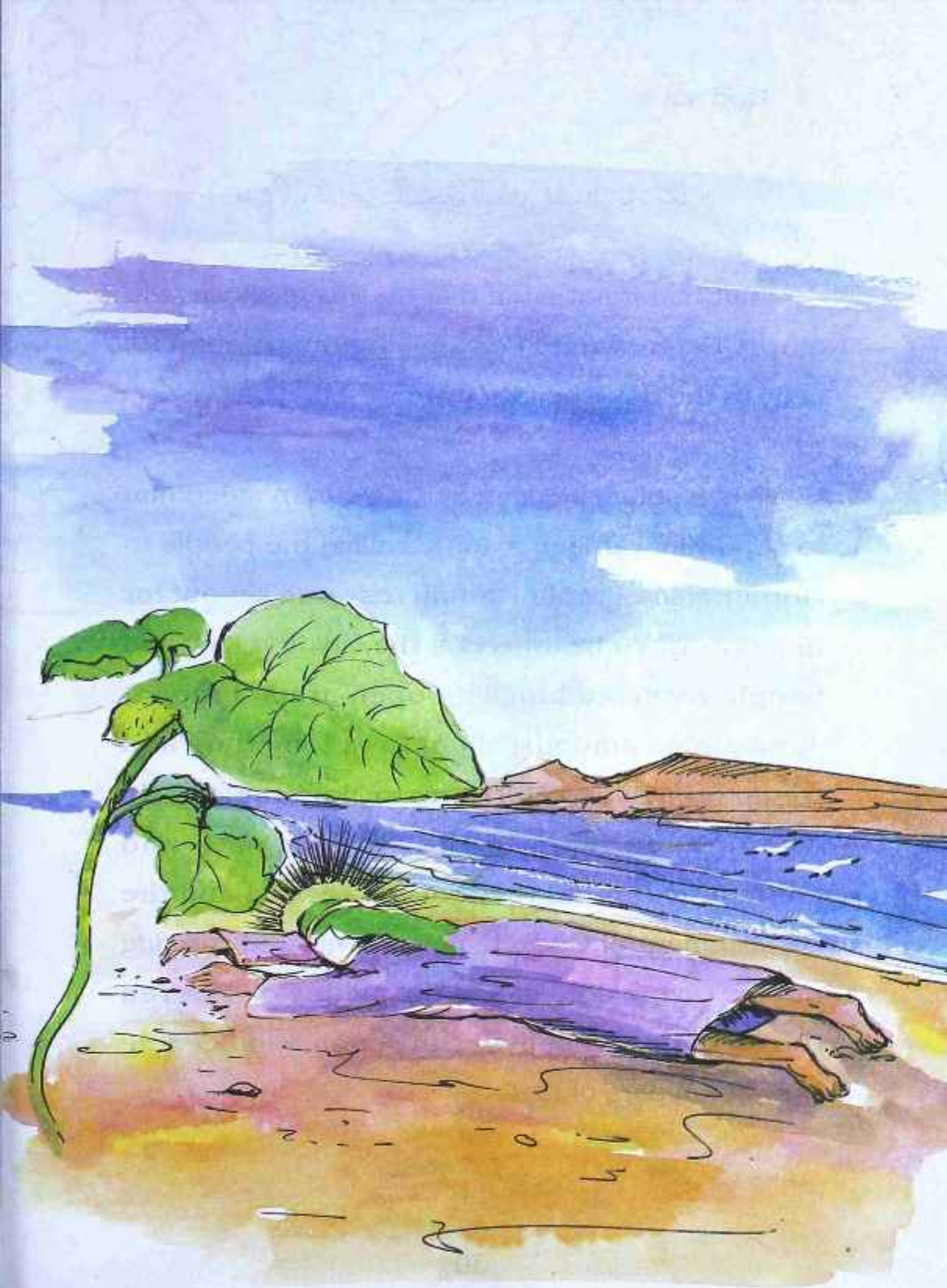
God then responded to his prayer and commanded the fish to cast up Jonah onto the dry land.

The fish obeyed and started towards the sea shore. When she got close to the shore, she cast him up onto the shore. Since the body of Jonah had been weakened during his ordeal and his eyes could not stand the sun, God made a gourd plant grow miraculously providing shade for Jonah to protect him from the sun's glare. By His command a wild goat suckled him and so he gradually grew in strength.

God says:

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَخَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَكَذَلِكَ نُنْجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

"So We responded to him and delivered him from the grief, and thus do We deliver the believers."

