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UNIT I
ISSUE 1

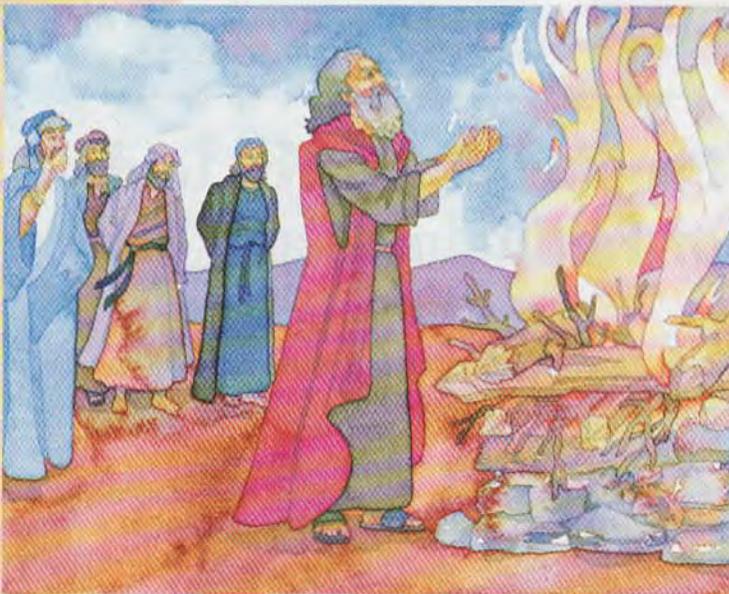
The Mission
of the
Prophets

Community Times



Elijah Challenges the Prophets of Baal And Succeeds in Igniting Fire on Altar

NORTHERN KINGDOM, 9th Century, BCE—Strange happenings took place on Mount Carmel earlier today. The prophet Elijah challenged four hundred and fifty



of Asherah. (The prophets of Baal and Asherah are friends of Queen Jezebel.)

“When everyone had gathered at Mount Carmel, Elijah gave the people of Israel an ultimatum—either follow Baal or follow the Lord. Then he asked for two bulls to be given to him. The prophets of Baal were given their choice. When they had done so, Elijah said, ‘Cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it; I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it.’

“After this was done, the prophets of Baal called upon their god, crying, ‘O Baal, answer us!’ The prophets limped around the altar they had made from morning until noon without any response from Baal.

“At noon, Elijah teased them, saying, ‘Perhaps he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.’ The prophets raved on and on, but still nothing happened.

Elijah Takes Charge

“Elijah said to all the people, ‘Come closer to me,’ and everyone gathered around. Elijah prepared the altar to the Lord, by taking twelve stones for the twelve sons of Jacob and building an altar to the Lord. Then he dug a trench, cut the wood, and prepared the bull, which he laid upon the altar.

prophets of Baal to call on their god to light the sacrificial fire. The god Baal did not respond, but the Lord God of Israel sent a fire that consumed the offering.

An eyewitness at the scene gave us this detailed account:

“The prophet Elijah appeared out of nowhere to confront King Ahab. Elijah called for all of Israel to assemble at Mount Carmel along with four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets

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Continued on page 3

Elisha Chosen As Elijah's Successor



As the story is told, Elijah and Elisha traveled from Gilgal to the Jordan River. At the Jordan, Elijah parted the waters with his cloak, and the two went to the other side.

Elisha was a farmer who became the successor to Elijah. As the story is told, Elijah and Elisha traveled from Gilgal to the Jordan River. At the Jordan, Elijah parted the waters with his cloak, and the two went to the other side.

There Elijah was carried away by a chariot of fire in a whirlwind. When Elisha could see Elijah no longer, he picked up the mantle Elijah had given him and went back across the Jordan.

Elisha's work for the Lord took a different path from Elijah's. He became a prophet of the cities. He is remembered as a man of wisdom and a worker of miracles, both for all of Israel in times of crisis and for individuals in times of need.

We can read, in *II Kings*, chs. 2-6, the stories of Elisha's miracles. He purified the water of Jericho by adding salt. When a widow lacked money, Elisha increased the amount of her oil so that she could sell it and pay her debts.

The most famous story is that of Naaman, a Syrian commander who had leprosy. Elisha ordered him to bathe in the Jordan River seven times. Then, when Naaman's servants told him to follow Elisha's instruction, he was made well.

To the very end of his life when he grew old and sick, Elisha stayed keenly interested in the future of Israel as a nation. His ministry as a servant of God had lasted fifty years (849-799 BCE).

Hebrew Prophets Declared God's Word, Calling for Faithfulness and Justice

Prophets were men who spoke the word of God to the people. They are prominent in the Hebrew Scriptures. Several are mentioned in the New Testament as well. In listings of church leaders, prophets are named along with apostles, teachers, pastors, and preachers.

Prophets spoke out against injustices they saw happening among the chosen people of God, such as the neglect of the poor. They also called on the people to turn away from worship of idols and false gods and to return to the one Lord God of Israel.

Prophets served as a channel for direct communication between God and the people. They repeated the word of the Lord as it had been spoken to them by God. While the prophets often spoke of the justice of

God that would come upon the unrighteous, their final word was always a word of hope. God would remain faithful to the people if they would remain faithful to God.

Women were prophetesses in Biblical times. Deborah (*Judges 4:1-10*), Huldah (*2 Kings 22:14-20*), and Anna (*Luke 2:36-38*) spoke God's word to the people.

People who speak out about social issues in our own time are sometimes called prophets. For example, the late Martin Luther King, Jr., helped many people to understand racial injustice in the United States and to take steps to correct the inequalities among races.

Who are some prophets in your city?

Elijah Challenges, Continued from page 1

“Then Elijah did a strange thing! He had the people bring four jars full of water and pour it over the offering and the wood. He repeated this three times. Well, we all wondered if he’d been out in the sun too long. Everyone knows that wood soaked with water will not burn!

“However, we all stood still as Elijah prayed to the Lord God. Just as he finished,

the fire of the Lord fell and burnt not only the offering, but the wood, the stones, and the dust. It even licked up the water that had run into the trench.

“All the people fell down and worshiped the Lord, saying, ‘The Lord indeed is God; the Lord indeed is God.’”

We understand that the prophets of Baal were seized and carried away.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

The First Song of Isaiah

Surely, it is God who saves me;

I will trust in him and not be afraid.

For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense,
and he will be my Savior.

Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing
from the springs of salvation.

And on that day you shall say,

Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;

Make his deeds known among the peoples;
see that they remember that his Name is exalted.

Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things,
and this is known in all the world.

Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy,
for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One
of Israel.

—*The Book of Common Prayer, Morning Prayer II, page 86*

Answers:

1. Elijah, people, prophet, hundred
2. bull, prepared, Baal, answer, voice
3. twelve, tribes, Jacob, Israel
4. wood, pieces, laid
5. jars, water, burnt
6. Elijah, answer, people, hearts
7. fire, consumed, stones, trench
8. people, faces, indeed

SCRAMBLED ~~BEDMASRC~~ SENTENCES

Unscramble the words in each sentence to discover key points in the story of Elijah.

1. Then JHAELI said to the LEEPOP, "I, even I only, am left a PHORTEP of the Lord; but Baal's prophets number four NREDHUD fifty."
2. So they took the LUBL that was given them, DAREPPRE it, and called on the name of ABAL from morning until noon, crying "O, Baal, WANSER us!" But there was no ICEOV, and no answer.
3. Elijah took WELVET stones, according to the number of the BRITES of the sons of COJAB, to whom the word of the Lord came saying, "EASIRL shall be your name";
4. Next he put the DOWO in order, cut the bull in CIEPSE, and DIAL it on the wood.
5. He said, "Fill four SARJ with RETAW and pour it on the TURNB offering and on the wood."
6. (JHAELI called on the Lord and said,) "WASNER me, O Lord, answer me, so that this LEOPPE may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their TEARHS back."
7. Then the EIRF of the Lord fell and MUSNCODE the burnt offering, the wood, the NOTESS, and the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the HENRTC.
8. When all the EOPPEL saw it, they fell on their CASEF and said, "The Lord EDINDE is God."

Unit I: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Verses for the Unit:

Session 1: *II Kings 2:11b; Psalm 85:8*

Session 2: *Amos 3:7; 5:24*

Session 3: *Isaiah 6:3; 9:2b*

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Session 7: *Isaiah 40:31; 55:6-7*

Session 8: *Jonah 2:2a; Zechariah 9:9*

Session 9: *Ephesians 1:17-18*



LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 1

"... a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven."

—*II Kings 2:11b* (NRSV)

"Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts."

—*Psalm 85:8* (NRSV)

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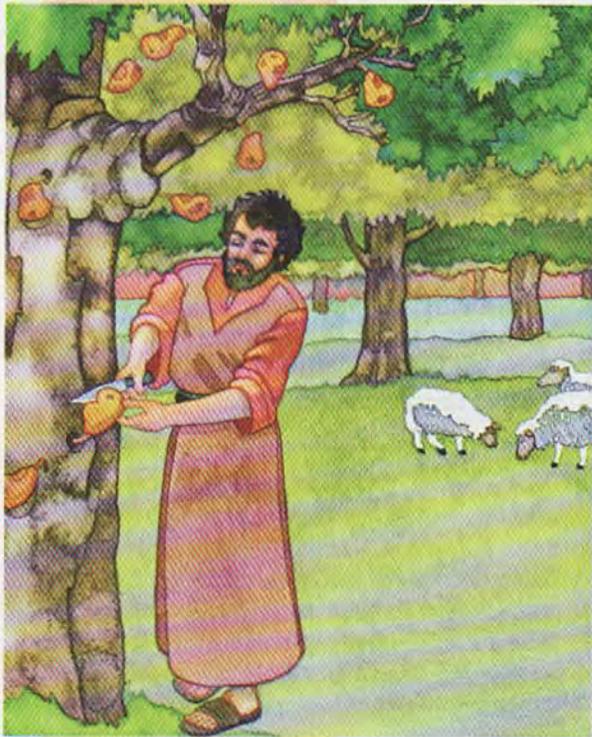
UNIT I
ISSUE 2

Amos: Prophet
of Justice

Community Times



Amos of Tekoa Calls on People of Israel To Keep God's Law and Assist the Poor



ISRAEL, 8th Century BCE—Throughout all of Israel, in the north, the prophet Amos has been seen and heard proclaiming the word of the Lord. He claims to have had a vision from God, who told him to speak out against the people of Israel. They are neglecting the poor, and they do not worship according to God's laws.

In a recent interview we asked Amos who he is and why he came to Israel. He replied, "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore

trees, and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go prophesy to my people Israel.'"

It was later reported that he repeated these same words to Amaziah, the priest of Bethel. Amaziah, who was sent by King Jeroboam, told Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom."

Amos Speaks Out

Many people have heard Amos' speeches and have shared their impressions with us.

"He certainly is a forceful speaker," said one listener. "He speaks out against cities and nations—Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Moab, Judah, the Ammonites, and especially Israel. He says the people of Israel do not obey the laws of God. They have turned their faces from the Lord and do not worship according to God's commandments.

"I think Amos is a strange person who does not know our ways."

A merchant who heard Amos by the city gate reports, "Amos has been shouting threats of punishment for Israel. He says the day of the Lord is coming when the Lord will punish Israel for all her iniquities. When asked what these iniquities were, Amos told us of those who 'sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals.'

"Amos continued by telling the people that God despised the religious festivals, would not accept the burnt offerings, songs of praise, or music from the harps. 'But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream,' concluded Amos."

"I think the leaders of Israel should do something about this so-called prophet," the merchant added.

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Continued on page 3

Archaeologists Explore Biblical Sites, Seeking Clues to How the People Lived

It was not until the early 1800s that archaeologists began to explore the Biblical lands. They looked for the places mentioned in the Scriptures, and for items such as pottery. They wanted to find out more about life in the time of Abraham, King David, the prophets, or Jesus and the disciples.



