

Aviva Dautch
Jonah's Prayer

A radical human posture between death and life.

– Avivah G. Zornberg

At the other end of the known world
a man with no credentials but his father's name
responds to God's call
by fleeing.

His hope is to travel
as far away as possible;
the theological absurdity
of such an attempt never arises
for, although we question him,
his flight
is a provocative
but comprehensible act.

He is a small figure
overwhelmed by gigantic forces,
a child who shrinks
to foetal size.

The insistent verbs of descent carry him
downwards:

into the ship's hold,
the whale's belly,
a posture of regressed stupor,

into complete withdrawal
from consciousness.

Only then can he condense
the velocity of his flight
into prayer –

for what is left
is the internal silence
at the heart of all stories

and replacing silence,
the soul's response.