

영문구약성서
(Old Testament)

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Creation - How the World Was Made

Adam and Eve enjoy the Garden of Eden.

THIS GREAT WORLD in which we live did not always exist. The broad expanse of sky, which smiles upon us when days are fair, and frowns and weeps when days are foul, did not always form an arch above our earth-home. Long, long ago there was no world at all. There was no sun to shine, there were no stars to twinkle, nor moonbeams to play through the night shadows. But even then there was God; for he ever has been and always shall be the same unchanging Divine Being.

Then, away back in that long ago, at the very beginning of time, God made the world. Not as we see it today, for at first water covered everything, and all was darkness everywhere. What a strange, unfriendly world this must have been, for no living creature could dwell in it! But God planned to make it beautiful, so he caused the light to shine. This light he called Day and the darkness he called Night. And then the evening and morning of the first day of time passed by,

On the second day God made the beautiful blue sky, and placed above the water-covered earth clouds to carry the sky-moisture. He called the sky Heaven. On the third day he caused the waters to flow together in wide, deep places, and he called them Seas. Dry land then rose up, and this he called Earth. But as yet there were no grasses, flowers, nor trees-the whole earth was barren and desolate. So God caused a carpet of grass to grow upon the bare ground and beautiful flowers to spring up from the earth. The trees and herbs also he made to grow at his will. When God beheld all these things he saw that they were good.

On the fourth day appeared the great lights which we see in the sky-the sun, the moon, and the stars. These he made to divide the day from the night.

After these things were made, God began to create living creatures. He made fishes of all kinds and sizes to swim about in the seas and birds of every description to fly about above the water and land, just as we see them doing today. Thus the world continued to become more delightful, and the fifth day of the first week of time passed by.

On the sixth day God made all the animals, great and small, and every creeping thing. Then there was life abounding in the woods and on the plains, as well as in the air and in the sea. What a beautiful world! Still

what a strange world, for there were no people in it! Not a home anywhere—not a man, woman, nor little child to be seen. What a very strange world indeed!

But God had not yet finished his work of creation, for he wished to have people live in the wonderful world he had made. They could enjoy its beauties and take care of it as no other living creature could do. And more, they could know who had made all these great things, and knowing God they could love and worship him. So it was that God made the first man. Out of the dust of the ground he made the man's body, then he breathed into that body with the breath of life and man became a living soul.

This first man God called Adam, and to Adam he gave the power to rule over all the other living creatures. These animals and birds he brought to Adam, and Adam gave each of them a name. But not one of them did Adam find suitable for a helper, and because he needed a helper very much God made for him a woman. This woman became Adam's wife, and he loved her very much. He called her name Eve.

When the sixth day ended God had made the world and had placed everything in it just as he wished, therefore on the seventh day he rested from his work.

Eden - The First Earth-Home

God drives Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden.

GOD HIMSELF MADE for Adam and Eve their first earth-home. And a beautiful home it was. We shall call it a garden-home. God chose a place from which four rivers flowed and there he planted a large garden. We do not know the many kinds of trees and flowers and vegetables and grasses that he caused to grow in this garden. But we are sure that no park which man has made could be so lovely as was the Garden of Eden. In the midst of this garden God planted a wonderful tree, called the tree of life. Whoever might eat of the fruit of this tree would live on and on forever.

Adam and Eve were very happy. God had given them good things to enjoy, and they knew nothing about evil and wrong-doing. They often talked with God and listened to his voice as he walked and talked with them in the cool of evening time.

God wanted Adam and Eve to prove their love for him, and for this

reason he planted in the beautiful garden one test-tree, called the tree of knowledge of good and evil. "Of the fruit of every other tree in this garden you may eat," God had told them "but the fruit of this test-tree you must not taste. If you do, you shall surely die."

We do not know how long Adam and Eve enjoyed their beautiful garden-home, but we do know that one day a sad thing happened. Sin crept slyly into this lovely place. It came first to Eve. She heard a voice and saw a serpent talking to her. She was not afraid, because she had never known fear. So she listened. "Has God said that you must not eat the fruit of every tree in this garden?" the serpent asked.

"We may eat of every tree except one," Eve answered. "God has told us that we must not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, lest we die." "That is a mistake; you will not surely die," the serpent replied. "God knows that if you eat fruit from this tree you will become wise to know good and evil, as he is wise, therefore he has forbidden you to eat of it."

Until this time Eve had not touched the forbidden tree, but now she looked at its fruit and thought that if it really would make her wise, like God, she wanted to taste it. Soon she yielded to the temptation and plucked the fruit, and then she gave some to Adam, and he too ate of it.

At once Adam and Eve knew what a dreadful thing sin is. They knew they had disobeyed God. A strange something stole into their hearts; it was fear. How afraid they were to meet God! They had never been afraid before, but now they tried to find a hiding-place among the beautiful trees in the garden. Their hearts had become wicked.

Soon a voice called, "Adam, where are you?" and the frightened man answered, "Lord, I heard your voice and I was afraid, therefore I hid myself." "Why should you be afraid to meet me?" God asked "Have you eaten of the forbidden fruit?" Then Adam told God that Eve had given him some of the fruit and he had eaten it.

"What is this you have done?" God questioned Eve. And she told him what the serpent had said. "I listened to the tempter and then ate of the fruit and gave it to my husband," was her sorrowful confession. God was grieved because Adam and Eve had failed to obey him. Now he

knew they could no longer enjoy his presence with them, because sin had spoiled their lives. They were no longer fit to live in the beautiful garden home he had made for them. So he sent them away out into the world to make a home for themselves. And he placed an angel at the gate of the garden to prevent them from coming back to eat of the fruit that grew on the wonderful tree of life.

To Eve, God said, "Because you listened to the tempter's voice and disobeyed me, you shall have pain and trouble all the days of your life." Adam also received a sentence of punishment from God. No longer should the ground yield freely of the fruits and vegetables which Adam and Eve ate for food; now Adam must work hard to keep these things growing. And he would find that weeds and thorns and thistles would grow in his fields to make his work even harder. Then by and by he should grow old and feeble, and then he should die and his body would again become dust as it was before God created him. All these sorrows came because of sin.

But while God drove Adam and Eve out of the beautiful garden, he at the same time gave them the promise that he would send a Savior to make all men free from sin and death.

Cain and Abel - The First Children

Cain and Abel bring their offerings to God.

AFTER SIN CAUSED God to shut Adam and Eve out of the beautiful home that he had made for them, they built a home for themselves somewhere outside the garden gate. Here they began to feel more and more the punishment which their sin had brought upon them. Adam had to toil hard and long to secure food for himself and for Eve. No doubt his hands and feet were sometimes bruised and torn by thistles and thorns. Eve too learned the sad meaning of pain and sorrow. Her home was not so happy as it had been before she listened to the tempter's voice, and chose to disobey God.

But all the while God loved Adam and Eve. We can not know how great was his grief when they sinned. No longer could he walk and talk with them as he had done before. Now sin, like a great, black monster, had stepped in and spoiled their friendship, and where sin dwells God will not go. No doubt Adam and Eve were sorry, too. No longer could they have

God's presence in their home because sin had fastened itself in their hearts. But because God loved them still, he gave Adam and Eve a promise of a Savior. And because they believed the promise, hope came into their hearts again. Although they could not talk to God as they had done in their garden-home, now they confessed their sins to him, and it appears certain that they brought gifts which they offered upon altars. These altars they built by piling up either stones or earth, making a flat top, and placing on the top some wood, all cut and ready to be burned. Next they laid their offering upon the wood, then set fire to the wood, and that burned up the offering.

We are sure that Adam and Eve must have felt lonely, with no friends in all the big, wide world. But God planned that there should be more people, and so one day he gave Adam and Eve a little child—a baby boy. This baby they named Cain. How they must have loved him! After a while God gave them another little boy, and they named him Abel.

When Cain and his little brother Abel grew old enough to understand, Adam and Eve told them about the great God, and how they themselves had disobeyed him before Cain and Abel were born. They wanted their sons to love this God and try to please him. But alas! sin, like a tiny seed, was already buried in the hearts of these little boys, causing them to think naughty thoughts, or say unkind words, or do wrong deeds, just as little boys and girls are tempted to do today. Abel wanted to please God and he was sorry because he sinned; but Cain allowed the tiny sin-seed to grow and grow until his heart became very wicked.

By and by Cain and Abel became men, like Adam, and Cain worked in the fields raising grain and fruits, while Abel took care of a flock of sheep. These brothers built altars, upon which they offered their gifts to God, as their parents did. Cain brought for his offering fruit from the field where he had labored, and Abel brought a fat lamb. But Cain's offering did not please God. When he saw that God was displeased, he became very angry. God talked to him. He warned him of the harm that might come if he should continue to be angry instead of becoming sorry for his sins. But Cain was not willing to listen; he was not sorry for his sins. Abel believed the promise which God had given to his parents, and when he offered his gift he prayed and asked God to forgive his sins. God was pleased with Abel's offering.

One day while the brothers were together in the field, Cain quarreled with Abel. Now, we are sure that nothing good can come of quarrels, because they are so wrong. This quarrel ended dreadfully. Cain grew so angry with Abel that he killed him. What an awful deed!

God spoke again to Cain, and asked, "Where is Abel, your brother?" Cain replied, "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?" Wicked Cain did not know that God had seen all he did. And now for a punishment God told Cain that he must leave his old home forever.

Now at last Cain felt sorry, but he was sorry only because he was to be punished for his sin. He thought God was punishing him more than he could bear. Then God placed a mark upon him that all could see, and by that mark they would know that God did not want them to kill Cain.

After this Cain wandered far away into a land called Nod. There he lived for many long years.

Adam and Eve lived a long time, and God gave them other children besides Cain and Abel. Then the time came at last when their bodies grew feeble with age and they died, as God had said they should when they ate the forbidden fruit.

Noah's Ark - And Why It Was Built

Noah brings the animals into the ark.

THE CHILDREN OF Adam and Eve lived to be very old. Their children also lived for several hundreds of years. And so it was that grandsons became grandfathers before their own grandfathers died. Thus several generations lived and worked together. After a while there were many people living in the world.

We do not know very much about those people of long ago except the fact that many of them were very wicked. Among them was one man, however, who, like Abel, tried to please God. This man's name was Enoch. The Bible tells us that Enoch walked with God. We understand that he loved God better than he loved anything else, and talked to God and listened when God talked to him. Finally Enoch became an old man. At last, when he was three hundred and sixty-five years old, one day God took him away from earth to heaven, and he did not die. Enoch had a son whom he named Methuselah. This man lived for nine hundred and sixty-nine years, until he was older than any other man had ever been.

Then he died, like all other people had done except his father Enoch. By this time there were many, many people living in the world. And their hearts were so full of sin that their thoughts and words and deeds were all very wicked. They did not try to please God at all. They did not love him. They did not thank him for the blessings of food and shelter and sunshine which he gave to them. They did not teach their children to love good, pure things, but allowed them to grow up and become evil men and women like themselves. What a sad world this was! for sin was everywhere.

Finally God planned to destroy all the people because they were no longer fit to live. He felt sorry that he ever had made man. He thought he would destroy everything—people, animals, and every other creature that lived on the earth. He would cause a great flood of water to cover the earth.

Then God remembered Noah. Here was a man who had tried to do right regardless of all his wicked surroundings. And he had taught his sons to do right also. God was pleased with Noah and with his sons. Sometimes he talked to Noah. Now he told him about his plan to destroy the world. But because Noah and his family had been trying to do right and trust in the Lord, God promised that they should not be destroyed with the wicked people.

"Get ready to build an ark," God told Noah, "and then when it is finished you and your wife, your sons and their wives may go into this ark and live there until the flood is ended."

Now that God decided to save a few people he also arranged to save a pair of each kind of animal and of bird and of every living thing on the earth that breathed. These creatures were to be housed in the ark, too, while the flood should last.

Noah believed God and made ready to build the ark. God had told him how it should be built. For a long time, while others went their wicked way, he and his sons worked, sawing boards and hammering nails, and making every part of the ark just exactly as God had said it should be made. Then by and by every nail was driven securely into its place, the inside walls were finished, and every part was ready for the purpose it should serve. What a queer-looking building now stood before them—a very large boat-like house three stories high, away out on dry land!

Doubtless the people laughed much at faithful old Noah and his three sons. Perhaps they thought that only feeble-minded folk could believe that there ever would be such a thing as a flood. Still Noah continued to warn them that they should repent of their sins lest God destroy them.

One day, when the ark was completed and everything else was in readiness, God called Noah and told him to bring his wife, his three sons and their wives, and come into the ark. And the animals and birds and creeping things God caused to come also, two and two of every kind; and of those animals which man should need after the flood, and birds, seven pairs of each kind came. When they were all inside the ark God himself shut the door. After a few days the rain began to fall. And such a rain! Great sheets of water poured down from the clouds as if windows in the sky had been opened and water was flowing through them. Soon the tiny streamlets were raging torrents and the rivers were overflowing their banks. People began to forsake their homes and rush to the hills for safety. Animals, too, ran pell-mell everywhere, trying to find a place of refuge and shelter from the storm. But still it rained, and higher and higher the waters rose until every one believed at last that Noah had told the truth. But now it was too late to repent and seek refuge in the ark, for God had shut the door. And so when the waters crept up to the tops of the hills and mountains and finally buried them out of sight, every living creature on the face of the earth was drowned. Those in the ark were the only ones left alive.

For forty days and nights the downpour of rain continued; but Noah and his family were safe. When the waters rose high enough they lifted the ark off the ground, and it began to float about like a great ship on the top of the flood. For six months and more it floated high above the water-covered earth. Then one day it came to a standstill. God had caused a wind to blow over the waters to dry them up, and as the flood-tide became gradually lower, the ark had found a lodging-place on the top of a mountain. Here it rested for two months, and all the while the water-mark continued to drop lower down the mountainsides.

After waiting for some time, Noah opened a window, which must have been very high up, near the roof. He allowed a bird called a raven to fly out of the window. Now, the raven has strong wings, and this bird flew to and fro until the waters had gone down. After some days, Noah sent out a dove; but this bird could not find a place to build her nest, so she

soon returned again to the ark. Another week of waiting passed, and Noah sent the dove out once more. She stayed longer this time; and when evening came she flew back to Noah, bringing a green olive-leaf in her mouth. At this Noah and his family knew that the waters were returning to the rivers and the seas, and that the land again was becoming green and beautiful. One more week they waited, and now when Noah sent out the dove she flew away and never returned.

Now Noah believed that the time had come when he might uncover the roof and look out upon the earth. How glad he must have been to see dry land again; for more than a year had passed since God had shut them inside the ark. And God said to him, "Come out of the ark, with your wife and your sons and their wives, and every living thing that is with you in the ark." So Noah opened the great door, and he and his family stepped out upon the dry ground. All the animals and the birds and the creeping things came out also, and began to live upon the earth as they had done before the flood.

Noah was thankful to God because his life and the lives of his family had been saved when all other people had perished from off the earth. He built an altar as soon as he came out of the ark, and brought his offering to God. Because Noah had been obedient, God accepted his offering and was pleased with his household.

God then promised that never again would he send another flood to destroy every living creature, and that as long as the earth should remain there would be summer and winter, springtime and autumn, and day and night. And because God wanted mankind to remember always the promise that he would never again destroy the earth with a flood, he placed in the sky a sign of his promise. That sign was a beautiful rainbow. Have you ever seen that rainbow-sign? It is God's promise to all mankind—to you and to me as well as to Noah and his children.

The Tower of Babel - And Why It Was Never Finished

The people try to build a tower to reach the sky.

A CLEAN, NEW world lay before Noah and his three sons when they stepped out of the ark. Now there were no wicked neighbors to mock at them when they built altars to worship God. Even the wicked works of those wicked people had been swept away out of sight. Everything was

ready for a new beginning.

Noah and his sons set to work and made new homes. Noah's sons were named Shem, Ham, and Japheth. After a while God gave them children. These children grew up and made homes for themselves. Then there were other children; and so it came about that the number of people grew and grew until the earth became as full of people as it was before the flood.

From the mountain of Ararat, where the ark lodged when the waters went down, the human family went into the south country. Later they moved east, into the valley of Mesopotamia, and there they lived on a plain in the land of Shinar. "Let us build for ourselves a city," said the people some time after they reached Shinar, "and let us make a tower so great and high that its top will reach up to the sky. Then we shall not be scattered over the face of the earth, and separated from one another." And so the people set to work.