Archaeologists are scientists who explore ancient places in search of clues to the past. Their work is a very difficult and precise process. First, the ground must be measured and marked off in sections. Then an excavator digs down very carefully by hand, using special tools. Dirt is sifted through sieves to be sure that small fragments of pottery or coins are not lost. The items found are examined for dates or other markings that would identify them.

Among the things archaeologists have uncovered are ordinary household items, such as clay jars, or oil lamps. Other pieces are ivory, jewelry, and coins—and even silver and gold plates and goblets used by kings.

Collections of ivory have been found in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia. The most famous ivory discoveries were dug up in Samaria. They were intricately carved with Egyptian art and inscribed with Hebrew letters.

The prophet Amos was very critical of “the palaces of ivory” and the “beds of ivory” the Samaritan women slept on.

At one time Asian elephants were plentiful in Syria, and it was the ivory from their tusks that was used for jewelry, furniture, and other luxury items. These elephants became extinct about 1000 BCE.

Many churches and organizations work for peace and justice throughout the world....

Each Generation Needs Call for Justice

Amos’ call for justice for the poor could have been spoken in every period of human history. The story is the same, over and over. Many people live in poverty, and the rich continue to neglect them.

Charles Dickens wrote about the poor in England, in books such as *Oliver Twist* and *A Christmas Carol*. The poor in America during the depression of the 1930s appear in John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*. Today many cities deal with people who are homeless and must look to others for food, clothing, and shelter.

Injustice toward other people is not limited to the poor. Victims include persons of

different races or religions who are discriminated against by governments, society, or individuals. Such cases are called social injustice.

Many people have spoken out today, just as the prophets did in the past, about these issues. The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., a Baptist minister, gave many speeches and marched in demonstrations to convince the government and the people to treat all persons as equal regardless of their race or color of their skin.

Many churches and organizations work for peace and justice throughout the world, in the hope that everyone may live in safety and be treated fairly.

Amos of Tekoa, Continued from page 1

A woman who recently heard Amos' preaching had a different point of view. She said, "Amos is right! The rich people in their ivory houses don't care about the poor. They just go to the temple because it is the thing for them to do, and not because they care about God or obeying God's laws.

"I believe Amos when he says that Israel will be punished for its sins. I wish the people would listen to him and change their ways."

We have heard that Amos has left the land of Israel. The people will have to go on wondering if his prophecy will in fact come true.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

The First Song of Isaiah

Surely, it is God who saves me;

I will trust in him and not be afraid.

***For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense,
and he will be my Savior.***

Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing
from the springs of salvation.

And on that day you shall say,

Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;

Make his deeds known among the peoples;

see that they remember that his Name is exalted.

Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things,
and this is known in all the world.

Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy,

for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One
of Israel.

—*The Book of Common Prayer, Morning Prayer II, page 86*

Answer:

Righteousness and
Justice

God punished the transgressions of Judah because they rejected the law of the Lord, did not keep God's statutes, and were led astray by lies after which their ancestors walked.

A M O S

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate letters in order to form words appearing in today's session.

God p○nis○ed the trans○re○s○ions of J○dah because they re○ected the law of the Lord, did ○ot keep G○d's ○ta○ut○s, and we○e led a○○ray by l○es aft○r which th○ir an○estor○ walked.

Write the letters in the circles here:

Now rearrange the letters to form two words/themes that were important in Amos' prophecy.

and -----

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Session 7: *Isaiah 40:31; 55:6-7*

Session 8: *Jonah 2:2a; Zechariah 9:9*

Session 9: *Ephesians 1:17-18*



LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 2

“Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.”

—*Amos 3:7 (NRSV)*

“But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream.”

—*Amos 5:24 (NRSV)*

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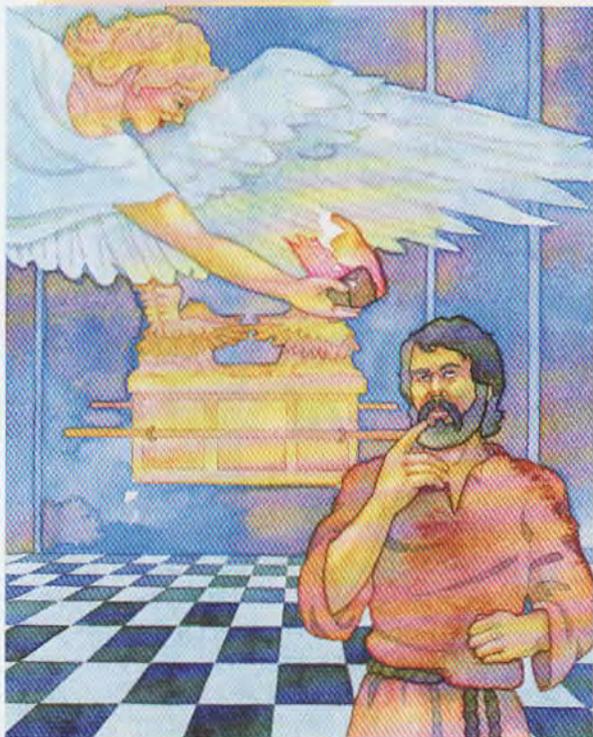
UNIT I
ISSUE 3

Isaiah:
Messiah Will
Come

Community Times



Isaiah Remembers the Vision from God That Called Him to a Life As Prophet



JUDAH, 8th Century BCE—The prophet Isaiah agreed to an interview after almost forty years of speaking God's word to the people of Jerusalem.

Isaiah was born to Amoz, one of the ruling class in Judah. We asked him about his call to be a prophet.

"It was the same year that King Uzziah died that I received my call to speak for God," began Isaiah. "I had a vision in which I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty. His robe filled the whole temple. Seraphs with six wings attended

him and called to one another, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.'

"The foundations of the building shook when the seraphs' voices called out, and the whole house filled with smoke.

"I was afraid," continued Isaiah. "I said, 'Woe is me! I am lost.' I thought that God would punish me because I was a sinner and lived among people who were sinners. I thought that if I had seen God, surely I would die.

"Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with the coal and told me my sins were erased.

"As I was recovering, I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?'

"To my surprise, I heard my own voice replying, 'Here am I; send me!' Then the Lord told me what to say to the people. I have been trying to share God's messages with those who would hear ever since."

Words of Hope

We then asked Isaiah to tell us about some of the prophecies he had proclaimed.

"I have spoken to kings and to the people. I have told them what will happen to them if they don't return to the ways of the Lord.

"But I have also shared the word of hope from God. I told them, 'In the days to come, the mountain of the Lord's house will be established.... He shall judge between nations,... they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.'

"The Lord will save his people from destruction. I told them, 'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; ... For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; ...' He will be called wonder-

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*The prophets
found God's
people
worshiping
pagan gods, like
these figurines
of Baal and
Asherah.*

People Hear God's Call for Various Types of Ministry in Today's Church

People who do God's work in the church today often talk about a "call" to ministry. Persons who feel called by God believe that God has led them and wants them to do the work they are doing. Such calls may be strongly affirmed by others—teachers, friends, parents, and clergy.

Many people are called into a variety of today's ministries. They include volunteers who spend time at churches, soup kitchens, day care centers, and other agencies that reach out to people in need. Other persons seek paid jobs within the church, such as parish secretaries, organists, and directors of Christian education. They are lay people engaged in the church's ministry.

Another group of people seek to serve God in the church through ordination. The call to ordination can come in three forms:

- In some dioceses, people are called to be permanent deacons. They are ordained by the bishop and usually do specific jobs, such as ministering to people in hospitals or nursing homes.

- The second form of ordination is to the priesthood. Persons who feel that God is asking them to serve the church in this unique way must think very carefully about the decision. They talk with their priests, their friends, and others who can help them decide. They meet with members of their own congregations, the bishops of their dioceses, and with committees of dioceses known as commissions on ministry.

All of these people help an individual carefully consider a call to be a priest. If everyone agrees, the individual then attends a school called a seminary, to study for priesthood. After graduation, this person will be ordained as a transitional deacon. Usually, six months to a year later, the deacon will be ordained as a priest.

- The third form follows a call by a diocese for a priest to become their bishop. Bishops are elected by special meetings of the clergy and lay people of the diocese. Bishops need to have leadership and pastoral skills that will help them to deal with various kinds of people.

Text of Isaiah Inspires Great Music Used in Church's Services of Worship

The words of Isaiah have been the inspiration for many kinds of music used in the church. Canticles such as the three Songs of Isaiah are frequently sung at Morning or Evening Prayer (*The Book of Common Prayer*, pages 86-87).

The Sanctus—"Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory"—is said or sung at every celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

Isaiah's words also inspired hymns and other kinds of music. *The Messiah*, by George Frederick Handel, is based on *Isaiah 9:6* and is heard by many people every year during the Advent and Christmas seasons.

A famous Negro spiritual, "Down by the Riverside," reflects Isaiah's thoughts about

"swords into plowshares" and "spears into pruning hooks," when the people of God will "study war no more." This hymn is included in *Lift Every Voice and Sing: An African American Hymnal*, which celebrates the unique contributions of African Americans to music for worship. It is published by The Church Hymnal Corporation. The following words are from the refrain:

"Goin' to lay down my sword and shield,

Down by the riverside,

Down by the riverside,

Down by the riverside.

Goin' to lay down my sword and shield,

Down by the riverside,

To study war no more, . . ."

RECALLING ISAIAH

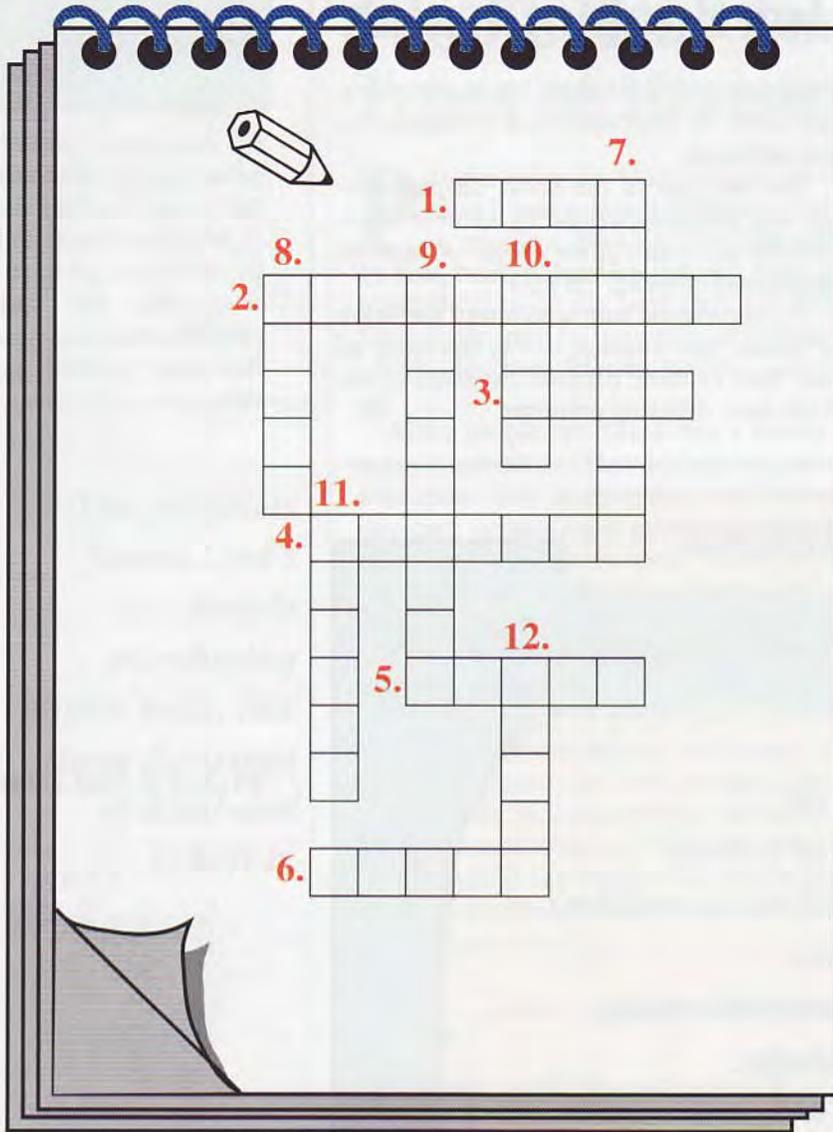
Crossword Puzzle Clues:

ACROSS

1. Isaiah said, "Here I am, _____ me."
2. They will beat their swords into _____.
3. Isaiah asked, "How _____, O Lord?"
4. The _____ had six wings each.
5. The people have seen a great _____.
6. Neither shall they _____ war any more.

