

# Surrendering the Small Self

קַח־נָא אֶת־נַפְשִׁי מִמֶּנִּי

Kach-na et-nafshi mimeni

Take my soul (*nefesh*) from me. (Jonah 4:3)

On the afternoon of Yom Kippur, we read the story of Jonah, the reluctant prophet who ran from his calling because he didn't want the people of Nineva to repent and be forgiven. When, after a tumultuous storm and a forced retreat inside the belly of a whale, he finally prophesied to the people of Nineva; they did indeed repent and God forgave them. Jonah was quite unhappy about all this and his suffering that was caused by attachment to small mind/ small self, was unbearable. Jonah says "take my soul from me because I would rather die than live."

The word for "soul" that he uses is "*nefesh*," which, in our tradition refers to the lowest level of soul, the part of us that is completely attached to our separate identity, and immersed in the dualism of materiality.

This is a powerful and potentially dangerous practice of surrender of the small self. When we say to God, "Take my soul from me," we want to be very clear just *what* we are surrendering. Before you begin chanting, identify your pettiness, the small-minded habits, the old un-conscious reactive and repetitive patterns that you are ready to release. Lay them on the altar of the chant. Offer up the small self. Open to the Big Self.

(Don't chant this while driving or using heavy machinery or spacing out. It is powerful!)