In this land of Shinar the soil is such that bricks can be made of it, and soon many bricks were made and ready for use. What a busy people! Some were making brick, others were mixing mortar, and still others were carrying brick and mortar to the workmen who were building the city and the tower. Everything was moving fast and everybody was thinking that some day their city and their wonderful tower would be finished.

Then something happened that the people had not expected to happen at all. God came to see the city and the tower. He did not talk to the builders, and very likely they did not know he had been there to look upon their work. But God was not pleased with what he saw. He knew that men would become more sinful if they should finish that great tower. Already they were thinking more and more about their own work and less and less about the God who gave them strength with which to labor. Soon they might forget God entirely and worship the work their own hands had made. So God planned to stop their building.

Until this time all the people in the world spoke one language. Now God caused them to speak different languages. The people of one family could not understand what their neighbors were talking about. Neither could their neighbors understand what they were saying. Such a great change caused the people to become restless, and all those who spoke one language moved into neighbor-hoods by themselves. They could no longer go on

with their great building, either, because the workmen could not understand one another's language; and so at last they quit trying to finish the tower whose top they had planned should reach the sky. And the name of the city was called Babel.

Soon the people of one language gathered together their possessions and moved away from Babel. Others did the same. Across the plains they journeyed and over the mountains into strange lands where men's feet had never walked before. They built cities and planted fields and vineyards, and their number grew until they became strong nations.

Abraham - A Man Who Heard And Obeyed God's Call

Abram builds an altar in the plain of Moreh and worships God.

THE PEOPLE WHO moved away from Babel into different parts of the world did not pray to God. Their hearts were sinful, and they shrank away from the purity of God, as Adam and Eve did when they tried to hide from God's presence in the Garden of Eden. But we find that the people prayed to something. In every country where they went they had some kind of worship. Many of them worshiped things that God had made, such as the sun, the moon, and the stars. Afterward they also worshiped rivers and mountains and hills. They made images of wood and of stone to these things which they worshiped, and called the images gods.

Not far from the city of Babel, where the tower was left unfinished, another city was built. This city was called Ur of the Chaldees, because it was built in the home country of the Chaldean people. These people worshiped the moon-god, Ur, and when they built their great city they named it in honor of their god.

On the plains near Ur lived an old man who was a shepherd. He tilled the soil and also raised large flocks of sheep and herds of cattle. His name was Terah. He had three grown sons named Abram, Nahor, and Haran. They were also shepherd-farmers. Haran did not live to be very old. When he died he left a son named Lot.

Now, Abram the son of Terah was a good man. He did not worship the moon-god as did his neighbors. He believed in the true God. He built altars and worshiped God just as Abel and Noah had done long years before. His offerings pleased God, and his prayers were heard.

One day Abraham heard the voice of God calling to him. He listened. God told him to gather together his family and his flocks and herds, bid farewell to his neighbors and friends, and start out on a long journey. God promised to lead him to a land far away, where he would bless him and make his name great. Through his family God promised to give a blessing to all families in the world.

Perhaps Abram did not understand the meaning of all God's promise. He did not know that in the years to come a Savior should be born among the people of his own family, who would then be called the Jews. This Savior, we know, is the blessing which God promised to give to all families in the world, if Abram would obey his voice.

Although Abram did not know these things, nor even the country to which God wished to lead him, he was not afraid to go. So he took all his family—his wife, whose name was Sarai, his aged father, Terah, his brother Nahor and his wife, and the young son of his dead brother Haran. They and their servants Abram urged to start out with him on his journey. And they took all their possessions too—the tents in which they lived, and the large flocks of sheep and herds of cattle.

Day after day they journeyed up the great River Euphrates until they came to a place called Haran. Here they stopped to rest, and here Abram's aged father died and was buried. Even before that God spoke to Abram and urged him to continue his journey. But Nahor, Abram's brother, was unwilling to go farther, so he remained at Haran and made his home at that place.

After this Abram made a second start. Now he took only his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and their servants. Driving their flocks and herds before them, they turned away from the great river and journeyed southwest, toward the land of Canaan. On one side of them the mountains rose wild and high, while on the other side, as far as they could see, the barren desert stretched away toward the south. On and on they traveled—across rivers, through valleys, over hills—each day farther from their homeland and nearer to the land which God had promised. We do not know how many days and weeks and months passed by before they came to the plain of Moreh, where God spoke again to Abram. "This is the land," God told him, "that I will give to you and to your children." And Abram built an altar there and worshiped God.

Now, this land of promise was called Canaan, because the Canaanite people lived in it. These people had been there for a long time and had built some towns and cities. Abram did not live among the Canaanite people, but pitched his tents out on the hills or plains, wherever he could find grass for his cattle and sheep to eat and water for them to drink. All the while his flocks and herds grew larger, until finally Abram became very rich.

Then there came a famine in the land. The grass failed and the waters of the brooks dried up. Nowhere could Abram find pasture, so he moved away from Canaan into the country called Egypt. Here he saw the great River Nile, and possibly even the pyramids and the sphinx. But he did not remain long in Egypt, because God did not want him to dwell there. When the famine ended in Canaan, he returned again to that country.

How Abraham Ended a Quarrel

Abraham and Lot separate the land.

AFTER ABRAM RETURNED from Egypt, he and Lot journeyed to the place where they had first pitched their tents in Canaan. There Abram had built an altar to worship God. At the very same place he now sacrificed another offering, and again talked to God.

Abram was now a very rich man. Not only did he possess many servants, flocks, and herds, but he also possessed much silver and gold. And we find that his nephew Lot owned many servants and sheep and cattle too. Wherever these men and their servants pitched their tents, the place looked like a tent-town. And the country all around them would be dotted with cattle and sheep.

After some time trouble arose between the servants of Abram and Lot. Some of Abram's servants were caretakers of his cattle and sheep. They and the servants who cared for Lot's flocks quarreled. Abram's servants wanted the best pasture-land for Abram's flocks, and Lot's servants wanted that same land for their master's flocks. And so the trouble grew. By and by news of the quarrel reached the ears of Abram.

He looked out over the crowded country and saw how hard it must be for the servants. How could they always find places near by where tender grasses grew and where water was plentiful? He saw, too, the villages of the Canaanites not far away, and he knew there was not room enough in that part of the country for all to dwell together peaceably.

So Abram called Lot and said, "Let there be no quarrel between us or between our servants. There is not room enough for both of us to dwell together with our flocks and herds. But see, the whole land lies before us. Let us separate. If you choose to go to the west country, then I shall journey east; but if you desire the east country, then I shall go west."

From the height upon which Abram and Lot stood to view the country they could see far to the east and to the west. Because Abram was the one to whom God had promised all this land he could have chosen the better part, or he could have sent Lot and his servants away out of the land altogether. But Abram was not selfish.

He kindly offered Lot the first choice. And Lot, forgetting the kindness of his uncle, thought only of his own interests and chose the east country, through which the Jordan River flowed.

"I can always find plenty of grass and water there," he reasoned, "and my flocks and herds will grow in number until soon I shall become very rich, too." After Lot departed with his possessions, God spoke again to Abram. Perhaps God saw that Abram felt lonely. So he comforted him by reminding him of the promise that the whole of Canaan's land should belong to him and to his children.

As yet Abram and Sarai had no children, but God said that some day the children of their grandsons and great-grandsons should be many. And Abram believed God. God also told Abram to journey through the length and breadth of Canaan's land to see how large a country it was.

So Abram moved away from the place where he and Lot had lived together for the last time, and came to a plain called Mamre. Here he pitched his tents under the oak-trees near the city of Hebron, and then built another altar to worship God.

Hagar, Ishmael, And God's Promise To Abraham

Lot's Choice, And How It Brought Troub

Abraham meets the priest, Melchizedek.

WHEN LOT SELECTED the fertile plains of Jordan for his share of Canaan's land, he thought he was making a wise choice. He saw in the distance the large cities of the plain, called Sodom and Gomorrah. He knew that in those cities he could sell sheep and cattle from his flocks and herds, and soon have much silver and gold. So he moved toward

Sodom. After a while he pitched his tents still nearer the city walls, and finally he moved his family inside the gate.

Now, Sodom was not a nice place for good people to live. The people of Sodom cared nothing about God. Some of them were very rich, and perhaps they had beautiful homes. But they had unlovely hearts. The Bible tells us that the men of Sodom were wicked and great sinners in God's sight. But in Lot's sight they were rich men, and clever, and so he brought his family to dwell among them. This was a sad mistake.

One day trouble came upon Sodom. There had been war in the land and the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, and three other cities had gone out to battle. The army against which they fought defeated them. Then the conquering soldiers entered the gates of Sodom and of Gomorrah, crowded through the streets, and pushed their way into rich men's houses, taking everything that they could find to carry away. They even took people and led them away to become slaves. And Lot with his wife and children were taken with the others.

One of the captured men escaped and fled across the country to the place near Hebron where Abram lived. He told about the battle and what had happened to Lot. When Abram heard of Lot's trouble, he took three hundred and eighteen of his men servants and, with some friends, hurried in pursuit of the captives. After a long, hard march across the country they came upon the enemy's camp at a place in the north of Canaan, called Dan. It was night, and the unsuspecting enemies lay asleep. Abram and his men rushed upon them and frightened them. They thought a great army had come to fight against them, and they were not prepared for a battle. So they rose up in haste and ran away, leaving behind their tents and all the goods and the people which they had taken away from Sodom and Gomorrah.

This was a great victory for Abram. The people of Canaan honored him for his courage, and the king of Sodom went out to meet him. He offered Abram all the gold and silver and food and clothing that he had taken away from the enemy's camp, and asked only that the people be returned again to Sodom. But Abram would not accept any reward from the king, because he had promised God that he would not keep anything for himself. And so all the people and their possessions were again returned to their homes.

Another king also came out to meet Abram. His name was Melchizedek, and he was king of Salem, a place which was later called Jerusalem. Melchizedek was different from the other people of Canaan because he loved the true God and worshiped him. He was a priest of God. When this king met Abram he brought food for him, and then he asked God to bless Abram. He also thanked God for giving Abram such a great victory.

Because Melchizedek was a priest of the true God, Abram gave him a tenth of all the goods he had taken from the enemy's camp. After this experience, Lot took his wife and children and went back again to live in wicked Sodom; but Abram returned to his quiet tent-home under the oak-trees near Hebron.

Abraham Gets Strange Visitors

Abraham's visitors tell him that Sodom will be destroyed.

IT WAS NOONDAY, and everywhere the sun shone hot upon the plains. But Abraham sat in the cool shade of his tent door, beneath a tree. Presently three strange men drew near. They did not look like other men, and Abraham knew they were from a far country. He hurried to meet them, and, bowing low toward the ground just as he always when greeting a friend or a visitor, he urged them to rest for a while in the cool shade. This they were quite ready to do.

Now we shall see how Abraham entertained his guests. First he merit for water to wash their feet. This was not unusual because people wore sandals in that long-ago time and it was customary for them to remove their sandals and wash their feet whenever they sat down to rest and visit. Next, Abraham told his wife to make ready and bake some barley cakes upon the hearth, while he should prepare some meat, for his guests. Then he ran out to his herd and selected a young calf, which he gave to a servant to dress and cook. When all was ready, he brought the food to his guests, and they ate while he stood under a tree near by. Abraham was glad to serve these strangers because he was kind to every one.

When the meal was ended, the men arose to continue their journey. Abraham walked with them for a little way. By this time he knew they were not like other men, but they were heavenly beings. Two of them were angels. The other one was the Lord. And Abraham felt that he was unworthy to entertain such wonderful visitors. But because he was a good man the Lord loved him.

"Shall I hide from Abraham this thing which I do"? the Lord asked his companions. "I know that he will teach his children to keep my ways and to do right." Then, turning toward Abraham the Lord said, "I am going to visit Sodom and Gomorrah to see if these cities are as wicked as they seem, for the cry of their sins has reached me."

The two men hurried on; but Abraham detained the Lord a while longer, because he wanted to talk to him. He knew the Lord would destroy the cities if he found them to be as wicked as they seemed, and he thought of Lot. Now, we remember that Lot had gone back to live again in Sodom after Abraham and his servants had rescued him and his family from the enemy's camp. Abraham knew that Lot too might perish if the cities should be destroyed. And he loved Lot. He wished once more to try to save him, so he said, "Will you destroy the righteous persons in the city, will you not spare the lives of all for their sake?" And the Lord promised to spare Sodom if he could find fifty righteous persons in it.

Abraham feared that there might be less than fifty. And he was troubled for Lot's safety. So he spoke again. "I know that I am but a common man, made of dust," said he, "yet I speak to the Lord. If there should be only forty-five righteous persons living in Sodom, will you spare the city?" And the Lord said he would spare the city for the sake of only forty-five righteous persons.

Still Abraham felt troubled. He feared there might not be even forty-five. So he asked if the city might be spared for the sake of forty. The Lord knew it was Abraham's love for the people which to plead so earnestly for Sodom, and he promised to spare the city for the sake of forty.

"What," thought poor, distressed Abraham, "if there should not be even forty righteous persons found in Sodom?" And once more he spoke. "O Lord, be not angry with me," he said, "but if there are only thirty righteous persons, will you spare the city for their sakes. And the Lord promised to spare the entire city if only thirty people could be found in it. Abraham continued to plead until he had asked the Lord if he would spare the city if only ten righteous persons were found, and the Lord promised to spare Sodom if he could find only ten. Then the Lord passed on, and Abraham returned to his tent.

Sodom And Gomorrah, And What Happened to Them

Lot and his family escape from Sodom before it's destroyed.

THE LONG SHADOWS of evening-time were stealing over the through the valleys, and everywhere people were hurrying home. Soon the city gates would be closed, and the wise men who sat there during the daytime to judge the people would be turning homeward, too.

Among the wise men who sat in Sodom's gate was Lot. On this evening he saw two strangers approaching, and he greeted them with a low bow, just as Abraham had greeted these same men earlier in day. For they were no other than the angels who had dined with the Lord at Abraham's tent. Lot invited them to his home to spend the night, but they said they would stay out in the streets. Now, Lot knew the wicked men of Sodom would try to harm them if they remained in the streets, so he urged them to come with him. Finally they consented.

Here again the angels were entertained with hospitality, which may have reminded them of Abraham's kindness, for Lot brought water to wash their dusty feet and prepared good things for them to eat. Possibly Lot did not yet know that they were heavenly beings; but he thought they were strangers unlike the wicked men who lived in that city.

Soon the news spread all over Sodom that Lot had two strange-looking visitors at his home, and men came hurrying from every part of the city to see them. They planned to hurt them. But when Lot refused to let them see his guests, they pushed him aside and tried to break open the door. At this the angels drew Lot quickly inside, and then smote the men with blindness. Now Lot knew that his visitors were angels, and that they had come to destroy Sodom because it was such a wicked place. He went out to the homes of his sons-in-law, two men of Sodom, and told them that the Lord was going to destroy their city. But they would not believe his words. And they would not listen when he told them to hurry and escape for their lives. So the night passed by.

When the early morning came, before the sun lightened the earth, the angels urged Lot and his wife and their two daughters to make haste and flee out of the city lest they also be destroyed. How hard it seemed for Lot to leave his home and his riches to be destroyed! God was merciful to him, and the angels seized him and his family and dragged them

outside the city. Then they bade them flee to the mountains for their lives, and not even pause long enough to take a backward glance toward their old home, because God would soon destroy the cities of that rich valley, and unless they hurried away they too should perish. But Lot's wife did not obey the angel's words. She looked back, and her body became changed into a pillar of salt.

Poor, unhappy Lot! fear now tormented him from every direction. He thought his life would not be safe even in the mountains, for wild animals might devour him there. So he prayed to God to spare a small city near by and allow him and his daughters to enter that place. God heard his prayer and granted his request, so they fled into that city. That place was called Zoar, which means little.

Just as the sun rose, Lot and his daughters entered the gate of Zoar, and at that time God sent a great rain of fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah and all the neighboring cities. So terrible was the fire that it completely destroyed the cities and all the wicked people near by. Lot and his daughters feared that their lives were not safe in Zoar, so they hurried to the mountains, where God had first told them to go. There they lived in a cave-home, far away from other people. After this time we hear no more about Lot, the man whose home and riches were destroyed because he chose to live among wicked people who hated God.