DOWN

7. The people walked in _____.
8. He will be called Prince of _____.
9. He is named _____ Counselor.
10. They called to one another and said, "_____, _____, _____."
(the answer is only one word)
11. The _____ will become pruning hooks.
12. For unto us a son is _____.



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Session 7: *Isaiah 40:31; 55:6-7*

Session 8: *Jonah 2:2a; Zechariah 9:9*

Session 9: *Ephesians 1:17-18*



LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 3

"And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.'"

—*Isaiah 6:3 (NRSV)*

"... those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined."

—*Isaiah 9:2b (NRSV)*



UNIT I
ISSUE 4

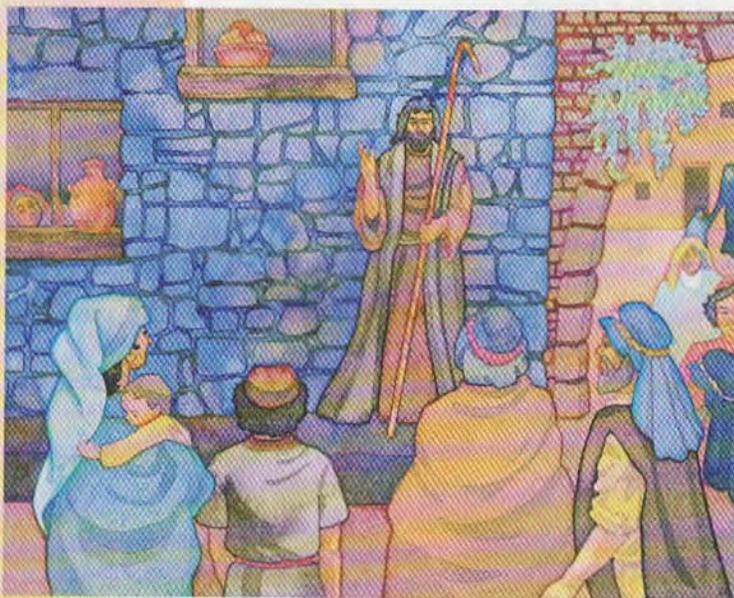
Micah Spoke
for God

Community Times



Prophet Predicts Punishment But Offers Promise of Salvation to People of God

JERUSALEM, Late 8th Century BCE—Micah, a prophet of the Lord, spoke out today against the city of Jerusalem and the people of Samaria. He is angry about the injustices being done to the poor, and he hates the evil ways of the powerful and mighty.



known and recognized as a prophet, yet the people reject his message.

One person who was present when Micah proclaimed words of destruction and punishment for Jerusalem, said that “one should not preach of such things; disgrace will not overtake us.”

“He is a prophet of doom, who only wishes to frighten the women and children,” said another.

Yet, in contradiction to those statements, Micah has been heard offering the people hope of salvation. An observer reported, “Micah has said that one day ‘the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established as the highest of mountains,’ and that people and nations will stream to it. There will be no war, families will have plenty, and no one will be afraid.”

“I think Micah is right,” said one citizen. “If we do not destroy what is evil and do what is right in God’s eyes, the people will suffer.”

Micah Describes Future Leader

Other prophets have spoken out against the injustices and the disobedience of the people. They have suggested that Jerusalem will be spared destruction in spite of the sins of its people. Micah offers hope for those few who still follow God’s laws. But he still believes strongly that Jerusalem will be destroyed by the enemy.

Micah has made a curious prediction

Micah is warning King Hezekiah and the people that, because of their sins, they will be punished by God. He says they will experience military defeat and exile.

He comes from Moresheth, a small town twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem. No one seems to have information about his family or his occupation, although some suspect he has been a farmer. He is

MICAH'S COURTROOM

The Lord God brings Israel to trial.

The Lord God brings Israel to trial. The mountains, the hills, and the foundations of the earth are the jury. They will hear the testimony because they have stood since the creation and have witnessed the works and deeds of God.

God will act as prosecutor—the one who accuses Israel of ignoring God's law and the benefits of being God's people.

God will also serve as judge—the one who will pronounce final judgment.

Israel will plead for mercy and offer atonement for sins committed.

Scene: *A courtroom with a table for the judge's bench, and chairs for the defendant and the prophet Micah. The jury may be seated in another part of the room. A chair set apart will be for the prophet Micah.*

Cast: Micah, prophet of the Lord.
The prosecutor.
The judge.
The defendant, Israel.
Jury—mountains, hills, earth.

SCRIPT

Judge: Rise, plead your case before the mountains, let the hills hear what you have to say. God has brought a lawsuit against Israel.

Prosecutor: People of Israel, why have you sinned against God? What has God done to you, that you forget to follow the law? What has caused you to be weary of worshipping the Lord?

God brought you out of Egypt, out of slavery into the promised land. Moses, Aaron, and Miriam were sent to you as leaders. You were saved from the evil that King Balak of Moab sent upon you. God has protected you many times from your enemies.

Israel: I repent of my sins before the court. What must I do? Am I to bring burnt offerings of year-old calves? Am I expected to pay my debt with thousands of rams, with oil in great quantities? Must I give my firstborn child to God? Tell me how I can be freed of my sins!

Micah: The Lord has told you what is good and what is required of you. You must do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God. (The jury nods its agreement.)

Judge: Court is adjourned.

Two Kingdoms Share the Same Sins

In Micah's time the lands of Israel and Judah were separate. The kingdom of twelve tribes, created under King Saul and united by King David, became divided after the death of King Solomon, David's son.

The capital of the northern kingdom of Israel was Samaria, a city that faced the sea. The land was fertile and abundant with goods to trade with other provinces.

Because of the nearness to a seaport, the people could obtain many luxury items from the lands around the Mediterranean Sea. The wealthy people had palaces made of ivory, and vessels of gold, while the poor suffered.

It was against these injustices that prophets spoke out. Judah, the southern kingdom, was mostly hilly desert.

Its capital was Jerusalem. The soil of Judah was not rich in quality. Fruits and vegetables the people harvested were used as food for the people and were not abundant enough to be available for trade.

The upper classes failed to look after the poor people. The rich citizens turned away from worshipping God.

Judah had stronger leadership because the kings could claim they were direct descendants of King David. It was to the leaders of Jerusalem that the prophets spoke out about the failure to follow the laws of God.

When the northern kingdom met destruction from the Assyrians, Judah's hopes of a strong united kingdom were also destroyed.

Prophet Predicts, *Continued from page 1*

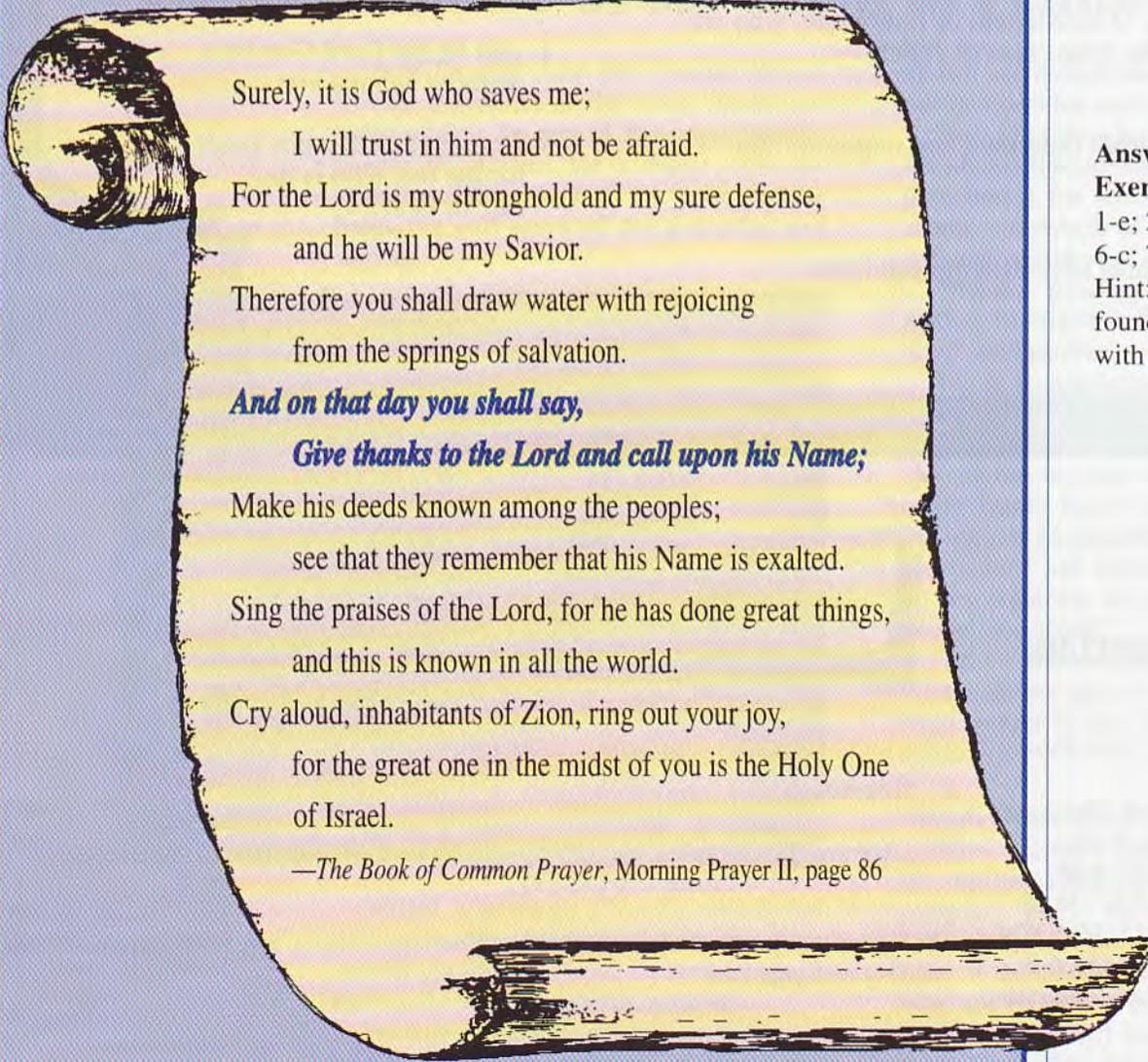
concerning a leader of Israel who “shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.”

He has told people that this person will be great and will bring peace so the descendants of Jacob will live in security.

This future ruler, Micah says, will be born in Bethlehem. This appears unlikely since most of the ruling families live in the larger cities of the region. Bethlehem is only a small rural village inhabited by farmers and shepherds.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

The First Song of Isaiah



Surely, it is God who saves me;
I will trust in him and not be afraid.
For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense,
and he will be my Savior.
Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing
from the springs of salvation.

And on that day you shall say,

Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;

Make his deeds known among the peoples;
see that they remember that his Name is exalted.
Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things,
and this is known in all the world.

Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy,
for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One
of Israel.

—*The Book of Common Prayer, Morning Prayer II, page 86*

Answers to Matching Exercise

1-e; 2-g; 3-b; 4-a; 5-f;
6-c; 7-d

Hint: The verses are found in the chapters with the same number.

