



# Nabí

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**Nabí (anglès)**

III

'What did I gain by escaping,  
by hiding under my arm, by imagining You did not exist,  
by crouching in the hold of the ship?  
You sent out  
against us a great wind from the dry land.  
The sea was a raging fury of vengeance  
and a frenzy of voices.  
We sank to the bottom of a slippery pit, without hope;  
a mountainous sea swelled upwards, crested,  
and tumbled down in a deafening crash.  
Splintered by the slap of a wave,  
the main mast toppled over.  
At the shout: "Ease, ease!"  
block and tackle went overboard.  
And in such extreme distress of ill-fortune,  
one sailor bled from his forehead, another from the jaw;  
and as though already sinking into the dark grave,  
each one of them was invoking his own god: the Sun, the Moon,  
the great Bicom, Ortygia, a boulder or a fish.  
A dreadful jolt wounded my head:  
in the sombre stampede of the storm,  
I was in despair of my own life,  
and I felt the thread of my senses breaking.  
And in the turmoil I lay unconscious  
until the skipper abruptly shouted:  
"Get up, invoke your God once and for all;  
sting His thoughts, change His mind;  
perhaps He is frowning upon us,  
and once He sees you we shall be saved."

'Anxiously I went up to the bridge, knees shaking,  
and behind me a crew member ranted:  
"The sky is becoming a black night of rancour.  
Someone in this ship has enraged his god.  
We are losing the ship, our livelihood, the clear life;  
each wave towers more than the last;  
sea-monsters howl horrifically.  
Shall we all die because of one man?  
We must know why the ship is tossing  
and about to founder.  
Come, all of you, stop the mad shouting:  
let's get together and cast lots."

'And all of a sudden I was  
exposed as the enemy within:  
ill luck  
had pointed at me.  
And they were all in a hurry,  
white with anguish and rasping fear:  
they came, following their conspiracy,  
with hesitant urgency:  
"Now we shall know what you are doing in the vessel, traitor,  
your arts and your ill luck:  
tell us, what is your law, your nation."

"I, the frightened one hiding in the hold  
(for even of the light I lived in fear),  
as I face death I'll bare my heart to you.  
I belong to the land of Israel and its faith,  
born in the rubble of calcinated scrub-land;  
I worship Jehovah, the God of Heaven,  
solitary Lord of celestial bodies,  
who made the sea and the dry land;  
by Him I am guided, without Him I'm nothing."  
"When you came aboard, what evil were you plotting?"  
"I thought the ship would hide me from Jehovah.  
Reluctant to obey His wishes,  
I was trying to find ways to escape.  
I would certainly have repeatedly sung His name in my prayers  
but from a distance, in peace, like someone chanting an incantation,  
neither suffering  
nor repenting,  
free of sudden awakenings and without fear  
of the entrusted announcement,  
nor did I have to gather insults on every wretched path,  
nor undertake journeys in vain,  
and never, never in clouds, leaves or leaping flames  
hear the Voice that had chosen me."

'And the sailors replied:  
"When such a brave God as Jehovah has revealed Himself,  
if jealousy crosses His mind,  
it would be foolish for anyone not to surrender a traitor.  
The will of your God, though, deafens us,  
and in this howling wind we don't know what He wants."  
"Seize me" I said, "throw me overboard,  
and you'll find calm seas returning.  
Because my running away ended in distress,  
and I am ashamed of my villainy  
and I know that God is calling me  
and that the seas swell upwards at His behest."  
In fear, though, with piety and broken voice,  
they said: "Perhaps his God will listen to him."  
Desperately all hands took up oars towards

the coast covered in mist and spray;  
the sea briskly became mountainous.

Oars dropped from their hands. Then  
the men voiced forcefully their appeal to Jehovah:  
"You who are punishing and tormenting us  
and leave us exhausted, spiritless,  
God of fierce brow!,  
having opened up the unsteady rocking grave, You  
have thrown us helpless to the mercy of the storm  
because a miserable fugitive is hiding from You:  
if the man who is hiding dies,  
do not drown us in the abyss!  
It is Your concern if You seek revenge.  
It is You who says: 'Thus',  
It is not us who cast him into the sea; it is You.  
If You reach out the other hand, surely You can save him.  
You could build him another ship if You wished,  
or You could layout an island under his feet."

'And, divine gain of the long contest,  
I was thrown into the sea. In disorder:  
"Let's see" the voices said "if God picks him up."  
And as the drenched sky stretched out clear,  
the sea abated.

'In the levelled sea  
a great fish, which Jehovah sprung up before me,  
casually,  
swallowed me up.  
When I set sail from Jaffa -  
the foolish were singing, the bold were laughing -  
I was seeking a shelter for my heart;  
but God overturned my treachery  
sending me to a hideout for my person;  
and in the belly of the fish I remained,  
my soul at peace, for three days and three nights.'

Traduit per J. L. Gili