Ishmael - The Little Boy Who Became A Great Hunter

Hagar and her son, Ishmael.

AFTER THE DESTRUCTION of Sodom and the other cities of the plain, Abraham moved away from Hebron. He journeyed south and west, into the land of the Philistines, near the Great Sea, and made his home in a place called Gerar. Here he lived only a short when God gave to him and Sarah the child of promise. Abraham named the child Isaac (a word meaning, in his language, "laughing") because both he and Sarah had laughed when God told them that they should have a son in their old age.

When the baby Isaac grew old enough to toddle about his tent-home, and to lisp words, his father Abraham made a great feast for him. Perhaps many friends were invited, and every one knew that Isaac's parents thought he was a very wonderful little boy indeed. Before the day passed, however, something happened which brought sadness to the kind heart of

Abraham. You remember that Ishmael, the son of Hagar, Sarah's maid, also lived in Abraham's tent. These two boys, Ishmael and Isaac, may have played together sometimes, although Ishmael was much older than Abraham's little son. On this feast-day, when everybody else was happy, Ishmael was unkind to Isaac. Perhaps he felt jealous of the honor that Isaac was receiving from so many people.

When Sarah heard how unkindly Ishmael had treated her little boy she became angry, and called Abraham. "You must send Ishmael and his mother away," she told him, "for I do not want our little boy to grow up with such a rude companion." Now, Abraham loved Ishmael too, and he felt sad to hear that the boy had mistreated his son. He thought that Ishmael might learn to be kind; but God told him to send the boy and his mother away, just as Sarah had said.

So the next morning Abraham called Hagar and told her that she must take Ishmael and go away. He gave her food for the journey and placed upon her shoulder a bottle filled with water. This bottle was not made of glass, but of the skin of an animal; for people used skin-bottles in that long-ago time. Then Abraham bade them good-by, and perhaps he watched them as they started toward the land of Egypt, where Hagar used to live when she was a little girl.

The road to Egypt led through the same desert where the angel spoke to Hagar when she had run away from Sarah's tent. On this second journey Hagar missed the road and wandered off into the trackless wilderness. She did not know which way to take; and after a while there was no more food in her basket nor water in the bottle which Abraham had given. And the hot sun beamed down upon the dry, burning sand all day, until Hagar and Ishmael grew so thirsty, faint, and weak that they could go no farther. Then Hagar laid her suffering boy beneath the shade of a little bush, and went away. "I can not bear to see him suffer and die," she said, and then she wept. But God had not forgotten about Hagar and her boy. Just as he had seen her on her first journey into the wilderness, so he could see her now as she sat weeping all alone. And soon she heard a voice calling to her out of heaven, "What is the cause of your sorrow, Hagar? Do not be afraid, for God has heard Ishmael's cry of pain, and he will save his life and make of him a great nation. Go, now, and lift him up." Then Hagar saw a spring of water which God caused to bubble out of the dry ground near

by, and she quickly filled her empty bottle and gave Ishmael a drink. After this Hagar and Ishmael did not journey on to Egypt, but made their home in the wilderness, far from other people. God cared for them, and Ishmael grew to be a strong, wild man. He became a hunter, and used a bow and arrow. His children also grew up in the wilderness, and were wild and strong like their father. They finally were called Arabians, and even today their descendants live in the desert and wander about wherever they please, just as Ishmael, their forefather, did so long ago

How Abraham Gave Isaac Back to God

As Abraham prepares to sacrifice Isaac, he is stopped by the angel of God. IT IS GOD'S will that people show their love for him by what they do. You remember how God wished to have the first man and woman show their love for him. He planted in their garden-home a test-tree, the fruit of which he commanded them not to eat. And you remember also how they failed to obey his command, and so failed to show their love.

Abraham always listened to God's voice and obeyed. He left his own people and his homeland to journey into a country that he did not know, because God called him. And in our last story he sent Ishmael and Hagar away because God told him to do as Sarah had said. Even when it did not seem easy to obey, Abraham was always ready to do God's bidding.

After the baby Isaac came into Abraham's life, God saw that Abraham's love for the little boy was very strong. And the passing years increased this love, because Abraham knew that Isaac was the child God had promised, and he loved Isaac as a gift from God. He looked forward to the time when Isaac should become a man and should have children also, and he knew that these children should grow up and become the fathers of more people, because God had told him these things. And so whenever he looked upon Isaac and thought about these things, he knew that in this child were bound up all the promises of God for the coming years.

By and by the time came when Isaac grew far away from baby-hood into youth. Abraham had taught him to know about God and to worship him. Perhaps he had taken Isaac with him when he offered gifts upon the altar, and he had told Isaac that God would accept the gifts and hear his prayers if he would try to do right. And Isaac loved his father Abraham, and was obedient to him.

When God saw how dearly Abraham loved his son, and how obedient and loving Isaac was toward his father, he thought, "I must prove Abraham this once more, and see whether he loves me better than he loves the gift-child I have given." So he called to Abraham one day, and Abraham answered, "Behold, here am I." Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love so much, and go into the land of Moriah. There give him back to me as an offering upon an altar, which you must build at the place I will show." Abraham did not know the reason why God should ask him to give Isaac back as an offering. He could not understand how the promises concerning Isaac would be fulfilled if now he must offer Isaac upon an altar, just like the lambs which he had given to God at other times. But Abraham believed that God understood why, and so he was not afraid to obey.

The land of Moriah was some distance from Abraham's tent, and the journey there would require a few days' time. Abraham knew this, and he prepared to start at once. He called two young men servants and Isaac, then saddled his donkey, and they started away. They took wood and fire with which to burn the offering, and traveled on and on for two days, sleeping at night under the trees. On the third day Abraham saw the mountain where God wanted him to build the altar and offer his gift. He left the servants with the donkey to wait by the roadside, while he and Isaac should go on alone. Isaac carried the wood upon his shoulder, and Abraham took the vessel containing the fire.

As they climbed the mountain-side together, Isaac began to wonder why his father had forgotten to bring a lamb for an offering. He did not know what God had asked Abraham to give. He did not understand why they were going so far from home to build the altar. So he said, "My father, see, here is wood and fire for the altar, but where is the lamb for an offering?" Abraham replied, "God will provide himself a lamb."

When they reached the place God had appointed, Abraham built an altar, laid the wood upon it, and then bound Isaac's hands and feet and placed him upon the wood. Next he took his knife, and was about to kill Isaac when a loud voice called to him out of the sky, "Abraham! Abraham!" The old man stopped to listen, and the angel of God said to him, "Do not harm Isaac. Now I know that you love God even better than you love your child. Untie his hands and his feet, and let him go." At this Abraham saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket near by. He took this animal and

offered it instead of his son Isaac.

Afterward the angel called to Abraham from the sky again, and said, "Because you have not withheld your dearly loved child from me, I will surely bless you and will cause your descendants to be as many as the stars in the heavens and as the sands upon the seashore. And I will bless all the nations of the earth through your descendants, because you have obeyed my voice."

No doubt it was a happy father and son who walked down the mountain-side together; for now Abraham knew that he had surely pleased God, and Isaac knew that his life was precious in God's sight. Abraham called the name of the place where he built the altar, Jehovah Jireh, which means in his language, "The Lord will provide." Then they returned to the young men servants who were wait-ing by the roadside, and then journeyed on to their home at Beersheba., where Abraham had planted trees and digged a well some time before this story. Here Abraham lived for many years.

How Abraham Found a Wife For Isaac

Rebekah and Eliezer at the well.

WHEN SARAH, ISAAC'S mother, was one hundred and twenty-seven years old, she died. Abraham had no place to bury her, so he bought a field containing a cave,, and Abraham buried Sarah in this cave. The field and the cave were called by the name of Machpelah.

After Sarah's death, Abraham and Isaac felt lonely. Isaac was now grown to manhood, and Abraham thought he was old enough to be married. The parents usually choose wives for their sons, and husbands for their daughters, in those countries, and Abraham wished to choose a good wife for Isaac. He knew that the women who lived in Canaan were idol-worshippers, and that they would not teach their children to love the true God. Because he wanted Isaac's children to serve God, he would not choose a woman of Canaan to be Isaac's wife.

Then Abraham remembered the news that had come to him from his brother Nahor, who lived at Haran, the place in the country of Mesopotamia where his aged father had died. Nahor was now the father of twelve sons. "Perhaps I can send back to my own people at Haran," thought Abraham, "and find a wife for Isaac." So he called his trusted

servant, Eliezer, and asked him to journey back to Haran and try to find a God-fearing wife for Isaac.

Eliezer knew that such a journey would require many days' time and would be attended by many dangers along the way. He knew, too, that Abraham's people might not be willing to send a daughter so far from home to become the wife of a man whom they had never met. But because he was a faithful servant Eliezer said, "I will go."

Then the long journey began. Eliezer took with him ten camels, several attendant servants, and many valuable presents. For days and days they traveled, crossing valleys, hills, and rivers, and edging alongside the great, lonely desert. By and by they came to the northern part of Mesopotamia, and then at last their tired camels stopped outside the city of Haran and knelt down near a well.

It was evening time, and the women of the city were coming to this well to fill their pitchers with water. Eliezer had learned to trust in Abraham's God, and now he lifted up his heart and prayed that God would send out to this well the young woman who would be suitable for Isaac's wife. "Let it come to pass, O Lord," he prayed, "that the young woman of whom I shall ask a drink may offer to draw water for my camels also. By this sign I shall know that she is the one whom you have chosen, for Abraham's sake, to be the wife of Isaac."

While Eliezer was praying, a beautiful young woman approached, with an earthen pitcher upon her shoulder. Eliezer waited until she had filled the pitcher with water, then he asked for a drink. Although he was a stranger, she spoke kindly to him and said she would draw water for his camels also. Again and again she filled her pitcher and poured its contents into the trough that the thirsty animals might drink. When she had done this, Eliezer gave her some of the beautiful presents that he had brought, and asked whose daughter she was and whether her people could supply lodging for him and for his camels. At her reply that she was the granddaughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother, Eliezer knew that his prayer had been answered, and he bowed his head and worshiped God. Then Rebekah—for this was the young woman's name—told Eliezer that there was plenty of room in her father's house to lodge them all, and she hurried to tell what had happened at the well and to show the beautiful

presents that Eliezer had given her.

When her brother Laban heard her story and saw the costly ornaments which Eliezer had given to Rebekah, he ran eagerly to meet the strangers at the well and to invite them to come in. "We have room for you and for your camels," he told them, and they went with him into the city. Laban now showed the same kindness to his guests that Abraham and Lot had shown to their angel visitors. He first brought water to wash their feet and then set food before them.

But Eliezer could not eat. "First let me tell why I have come," he said. "I am Abraham's servant, and God has blessed my master greatly, giving him flocks and herds, silver and gold, and many servants, besides camels and asses. God also gave to him and Sarah a son in their old age, and now Abraham has given all his great riches to his son. But as yet this son, Isaac, has no wife, and Abraham will not take a wife for him from the daughters of Canaan, because they worship idols. He has sent me, therefore, to you, to find a wife for Isaac." Eliezer told also how Rebekah, in answer to his prayer, had offered drink to him and to his thirsty animals.

Rebekah's father and brother Laban were willing to let her go back with Eliezer because they believed that God had sent him. And Rebekah, too, was willing to go. Eliezer was grateful to know of their willingness, and he bowed his head once more to worship the great God who had helped him on his journey. Afterward he enjoyed the feast which Rebekah's people had prepared for them. That same night he gave other presents of silver and gold and beautiful clothing to Rebekah, and to her mother and brother.

The next morning Eliezer said, "Now let me return to my master." Laban and his mother did not want to let Rebekah leave them so soon. "Can you not stay for a few more days?", they asked. But when Eliezer insisted that he must go at once, they called Rebekah, and she said, "I will go." So they bade her good-by and sent her away with her nurse and other attending maids.

On the homeward journey Rebekah and her maids rode the camels, and Eliezer led the way to Canaan. Very likely they traveled the same road that Abraham had traveled many years before, when he went with Sarah and Lot to the land that God had promised. At last they drew near to the place where Abraham and Isaac now lived. The evening shadows were

stealing through the trees, and Isaac was out in the fields alone, thinking about God, when he saw the camels coming. He hurried to meet them, and Rebekah, seeing him, asked who he was. "This is my master, Isaac," Eliezer replied, and Rebekah alighted from her camel and covered her face with a veil.

When Isaac met them, Eliezer told how God had answered his prayers and had sent Rebekah to him. Isaac took her to his mother's tent, and she became his wife. He loved her, and did not grieve any more because of his mother's death.

The time passed on, and finally Abraham died, too. He had reached the age of one hundred and seventy-five. Ishmael heard of his death and came to help Isaac bury his father. They placed his body in the cave where Sarah had been buried.

The Story of Jacob

Rebekah plots with Jacob to take the birth-right from Esau.

AFTER ABRAHAM DIED, his son Isaac lived in the land of Canaan. Like his father, Isaac had his home in a tent; around him were the tents of his people, and many flocks of sheep and herds of cattle feeding wherever they could find grass to eat and water to drink.

Isaac and his wife Rebekah had two children. The older was named Esau and the younger Jacob. Esau was a man of the woods and very fond of hunting; and he was rough and covered with hair.

Jacob was quiet and thoughtful, staying at home, dwelling in a tent, and caring for the flocks of his father.

Isaac loved Esau more than Jacob, because Esau brought to his father that which he had killed in his hunting; but Rebekah liked Jacob, because she saw that he was wise and careful in his work.

Among the people in those lands, when a man dies, his older son receives twice as much as the younger of what the father has owned. This was called his "birthright," for it was his right as the oldest born. So Esau, as the older, had a "birthright" to more of Isaac's possessions than Jacob. And besides this, there was the privilege of the promise of God that the family of Isaac should receive great blessings.

THE SALE OF A BIRTHRIGHT

Now Esau, when he grew up, did not care for his birthright or the blessing which God had promised. But Jacob, who was a wise man, wished greatly to have the birthright which would come to Esau when his father died. Once, when Esau came home, hungry and tired from hunting in the fields, he saw that Jacob had a bowl of something that he had just cooked for dinner. And Esau said:

"Give me some of that red stuff in the dish. Will you not give me some? I am hungry." And Jacob answered, "I will give it to you, if you will first of all sell to me your birthright." And Esau said, "What is the use of the birth-right to me now, when I am almost starving to death? You can have my birthright if you will give me something to eat."

Then Esau made Jacob a solemn promise to give to Jacob his birthright, all for a bowl of food. It was not right for Jacob to deal so selfishly with his brother; but it was very wrong in Esau to care so little for his birthright and God's blessing. Some time after this, when Esau was forty years old, he married two wives. Though this would be very wicked in our times, it was not supposed to be wrong then; for even good men then had more than one wife. But Esau's two wives were women from the people of Canaan, who worshipped idols, and not the true God. And they taught their children also to pray to idols; so that those who came from Esau, the people who were his descendants, lost all knowledge of God, and became very wicked. But this was long after that time.

Isaac and Rebekah were very sorry to have their son Esau marry women who prayed to idols and not to God; but still Isaac loved his active son Esau more than his quiet son Jacob. But Rebekah loved Jacob more than Esau. Isaac became at last very old and feeble, and so blind that he could see scarcely anything. One day he said to Esau:

"My son, I am very old, and do not know how soon I must die. But before I die, I wish to give to you, as my older son, God's blessing upon you, and your children, and your descendants. Go out into the fields, and with your bow and arrows shoot some animal that is good for food, and make for me a dish of cooked meat such as you know I love; and after I have eaten it I will give you the blessing."

Now Esau ought to have told his father that the blessing did not belong to

him, for he had sold it to his brother Jacob. But he did not tell his father. He went out into the fields hunting, to find the kind of meat which his father liked the most. Now Rebekah was listening, and heard all that Isaac had said to Esau. She knew that it would be better for Jacob to have the blessing than for Esau; and she loved Jacob more than Esau. So she called to Jacob and told him what Isaac had said to Esau, and she said:

"Now, my son, do what I tell you, and you will get the blessing instead of your brother. Go to the flocks and bring to me two little kids from the goats, and I will cook them just like the meat which Esau cooks for your father. And you will bring it to your father, and he will think that you are Esau, and will give you the blessing; and it really belongs to you."