MATCH MICAH'S WORDS

Find the second part of each of the following statements made by the prophet Micah, and match it to the first part. Included is one pair for every chapter in the Book of Micah.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. "... listen, O earth, and all that is in it;— | a. neither shall they learn war any more; . . ." |
| 2. "Do not my words do good— | b. Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, . . ." |
| 3. "Zion shall be plowed as a field;— | c. but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" |
| 4. "... nation shall not lift up sword against nation,— | d. and there is no one left who is upright; . . ." |
| 5. "But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah,— | e. and let the Lord God be a witness against you, . . ." |
| 6. "... and what does the Lord require of you— | f. from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, . . ." |
| 7. "The faithful have disappeared from the land,— | g. to one who walks uprightly?" |

Unit I: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Verses for the Unit:

Session 1: *II Kings 2:11b; Psalm 85:8*

Session 2: *Amos 3:7; 5:24*

Session 3: *Isaiah 6:3; 9:2b*

Session 4: *Micah 4:5b; 6:8b*

Session 5: *Jeremiah 8:11; 18:6b*

Session 6: *Ezekiel 1:15, 16c; 37:4*

Session 7: *Isaiah 40:31; 55:6-7*

Session 8: *Jonah 2:2a; Zechariah 9:9*

Session 9: *Ephesians 1:17-18*



LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 4

"... but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever."
—*Micah 4:5b (NRSV)*

"... what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"
—*Micah 6:8b (NRSV)*

ECC



UNIT I
ISSUE 5

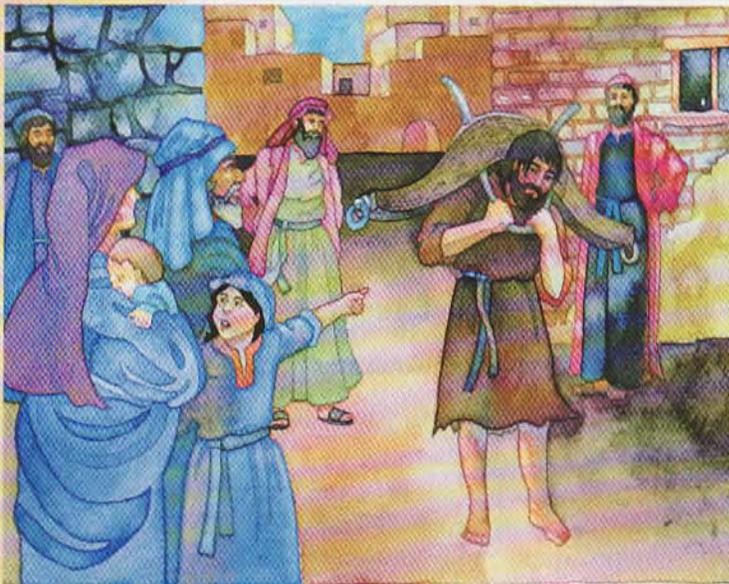
Jeremiah:
Prophet of
Faith

Community Times



Authorities Seeking Prophet and Scribe On Orders of King Jehoiakim's Officials

The prophet Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch are being sought by the authorities following the reading of a scroll near a temple gate yesterday.



Jeremiah has long been a source of embarrassment for the kings of Judah. He has predicted the fall of the city of Jerusalem if the people do not repent and return to the Lord. Jeremiah speaks out forcefully against the evils that take place among the people.

An acquaintance of the prophet told us about this most recent event: "Jeremiah received a message from God. God told him, 'Take a scroll and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against

Israel and Judah and all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah until today. It may be that when the house of Judah hears of all the disasters that I intend to do to them, all of them may turn from their evil ways, so that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.'

"Jeremiah then called Baruch and dictated to him all that God had spoken. When they were finished, Baruch took the scroll and read it aloud to the people who had gathered at the temple for a day of fasting. (Jeremiah had been banned from the house of the Lord because of his prophecies.)

"Micaiah, one who heard all the words of the scroll, went to the chambers of the secretary and told the officials what he had heard. At once they sent for Baruch and asked him to read the scroll to them. After Baruch finished, they asked, 'How did you write all these words?'

"Baruch said, 'He (Jeremiah) dictated all these words to me, and I wrote them with ink on the scroll.'

"The officials told Baruch, 'Go and hide, you and Jeremiah, and let no one know where you are.'"

King Burned the Scroll

A palace official told us that the scroll was taken to the king by Jehudi, who read the scroll aloud.

We asked Jehudi to tell us what happened. He reported, "I was called to the

Continued on page 3

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Jeremiah's Yokes Offer Stern Message

In the beginning of the reign of King Zedekiah, Jeremiah made a yoke, such as those worn by a team of oxen, out of straps and bars. He placed the yoke around his neck to get across a message to the king and the people: They must wear the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him and his people. He kept telling everyone over and over again that they should surrender and not fight. If they chose to fight the Babylonians, he said, all the vessels of the temple and all of the city would be destroyed.

When the prophet Jeremiah finished speaking to the people, the prophet Hananiah took the yoke from the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, and broke it. Hananiah said, "Thus says the Lord: 'This is how I will break the yoke of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon...'"

This did not stop Jeremiah. Sometime later he returned to where the prophet Hananiah was. This time he wore an iron yoke around his neck. He told Hananiah that the yoke upon the nations would be as strong as iron. He even predicted the death of Hananiah, who actually died two months later.

Broken Pot Symbolizes God's Judgment

The prophet Jeremiah has been known to spend time in potters' sheds. He seems to be fascinated by the clay and a potter at the wheel. He has said that the work of the potter is much like the work of God. When a pot is created on the wheel and fails to turn out right, the potter just starts over. The clay is molded in a different way.

Because of his interest in clay pottery, the citizens at the Potsherd Gate thought it was nothing unusual when Jeremiah appeared carrying a potter's earthenware jug. They were surprised, however, when Jeremiah threw the jug to the ground, smashing it into a thousand pieces.

Jeremiah then proclaimed loudly that the Lord had said, "So will I break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, so that it can never be mended."

Just then the priest Pashhur heard Jeremiah prophesying these things. The priest struck Jeremiah and had him put in the stocks that were in the upper Benjamin Gate. The prophet remained there until the next morning.

Condemned Prophet Is Put into Cistern

The priest Pashhur remained an enemy of Jeremiah. Some time after the event of the broken pot, Pashhur again heard Jeremiah saying to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, 'Those who stay in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but those who go out to the Chaldeans shall live; . . . This city shall surely be handed over to the army of the king of Babylon and be taken.'"

Pashhur and the others were so angered by Jeremiah's statements that they went to the king and asked that the prophet be put to death. King Zedekiah turned Jeremiah over to the officials and said, "He is in your hands."

Immediately the men took Jeremiah and threw him into a cistern. He was let down by ropes until he reached the bottom where he sunk into the mud. The cistern was a cold, damp, and miserable place to die.

Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian, heard that Jeremiah had been put into the cistern. He appealed to the king.

"My lord king," said Ebed-melech, "these men have acted wickedly in all they did to the prophet Jeremiah by throwing him in the cistern to die there of hunger, for there is no bread left in the city."

The king commanded Ebed-melech, "Take three men with you from here and pull the prophet Jeremiah up from the cistern before he dies."

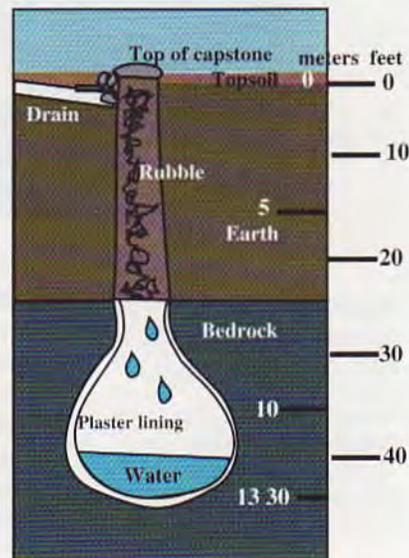
Ebed-melech then took some rags and old clothes and let them down to Jeremiah by ropes. Then he told Jeremiah, "Just put the rags and clothes between your armpits and the ropes." Then they pulled Jeremiah from the cistern and he remained in the court of the guard.

What Cisterns Were Like

Cisterns in Biblical times were holes dug into the ground. They were shaped like long-necked bottles. Their purpose was to collect and store rain water during wet weather in order to save it for use during the dry spells.

The neck of a cistern was only big enough for the man who was digging it to crawl through. At about 25 feet down, the hole was enlarged and lined with plaster. This is where the water was stored.

Once the cistern was finished, the top was covered with a stone or wooden cover to protect the water from evaporation and contamination, and to keep animals and people from falling in.



Prophet Predicts, *Continued from page 1*

king's winter apartment. It was a cold day and there was a fire burning in the brazier in front of the king.

"The king and the others who were there sent me to get a scroll from the secretary's chamber. When I returned, I was told to read the scroll to the king. I was really frightened because of what the king did as I read. He would angrily cut off each portion of the scroll I had just read and throw it into the brazier. Several urged him not to burn the scroll, but he would not listen to them."

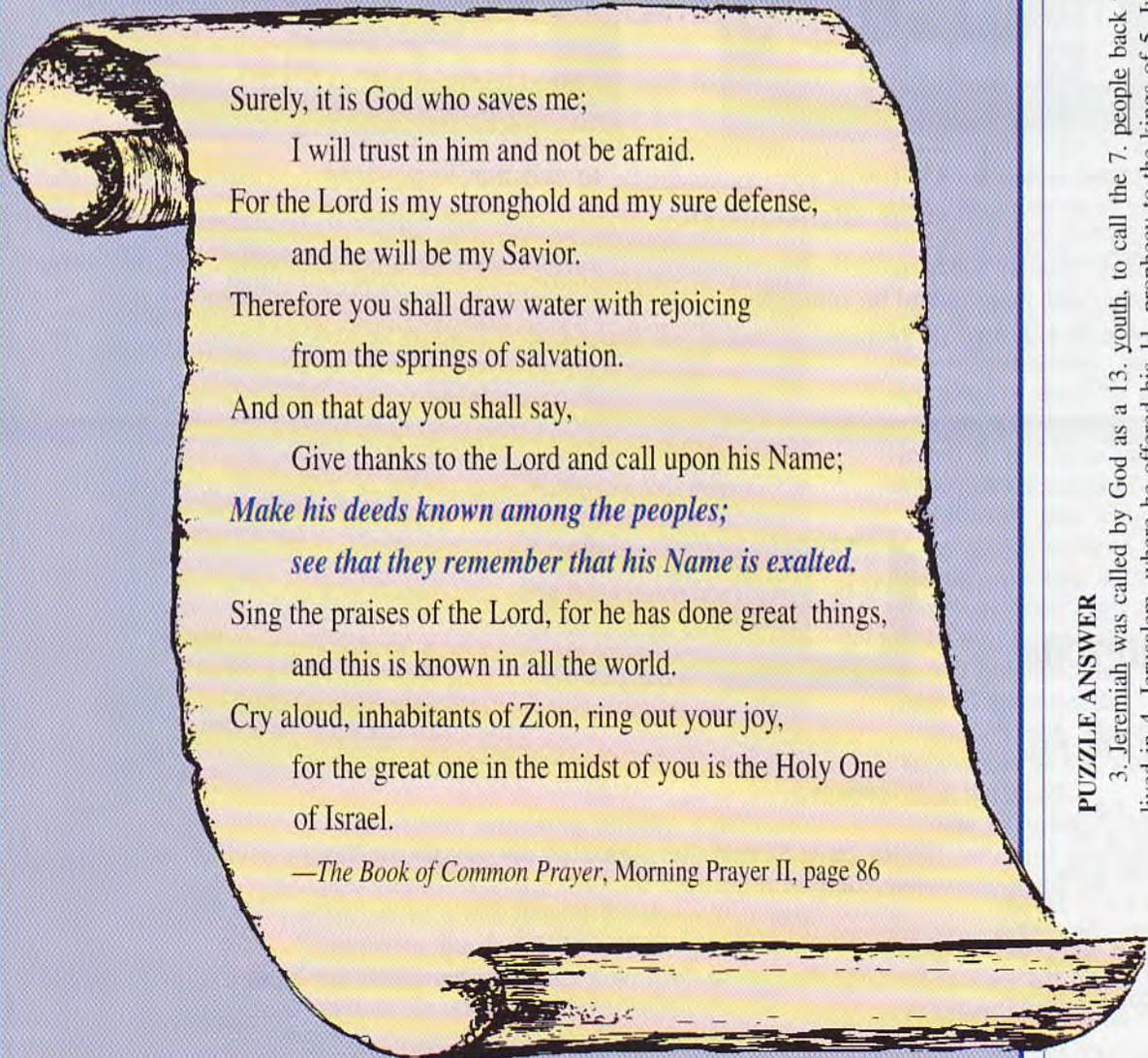
This is not the first time that the prophet Jeremiah

has caused such a stir in Jerusalem. He was called by God as a youth and appointed "over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant." As a son of Hilkiah, a priest from Anathoth, Jeremiah was not a stranger to the ways of kings. He took his call from God as his life's work and has set about diligently to spread God's word to the people of Israel and Judah, begging them to return to the Lord.