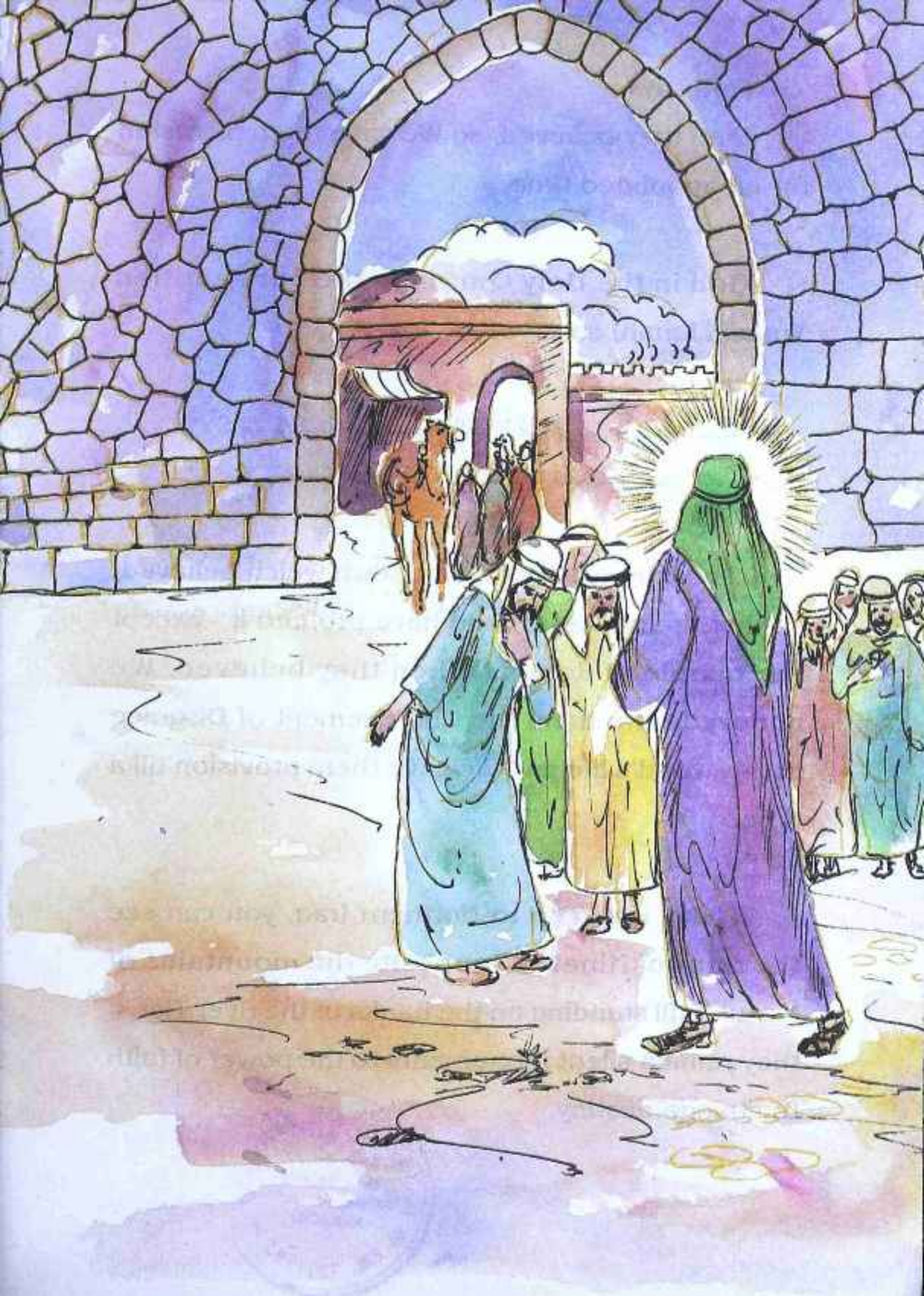


God says:

فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ لَلِئْتِ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُعْتَدُونَ

"But had it not been that he was of those who glorify Us, he would certainly have tarried in its belly to the day when they are raised."

When Jonah became fit, God commanded him to go to Nineveh and resume calling the people to Monotheism. Prophet Jonah rose and set out for Nineveh. When he arrived at the city, the king and people received him with open arms. Prophet Jonah lived amongst them for a long time and would preach and call them to Monotheism. He would guide them to the straight path and constantly remind them of the reward and the chastisement of God. He never neglected carrying out his Divine duties, and the people of Nineveh too on their part believed in Jonah and became true worshipers of God.



God says:

"And they believed, so We gave them provision for an appointed time."

God in the Holy Qur'an in the Sura entitled Yunus (Jonah) says:

فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ ءَامَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَا إِيمَانُهَا إِلَّا قَوْمَ يُونُسَ لَمَّا ءَامَنُوا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَ مَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ

"And why was there not a town which believed, so that their belief should have profited it - except the people of Jonah? When they believed, We removed from them the Chastisement of Disgrace in this world's life and We gave them provision till a time."

Today if you go to Northern Iraq, you can see the ruins of Nineveh, opposite the mountains of Mosul. Still standing on the banks of the river Tigris, they remain silent monuments to the power of faith to change destiny.



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