But Jacob said, "You know that Esau and I are not alike, His neck and arms are covered with hairs, while mine are smooth. My father will feel of me, and he will find that I am not Esau; and then, instead of giving me a blessing, I am afraid that he will curse me."

But Rebekah answered her son, "Never mind; you do as I have told you, and I will take care of you. If any harm comes it will come to me; so do not be afraid, but go and bring the meat." Then Jacob went and brought a pair of little kids from the flocks, and from them his mother made a dish of food, so that it would be to the taste just as Isaac liked it. Then Rebekah found some of Esau's clothes, and dressed Jacob in them; and she placed on his neck and hands some of the skins of the kids, so that his neck and his hands would feel rough and hairy to the touch.

Then Jacob came into his father's tent, bringing the dinner, and speaking as much like Esau as he could, he said:

"Here I am, my father."

And Isaac said, "Who are you, my son?"

And Jacob answered, "I am Esau, your oldest son; I have done as you bade me; now sit up and eat the dinner that I have made, and then give me your blessing as you promised me."

And Isaac said, "How is it that you found it so quickly?" Jacob answered, "Because the Lord your God showed me where to go and gave me good success." Isaac did not feel certain that it was his son Esau, and he said, "Come near and let me feel you, so that I may know that you are really my son Esau." And Jacob went up close to Isaac's bed, and Isaac felt of his face, and his neck, and his hands, and he said:

"The voice sounds like Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau. Are you really my son Esau?" And Jacob told a lie to his father, and said, "I am." Then the old man ate the food that Jacob had brought to him; and he kissed Jacob, believing him to be Esau; and he gave him the blessing, saying to him:

"May God give you the dew of heaven, and the richness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. May nations bow down to you and peoples become your servants. May you be the master over your brother, and may your family and descendants that shall come from you rule over his family and his descendants. Blessed be those that bless you, and cursed be those that curse you."

Just as soon as Jacob had received the blessing he rose up and hastened away. He had scarcely gone out, when Esau came in from hunting, with the dish of food that he had cooked. And he said:

"Let my father sit up and eat the food that I have brought, and give me the blessing." And Isaac said, "Why, who are you?" Esau answered, "I am your son; your oldest son, Esau."

And Isaac trembled, and said, "Who then is the one that came in and brought to me food? and I have eaten his food and have blessed him; yes, and he shall be blessed."

When Esau heard this, he knew that he had been cheated; and he cried aloud, with a bitter cry, "O, my father, my brother has taken away my blessing, just as he took away my birthright! But cannot you give me another blessing, too? Have you given everything to my brother?"

And Isaac told him all that he had said to Jacob, making him the ruler over his brother. But Esau begged for another blessing; and Isaac said: "My son, your dwelling shall be of the riches of the earth and of the dew of heaven. You shall live by your sword and your descendants shall serve his descendants. But in time to come they shall break loose and shall shake off the yoke of your brother's rule and shall be free."

All this came to pass many years afterward. The people who came from Esau lived in a land called Edom, on the south of the land of Israel, where Jacob's descendants lived. And after a time the Israelites became rulers over the Edomites; and later still, the Edomites made themselves

free from the Israelites. But all this took place hundreds of years afterward.

It was better that Jacob's descendants, those who came after him, should have the blessing, than that Esau's people should have it; for Jacob's people worshipped God, and Esau's people walked in the way of the idols and became wicked.

The Ladder That Reached to Heaven

Jacob sleeps at Bethel, and dreams of a ladder that reaches to Heaven. AFTER ESAU FOUND that he had lost his birth-right and his blessing, he was very angry against his brother Jacob; and he said to himself, and told others: "My father Isaac is very old and cannot live long. As soon as he is dead, then I shall kill Jacob for having robbed me of my right."

When Rebekah heard this, she said to Jacob, "Before it is too late, do you go away from home and get out of Esau's sight. Perhaps when Esau sees you no longer, he will forget his anger, and then you can come home again. Go and visit my brother Laban, your uncle, in Haran, and stay with him for a little while."

We must remember that Rebekah came from the family of Nahor, Abraham's younger brother, who lived in Haran, a long distance to the northeast of Canaan, and that Laban was Rebekah's brother. So Jacob went out of Beersheba, on the border of the desert, and walked alone, carrying his staff in his hand. One evening, just about sunset, he came to a place among the mountains, more than sixty miles distant from his home. And as he had no bed to lie down upon, he took a stone and rested his head upon it for a pillow, and lay down to sleep.

And on that night Jacob had a wonderful dream. In his dream he saw stairs leading from the earth where he lay up to heaven; and angels were going up and coming down upon the stairs. And above the stairs, he saw the Lord God standing. And God said to Jacob:

"I am the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac your father; and I will be your God, too. The land where you are lying all alone, shall belong to you and to your children after you; and your children shall spread abroad over the lands, east and west, and north and south, like the dust of the earth; and in your family all the world shall receive a

blessing. And I am with you in your journey, and I will keep you where you are going, and will bring you back to this land. I will never leave you, and I will surely keep my promise to you.

And in the morning Jacob awakened from his sleep, and he said:
"Surely, the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it! I thought that I was all alone, but God has been with me. This place is the house of God; it is the gate of heaven!"

And Jacob took the stone on which his head had rested, and he set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on it as an offering to God. And Jacob named that place Bethel, which in the language that Jacob spoke means "The House of God."

And Jacob made a promise to God at that time, and said:
"If God really will go with me and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and will bring me to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God: and this stone shall be the house of God, and of all that God gives me I will give back to God one-tenth as an offering." Then Jacob went onward in his long journey. He walked across the river Jordan in a shallow place, feeling his way with his staff; he climbed mountains and journeyed beside the great desert on the east, and at last came to the city of Haran. Beside the city was the well, where Abraham's servant had met Jacob's mother, Rebekah; and there, after Jacob had waited for a time, he saw a young woman coming with her sheep to give them water.

Then Jacob took off the flat stone that was over the mouth of the well, and drew water and gave it to the sheep. And when he found that this young woman was his own cousin Rachel, the daughter of Laban, he was so glad that he wept for joy. And at that moment he began to love Rachel, and longed to have her for his wife.

Rachel's father, Laban, who was Jacob's uncle, gave a welcome to Jacob, and took him into his home.

And Jacob asked Laban if he would give his daughter, Rachel, to him as his wife; and Jacob said, "If you give me Rachel, I will work for you seven years." And Laban said, "It is better that you should have her, than that a stranger should marry her." So Jacob lived seven years in Laban's house, caring for his sheep and oxen and camels; but his love for Rachel made the time seem short.

At last the day came for the marriage; and they brought in the bride, who, after the manner of that land, was covered with a thick veil, so that her face could not be seen. And she was married to Jacob, and when Jacob lifted up her veil he found that he had married, not Rachel, but her older sister, Leah, who was not beautiful, and whom Jacob did not love at all.

Jacob was very angry that he had been deceived, -- though that was just the way in which Jacob himself had deceived his father and cheated his brother Esau. But his uncle Laban said:

"In our land we never allow the younger daughter to be married before the older daughter. Keep Leah for your wife, and work for me seven years longer, and you shall have Rachel also."

For in those times, as we have seen, men often had two wives, or even more than two. So Jacob stayed seven years more, fourteen years in all, before he received Rachel as his wife.

While Jacob was living at Haran, eleven sons were born to him. But only one of these was the child of Rachel, whom Jacob loved. This son was Joseph, who was dearer to Jacob than any other of his children, partly because he was the youngest, and because he was the child of his beloved Rachel.

Jacob and Rachel

Jacob works for Laban, to win the hand of Rachel.

JACOB CONTINUED ON his way, getting ever farther away from his brother Esau's wrath. At last he reached Haran, the place where his uncle Laban dwelt. He saw a green field, and in the field a well. Three flocks of sheep were lying there, resting, and waiting to be watered. As Jacob drew near he greeted the shepherds and asked them whether they knew a man named Laban. They replied, "We know Laban, and here, behold, Rachel, his daughter, cometh with the sheep."

As Rachel approached, looking sweet and beautiful, Jacob was deeply touched. He rolled away the stone which covered the well and watered the flock of Laban. Then he embraced his young cousin and lifted up his voice and wept. When Rachel learned who Jacob was, she hastened to tell her father, Laban, and he greeted Jacob joyfully, and made him welcome in his home.

Jacob remained in Laban's home for a month, tending the flocks and

herds. When Laban asked him what wages he wanted to receive, Jacob rescued any money, but said, "I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter."

Jacob wished to have Rachel for his bride, for he had already begun to love her dearly. Laban thought this was a very good bargain, and readily agreed. Jacob toiled for seven years in his uncle's service, and the time seemed to pass very quickly, for he knew that at the end of that time he would win the hand of A great wedding feast was prepared, and the wedding day came at last. Jacob was full of happiness, but, alas Laban deceived Jacob, and forced him to marry Leah, the older daughter instead. Jacob was very angry at this, but Laban explained that a younger daughter cannot marry first, but would have to wait until the older daughter was married, so that Jacob would have to work for him seven more years if he also wanted to wed Rachel.

So Jacob, who had cheated his brother, was now cheated in turn. Jacob worked for seven more weary years, always remembering, however, that at the end of this time he would win the hand of his beloved Rachel. Finally, after seven more years had passed, Jacob also married Rachel, and now he was happy at last.

Jacob and Esau

Jacob returns to Canaan, and is welcomed by Esau.

JACOB REMAINED TWENTY years with Laban, whose daughter Rachel he had married. In those days men's chief riches consisted in flocks and herds; and Jacob had the care of those belonging to Laban. His uncle tried to deprive him of the wages which he had promised to give him; but, notwithstanding this, Jacob himself grew rich in cattle, and beasts of burden, and numerous servants. At the end of the twenty years that Jacob had been with Laban, God bade him return to his own land; so he gathered together all his possessions, and set out on his way thither.

As Jacob still feared the anger of his brother Esau, whom he had cruelly treated, he sent messengers before him into Edom, where Esau lived, to say that he, and all his family with him, were coming, and that he hoped his brother would be friendly with him. But when his messengers returned, bringing word that Esau, with four hundred men, was advancing to meet him, he was much afraid, thinking now his brother was going to kill him.

So he divided his people and his flocks into two companies, that if the one were attacked, the other might escape away; and when he had done all that he could for self-defense, he prayed to God that Esau might not kill him, with his children and servants.

Then he took a great number of his cattle, his sheep and camels, and sent them on before him in separate droves, bidding the men who were with them tell Esau, when they met him, that they were a present from his servant Jacob.

It was not long before Esau and his four hundred men came in sight; and then Jacob, putting his children in a place of safety, went forward to meet him, bowing himself down to the ground to do honor to his brother.

But Esau, who had forgiven his brother's ill deeds, ran to him in the most loving manner, kissing him, and weeping for joy that they had at last met. And he asked him kindly about all the people with him and what was the meaning of the droves of cattle he had seen on the road.

Jacob told him that the people were his family, and that the cattle were for a present to himself. And when Esau refused to take it, he urged him, that he might be sure his brother had forgiven him.

Then Esau returned to his own country, and Jacob, in time, came back to the land of Canaan, as God had promised that he should do.

The Story of Joseph and His Coat of Many Colors

Joseph is sold by his brothers.

AFTER JACOB CAME back to the land of Canaan with his eleven sons, another son was born to him, the second child of his wife Rachel, whom Jacob loved so well. But soon after the baby came, his mother Rachel died, and Jacob was filled with sorrow. Even to this day you can see the place where Rachel was buried, on the road between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Jacob named the child whom Rachel left, Benjamin; and now Jacob had twelve sons. Most of them were grown-up men; but Joseph was a boy seventeen years old, and his brother Benjamin was almost a baby.

Of all his children, Jacob loved Joseph the best, because he was Rachel's child; because he was so much younger than most of his brothers; and because he was good, and faithful, and thoughtful. Jacob gave to Joseph

a robe or coat of bright colors, made somewhat like a long cloak with wide sleeves. This was a special mark of Jacob's favor to Joseph, and it made his older brothers envious of him.

Then, too, Joseph did what was right, while his older brothers often did very wrong acts, of which Joseph sometimes told their father; and this made them very angry at Joseph. But they hated him still more because of two strange dreams he had, and of which he told them. He said one day: "Listen to this dream that I have dreamed. I dreamed that we were out in the field binding sheaves, when suddenly my sheaf stood up, and all your sheaves came around it and bowed down to my sheaf!"

And they said scornfully, "Do you suppose that the dream means that you will some time rule over us, and that we shall bow down to you?"

Then, a few days after, Joseph said, "I have dreamed again. This time, I saw in my dream the sun, and the moon, and eleven stars, all come and bow to me!" And his father said to him, "I do not like you to dream such dreams. Shall I, and your mother, and your brothers, come and bow down before you as if you were a king?"

His brothers hated Joseph, and would not speak kindly to him; but his father thought much of what Joseph had said. At one time, Joseph's ten brothers were taking care of the flock in the fields near Shechem, which was nearly fifty miles from Hebron, where Jacob's tents were spread. And Jacob wished to send a message to his sons, and he called Joseph, and said to him:

"Your brothers are near Shechem with the flock. I wish that you would go to them, and take a message, and find if they are well, and if the flocks are doing well; and bring me word from them."

That was quite an errand, for a boy to go alone over the country, and find his way, for fifty miles, and then walk home again. But Joseph was a boy who could take care of him-self, and could be trusted; so he went forth on his journey, walking northward over the mountains, past Bethlehem, and Jerusalem, and Bethel -- though we are not sure those cities were then built, except Jerusalem, which was already a strong city. When Joseph reached Shechem, he could not find his brothers, for they had taken their flocks to another place. A man met Joseph wandering in the field, and asked him, "Whom are you seeking?"

Joseph said, "I am looking for my brothers, the sons of Jacob. Can you tell me where I will find them?" And the man said, "They are at Dothan; or I heard them say that they were going there.

Then Joseph walked over the hills to Dothan, which was fifteen miles further. And his brothers saw him afar off coming toward them. They walking knew him by his bright garment; and one said to another: "Look, that dreamer is coming! Come, let us kill him, and throw his body into a pit, and tell his father that some wild beast has eaten him; and then we will see what becomes of his dreams.

One of his brothers, whose name was Reuben, felt more kindly toward Joseph than the others. He said:

"Let us not kill him, but let us throw him into this pit, in the wilderness, and leave him there to die." But Reuben intended, after they had gone away, to lift Joseph out of the pit, and take him home to his father. The brothers did as Reuben told them; they threw Joseph into the pit, which was empty. He cried, and begged them to save him; but they would not. They calmly sat down to eat their dinner on the grass, while their brother was calling to them from the pit.

After the dinner, Reuben chanced to go to another part of the field; so that he was not at hand when a company of men passed by with their camels, going from Gilead, on the east of the river Jordan, to Egypt, to sell spices and fragrant gum from trees to the Egyptians.

Then Judah, another of Joseph's brothers, said, "What good will it do us to kill our brother? Would it not be better for us to sell him to these men, and let them carry him away? After all, he is our brother, and we would better not kill him."

His brothers agreed with him; so they stopped the men who were passing, and drew up Joseph from the pit, and for twenty pieces of silver they sold Joseph to these men; and they took him away with them down to Egypt.

After a while, Reuben came to the pit, where they had left Joseph, and looked into it; but Joseph was not there. Then Reuben was in great trouble; and he came back to his brothers, saying: "The boy is not there! What shall I do!" Then his brothers told Reuben what they had done; and they all agreed together to deceive their father. They killed one of the goats, and dipped Joseph's coat in its blood; and they brought it to their father, and they said to him: "We found this coat out in the wilderness.

Look at it, father, and tell us if you think it was the coat of your son." And Jacob knew it at once. He said: "It is my son's coat. Some wild beast has eaten him. There is no doubt that Joseph has been torn in pieces!" And Jacob's heart was broken over the loss of Joseph all the more because he had sent Joseph alone on the journey through the wilderness. They tried to comfort him, but he would not be comforted. He said: "I will go down to the grave mourning for my poor lost son."

So the old man sorrowed for his son Joseph; and all the time his wicked brothers knew that Joseph was not dead; but they would not tell their father the dreadful deed they had done to their brother, in selling him as a slave.

Pharaoh's Dream

Pharaoh asks for the meaning of his dream.