We expect this will not be the last we will see and hear of Jeremiah, the prophet.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

The First Song of Isaiah



Surely, it is God who saves me;
I will trust in him and not be afraid.
For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense,
and he will be my Savior.
Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing
from the springs of salvation.
And on that day you shall say,
Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;
*Make his deeds known among the peoples;
see that they remember that his Name is exalted.*
Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things,
and this is known in all the world.
Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy,
for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One
of Israel.

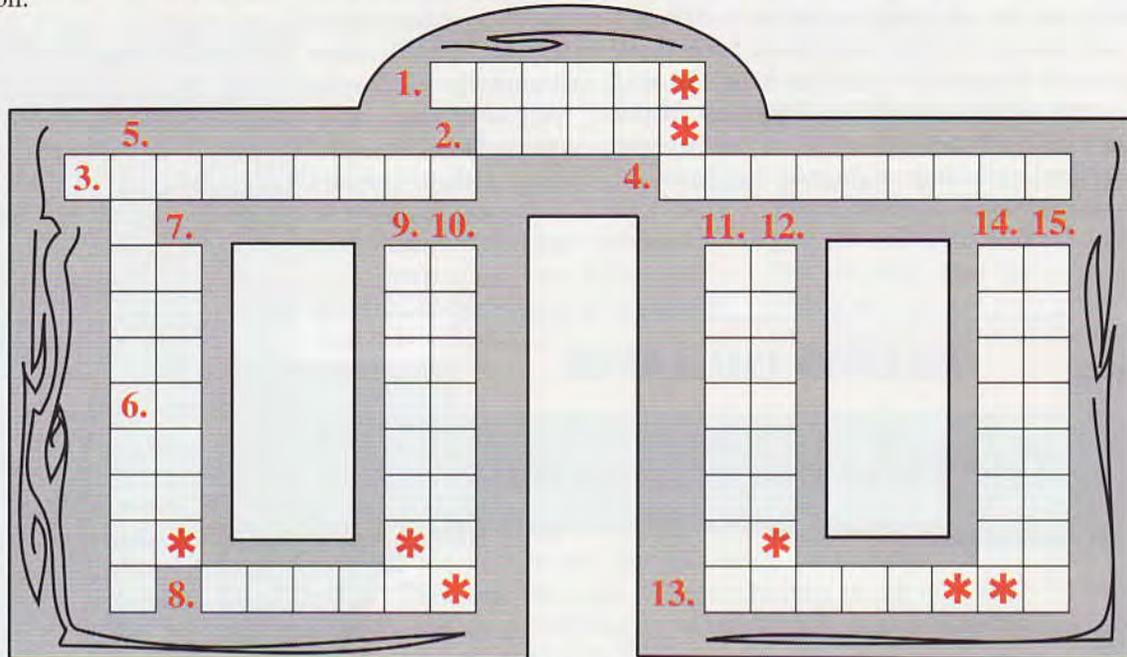
—*The Book of Common Prayer*, Morning Prayer II, page 86

PUZZLE ANSWER

3. Jeremiah was called by God as a 13. youth, to call the 7. people back to God. He lived in 4. Jerusalem, where he offered his 11. prophecy to the kings of 5. Judah and 9. Israel. Jeremiah wore a 12. wooden 2. yoke to show the people that they must submit to the king of 14. Babylon and be sent into 8. exile. He also 1. broke a 6. clay jug to illustrate how the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed. Jeremiah was a 15. faithful 10. prophet of God.

JEREMIAH'S YOKE

Directions: Using the clues below and the crossword puzzle of Jeremiah's yoke, fill in the blanks to discover the puzzle solution.



3. _____ was called by God as a 13. _____, to call the 7. _____ back to God. He lived in 4. _____, where he offered his 11. _____ to the kings of 5. _____ and 9. _____. Jeremiah wore a 12. _____ 2. _____ to show the people that they must submit to the king of 14. _____ and be sent into 8. _____. He also 1. _____ a 6. _____ jug to illustrate how the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed. Jeremiah was a 15. _____ 10. _____ of God.

Unit I: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Verses for the Unit:

Session 1: *II Kings 2:11b; Psalm 85:8*

Session 2: *Amos 3:7; 5:24*

Session 3: *Isaiah 6:3; 9:2b*

Session 4: *Micah 4:5b; 6:8b*

Session 5: *Jeremiah 8:11; 18:6b*

Session 6: *Ezekiel 1:15, 16c; 37:4*

Session 7: *Isaiah 40:31; 55:6-7*

Session 8: *Jonah 2:2a; Zechariah 9:9*

Session 9: *Ephesians 1:17-18*



LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 5

"They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace."

—*Jeremiah 8:11 (NRSV)*

"Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel."

—*Jeremiah 18:6b (NRSV)*

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UNIT I
ISSUE 6

Ezekiel:
Seer of Visions

Community Times



Strange Visions and Deeds of Ezekiel Prove Puzzling to God's People in Exile

TEL-ABIB, 6th Century BCE—The prophet Ezekiel returned to Tel-abib today after being away for some time. He has told us of a vision given to him by the Lord.

"The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry," began Ezekiel's account of his vision.

He continued, "I looked at all those bones and wondered what I was doing there. Then the Lord spoke to me and told me to prophesy to the bones. He told me to say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.'

"I did what the Lord told me to do, and there was a loud noise. Suddenly the bones

began to rattle together, and flesh came upon them. At first they were not breathing so I did as the Lord told me and called upon the four winds. A vast number of people stood on their feet and walked around. What had happened? What did this mean? What had I done? These were dead, and now they lived.

"Then the Lord spoke to me again, telling me that these bones were like the whole house of Israel. The people who are in exile feel cut off from the Lord. Their bones are dried up like these bones. Their hope is lost.

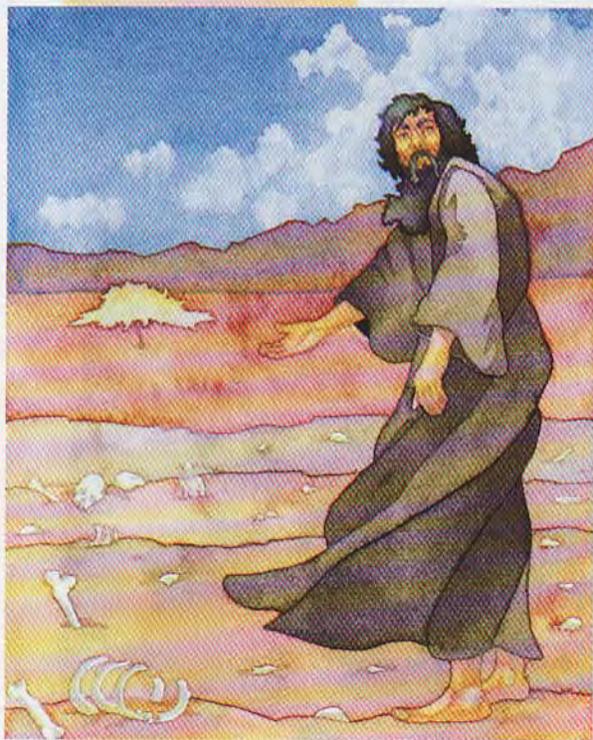
"The Lord told me to prophesy to you and say, 'I (the Lord God) will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act.'"

Observers Dismayed

The people of Israel are puzzled by Ezekiel's actions and words. As strangers in a foreign land, they want to believe that they will return to Jerusalem and their ancestral homes. However, Ezekiel's strange visions are sometimes hard for them to take.

Everyone remembers what happened about five years after we had been living along the river Chebar, in the land of the Chaldeans. Ezekiel, a priest from the family of Buzi, had a vision of wheels within

Continued on page 3



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Letter Describes Life in Exile

The following is a letter that a young person sent into exile in Babylon might have written to a friend who stayed behind in Jerusalem.

Dear Sarah,

It has been a long time since we left Jerusalem. We had many hardships on our journey to Babylon. Our captors are kind but the trip was long. We traveled over mountains and deserts for many months before arriving at the river Chebar. We now live in Tel-abib with other Jews who have been sent into exile from Judah and Israel.

Life here is very different from Jerusalem. My father works as a servant for the ruler here. We live in a tent by the river. My mother cooks, sews, and tends the few sheep we keep in a nearby field. My sister and I help her when we are not doing our chores.

I cannot go to the temple with my father as I used to. An old rabbi in the village teaches the boys who can attend. We have started having regular worship meetings in a larger tent of one of the families. We call it a synagogue. Some of the elders have begun writing the sacred stories on large scrolls. They read the stories aloud during worship. The Chaldeans do not seem to care that we don't worship their god, Marduk. Some are even interested in what we tell them about the Lord God.

Most of the people have resigned themselves to life here, although everyone wishes we could come back home. A few families are very angry and cry a lot. Some women hung their harps in the willow trees by the river and said they would not sing again until they return to Jerusalem.

Do you remember the story we used to tell about how all the different languages began? Well, people here say that the Tower of Babel was built not very far from where we live. I went with some friends to search for the ruins, but I think we were not in the right place. We didn't see anything that was built high enough to reach the sky.

I hope we will be able to come back to Jerusalem soon. I miss you.

Shalom,
Joshua

Dem Bones

Ezekiel cried, "Dem dry bones!"

Ezekiel cried, "Dem dry bones!"

Oh, hear the word of the Lord.

The foot bone connected to the leg bone.

The leg bone connected to the knee bone.

The knee bone connected to the thigh bone.

The thigh bone connected to the back bone.

The back bone connected to the neck bone.

The neck bone connected to the head bone.

Oh, hear the word of the Lord!

Dem bones, dem bones gonna walk a-roun'

Dem bones, dem bones gonna walk a-roun'

Dem bones, dem bones gonna walk a-roun'

Oh, hear the word of the Lord!

The head bone connected to the neck bone.

The neck bone connected to the back bone.

The back bone connected to the thigh bone.

The thigh bone connected to the knee bone.

The knee bone connected to the leg bone.

The leg bone connected to the foot bone.

Oh, hear the word of the Lord!

Strange Visions, *Continued from page 1*

wheels, burning coals, and strange winged creatures. He kept falling on his face and then standing upright. When it was over, he sat stunned among us for seven days.

After that time, Ezekiel did many peculiar things. He built a model of the city of Jerusalem with bricks, and laid on his side

for long periods of time. Once he cut his hair and burned a third of it. Another third he cut into tiny pieces with a sword, then spread it all around the city. The final third he scattered to the winds.

We want to believe he speaks for the Lord, but sometimes we wonder!

MEMORY CHALLENGE

The First Song of Isaiah

Surely, it is God who saves me;

I will trust in him and not be afraid.

For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense,
and he will be my Savior.

Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing
from the springs of salvation.

And on that day you shall say,

Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;

Make his deeds known among the peoples;

see that they remember that his Name is exalted.

***Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things,
and this is known in all the world.***

Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy,
for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One
of Israel.

—*The Book of Common Prayer, Morning Prayer II, page 86*

ANSWER:

1. Ezekiel
2. Judah
3. Wings
4. to
5. Prayed
6. Mortal

Way up in the
middle of the air.

