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Late in the afternoon of Yom Kippur, deep into our chosen fast, we read the book of Jonah (Yonah in Hebrew). It is a magnificent story whose themes and characters have resonated with writers and artists over the millennia, and whose lines have been mined for nuggets of wisdom about the myriad ways we are to learn, repent, and change. (For a primer on the story, please see the box on page 2.) In this issue, we draw upon some of the themes of the book and stretch them out — as an artist might stretch out a canvas before beginning to paint. Several essays explore the theme of *teshuvah*, including Jonah's complicated response to mercy and the search for justice. Jonah is often described as a reluctant prophet, and we include two essays that address prophecy, including one on how prophets can both distort and amplify the voices of democracy. Jonah's experience of fleeing and then finding himself in the belly of the fish raises questions about incarceration, and we include the voice of a woman in prison for decades grappling with the text, her guilt, and forgiveness. We also include pieces that explore minor themes of the book: What can it teach us about gratitude and loneliness, for instance? One educator recounts the story of Jonah through a child's imagination and another sees it through a teenager's angst; a scientist suggests how we might understand "chance" in light of the story. Several essays touch on a vision of Judaism that is outward looking, that emphasizes mutuality and doesn't see the world divided between "us" and "them." Once again, we've asked four poets to collaborate on a poem — this year drawing inspiration from a verse in Jonah about giving thanks. Remember to make use of our discussion guide (p. 20) to stimulate discussion in your community.

Our back page re-launches our yearlong ethics series — now focusing on democracy. Among the themes we'll address this year are: How can we reconcile Jewish law and Israeli law? What are the limitations of democracy? What is the relationship of money to the democratic process? Must citizens always accept all decisions made by a democratically elected government?

If you are not a subscriber, please consider becoming one. The journal is the perfect conversation-starter for small salons, larger community events, or discussions around any Jewish table. A subscription envelope is included. Questions? Please feel free to contact me at [SBerrin@shma.com](mailto:SBerrin@shma.com).

After reading this issue, we invite you to log on to our recently-launched S-blog ([shma.com](http://shma.com)) and join those who are taking this conversation about Jonah, its meaning, and its wisdom even further.

— *Shana tova u'metukah*, Susan Berrin, Editor-in-Chief

## How Can You Sleep?

ED FEINSTEIN

Once upon a time, there was a man named Jonah who constructed a cozy world neatly divided into clean binary terms: us/them; our people/those people; insiders/outsideers. Jonah enjoyed the security of knowing exactly who he was because he knew precisely who he wasn't. He drew a comfortable sense of self from a carefully constructed image of the "other." He had a precisely defined sense of his duties, and an unambiguous sense of his boundaries. He knew to whom he owed concern, and exactly where his concern ended.

Then, one day, God appeared to Jonah and shattered his world. In God, there is a unity beneath the divisions, wholeness behind disjunction: you and me, us and them, ours and theirs. Though separated on the surface, we are deeply connected within. The boundaries of self, God insists, must include the other. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote from the Birmingham Jail: "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

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