THE MERCHANTS WHO bought Joseph sold him to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who treated him very favorably, and put all his affairs under Joseph's care. But after he had served his master faithfully for some time, Joseph was falsely accused of some wrong doing; and his master, without inquiring into the matter, shut him up in prison.

But God was with him in the prison, as He had been while Joseph was ruling over Potiphar's household; and He caused the keeper of the prison to put trust in him, so that he had the whole care of the other prisoners, and of all that was done there.

Two of these prisoners, chief servants of Pharaoh, dreamed strange dreams, and God gave Joseph wisdom to interpret them. He told one of them that his dream signified that in three days he should be taken out of prison and hanged; the other prisoner's dream signified that in three days he should be released and restored to favor. And he begged this one, after he should be set at liberty, to try to get him also out of prison. But when the man got out of prison, he thought no more about Joseph for two whole years. At the end of that time, Pharaoh, to whose service he was restored, had two dreams that made him unhappy, and whose meaning none of his wise men could tell him.

He dreamed that seven fat cattle were feeding in a meadow, and that seven lean ones came and ate them up. Again he dreamed of seven ears

of good corn on one stalk, and that seven blighted ones sprang up and devoured them. And when no one could tell him what these dreams meant, the chief butler remembered how Joseph had explained to him his dream in the prison. So he told the king, who immediately sent for Joseph out of prison, related his dreams to him, and asked him what they signified. Joseph answered the king that in these dreams God had showed him what He was about to do: that He was going to give Egypt seven years of plenty, and after them seven years of famine. And he advised Pharaoh to seek out some discreet person whom he might set over the land of Egypt, with officers under him, to store up, during the years of plenty, corn enough to supply them in the years of famine.

Pharaoh thought the advice was good, and that no one was so fit as Joseph to do all this; so he made him ruler. And Joseph stored up the corn, so that, when the famine came, other countries sent to Egypt to buy food.

Joseph and His Brethren

Joseph who is now a leader in Egypt, is united with his brothers, and he forgives them.

THE LAND OF Canaan, where Joseph's father and brothers were living, was one of the countries afflicted by famine; so, when they heard that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob sent his sons there to buy some. They did not know, and bowed down before him, that he was their brother whom they had sold for a slave. But Joseph knew them, and treated them roughly, telling them they were spies. They answered him that they were no spies, but honest men--twelve brothers, one of whom, Benjamin, the youngest, was with their father in Canaan; and another, Joseph, was dead. But he said that the only way of proving themselves honest men was for one of them to go and fetch their youngest brother, while he kept the others in Egypt. And, having said this, he put them all in prison for three days.

On the third day they were brought before Joseph again, and then he told them that one of them must be left in prison, while the others carried corn to their father, and brought back their youngest brother. When they heard this they were greatly distressed; and they said to each other that now punishment was coming upon them for their cruelty, a long time ago, to their brother Joseph.

Joseph wept when he heard his brothers speaking in this way, for he understood what they said, though they did not know it, as he spoke in different language from theirs. Then he sent them away with corn, keeping Simeon till they returned with Benjamin.

Jacob was very unwilling to let him go; but their corn was soon done, there was none to be had anywhere save in Egypt, and Joseph had said they should not have any more unless Benjamin were with them. So he was obliged to send him.

When his brothers came again, Joseph entertained them very kindly at first, but presently he made as though he would keep Benjamin for his slave. Upon this, Judah, who had promised to take care of Benjamin, pleaded so earnestly, offering to be a slave in his place, that Joseph told them he was their own brother whom they have sold into Egypt.

And he forgave them. Then he sent for his father, and made them all live with him in the land of Egypt.

Moses in the Bulrushes

The baby Moses in found hidden in the bulrushes, and brought to Pharoah's daughter.

JOSEPH DIED IN Egypt when he was a hundred and ten years old; and all the people mourned for him. Some time after this, when the descendants of Jacob had become very numerous, there was a king of Egypt who treated them in a harsh manner. He tried to make slaves of them, setting them to all kinds of hard labor. But, the more he oppressed them, the more they increased in number; and the Egyptians were afraid lest, in time of war, the Israelites might turn against them, and make their escape out of the land.

So the king commanded that all the sons of the children of Israel, or Hebrews as they are also called, should be put to death as soon as they were born. But the Hebrews to whom he gave this wicked command did not obey him; at which the king was so angry that he ordered his own people to throw all these poor little children into the river.

At this time a Hebrew named Amram had a son born: he was a beautiful child, and for three months his mother, Jochebed, succeeded in saving him from the Egyptians.

But at last she found she could no longer conceal him. So she made an

ark, that is, a sort of cradle, of bulrushes coated over with pitch, laid him in it, and then placed the ark among the reeds that grew by the riverside, while his sister stood watching in the distance to see what would become of him. Presently the king's daughter, attended by her women, came down to the river, and, perceiving the ark among the reeds, she sent one of her servants to bring it to her.

It was accordingly brought; and when she saw the poor little child crying, she was sorry for it, for she knew it must be one of the Hebrew children whom the king had commanded to be killed, and whose mother had laid it there, hoping that some one would have compassion on it.

The child's sister, seeing how the princess pitied him, then came forward, and asked whether she should fetch a Hebrew woman to nurse it for her. The princess bade her do so. So she fetched his own mother, and the king's daughter told her to take the child away and nurse it for her. Then his mother joyfully carried her little one home again.

When he was old enough to be taken to Pharaoh's daughter, she called him her son, named him Moses, which means "drawn out of the water," and had him taught all that was known to the Egyptians, who were a very learned people.

The Israelites' Burdens

God speaks to Moses from out of the burning bush.

MOSES WAS BROUGHT up in the court of Egypt. But when he was about forty years old, he went among his own people again, and was grieved to find how sadly they were oppressed by the Egyptians.

Once he saw an Egyptian ill-treating a Hebrew; so he killed the man, and buried his body in the sand. The king would have put him to death for this, but Moses escaped into the land of Midian, and dwelt there.

One day, when he was feeding his flock near Horeb, God called to him out of a bush that flamed with fire, and yet was not burned. And He told Moses that He had seen the sufferings of the people of Israel, and would deliver them, and bring them into the good land of Canaan, as He had promised to Abraham. And He commanded him to tell Pharaoh to let the people go, that they might serve God in the wilderness.

He also appointed various wonderful things to be wrought before Pharaoh,

that he might know that He who had sent him this command was the true God, whom he and his people ought to worship.

Moses was very unwilling to go to Pharaoh, for he thought the king would not heed what he said; but God would have him do it, and also told him to take his brother Aaron with him. So he went; and when he came before the king, Pharaoh asked who the Lord was that he should obey Him. And he told Moses and Aaron that they hindered the people in their work by telling them about their God wanting them to go and sacrifice to him in the wilderness. It was only because they were idle that they wished to do so. They should not go. And he ordered that more work should be given them than before.

The Hebrews had been making bricks of clay mixed with straw. So Pharaoh commanded that no more straw should be given them, but they should get it for themselves where they could; while, at the same time, they were obliged to make as much brick as when straw was found for them. But, instead of making bricks, their time was now spent in seeking straw; and they were beaten because the usual quantity of work was not done. The poor Hebrews were very sad, and bitterly reproached Moses and Aaron for making their condition so much worse than it had been.

And though God assured them, by Moses, that He would certainly deliver them out of Egypt, they were so unhappy and faint-hearted that they would not believe it.

Pharaoh's Overthrow

Moses leads the people safely through the divided waters.

AFTER THIS, BY God's command, Moses and Aaron went many times to Pharaoh to bid him let the people go. But Pharaoh would not, though God sent strange and terrible plagues upon him and his people to punish them for their wickedness, and make them obey Him.

At length, as Pharaoh had commanded all the sons of the Hebrews to be slain, God in one night destroyed all the first-born in Egypt; and then, fearing for their own lives, the Egyptians hastily drove out the Israelites, men, women, children, and cattle, with their household goods, hurriedly gathered together. There were six hundred thousand men, besides women and children. God caused a pillar of cloud to go before them in the daytime, to show them the way they were to take, and at night He led

them by a pillar of fire.

After the children of Israel had left Egypt, Pharaoh, though his kingdom had been nearly destroyed for his disobedience to God, was angry with himself for having let them go. So he gathered together a great army, and pursued them to where they were encamped, in the wilderness by the Red Sea. When the people saw they were pursued, they were much afraid, and reproached Moses for bringing them there; for they thought it would have been better to be slaves in Egypt, than to be killed in the wilderness. But Moses bade them not fear; God would deliver them.

Then the pillar of cloud and of fire, that had gone before to guide them, removed, and went behind the camp, so that it stood between the Egyptians and the children of Israel. To the Egyptians it was cloud and darkness, so that they could not continue their pursuit; but to the Israelites it gave light. Then Moses, as God had commanded him, stretched out his rod, or staff, over the sea; and the waters divided, standing like a wall on the right hand and on the left, leaving dry land between them, so that the whole multitude passed through the very middle of the sea to the opposite shore. The Egyptians, seeing this, hastened to follow; but God sent a violent storm upon them, which threw them all into confusion.

When they were in the middle of the sea, where the Israelites had gone safely, God bade Moses again stretch out his hand over it; and when he did so, the waters came back again to their place, and drowned Pharaoh, and all the Egyptians: there was not one of them left alive.

So God delivered the children of Israel, as He had said.

Moses Smites the Rock

Moses strikes the rock with his rod, and water comes forth.

AFTER THE EGYPTIANS had been all destroyed, the Israelites went forward into the wilderness; and when they had been traveling three days, they were in distress for want of water.

They did indeed find some at a place called Marah, but it was so bitter they could not drink it. So again they reproached Moses, as they had done when the Egyptians pursued them to the Red Sea, asking him what they were to do for drink. Then God bade him throw into the water a certain tree which He showed to him; and when Moses had done this, it became quite good to drink.

In a few days after, the people were in want of food; and again they were

angry with Moses and his brother Aaron, who was with him taking care of the Israelites. They said they wished they had stayed in Egypt, where they had enough to eat, for they had been brought into the wilderness only that they might die of hunger. Then Moses asked them why they murmured against him and Aaron, when it was God Himself who had brought them out of Egypt; their murmuring was really against God.

And yet, though He was displeased at their conduct, He would supply them with food, that they might know that he was indeed their God. So, in the evening, great flocks of quail came about the camp for the Israelites to eat; and in the morning, when the dew was dried up from the ground, there lay upon it a small round thing, like coriander seeds.

The people did not know what it was; but Moses told them that was bread that God had sent them. There it was, fresh every morning, except on the seventh day, which God had in the beginning made a day of rest. On that day He would not have them gather it, giving them twice as much on the sixth day, that they might have enough for the seventh. This was called "manna"; and when it was ground, like grain, they made bread of it. God gave it them for forty years, till they came to the land of Canaan. But, though God had done so much for them, the children of Israel were a most ungrateful people. The very next time they wanted water, they were so angry with Moses that they were ready to kill him.

Then Moses prayed to God to tell him what to do. And God bade him take some of the chiefs of the people, and go to a certain rock in Horeb, and strike it with his rod, and water should come out of it. So he took the men with him, and struck the rock, and water flowed abundantly

Aaron's Golden Calf

After returning from Mount Sanai, Moses was angry when he saw the golden calf.

WHILE THE CHILDREN of Israel were encamped in the wilderness, Moses' wife and his two sons, together with Jethro, his father-in-law, came to him there. And Jethro, seeing how Moses was overburdened with the care of so many people, advised him to appoint officers over them, under himself, who might attend to all their smaller concerns.

But God Himself had the chief government of the people; and on Mount

Sinai, where Moses spoke to Him and saw His great glory, He gave to them, not only the Ten Commandments, but many other laws and directions, for all they should do in worshiping Him. That was an awful sight when God spoke to Moses on Sinai! For there were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud, like the smoke of a furnace, about the mountain; and from out of it came a great voice of a trumpet, sounding louder and louder: and then Moses went up and spoke with the Lord God.

Moses was forty days in the mount, and the people began to wonder what had become of him. So they asked Aaron to make them some images which they might worship, and that might guide them out of the wilderness. Aaron knew there was only one God, yet he did as the people desired.

He bade them bring their golden ornaments to him; and then he melted them, shaped the metal into the form of a calf (one of the false gods of the Egyptians), built an altar before it, on which the people might lay their offerings, and told them that was their god that had brought them out of the land of Egypt.

The next day the people offered sacrifice to this calf, just as the heathen, who did not know God, worshiped their idols, or false gods.

But God saw this; and He was so displeased at their wickedness that He would have destroyed them all, had not Moses interceded for them. Then Moses came down from the mount to the camp, and asked Aaron how it was that he and the people had committed so great a sin.

Aaron tried to excuse himself by laying the blame on the unruly Israelites. But there was no excuse for him. And after Moses had burned the calf, he ground it to a powder, and threw it into the water that supplied the camp.

God also, though he had granted Moses' prayer, commanded that great numbers of the people should be put to death for their sin.

The Ten Commandments

Moses returns from Mount Sanai with the Ten Commandments.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS which God gave on Mount Sinai were written by Himself on stone tablets. And when Moses came down from the mount, and saw the people worshiping the gold calf, in his anger he threw them down, and they were broken.

But after God, at Moses' prayer, had so far forgiven the sin of the Israelites as not to destroy them all, He bade Moses hew two tables of stone, like the first, and bring them to Him on Mount Sinai, that He might again give them his commandments.

Moses did so, and went up early in the morning to the mount. He was in the mount with God forty days and nights, neither eating nor drinking; and when he came down with the stone tables, on which the commandments had been again written, his face was so bright that the people could not look at him. He had to cover himself with a veil while he talked to them.

God had bidden him tell the people of Israel that if they kept His commandments, He would bless them, and make them prosperous; but if they did not keep them, He would give them into the power of their enemies, and afflict them with all kinds of troubles.

God also would have them prepare a place in which He might be worshiped; and, as the people were traveling onward to the promised land, He bade them make it like a tent, which might be carried along with them, and set up when they rested on their march.

This tent was called the Tabernacle; and God gave exact directions how it was to be made, and also how they were to make the altar on which sacrifice was to be offered, and the ark, which was a chest, to hold the tables of stone.

The people were glad to do what God desired them in this matter, and brought such large quantities of precious materials to construct the Tabernacle, and those other things that were to be in it, that at last Moses was obliged to bid them bring no more.

When all was completed, God commanded that the Tabernacle should be set up in the wilderness of Sinai. And when it was set up, His glory filled it; a cloud also rested upon it by day, and at night a light like fire.

As long as God would have the children of Israel remain in their camp in the wilderness, this cloud remained on the Tabernacle; when He would have them go on their journey, the cloud was taken up from it, and went before them.

In this way the people knew whether God would have them travel on, or stay where they were.

The Return of the Spies

The spies return from the land of Canaan, and report to Moses what they saw.

WHEN THE CHILDREN of Israel were encamped in the wilderness of Paran, Moses, by God's command, sent twelve men, one from each of the twelve tribes, or families into which they were divided, into the land of Canaan, that they might bring him word what sort of country it was, and what kind of people lived in it.

He also told the men to bring back with them some of it's fruits.

So the twelve men, who are called spies because they went to see the country, went, and were out forty days. When they returned, as it was the time when grapes were ripening, they brought with them, from Eshcol, a bunch of grapes, so large and ripe that two of them carried it between them. This, and other fruits that they had gathered, they showed to the Israelites, and told them that the country whence they came was very fertile, but that the people in it were so powerful and warlike that it would be impossible to drive them out, as God had said they should.

They were giants, and lived in large cities, defended by walls. And though Caleb, a brave man, one of the spies, wished that the people should at once march forward and take it, the other spies repeated that it was impossible. Then the people began to reproach Moses and Aaron for bringing them into that wilderness to be slain by their enemies; and they threatened to put Moses away from them, and choose, in this place, a captain who might lead them back into Egypt.

Caleb, and Joshua, another of the spies, entreated them not to rebel against God; for, if they obeyed Him, He would certainly, as He had promised, give them that rich country. But the multitude only clamored the more, and were even for stoning Moses and those with him.

Then suddenly the glory of the Lord was seen in the Tabernacle; and God Himself, in His displeasure, declared that as the people would not believe him, they should no longer be His people, nor have the good land He had promised them.

But Moses again prayed earnestly for the rebellious Israelites, begging God to pardon them. And God heard his prayer, and said that He would not entirely cast them off.