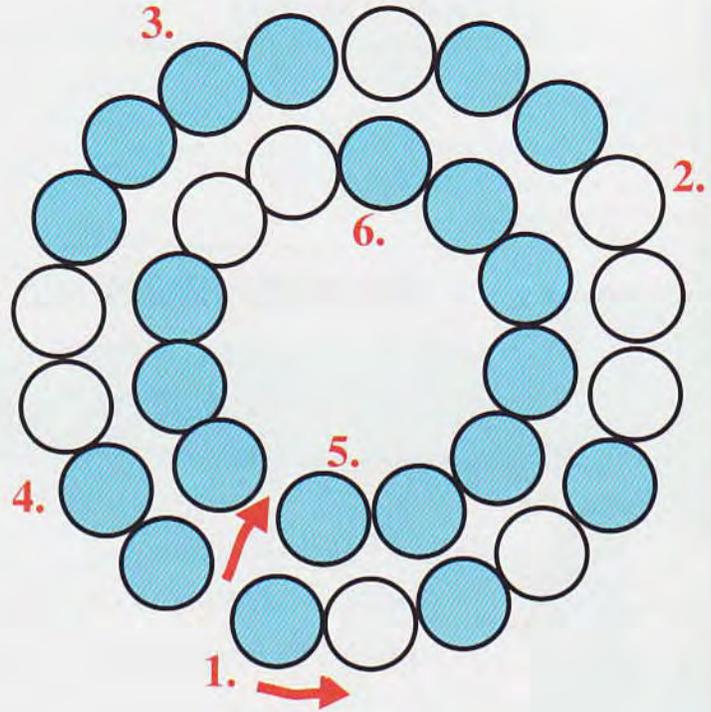
EZEKIEL'S SONG

Step A: Use the clues to fill in the circles at right.

- _____ was a prophet who had fantastic visions.
- The people of _____ were led into exile.
- The living creatures had four _____.
- The people were led away _____ Babylon.
- The people _____ to the Lord, God.
- When the Lord spoke to the prophet, he said, "_____." See *Ezekiel 37:3*

Step B: Use the shaded letters in the wheel to fill in the blanks and discover where Ezekiel saw the wheel.

_____ I _____ H _____
 _____ F T _____



Unit I: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Verses for the Unit:

Session 1: *II Kings 2:11b; Psalm 85:8*

Session 2: *Amos 3:7; 5:24*

Session 3: *Isaiah 6:3; 9:2b*

Session 4: *Micah 4:5b; 6:8b*

Session 5: *Jeremiah 8:11; 18:6b*

Session 6: *Ezekiel 1:15, 16c; 37:4*

Session 7: *Isaiah 40:31; 55:6-7*

Session 8: *Jonah 2:2a; Zechariah 9:9*

Session 9: *Ephesians 1:17-18*



LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 6

"As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them. . . . their construction being something like a wheel within a wheel."

—*Ezekiel 1:15, 16c (NRSV)*

"Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.'"

—*Ezekiel 37:4 (NRSV)*

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UNIT I
ISSUE 7

Isaiah
Proclaims A
Message of
Light

Community Times

Prophet Offers Comfort and True Hope To God's People Who Long to Go Home

BABYLON, 6th Century BCE—The beloved prophet Isaiah has once again offered words of comfort to the people of Israel in exile here in Babylon.

Yesterday, he told a crowd of Israelites: "The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not be faint."

A bystander remarked that the people stood as if in a trance when Isaiah had finished. It was a long time before they began to speak or move about.

We asked an Israelite who heard Isaiah to comment on what she had heard. She said, "I have felt so lost here in Babylon. The people have been good to us, but still, I feel like a stranger in a strange land. I long to return to Jerusalem and see the place where the temple once stood, where my ancestors worshipped.

"Isaiah gives me hope that one day our people will return to live in that holy city.

I'll never forget the first time I heard him speak. He told us then that our penalty had been paid and offered us great comfort. I remember the words as if they were spoken only minutes ago.

"Isaiah told of a voice crying out and saying, 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'"

Generations in Exile

The people of Israel have been in exile in Babylon for several generations. Most of them were born and raised in the villages here. We wondered why they still called Jerusalem home. Here are some typical comments:

"Our parents and grandparents have kept the story of Israel alive."

"The land of Israel was given to our people by the Lord our God. It is where we belong."

"We would still be living in the land of milk and honey, that the Lord gave to us, if we had not turned away from God. We have learned what is truly important through being in exile."

"We long to worship our God on the

Continued on page 2



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Prophet, Continued from page 1

site of the temple built by King Solomon, in the city where King David reigned.”

The Israelites are a determined people. They have kept their faith and hope alive against all odds. While their dreams to return to Jerusalem may seem impossible, a new hope has risen with the ascension of Cyrus to the throne of Persia.

Isaiah's Servant Songs

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; . . . *Isaiah 42:1*

I have given you as a covenant to the people, . . . *Isaiah 42:6c*

. . . to open the eyes that are blind, . . . *Isaiah 42:7a*

The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me. *Isaiah 49:1b*

I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth. *Isaiah 49:6b*

The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. *Isaiah 49:4*

I gave my back to those who struck me, . . . I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. *Isaiah 49:6*

He was despised and rejected by others; . . . *Isaiah 53:3*

But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; . . . *Isaiah 53:5a*

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth, . . . *Isaiah 53:7a*

By perversion of justice he was taken away. *Isaiah 53:8a*

They made his . . . tomb with the rich, . . . *Isaiah 53:9a*

Jesus, The Messiah

And when Jesus had been baptized, . . . he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew 3:16-17

. . . “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.

Mark 14:24

. . . the blind receive their sight, . . .

Matthew 11:5a

And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. *Luke 1:31*

. . . I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

John 8:12

Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 5:2-3

They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him.

Mark 15:19

They cried out, “Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!”

John 19:15a

This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the prophet Isaiah, “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.”

Matthew 8:17

But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer.

Matthew 27:12

. . . I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed he has done nothing to deserve death.

Luke 23:14b-15

So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, . . .

Matthew 27:59-60

Dead Sea Scrolls Include All of Isaiah

In late 1946 or early 1947, shepherds were watching their flocks on the western shore of the Dead Sea. Somehow a cave was discovered that held great treasures. Inside were pottery jars containing manuscripts wrapped in linen. These turned out to be the oldest Hebrew manuscripts now in existence. They are probably about 2,000 years old.

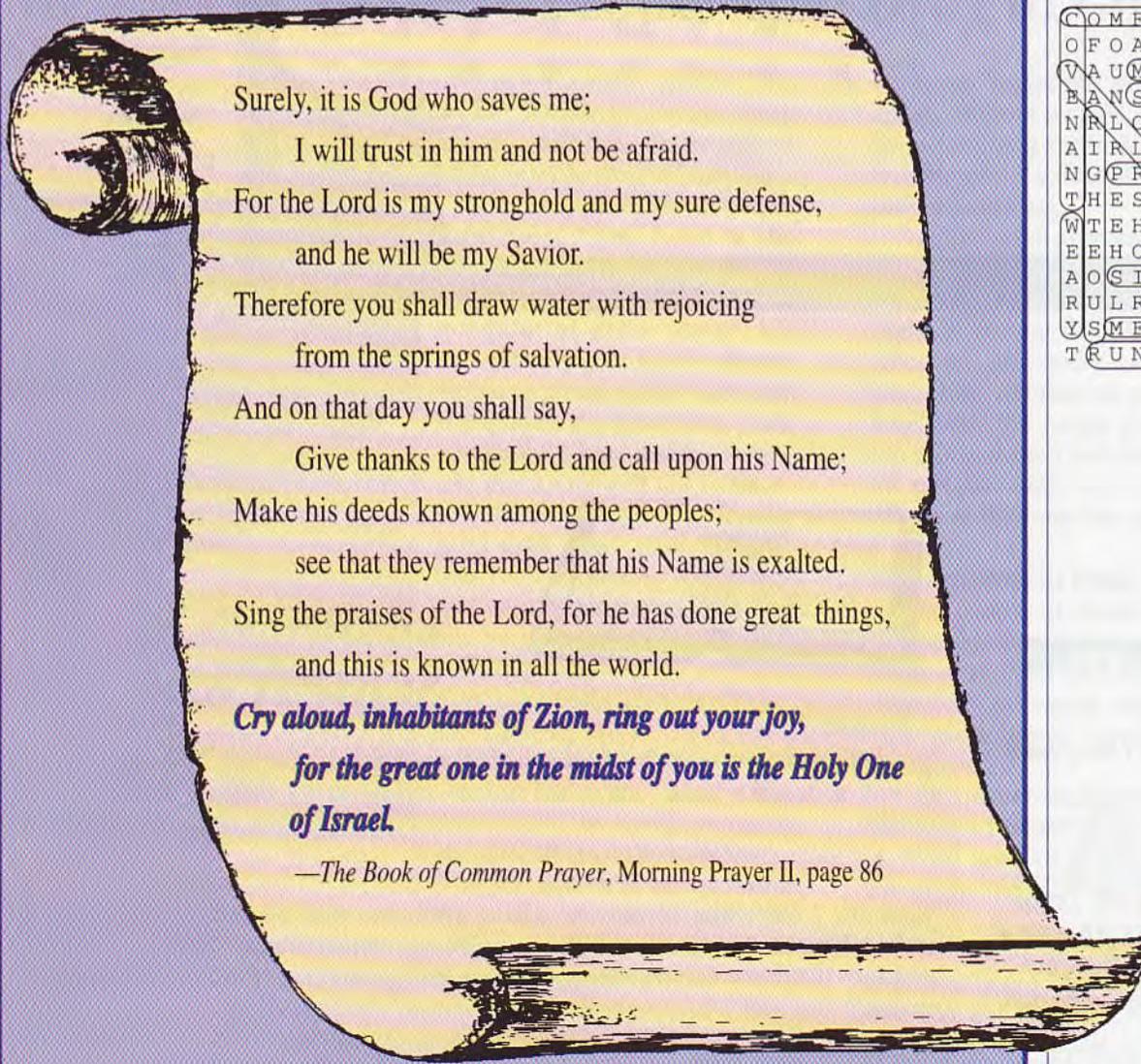
From the shepherds the scrolls found their way to Biblical scholars who are trying to put the many pieces of information together. With the advent of computers, they have been able to produce a simulation of the parts that have decayed.

One of the scrolls that was found in good condition was a copy of the Book of Isaiah. It was made of seventeen sheets of leather sewn together with linen thread. It measured 24 feet long by 10 inches high. This Isaiah scroll contained all 66 chapters with very little differences from what we read in our Bibles now.



MEMORY CHALLENGE

The First Song of Isaiah



Surely, it is God who saves me;
 I will trust in him and not be afraid.
 For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense,
 and he will be my Savior.
 Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing
 from the springs of salvation.
 And on that day you shall say,
 Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;
 Make his deeds known among the peoples;
 see that they remember that his Name is exalted.
 Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things,
 and this is known in all the world.
***Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy,
 for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One
 of Israel.***

—*The Book of Common Prayer, Morning Prayer II, page 86*

PUZZLE SOLUTION

C	O	M	F	O	R	T	C	Y	R	U	S	I	
O	F	O	A	T	T	A	F	A	I	O	R	H	S
V	A	U	M	O	U	N	T	A	I	N	T	E	A
E	A	N	S	U	F	F	E	R	I	N	G	P	I
N	R	L	O	N	F	E	J	E	R	N	O	H	A
A	I	R	L	S	A	N	E	U	A	I	T	E	H
N	G	P	R	E	P	A	R	E	S	A	R	E	H
T	H	E	S	R	V	T	U	R	E	T	W	D	A
W	T	E	H	V	R	I	S	P	I	R	I	T	G
E	E	H	O	A	T	O	A	I	T	E	N	C	E
A	O	S	I	N	A	N	L	R	I	N	G	R	E
R	U	L	R	T	O	S	E	I	N	G	S	U	S
Y	S	M	E	R	C	Y	M	E	R	T	I	R	O
T	R	U	N	S	T	H	O	U	G	H	T	S	T

ISAIAH WORD SEARCH

Find words from Isaiah hidden in the puzzle.

C	O	M	F	O	R	T	O	C	Y	R	U	S	I
O	F	O	A	T	T	A	F	A	I	O	R	H	S
V	A	U	M	O	U	N	T	A	I	N	T	E	A
E	A	N	S	U	F	F	E	R	I	N	G	P	I
N	R	L	O	N	F	E	J	E	R	N	O	H	A
A	I	R	L	S	A	N	E	U	A	I	T	E	H
N	G	P	R	E	P	A	R	E	S	S	A	R	E
T	H	E	S	R	Y	T	U	R	E	T	W	D	A
W	T	E	H	V	R	I	S	P	I	R	I	T	G
E	E	H	O	A	T	O	A	I	T	E	N	C	L
A	O	S	I	N	A	N	L	R	I	N	G	R	E
R	U	L	R	T	O	S	E	I	N	G	S	U	S
Y	S	M	E	R	C	Y	M	E	R	T	I	R	O
T	R	U	N	S	T	H	O	U	G	H	T	S	T

COMFORT
 JERUSALEM
 JUSTICE
 COVENANT
 FAINT
 SUFFERING
 VALLEY
 SERVANT
 EAGLES
 PREPARE
 SIN
 ISAIAH
 MOUNTAIN
 SPIRIT
 CYRUS
 NATIONS
 SHEPHERD
 RIGHTEOUS
 MERCY
 STRENGTH
 THOUGHTS
 WINGS
 WEARY
 RUN

Unit I: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Verses for the Unit:

Session 1: *II Kings 2:11b; Psalm 85:8*

Session 2: *Amos 3:7; 5:24*

Session 3: *Isaiah 6:3; 9:2b*

Session 4: *Micah 4:5b; 6:8b*

Session 5: *Jeremiah 8:11; 18:6b*

Session 6: *Ezekiel 1:15, 16c; 37:4*

Session 7: *Isaiah 40:31; 55:6-7*

Session 8: *Jonah 2:2a; Zechariah 9:9*

Session 9: *Ephesians 1:17-18*



LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 7

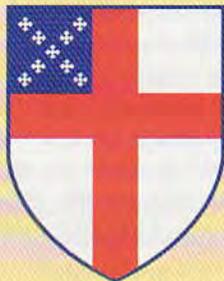
“... but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

—*Isaiah 40:31 (NRSV)*

“Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

—*Isaiah 55:6,7 (NRSV)*

ECC



UNIT I
ISSUE 8

Centuries of
Prophecy

Community Times



Reluctant Prophet Grows Angry When People Hear His Message and Repent

NINEVEH, 8th Century BCE—This week the prophet Jonah stormed out of Nineveh in an obvious rage. When he reached a spot east of the city he made a booth for himself.

Some days ago, Jonah came here and began to proclaim the Lord's message to the people. He said, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

The people of Nineveh do not usually pay much attention to travelers passing through, particularly anyone who proclaims the end of the world. However, there must have been a note of truth in Jonah's message because the people really believed him. Shortly after Jonah began preaching, they started to fast. They put on sack cloth. Soon the whole city was

fasting and praying to God—old people, children, everybody.

When the word came to the king, it was reported that he immediately got up off his throne, took off his royal robes, put on sackcloth, and sat in ashes. Instantly, a decree went out from the palace:

1. "No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water."

2. "Human beings and animals shall be

covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God."

3. "All shall turn from evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands."

The king is said to have expressed the hope that these actions would persuade God to have a change of heart and spare the city.

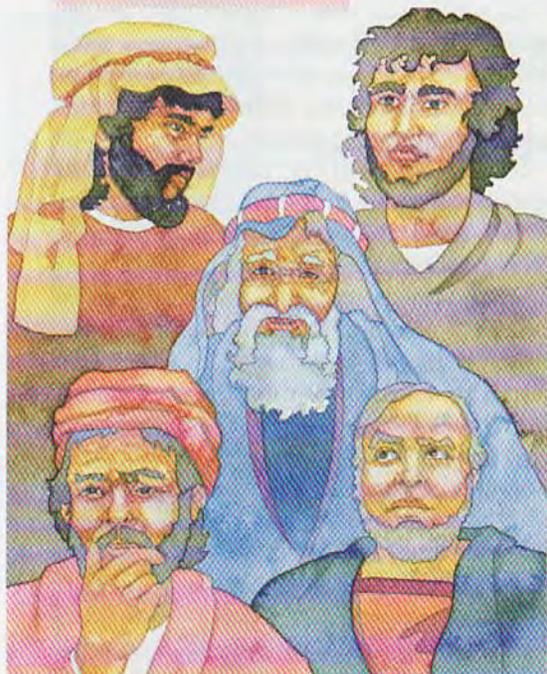
It appears that the Lord God has been touched by the dedication of all the people of the city. The calamity that Jonah predicted has not come about.

Jonah Shares His Story

Today, Jonah told us more about his background. His story is an incredible one. He began, "Some time ago, I was at home in Gath-hepher in Galilee, when the Lord called me saying, 'Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.'

"I had no intention of going to Nineveh! In fact I fled in the opposite direction. I went to Joppa and got on a boat headed for Tarshish. I figured I'd get as far away from Nineveh as possible, even put a sea between us.

"Well, there was a storm and the sailors discovered that I was running from the Lord, so they tossed me overboard to calm the storm. I thought I was going to die, but suddenly I was inside the belly of a big fish. After three days, it spit me up on the shore.



Chalice Year—
Intermediate,
Episcopal Children's
Curriculum
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Continued on page 2

Reluctant Prophet, *Continued from page 1*

The Lord spoke to me again, 'Get up to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.' I surely wasn't going to disobey the Lord a second time. So I came here.

"I was expecting the city to be destroyed. I really couldn't believe that the people would listen and turn to the

Lord, or that the Lord would change his mind. I thought a few people would be spared, but that would be all.

"Even though I was angry when I went out into the desert, the Lord sent a plant to give me shade. When a worm ate it, I wanted to die. Then the Lord spoke to me again and told me of his concern for the people and animals of Nineveh. I finally understand."



Two of the Minor Prophets Call God's People Back to Faithfulness

Following are stories about two of the "minor" prophets. Both shared important messages.

Hosea

Hosea was a prophet in the northern kingdom of Israel about 745 BCE. His name means "God has saved." He was

married to a woman named Gomer, who was unfaithful to him. Even though she was not a good wife, Hosea loved her very much.

Hosea uses his marriage (its hurts and disappointments) to explain to the people of Israel their relationship with God. He sees Israel as the unfaithful spouse, whom God loves dearly. Hosea's message is that if Israel will only return to the Lord and be faithful, all will be well, for God is loving and forgiving.

Hosea believed that faith was a matter of the heart, not of sacrifices and other rituals. "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings," the prophet said (*Hosea 6:6*).

Joel

We know very little about the prophet Joel—not even where he came from or where he lived. We know only that he was the son of Pethuel and that he had experienced the devastation of the land brought on by swarms of locusts.

Joel believed the Day of the Lord would

come upon the people just as the locusts had suddenly appeared. He wanted the story to be told.

He said, "Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation." Keeping the story in the memories of the people would help them to remain faithful to God.

Joel's account is frightening. He describes the attack of the locusts as "a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes; . . . Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, but after them a desolate wilderness, and nothing escapes them. They have the appearance of horses, and like war-horses they charge. As with the rumbling of chariots, they leap on the tops of mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble, . . . The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble."

In spite of this disaster, Joel says that the Lord will once again bless the land with sweet water and wine and the hills will flow with milk. The words of Joel are repeated by the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost: "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions."

'Minor' Does Not Mean Unimportant

The terms major and minor have a different meaning when we use them to designate the prophets of the Bible.

The term major simply refers to the length of the prophets' writings. The three longest books are Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. These are called Major Prophets.

The remaining prophets, known as the Twelve, are the shorter writings of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Sometimes the terms Former and Latter are used to describe the prophets. In this case, Former refers to the prophets mentioned in Joshua, Judges, Samuel (1 and 2), and Kings (1 and 2).

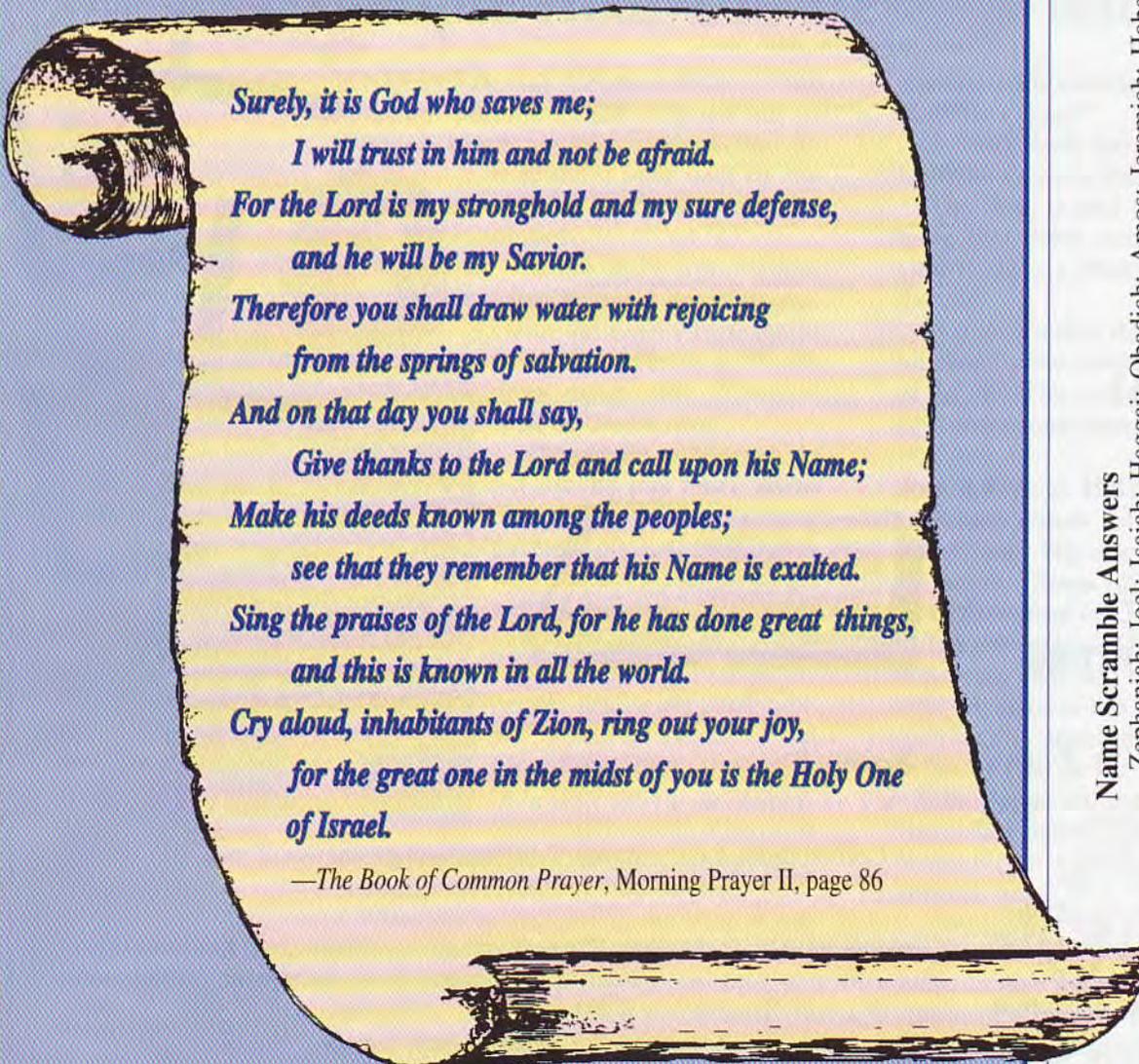
In any case, the prophets were individuals who spoke the word of God to the people of Israel. They were not very popular and were at times threatened with death. In many situations they themselves were reluctant to leave their comfortable lives. Moses, Jeremiah, Jonah, and others said, "No," and gave excuses for not doing as God asked.