But that none of those men, for whom He had done such great things, in

delivering them out of Egypt, and feeding them in the wilderness, and who had yet constantly rebelled against Him, should enter into the promised land: they should all die in the wilderness.

Only their children, together with Joshua and Caleb, should be brought into Canaan.

The Brazen Serpent

Moses sets up the brass serpent on the pole.

THE PEOPLE WERE at first very sorry for having so displeased God. But they soon forgot it all; and the next time that they were without water in their encampment, they murmured, as usual, against Moses and Aaron.

Then God commanded Moses to take the rod with which he had struck the rock in Horeb, and before all the people to speak to a certain rock, which He pointed out, and it should give water for them and their cattle.

But now both Moses, and Aaron, who was to go with him, did wrong. They thought that speaking to the rock, as God had said, would not be sufficient; so Moses struck it twice with his rod, angrily asking the multitude whether he and Aaron must fetch them water out of the rock.

And though, notwithstanding their disobedience, the water, when the rock was struck, flowed out in such abundance that all had enough, God told Moses and Aaron that because they had not obeyed Him when He bade them speak to it only, they should neither of them enter into the promised land.

Aaron, whom God had appointed chief priest, died very soon afterward, on Mount Hor, and Eleazar, his son, was chosen by God as priest in his place.

The land of Edom, which God had given to Esau, now lay between the Israelites and the way by which they were to go to Canaan. So Moses sent messengers to the King of Edom, asking leave to pass through.

But the king not only refused to let them pass through, but threatened to lead out his army against the Israelites; so they were obliged to turn aside, and go round Edom. There they met with so many difficulties that they got quite dispirited, and, as before, murmured against God.

Then God, to punish them, sent among them fiery serpents, which stung great numbers of the people, so that they died. The fear of death made

the Israelites repent, and confess their sin in speaking against God. So they asked Moses to pray for them, that God would take away those dreadful serpents. And when Moses prayed, God told him to make an image in brass in the likeness of one of the serpents, and to set it up on a pole, and He promised that every one who was stung should be cured when he looked up to it.

Balaam and the Ass

The angel of the Lord stands in the way of Balaam.

THE ISRAELITES HAD to fight their way to the promised land, and God so often gave them victory in battle that the nations around were afraid of them.

Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, the king of Bashan, both came out with armies against them; but the Israelites overcame them, and took possession of their territories.

The victorious army afterward pitched their tents in the plains of Moab; and Balak, king of that country, fearing he and his people should also be destroyed, sent to Balaam, who was a prophet (that is, one to whom God shows things that are going to happen), to come and pronounce a curse upon the Israelites, which might prevent their taking his kingdom from him. Balaam at first refused to curse the Israelites, for he knew that God had blessed them. But Balak entreated him, promising him honors and riches; and at last Balaam consented.

So, in the morning, he saddled his ass and went with them. But God was angry with him for desiring Balak's riches and honors, and sent an angel to stand in the way and oppose him.

God, who can do whatever He will, enabled the ass, upon which Balaam rode, to see the angel; and she turned aside to avoid him. For this her master struck her. But again the angel stood before him in a path where there was a wall on each side; and the ass, seeing him, and trying to turn aside as before, crushed Balaam's foot against the wall.

Then Balaam struck her again. But a little farther on the angel stood before them a third time; and the ass, seeing him, fell down under Balaam, who angrily struck her with his staff. God now wonderfully caused the ass to speak; and she asked Balaam why he had beaten her.

Then God made Balaam himself see the angel standing with his drawn sword in his hand; and Balaam bowed down before him to the very ground. And the angel reproved Balaam for striking his ass, telling him that because he had wished to do what God did not will, God had sent His angel to oppose him in the way; and, had not the ass turned aside, he would have been slain.

Balaam then confessed that he had done wrong, and offered to go back. The angel, however, bade him go on to Balak, but to be careful to speak only what God should bid him say.

So Balaam went on; and when he saw all the encampment of the children of Israel stretching far before him, by God's command he blessed the people whom Balak had sent for him to curse.

Joshua at Jericho

Jericho is captured after it's walls come tumbling down.

THE CHILDREN OF Israel had now only to cross the River Jordan to enter the promised land of Canaan.

Moses, for his sin at Meribah, or the waters of strife, where he struck the rock instead of speaking to it as he was told, had been forbidden to enter it with them. He was only allowed to see it at a distance, from the top of mount Nebo. So, by God's command, he appointed Joshua to be their guide and leader into it. After Moses had done this, he died, a hundred and twenty years old.

Then God bade Joshua prepare to pass over the Jordan into the land He had promised to the Israelites. But, before they did so, Joshua sent two spies to the city of Jericho, which was fortified against them on the other side of the river.

The people of the city were very much afraid of the Israelites, for they had heard what God had done for them from the time they left Egypt. So, when the King of Jericho sent men to take these spies prisoners, a woman of the city, in whose house they had lodged, hid them; and then begged, as her reward, that when the city should be taken, her life, and the lives of all her family, might be saved.

The spies promised this; so then,, as she lived on the town wall, she let them down by a cord through the window, and they returned to the camp.

When the people were about to pass over Jordan, the ark, in which were two tables of stones, was carried before them by twelve priests; and, as soon as they entered the river, its waters were divided, and all the multitude went over on dry ground.

Then they encamped at Gilgal, before Jericho; and there God commanded that the armed men of the Israelites, with the priests carrying the ark, should on seven days go round the city, with trumpets sounding; and He told them that on the seventh day the walls should fall down before them.

So each day, for six days, as they had been bidden, they went once round the city; but on the seventh day they went round it seven times, as God had said; and at the seventh time, when the priest blew a loud blast with the trumpets, Joshua bade the people shout, for the city was theirs.

Then they gave a great shout, and the walls of the city fell down flat before them, so that they marched straight into it, and burned it to the ground. But Joshua remembered the woman Rahab, who had hidden the spies, and he brought her and her family in safety out of Jericho into the camp of the Israelites.

The Story of Gideon

Gideon's three hundred men blow their trumpets.

THE CHILDREN OF Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years. The Israelites took refuge in dens and strongholds in the mountains, and in caves. At harvest time, when the crops which had been sown by the Israelites were ready for the reaping, the Midianites came with their numbers of camels and ate up the crops. They were in great numbers like grasshoppers, and when they left, the land was bare, with no food for man or beast.

The children of Israel cried out to God and wanted to know why this great trouble had come upon them, and He sent them a prophet to tell them that it was because He had brought them up out of Egypt, and had delivered them from all oppression, and He had told them not to worship the gods of the country in which they lived, for He was the Lord their God; but they had not obeyed Him, and for this they were being punished. There was a man among the Israelites who did not want to worship any but Jehovah. His name was Gideon, and one day as he sat threshing wheat by the wine-press to hide it from the Midianites, an angel

of the Lord appeared and spoke to him, saying, "The Lord is with you, mighty man of valour." "I have chosen you to save Israel."

So the next day Gideon took ten of his servants and went up to the hill on which had been erected an altar to Baal and the Asherah, the false gods whom the people were worshiping. He threw down the false altars, and built an altar to God in the same place, and on it he made a burnt offering to God. The next morning when the people saw what had been done, they cried out to one another. "Who has done this thing?" they shouted. Then the men of the city went to Joash, Gideon's father, and they asked him to send his son out, that he might be put to death.

Gideon's father refused, saying, "Why should you plead for Baal? If he is a god, he should plead for himself against the one who has wronged him." Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, and called a great army together. But before he set out to save Israel, he wanted to be sure that he was the one chosen to do it, so he said to God: "If I am the one chosen to this task, I should like a sign. I will put this fleece of wool upon the earth. If the dew forms on the fleece, but not on the earth, I will know that it is indeed so."

And God did so that night. Then Gideon returned to his army, and prepared for the battle. But Jehovah said that his army was far too large, and he asked Gideon to send home all who were fearful and afraid. So twenty-two thousand went home, and then thousand remained. But Jehovah said that it was still too large, and sent home all but three hundred. That night Gideon went alone to the camp of the Midianites, and he heard one man telling of a strange dream.

"I dreamed," said the man, "and lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came to a tent, and smote it that it fell and overturned it, and the tent lay along." And the other answered, "This is nothing else save that sword of Gideon, for into his hand hath God delivered Midian and all the host. " Gideon returned to his camp.

He called up his three hundred men, and gave each of them empty pitchers and lamps and trumpets. Then he led them to the enemy camp.

When they came to the camp, the three companies blew with their trumpets, broke the pitchers, so that the lights shone out, and shouted, "The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon." The Midianites were in utter confusion, and Gideon won an easy victory.

Jephthah's Daughter

Jephthah's daughter comes hurrying out to meet her father, singing for joy. IN THE LAND of Israel east of Jordan there lived a man named Jephthah. His brothers despised him and drove him away from their father's home, so he went to live in the land called Tob. Here he became a strong man, and his brave deeds were told by many people. Finally even his brothers heard about them.

At this time the Israelites were in great trouble again. They had quit going to the tabernacle at Shiloh to worship God. Everywhere in the land they were bowing down before the gods that other nations worshiped. And the very nations whose gods they were serving began to trouble them. They began to make war against the Israelites and to take away their riches. The Ammonites came from the east and the Philistines came from the west and ruled over the Israelites. The Ammonites even threatened to take away the homes of the Israelites and to drive them out of their country. This was an unhappy time indeed for the people who had once enjoyed the blessings of God.

After suffering for eighteen years under the rule of their enemies, the Israelites remembered how God had long ago given them all the land and had made them stronger than all the nations who lived around them. So they cried to God for help, and they expected God to send a deliverer, just as he had done at other times when they were in trouble.

But God was much displeased with the people. He was not willing to help them, because they had turned away from him to worship the gods of other nations. He said, "Let the gods that you have chosen instead of me help you out of your trouble. I will not be your God when trouble comes upon you if you will not worship me when you have rest from your enemies." Now the Israelites became very sorry for having sinned against the true God. They saw that the gods they were serving could never help them at all. They knew that true God whom their fathers had worshiped could deliver them out of the power of their enemies. So they tore down

their idols and began to serve the Lord. They confessed their sins to the Lord and asked him again to help him.

When the Lord saw that the people were really sorry for their sins, he began to pity them. He saw them gather their soldiers together at a place called Mizpah, to fight against the Ammonites. But they had no leader. Finally some one remembered Jephthah whose brave deeds had been told through all the land. They sent quickly for him to come to lead them to the battle against the Ammonites. But Jephthah was not willing to come. Not until his brothers had promised to treat him kindly would Jephthah return again with his family to his old home and help his people out of their trouble.

Jephthah knew that unless God would be with him he could not gain a victory over the Ammonites. So he asked God to help him, and he promised to give as a present to God the first thing that should meet him on his return home from the battle. This was not a wise promise; for Jephthah did not know what might come first to greet him on his return. The Ammonites sent a message to the Israelites at Mizpah and wanted them to give up all the land east of the Jordan River; they said this land belonged to them first. But Jephthah sent back an answer that God would be the judge, for he had given the land to the people of Israel. Then the battle began; and the Israelites won the victory.

News of the victory reached Jephthah's home before he returned with the army of Mizpah. And everybody was glad because God had helped them again. Jephthah's daughter, his only child, came hurrying out to meet her father, singing for joy. But her song ended quickly when she saw her father's troubled face. He had remembered his promise to the Lord. Now he believed that he must give his only child as an offering to God. How sorry he felt because he had made such an unwise promise! He tore his clothes and cried out in distress. Then he told his daughter about the promise that he had made.

The people of other nations sometimes gave their children to their gods; but the law of Moses forbade the Israelites doing such a thing. Perhaps Jephthah had never heard that part of the law read, and he had often heard about the cruel custom of his heathen neighbors. He believed that he would need to keep his promise, although it was not a wise one. And

his daughter urged him to keep it. because God had given him the victory over their enemies. But first she asked for two months time to spend alone with her friends in the mountains, weeping because she must soon be taken away from them. Afterwards she returned again to her father that he might fulfill his promise to God.

Jephthah judged Israel for six years after his victory over the Ammonites, and then he died.

Samson and the Lion

Samson tears a lion to pieces with his bare hands.

THE CHILDREN OF Israel made many other conquests after the fall of Jericho. On one occasion God caused both the sun and the moon to stand still in the heavens, that the day might be long enough for them to complete the defeat of their enemies.

At length they had possession of almost the whole land of Canaan, and they divided it by lot among their twelve tribes, the descendants of Israel's twelve sons. Then God gave them rest from the attacks of their enemies round about them; and for a while they served Him faithfully.

But after the death of Joshua, and those who had come with him into the promised land, the people began to forget God, and to worship false gods. So, to punish them, God allowed their enemies to distress them on every hand. Yet, from time to time, He took pity upon them, and gave them rulers, called judges, under whom they were victorious in war. But, as soon as the judge was dead, they returned to their evil ways; and then God again let them fall under the power of their enemies.

The Philistines were the most powerful of nations that oppressed the Israelites; and to help them against these, God gave to them a judge named Samson.

Before he was born, an angel appeared to his mother and told her that her son should begin the deliverance of the people from the Philistines. She did not know it was really an angel, but told her husband that a man, who looked like an angel of God, had said these things to her.

Then Manoah, her husband, prayed to God that the man might come again, and tell them how they should bring up their child. So God sent the angel again, and they still thought he was a man.

But when they began to dress food for him, the angel bade them offer it

to God as a burnt-offering; and when they did so, he went up, as it were, to heaven, in the flame that rose from the altar. Then they knew it was God's angel with whom they had been speaking.

When their child was born they called him Samson, and did all that the angel had said they should do with him. And God blessed Samson, and made him the strongest man that ever lived.

One day, when he was going with his father and mother into the country of the Philistines, a lion sprang out roaring against him; and God suddenly gave him such strength that he seized it with his hands and tore it to pieces.

Samson and the Gates of Gaza

Samson pulls down the temple of Dagon, killing all who were inside.

SAMSON MARRIED THE daughter of one of the Philistines; but afterward her father took her away from him, and, in revenge, he killed great numbers of them, and destroyed their crops and vineyards.

The Philistines then came out in great force against the men of Judah, and demanded that Samson should be given up to them. The men accordingly came to Samson, and said they must give him up to the enemy. So Samson let them bind him with strong cords, and take him to the Philistines. But at that moment God gave him strength to snap the cords asunder; and, snatching up the jaw-bone of an ass, he fell upon his enemies, and killed a thousand of them.

After this, Samson went to Gaza, a city of the Philistines, and at night the people shut him in, saying to each other that they would kill him in the morning. But in the middle of the night he got up, tore down the gates of the city, and, throwing them upon his shoulders, carried them to the top of a hill in the neighborhood. His enemies now saw that they could not overcome him by force, so they bribed a woman to get from him the secret of his strength.

Samson deceived both her and them several times, but at last told her the truth, that if his hair were cut off, he should be no stronger than any other man. So, when he was asleep, she cut it off; and then, calling the Philistines, they took him, put out his eyes, and set him to grind corn. But as he toiled in prison, God gave his strength to him again. So one

day, when the great men of the Philistines were going to worship their false god Dagon, and would have Samson make sport for them, he begged the boy who led him in to let him rest against the pillars of the building where they were assembled.

Then, praying to God that He would once more enable him to destroy his enemies, he laid hold of the pillars, and, bending forward with all his might, pulled the building down, crushing both himself and thousands of the Philistines. Thus it happened that he killed more in his death than in life.

Naomi and Ruth

Ruth gleaned for grain in the field of Boaz.

IN THE DAYS when the Judges ruled over Israel, there was a famine in the land. And a man named Elimelech, who lived at Bethlehem—Judah, together with his wife Naomi, and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, left their home on account of it, and went to live in the country of the Moabites.

While they were there Elimelech died, leaving Naomi and her sons, who married two women of the country, named Orpah and Ruth. In about ten years the sons died also: and then Naomi, hearing that the famine which had driven them from home had passed away, resolved to return thither with her daughters-in-law.

But they had gone far before Naomi, remembering that she was now poor, as well as a widow, thought it would be better for her daughters-in-law to stay among their own people than to go with her to what was to them a strange land. So she kissed them, and bade them return to their mother's house, praying God to bless them for their kindness to her and her sons.

Her daughters wept, and refused to leave her; but she urged them to do so, till at last Orpah yielded, and, bidding Naomi a loving farewell, went back to her own home in Moab.

Ruth, however, still clung to her mother-in-law; and when Naomi would have had her follow her sister-in-law, who was gone to her own people and the gods of her country (for the Moabites were heathens, and worshiped the idol Baal), she answered her, "Entreat me not to leave them, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will

go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge: they people shall be my people, and thy God my God.

Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried: naught but death shall part thee and me." So, when Naomi saw how steadfastly Ruth loved her, she ceased urging her, and they went on together to Bethlehem–Judah.

When they arrived there all the people of the place were surprised to see them, asking, "Is not this Naomi?" But Naomi, full of sorrow for her dead husband and sons, and the poverty that had now fallen upon her, answered them, "Call me not Naomi (which signifies "Pleasant"), but Mara (that is, "Bitterness"), for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

It was the time of barley–harvest when Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem; and they were so very poor that Ruth went out into the fields to glean after the reapers.

One of the chief men of Bethlehem was named Boaz, a very rich man, who was a near relation to Elimelech, Naomi's husband. Ruth happened to go and glean in a field belonging to him; and Boaz, seeing her, asked the man who was over the reapers who she was.

The man answered that she was Ruth the Moabitess, who had come to Bethlehem with her mother–in–law Naomi, and that she had asked him to let her glean in the field. Boaz then spoke kindly to Ruth, and bade her not to go to any other fields to glean; and he told her, when she was thirsty, to help herself to the drink that was brought to refresh his servants. Ruth felt grateful to Boaz, and asked him how it was that he showed so much kindness to a stranger. He told her that he had heard how good a daughter she had been to Naomi; and that she had left her own father, and mother, and country, to come with her into a strange land. And he prayed that the God of Israel would bless and reward her. Then at meal–time he bade her eat and drink with the reapers. So she sat beside them; and Boaz himself set food before her.

And when she returned to her gleaning, he desired the reapers to let fall some handfuls of grain on purpose for her, that she might gather the more. When Ruth went home in the evening, she gave her mother–in–law some of her own dinner, which she had kept for her; and then she beat out the barley she had gleaned.

There was so large a quantity of it that Naomi asked her where she had gleaned that day. Ruth answered, in the field of Boaz. Naomi was glad when she heard this; and, telling Ruth that he was their near kinsman, she said she must contrive to see the great man again, and make him understand that the poor gleaner was nearly related to him.

So Ruth did as Naomi desired her. And when Boaz knew who she was, he blessed her, and said that he would do for her all that the law of the Israelites required from him as her nearest kinsman.

Then he called together the chief men of the city, and before them, as witnesses, bought back the piece of land that had belonged to Elimelech, and to which Ruth, as the widow of his son, was the next heir.

After that he took Ruth for his wife; and their son Obed was the grandfather of David, who was afterward the great King of Israel.

Hannah Dedicates Samuel

Hannah dedicates Samuel to the Lord and brings him to Eli at the Temple. FIFTEEN JUDGES RULED the people of Israel during a period of four hundred and fifty years; that is, from the death of Joshua, till Saul was chosen as their first king.

Samuel was the last of these judges; and he was a priest and a great prophet, as well as a ruler of the people. His father and mother were named Elkanah and Hannah.

They were very good people, and year by year went up from the place where they lived to Shiloh, where the Tabernacle had been set up, to worship and offer sacrifice to God. This all the Israelites were obliged to do after they were settled in the promised land.

Hannah had no children; and as she was grieved that she had none, she prayed to God, when worshiping at Shiloh, to give her a son, promising that if He would, she would dedicate him (that is, give him up) to the Lord God, in the service of the Tabernacle, from his childhood.

God granted her request; and when the child was born she called him Samuel (which means "Asked of God"), because he had been given to her in answer to her prayer.

The first time after his birth that Elkanah and his family went up, as usual, to worship at Shiloh, Hannah did not go with them. She told her husband should not do so till Samuel was weaned, and then she would take him with her, and leave him with the priests, who might train him to serve God

in the Tabernacle.

Elkanah bade her do as she thought best in the matter. So when Samuel was weaned, she took him with her to Shiloh. And when she had offered sacrifice to God, she told Eli the high-priest, who was also at that time judge in Israel, that she was the woman whom some time before he had seen praying in the Temple (as the Tabernacle was also called), and that Samuel was the child she had prayed for.

And now, as she had promised, she was come to give him to God, that he might be His priest.

Then, when Eli had given his blessing to Hannah and her husband, they returned home, leaving Samuel with him.

And the child served in the ministry of the Temple, clad in a white linen garment that the priests wore. It was called an ephod. And every year that his mother came up to worship at Shiloh, she brought him a little coat, that she had herself made for him.

And as Samuel grew, God blessed him; and Eli, who was very old and nearly blind, was fond of this good little child whom everybody loved because he was good.

Samuel's First Prophecy

Samuel finally knows that God is calling him as he sleeps.

THE HIGH-PRIEST ELI had two sons, named Hophni and Phinehas, who were both priests. But they were exceedingly wicked men; and when the people who came to worship complained to Eli of the wickedness of the young men, he reproved them so gently that they gave no heed to what he said.

And God was displeased with him for not using his authority to make them do better. One night, when Samuel was laid down to sleep, he heard a voice calling him; and thinking it was Eli, he got up and ran to him, to know what he wanted with him. But Eli bade him lie down again, for he had not called him.

Again the voice called "Samuel," and again Samuel ran to Eli, who told him he had not called. But the third time that Samuel heard the voice, and ran to Eli thinking it was he, Eli became aware that it was God Himself who was calling to the child.

So he bade him go and lie down again, and if the voice called him once

more, to answer, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Then, when he was laid down again, the voice called as before, "Samuel, Samuel."

And when Samuel answered as Eli had bidden him, God told him that he was going to punish Eli and his sons in a fearful manner, because the sons had made themselves hated for their wickedness and profanity, and Eli had not prevented it as he ought to have done.

In the morning Samuel rose, and, as was his office, opened the doors of the Temple. But he did not tell Eli what God had said to him in the night: he was afraid of doing so, it was so very sad.

Eli, however, bade him come to him and tell him all. And when the poor old man knew that it was God's will to destroy him and his family, he would not murmur at it: he only said, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good."

Very soon after this the Israelites were fighting against the Philistines, and thinking they should be sure of victory if the ark of God were with them, they fetched it into their camp from Shiloh.

But for their sins God suffered them to be defeated; the ark was taken, and Hophni and Phinehas, together with thirty thousand of the Israelites, were slain. Poor old Eli meanwhile sat by the wayside, waiting for tidings of the battle.

And when word was brought him that his sons were killed and the ark taken, he fell of his seat backward, and broke his neck.

Some time after Eli's death, Samuel judged Israel in his place.

David Is Anointed King

Samuel anoints David, the shepherd boy, to be king of Israel.

WHEN SAMUEL WAS very old, he made his sons judges, with himself, over Israel. But his sons took bribes, and did other things that they ought not to have done; and the people of Israel became so discontented, that they came to Samuel and desired him to give them a king in place of him and his sons.

Samuel was grieved at this request; so he prayed to God to know what he should do. And God was displeased with the people for wishing to be governed by a king, like other nations, when He Himself was their king.

Nevertheless, He gave them leave to have one, and told Samuel whom he

should choose. This was Saul, the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin. So Samuel anointed Saul King over Israel as we have already seen; and when he was brought before them, all the people shouted, "God save the king!"

At first Saul was a good king, and did all that God commanded him. But he soon became disobedient; and as he persisted in ill-doing, God, who was patient with him for a while, at last determined that one more worthy than he should be chosen to be king after him and whose children should succeed to the throne in place of Saul's children.

So God bade Samuel to take a horn of oil, and go to Jesse, an Israelite who lived at Bethlehem, and anoint one of his sons, whom He would point out to him, as the future king over Israel.

Samuel was afraid of doing this, for he thought Saul, if he knew it, would put him to death. But God bade him go and offer a sacrifice at Bethlehem, and He would show him what to do.

So he went and called the chief men of the town, together with Jesse and his family, to the sacrifice. Then Jesse made his sons pass before Samuel, who, when he saw the eldest son, Eliab, a tall, fine-looking man, thought he must be the one whom God would choose to be anointed king. But God said He would not have Eliab; for He looked at the heart of man, not at his outward appearance. So seven of Jesse's sons one after another, came before Samuel, and none of them did God choose.

Then Samuel asked if all Jesse's children were there. Jesse answered he had one more son, David, the youngest, who was away keeping sheep. So David was sent for. He was a beautiful youth, with golden hair; and as soon as he came, God bade Samuel anoint him, for he was the one whom He had chose.

So Samuel anointed him king. And the Spirit of God then came upon David, and remained with him from that day.

The Story of Saul

Samuel presents Saul to the people, as their king.

SAUL WAS THE son of Kish. He was tall and handsome and well-built, and from his shoulders upward, he was bigger than any of his people.

One day the asses of Kish strayed away and were lost; and Kish said to his son, "Take one of the servants with you and arise, go seek the

asses." They searched through Mount Ephraim, and through the land of Shalisha, but they did not find them. They passed through the land of Shalim, and through the land of the Benjamites, but still they could not find the asses.

Then Saul began to think of returning home, for they had been away for a long time, and he feared that his father would be anxious for their safety.

The servant suggested that they go to see a wise man who lived in a city near by and who had foretold many things which had come to pass. Together they went to the city to see the seer, and they met some maidens who told them that a sacrifice was being made that day and that the seer, whose name was Samuel, would be there to bless it; so they would be sure to find him.

Now, the Lord had told Samuel that he would send him a man from the land of Benjamin to be the captain and king of all the people of Israel. So when Saul appeared, Samuel pointed him out and said to the assembled people, "There is the man."

And to Samuel he said, "Come up with me to the high place. You shall eat with me today, and tomorrow I will let you go and you shall tell me everything that is in your heart. As for the asses, do not trouble about them, for they were found three days ago."

Saul was puzzled, for he could not understand the honor that was being bestowed upon him, but Samuel gave him no chance to protest. He took Saul and his servant to the feast, and gave Saul the choicest portion to eat. The next morning Samuel anointed Saul, and led him before all the people and proclaimed him the new king. Saul tried to hide, but as he stood head and shoulders above all the other people, it was an easy matter to single him out. Amid the shouts and cheers of the people he was made King of Israel.

David and Goliath

David slays the giant Goliath.

THE ISRAELITES AND the Philistines were now at war together, and the two armies were posted on two mountains, with a valley between them.

And while they were drawn up in sight of each other, a giant, named Goliath of Gath, came out of the camp of the Philistines, and challenged any one of the Israelites to come and fight with him.

If he killed the Israelite, then the Israelites were to yield to the Philistines; but if the Israelite killed him, then the Philistines would serve them. He was a huge giant, nine or ten feet high, clad from head to foot in heavy brazen armor. The staff of his spear was as thick as a weaver's beam. And for forty days this terrible giant came out, defying all the Israelites. Even Saul himself, the king, who was a brave man, was afraid of him.

Now at this time the three eldest sons of Jesse were in Saul's army; and their father bade David, who was tending his sheep at Bethlehem, go to the camp with some parched corn, and bread for his brothers. He arrived there just as the two armies were advancing to battle; and as he talked to his brothers, out came the giant, defying the Israelites, who fled at the very sight of him.

David was indignant at seeing the armies of God's chosen people so contemptuously treated by a heathen, and he asked those about him what should be done for the man who killed him. They told him that he should have honors and riches, and that he should marry the king's daughter. Then Saul, hearing what David had said, sent for him; and David told the king that he would go and fight the giant.

Saul reminded him that he was but a youth, and the Philistine had been a soldier all his life. But David answered that he had killed a lion and a bear that had attacked his flock, and he knew that God would also help him to kill this great giant.

Then Saul would have given him armor and a sword, but David would not have them. He took only his staff and sling, with five smooth stones in his shepherd's bag, and went to meet the giant, who came on cursing and taunting him.

But David, running forward, took a stone from his bag, and slang it at the giant, whom it struck in the forehead, so that he fell on his face to the ground, and David cut off his head with his own sword. Then the Philistines took to flight when they saw that the giant was dead.

David Playing Before Saul

Saul throws his spear at David.

WHEN SAUL AND David, and the whole army were coming home in triumph, after the defeat of the Philistines, the women of Israel, as they passed along, came out of all their cities to meet them with dances and

songs of joy.

And as they danced and played on instruments of music, they said, "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands! And Saul was so much displeased at their thus giving more honor to David than they did to their king, that from that day he began to regard him with jealousy and distrust. From the time that he had so sinned against God as to cause Him to give the kingdom of Israel after his death to another, Saul had become liable to fits of sadness and severe gloom.

God had withdrawn His Spirit from him, and he was miserable--almost mad. His servants, who were anxious to comfort him, thought that music would soothe the distressed mind of the king, and, as David played skillfully upon the harp, they would have him play before Saul.

And, whenever he did so, Saul was refreshed, and became cheerful again. But after he had grown envious of David's renown, twice, when David was playing before him, he threw a spear at him to kill him.

David, however, escaped unhurt. Saul then tried in various ways to destroy him by means of his enemies the Philistines, setting him on duties that seemed as if they must cost him his life.

Still God preserved David alike from the Philistines, and from Saul's own servant, whom the wicked king had commanded to put him to death. Then Jonathan, Saul's son, having sent David, whom he loved, to a place of safety, pleaded with his father for him, reminding Saul how faithful David had been to him, and what good service he had done the kingdom by killing the Philistine who had so frightened them all. And Saul yielded to the pleading of his son, and promised that he would do David no harm. So he was brought back, and served Saul as before.

War, however, soon broke out again between the Israelites and the Philistines, and David again defeated them with great slaughter. This roused all Saul's ill-will against him; so that, when in one of his fits of gloom, David, as was his custom, was trying to cheer him with his harp, Saul rose and threw a spear at him with such force that, as David slipped aside, it stuck fast in the wall.

That night David made his escape and never returned.

David and Jonathan

David creeps silently into where Saul is sleeping.

SAUL SENT MESSENGERS hither and thither to take David, but they failed to find him. Jonathan meanwhile kept trying to save his friend; but when at last Saul threw his spear at him, in his anger at his continuing to plead for David, he perceived that all his efforts were useless.

So he and David took leave of each other lovingly; the latter retiring to the wilderness, where he soon gathered together a band of followers.

While Saul continued his fierce pursuit of David, his life was twice in David's power, who refused to hurt Saul, though his followers urged him to kill the king.

On one of these occasions, David, to prove how easily he might have killed Saul if he would, cut off a piece of his robe when he was asleep.

And then, when the king awoke, showing it to him, he besought him not to believe those who had told him that David desired to take his life. Saul's hard heart was softened by his appeal, and he said to David, "Thou art more righteous than I;" for David had returned him good for evil.

Saul added that he knew David should be king after him; and he entreated that his sons might not be put to death when David came to the throne. David solemnly promised this, and then Saul returned from pursuing him. But David, not daring to trust himself with him, went back to his stronghold in En-gedi.

Saul's reconciliation with David did not last long. He was soon hunting him again with a force of three thousand men.

He had pitched his camp in the wilderness; and David, with Abishai, one of his followers, came down to it at night. The people were all asleep, and Saul's tent was set up in the midst of the encampment.

The two stole in among them, and came silently to the place where Saul lay sleeping, with his spear stuck into the ground by his pillow, surrounded by his guard, with Abner their captain, all fast asleep.

Abishai wished to kill Saul, but David would not suffer him. Only to show Saul once more how completely he had been in his power, he carried the spear, and water-bottle, that stood by it, away with him to his own camp. When he got there he called out tauntingly to Abner, and the king's guard, asking whether they were not pretty defenders of their master, and bidding

them send some one to fetch back the king's spear.

Saul knew the voice; and when David complained to him of his merciless pursuit of one who had so often spared his life, he relented, and said he would do David no more harm.

David is King

As Absalom flees, his hair is caught in the branches and he's left hanging.

SAUL, HAVING BEEN defeated and severely wounded in his last battle with the Philistines, killed himself for fear of falling alive into the hands of the enemy.

After his death the tribe of Judah chose David for their king, and he reigned in Hebron between seven and eight years. At the end of that time he became king over the whole Israel; and, having taken Jerusalem from the Jebusites, who had got possession of it, he made it his capital city, and lived there in a fine palace which he built for himself.