The work of the prophets covered about 900 years if we begin with Moses as the first prophet of God. The prophecies of Elijah through Isaiah covered about 100 years and the Twelve—from Nahum through Joel encompass 300 years.

Dead Sea Scrolls. A. Devaney. Superstock.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

The First Song of Isaiah



*Surely, it is God who saves me;
I will trust in him and not be afraid.
For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense,
and he will be my Savior.
Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing
from the springs of salvation.
And on that day you shall say,
Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;
Make his deeds known among the peoples;
see that they remember that his Name is exalted.
Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things,
and this is known in all the world.
Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy,
for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One
of Israel.*

—*The Book of Common Prayer, Morning Prayer II, page 86*

Name Scramble Answers

Zephaniah; Joel; Isaiah; Haggai; Obadiah; Amos; Jeremiah; Habakkuk;
Daniel; Hosea; Malachi; Micah; Nahum; Ezekiel; Jonah; Zechariah

PROPHETS' NAMES

PEZHHAAN _____
 LOJE _____
 SIHAAI _____
 GAHIAG _____
 HODAIAB _____
 OSAM _____
 MERIAJEH _____
 KABKUKAH _____
 ANDIEL _____
 SHEOA _____
 LAMHACI _____
 CIHAM _____
 HUMAN _____
 LEKIEZE _____
 JANOH _____
 RECZIHA AH _____



Unit I: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Verses for the Unit:

- Session 1: *II Kings 2:11b; Psalm 85:8*
- Session 2: *Amos 3:7; 5:24*
- Session 3: *Isaiah 6:3; 9:2b*
- Session 4: *Micah 4:5b; 6:8b*
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- Session 7: *Isaiah 40:31; 55:6-7*
- Session 8: *Jonah 2:2a; Zechariah 9:9***
- Session 9: *Ephesians 1:17-18*

LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 8

“... I called to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me; ...”
 —*Jonah 2:2a (NRSV)*

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”
 —*Zechariah 9:9 (NRSV)*

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UNIT I
ISSUE 9

Honoring the
Saints

Chalice Year—
Intermediate,
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Community Times



Apostle Paul Calls the Christians Saints, Surprising Leading Religious Authorities

MEDITERRANEAN AREA, 1st century CE—The apostle Paul has astounded religious authorities by addressing members of Christian congregations as “saints.”

In a letter treasured by the Christians who live in Corinth, Paul greeted them: “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, . . .”

The term saints had always been reserved for those who lived a life bound closely to God in love, or who set themselves apart and dedicated their lives to God. These were specific people who were recognized as holy by the whole community.

But the letter to Corinth scolded the Christians who live there. They had been quarrelling with one another over their baptisms. Several people were baptized by Apollos and others by Peter. These two groups seemed to be rivals for leadership within the church.

Paul told them that their divisions and arguments must stop. Their purpose is to proclaim the gospel.

Paul has also stated that these people are not wise in the ways of the Lord. They are just beginning to dedicate their lives to Christ, so how can they meet the definition

of being bound to God in love?

The letter further reports on immorality, boasting, lawsuits, and eating food offered to idols—all of which are happening among the Corinthians. The authorities

question how such people can be considered holy in any way. Yet Paul continues to refer to them as ones who belong to Christ, beloved, and saints.

Another Example Discovered

Further evidence to outrage religious authorities was discovered in an earlier letter by Paul, to the Christians in Rome. To that church he sent a woman, Phoebe, who claimed to be a deacon

of the church. He asked that she be welcomed “in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, . . .”

People who say they will never recognize the holiness of this new religion have also declared, “We will never accept a woman as a deacon of the church, nor as a saint.”

We asked the authorities what if any action will be taken on this matter. Everyone we reached declined to answer this question.



Saints: Our Examples and Our Companions

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth. Grant that in our earthly pilgrimage we may always be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer, and know ourselves to be surrounded by their witness to your power and mercy. We ask this for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whom all our intercessions are acceptable through the Spirit, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 395

This prayer reminds us of a verse from *The Letter to the Hebrews*, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, . . ."

The author of the collect may have had the same verse in mind. The prayer expresses two ideas: the saints offer us examples of how to live, and they surround us with love and prayers.

Being a Christian often means that we act or think differently from some of our friends. When we face a difficult situation, it is comforting to know that the saints are praying for and with us.

Why Were the Saints, Saints?

Why were the saints, saints?

Because they were cheerful, when it was difficult to be cheerful;

Patient when it was difficult to be patient.

And because they pushed on, when they wanted to stand still;

And kept silent when they wanted to talk;

And were agreeable when they wanted to be disagreeable.

That was all.

It was quite simple and it always will be.

—Author Unknown

How All Saints' Day Began

In ancient Ireland, before people had encountered Christianity, people celebrated a festival to chase away the evil spirits of the dead, who were said to haunt the earth on a particular night in late autumn. In order to frighten any the evil spirits, people would dress up in costumes and carry lanterns made from hollowed gourds.

When the Christians arrived, perhaps by way of St. Patrick, the church wanted to help people to understand that those who had died should be honored. Therefore the Feast of All Saints' Day was established on the day following this pagan festival. The

festival was renamed All Hallow's Eve, or what we now call Halloween.

All Saints' Day is one of the seven principal feasts of the church. All Saints' Day may be celebrated on its fixed date of November 1 or on the Sunday following. Special Collects and prayers are written for use at the celebration of Eucharist on All Saints. It is also a day when baptisms occur. If no one is being baptized, then it is a day when we may renew our own baptismal vows.

It is a time when we remember all the saints of the Church who have led holy or exemplary lives as Christians.

Saints Are Bound to Those They Love And Also to Those Whom They Injure

What is the communion of saints?

The answer can be found in "An Outline of the Faith: commonly called the Catechism," *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 862:

"The communion of saints is the whole family of God, the living and the dead, those whom we love and those whom we hurt, bound together in Christ by sacrament, prayer, and praise."

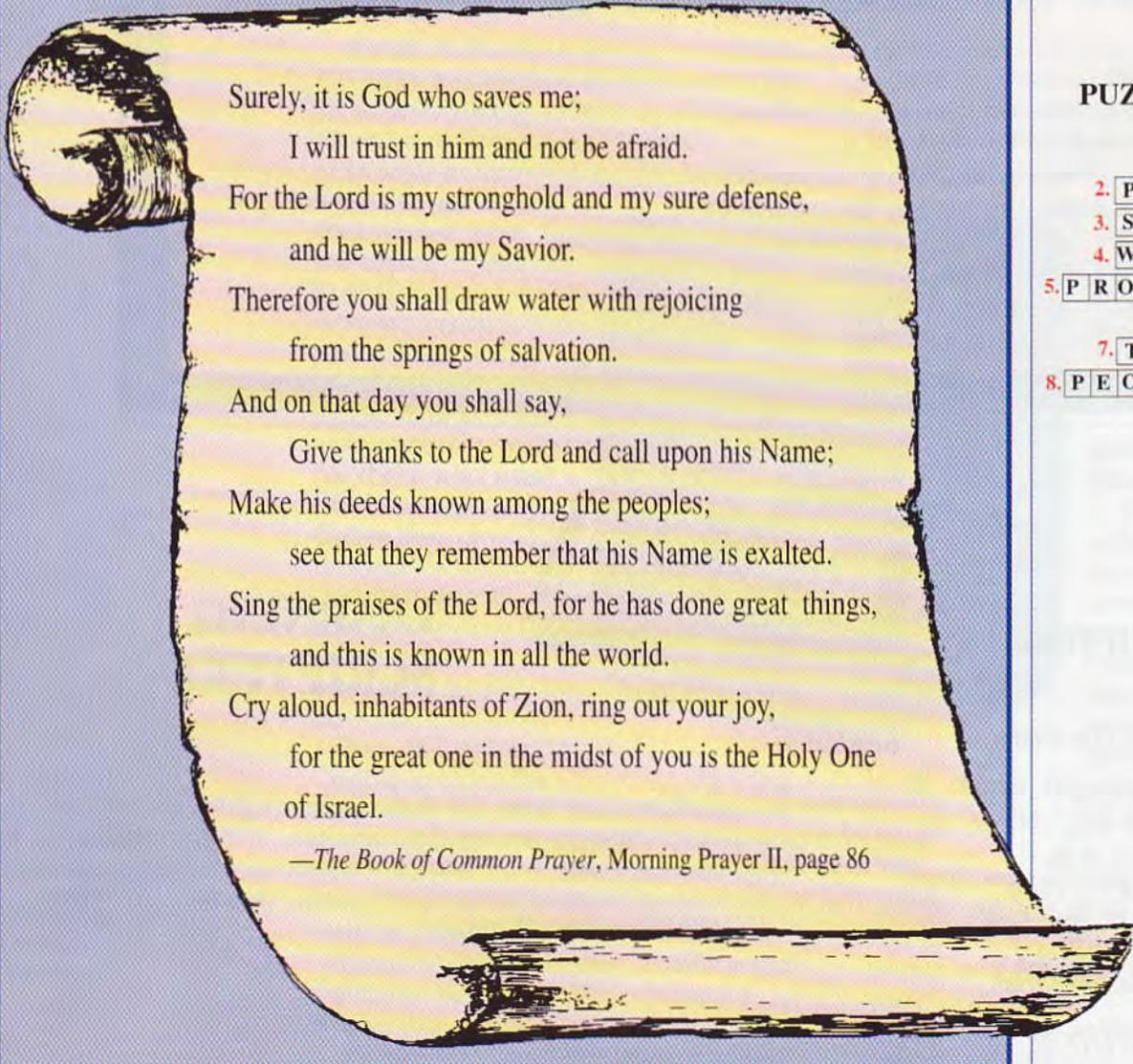
Several years ago, a movie reminded us of the true family of God. In the story, people were shot, beaten,

and killed. They hated one another because of differences. Then, at the very end of the movie, the scene was in a church. It was time for the distribution of the bread and wine during Holy Communion. As the bread was given to each person, all the characters in the story reappeared. They were now alive, whole, and smiling.

The message was clear: In the communion of saints there are no differences in race, gender, or wealth. All are bound together in Christ as a family sharing the sacrament, prayer, and praise.

MEMORY CHALLENGE

The First Song of Isaiah

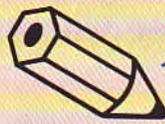


Surely, it is God who saves me;
I will trust in him and not be afraid.
For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense,
and he will be my Savior.
Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing
from the springs of salvation.
And on that day you shall say,
Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;
Make his deeds known among the peoples;
see that they remember that his Name is exalted.
Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things,
and this is known in all the world.
Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy,
for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One
of Israel.

—*The Book of Common Prayer*, Morning Prayer II, page 86

PUZZLE SOLUTION

1. FAITH
2. PRAYER
3. SAINTS
4. WITNESSES
5. PROPHETS
6. FEAST
7. TRUST
8. PEOPLE



ALL SAINTS



1. ○ □ □ □ □ □

2. □ □ ○ □ □ □ □

3. □ □ ○ □ □ □ □

4. □ □ ○ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

5. □ □ □ □ ○ □ □ □ □

6. ○ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

7. □ □ ○ □ □ □

8. □ □ □ □ ○ □ □

Clues:

1. Christians live by _____ in God.
2. Jesus taught us the Lord's _____.
3. All people belong to the communion of _____.
4. The saints surround us like a cloud of _____.
5. The _____ of Hebrew Scriptures are saints of God.
6. The Church celebrates the _____ of All Saints.
7. Faith is _____ in God's love for us.
8. All the _____ of God are saints.



Unit I: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Verses for the Unit:

Session 1: *II Kings 2:11b; Psalm 85:8*

Session 2: *Amos 3:7; 5:24*

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Session 8: *Jonah 2:2a; Zechariah 9:9*

Session 9: *Ephesians 1:17-18*

LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 9

"I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, . . ."

—*Ephesians 1:17-18 (NRSV)*