He greatly desired also to build a temple, in which the ark of God might be place, and in which God might be worshiped with more splendor than He had been in the Tabernacle. God was pleased that David desired to do this, but told him that not he, but his son Solomon, who was to succeed him, should build the Temple.

David had many children, and among these his son Absalom was his favorite. He was very beautiful, and not only his father, but all the people of Israel, loved him. But he was a vain, worthless young man, and caused his father much sorrow by his wicked conduct. He murdered one of his half brothers; and then, when, after long banishment, he was permitted to come again into the king's presence, he very soon raised a rebellion against him, in order to seize the crown for himself; and such numbers of the people joined with him that David was obliged to make his escape from Jerusalem into the wilderness.

The good king was sorely grieved that his own favorite son should seek his life; but he trusted that God, who had so often delivered him, would do so now. He soon drew round him forces enough to meet those of his rebellious son, and a pitched battle was fought between them in the wood of Ephraim.

The troops of Absalom were defeated with great slaughter; and as he himself was flying from the field of battle, his mule carried him under a large oak-tree; his hair caught in the branches, and the animal, galloping off, left him hanging there.

One of David's army, who saw this, instead of releasing him, ran and told Joab, David's chief captain, who, though he had received a strict charge from the king to save the life of his son, hastened to him, and cruelly killed him by thrusting three darts through his very heart.

When word was brought to David that Absalom was slain, he wept and lamented for him, exclaiming, "Oh, my son Absalom, my son! would God I had died for thee!"

Solomon Crowned King

Solomon is annointed to be the new King of Israel, after his father David. WHEN ABSALOM WAS dead, the people were eager to fetch the king home again; so eager, that they quarreled among themselves because the men of Judah, David's own tribe, were the first to bring him on his way to Jerusalem.

And the quarrel ended in all the men of Israel again revolting from the king. Joab, however, who was a skillful soldier, though he was a very bad man, succeeded in putting down the insurrection.

But David's troubles were not yet at an end. First famine, and then pestilence, in which seventy thousand of the people died, afflicted his kingdom.

And then, when he was old and feeble, apparently near death, his son Adonijah set himself up to be king, after his father, instead of Solomon, whom God had appointed to succeed David.

By way of making his claim sure, Adonijah had taken upon himself royal state. Joab and other officers of the kingdom were with him, and the people acknowledged him as king.

News of this was brought to David, who at once determined to prevent disputes about the succession after his death by having Solomon crowned during his own lifetime.

So he called Nathan the priest, Zadok the prophet, and Benaiah the captain of his guard, and bade them, with a number of his officers, take Solomon, and, placing him upon the king's own mule (which it was death

for any subject to ride), bring him down to Gihon, a fountain near Jerusalem, and there, with sound of trumpet, anoint, and proclaim him king over Israel.

So they took him thither, and proclaimed him king; multitudes following and shouting, "God save King Solomon!" till the city rang again. Adonijah and his friends were at this time rejoicing together; and while they were feasting, in came one of their party to tell them that David had actually made Solomon king of Israel.

When they heard this, they were so frightened that each one stole away as quietly as he could. And Adonijah, fearing that his life might be forfeited for attempting to seize the kingdom, fled to the altar for protection; for he who laid hold of the horns of the altar was considered under God's protection, and therefore safe from his enemies.

But Solomon sent for him, promising him safety if he submitted to him. So Adonijah came, and did homage to his brother, who let him go home peaceably. Soon after this David died, and was buried at Jerusalem.

The Judgment of Solomon

Solomon commanded that the living child be cut in two.

SOLOMON WAS THE greatest king that ever reigned in Israel; he was also one of the wisest men that ever lived. When he first came to the throne, God appeared to him one night in a dream, and asked what gift He should bestow upon him.

Solomon prayed that He would give him wisdom to govern his people. God was pleased that he had asked wisdom instead of riches, or conquests, or long life, and He told Solomon that because he had done so, not only would He make him wiser than any man who ever lived, but that he should be rich and famous above all kings of the earth.

And if he would obey Him in all things, long life should also be added to the other good gifts which were to be his.

In those days it was the custom for kings to sit in some public place, where such of their subjects as had wrongs to complain of might plead their cause before them, and obtain justice.

One day two women came before Solomon. One of them told him that

she and the other woman both lived in one house, and each had a very young child; that in the night the child belonging to the other woman died, and its mother exchanged it for the living one, putting her own dead child in her neighbor's bed as she lay sleeping, and taking the living child to herself. In the morning, the mother of the living child found out the cheat; but she whose child was dead would not give up the one that she had stolen, for she said it was her own. And the two women stood there before the king, each one contending that the living child was hers, and that the dead child belonged to the other.

Then Solomon desired his people to bring him a sword; and when it was brought, he bade them divide the living child in two, and give half of him to each of the women.

The woman who had falsely claimed the child made no objection to this decision. But the real mother could not bear it. Rather than have her son killed, she was willing to lose him altogether; and she cried, and in no wise slay it!"

Then the king saw at once to which of them the child belonged; and he said, "Give her the living child, for she is its mother."

And all the people of Israel, when they heard of this judgment of Solomon, knew that God had indeed given him wisdom to do justice among his subjects; and they held him in great awe and reverence.

The Queen of Sheba's Visit to Solomon

The Queen of Sheba is welcomed by Solomon.

SOLOMON HAD VAST treasures of gold and silver, and precious things of every kind. His people also were rich and happy. Solomon worshiped and served God faithfully; and God, as He had promised, blessed him greatly.

When David had desired to build a house, or temple, for God's worship at Jerusalem, God had told him that his son Solomon should build it. So, when he came to the throne, Solomon built this temple of the richest materials, and in the most costly manner.

Hewn stone, cedar, olive-tree wood, fine brass, pure gold, silver, and precious stones, were there in abundance; and artificers from Tyre, who were famous for their skill, wrought them for him.

The Temple, which was placed on Mount Moriah, was seven years in

building. When it was finished, Solomon dedicated it to God in a solemn assembly of the people; and the Lord God filled it with His glory, as He had done the Tabernacle in the wilderness.

The wisdom of Solomon was celebrated not only among his own people, but in all parts of the East, whose kings sent messengers to him, that they might hear it for themselves.

The Queen of Sheba came herself to Jerusalem, with a great train of people, and camels carrying gold, precious stones, and spices, as presents for the great king, that she might know, by conversing with Solomon, whether he was so wise as had been told her.

And when she heard his wisdom, and had seen the splendor of his court and palace, she was so overpowered that she fainted. And she said to the king that before she came she did not believe what had been told her in her own land of his wisdom and greatness, but now she saw that not even the half of it had been made known to her.

Happy were they who served before him, and continually heard his wisdom. And she gave thanks to God for having given such a king to his people Israel. Then, when Solomon had also given her costly presents, she and her train returned to their own country.

But as Solomon grew older, instead of serving and worshiping God as he had done, he began to worship false gods.

And then God, as He had threatened, let trouble come upon him and his kingdom, so that, after his death, ten of the tribes were taken away from his son, and set up into a separate kingdom, that of Israel, which was never again united to the kingdom of Judah.

Elijah Fed by Ravens

God feeds Elijah by sending a raven to bring him food.

VERY SOON AFTER the separation of the twelve tribes the kingdom of Israel fell into idolatry. Jeroboam, its first king, set up golden calves in Dan and Bethel, the two extremities of his dominions, to prevent his people going up to Jerusalem (which belonged to the kingdom of Judah) to worship God.

But, though they worshiped these images, they had not entirely rejected the true God. It was under Ahab, the sixth king, a weak and wicked man,

whose wife, Jezebel, was even worse than himself, that the worship of the true God was put down, and that of Baal established in its place.

God was angry both with Ahab and his people for their idolatry and persecution of his priests, who were put to death in great numbers; and, as a punishment for these sins, He sent Elijah to tell Ahab that for three years and a half neither dew nor rain should fall in the land of Israel.

As soon as Elijah had foretold this great evil, God bade him hide himself from the rage of Ahab in a certain place near the brook Cherith, where He had commanded the ravens to feed him. So he went and dwelt by the brook, which afforded him water to drink, while the ravens, as God had said, brought him food morning and evening. But, as no rain had fallen, in time the brook dried up, and then God bade him leave his present hiding-place, and go to Zarephath, near Sidon; for He had commanded a widow, who lived there, to provide for him.

Elijah immediately went to Zarephath; and when he came to the gate of the city, he saw the woman gathering sticks. He called her, and asked her to give him some water to drink; and as she was going for it, he begged her also to bring him a morsel of bread.

The poor woman turned round, and told him she had no bread. All that she had was a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a bottle, and she had just been gathering wood to cook it for herself and her son; after they had eaten it, they must lie down to die, for she knew not where to get more.

Elijah bade her do as she had said, but to make him a little cake first, and afterward for herself; for God, he assured her, would cause her meal and oil to last till the famine should be at an end.

So the woman made him the little cake first; and he, and she, with her family, were fed out of the handful meal and vessel of oil for many days. Neither of them failed till the day when God sent rain upon the earth, and so took away the famine.

Elijah Restores the Widow's Son

Elijah brings a widow's son back from the dead.

WHILE ELIJAH WAS with the widow of Zarephath, her son fell ill and died. His mother feared it was for some sin of hers that her child was taken from her, and that it was the prophet who had caused his illness.

In her distress, she said this to Elijah reproachfully. But he only bade her bring her son to him; and then, lying down with the child on his own bed, he prayed earnestly that God would let its soul come into it again.

God heard his prayer, and brought the child to life again; and Elijah carried him down to his mother.

When the three years and six months were past, God bade Elijah go again to Ahab, for He was now about to send rain upon the earth. At this time Ahab, and Obadiah, the governor of his household, a man who worshiped God, had gone in different directions to seek grass for the king's horses and mules.

As Obadiah went on his way, Elijah met him, and bade him tell his master where he might find Elijah; for Ahab, thinking it was he that had brought famine upon the kingdom, had angrily sought him in all countries.

Obadiah was unwilling to carry Elijah's message, for he feared that as soon as he had left him, God might command him to go to some other place, and then, when Ahab came and found no prophet there, he himself might be put to death for having misled the king.

But Elijah replied that he would assuredly show himself to Ahab that day; and then Obadiah went to tell him.

When Ahab met Elijah, he haughtily asked whether he were not the man that troubled Israel. But Elijah answered that it was not he, but Ahab and his family that had brought affliction upon the nation by their wickedness.

And he desired that the king would gather together all the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel, where he would offer sacrifice to God, and they to Baal; and the god whose sacrifice was consumed by fire from heaven should be acknowledged to be the true God.

Ahab did this. The priests of Baal built their altar, and from morning to evening kept crying, "O Baal, hear us!"

But there was no answer; their false god could do nothing for them. Then Elijah prepared his sacrifice; and when he called upon the Lord God, fire came down from heaven, that burnt up the sacrifice, and the wood, and even the stones of the altar.

And then all the people bowed to the earth, exclaiming, "The Lord He is the God! The Lord He is the God!"

Elijah Taken to Heaven

A chariot of fire appears, and Elijah is taken to heaven in a whirlwind.

ELIJAH RETURNED WITH Ahab to Jezreel, a beautiful place where the king had a palace. But Jezebel threatened to kill the prophet; so he fled for his life out of Israel, into the kingdom of Judah, to Beersheba.

There he left his servant, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. Here, weary and worn out with his troubles, he lay down to sleep under a juniper-tree, and begged God to let him die.

But while he slept, an angel touched him, bidding him rise and eat; and when he looked, he saw a cake baked on the coals, and a bottle of water by his side. So he ate and drank, and then lay down again.

A second time the angel touched him, and bade him rise and eat; and that food which God had sent him sustained him for forty days and nights, while he traveled through the wilderness to Mount Horeb. And there, after storm, and earthquake, and fire, God appeared to him in a wonderful manner.

At length the time came when God would take Elijah to heaven without dying like other men. And as he and Elisha, who was to succeed him as prophet, went on their way from Gilgal to the River Jordan, Elijah, knowing what God was about to do for him, tried to persuade Elisha to leave him to go on alone.

But Elisha clung lovingly to his master, and would not leave him. Then, at Bethel and Jericho, scholars of the prophets, who lived there, came out to them, asking Elisha if he knew that God would that day take away his master from him.

Elisha answered them, "Yea, I know it;" and again Elijah would have sent him away, but he would not go.

So they traveled together till they reached the river, where Elijah wrapped his mantle together, struck the waters, and they were divided, standing on each hand, so that he and Elisha passed over on dry ground.

And as they still went on, suddenly there appeared in the air a chariot of fire, with horses of fire, which, parting the two asunder, carried up Elijah in a whirlwind to heaven.

And when Elisha saw it, he cried after him, "My father, my father, the

chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" Then he took the mantle that fell from Elijah as he went up, and turned back to the Jordan; and as he stood on its bank,, he struck the waters, exclaiming, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

Then the waters were divided as they had been before and Elisha went over on dry land.

The Story of Elisha

The woman and her son before Elisha raises him from the dead.

WHEN THE YOUNG men who were in the schools of the prophets saw Elisha divide the waters of Jordan, they knew that God was with him, as He had been with Elijah; and they came and bowed down to the ground before him, to do him honor.

They, as well as Elisha, had seen Elijah taken up by the fiery chariot; but they thought that God might perhaps have carried him, in that way, to some other part of the country.

So they begged Elisha to let fifty of them go and seek him. Elisha at first forbade their doing so, but at last he gave them leave. So they sought Elijah for three days. But they did not find him, for he was with God in heaven. Then the people of Jericho came to Elisha, complaining that, though the situation of their city was beautiful, as he saw, the water was almost poisonous, and the soil was barren.

So he told them to bring him a new cruse, or bottle, with a little salt in it. And when it was brought, he went to the spring whence the water that supplied the neighborhood rose, and throwing the salt into it, he declared that God had taken away the unwholesomeness of the water, so that from that time neither men nor cattle should be injured by drinking it; nor should it any longer render the soil unproductive, as it had done.

After this, Elisha went to Bethel; and when he was near the city, some young men came out ridiculing and insulting him; and they mockingly bade him "go up," as his master had done. This was a shocking sin, for it was turning into jest that great miracle that God had just done, of carrying Elijah, living as he was, into heaven. Elisha knew that God's anger would fall upon them for such wickedness; and, turning back toward the young men, he told them that they would be punished.

And immediately two fierce she-bears rushed out of the wood, and killed forty-two of them. God enabled Elisha to do many miracles. He brought a dead child to life again. He healed the Syrian general, Naaman, of an incurable disease; fed a hundred of the prophets with a small quantity of bread; and did many other wonderful works.

When Elisha lay dying, Jehoash, king of Israel, came, and wept over him. Then Elisha bade the king shoot an arrow out of the window, and afterward strike the ground with the whole quiver-full, to show the king that he should overcome his enemies, the Syrians. When he had done this, Elisha died.

Jehoash the Boy King

Jehoash is proclaimed king at seven years old.

WHEN JEHOSHAPHAT DIED, his eldest son Jehoram became king in Judah in his place. His wife was Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and together they did a great many wicked things.

Jehoram slew all his brothers in order to get the riches which his father had left to them. He built places in the mountains of Judah and in Jerusalem for the worship of Baal.

When he died, after ruling for eight years, his son, Ahaziah, became the ruler. He, too, was very bad, and his rule was a short one. When he was killed, his mother saw that no one was left to take over the throne; so she planned to be the ruler herself.

Of course, Ahaziah had some children, who were her grandsons, and she had other grandchildren too, but she decided that they must all be killed so that she could be made queen.

Only one of the grandchildren escaped--a tiny baby named Jehoash. He was hidden away by his father's sister, and he was kept hidden for years, in a set of chambers built round the Temple.

Athaliah became the queen, and since she was so willful and powerful, even those who did not approve of her had to pretend that they did. She established the worship of Baal again, and even took some of the Temple treasures and placed them in the House of Baal.

Jehoash remained hidden in the temple for six years, and he was taught all about Jehovah and the laws of Jehovah by his aunt and her husband,

who was the High Priest of the Temple. (That was why the child could remain hidden in the Temple chambers for so long.)

Finally the wickedness of the queen and her court became so great that the High Priest of the Temple decided that the only way to save the entire nation from destruction would be to place the young prince on the throne. So after he had made his plans carefully, the Priest of Jehovah called the Guardsmen and soldiers of the temple together. He gave them weapons which had been hidden by David in the Temple.

Then he brought forth Jehoash from his hiding place, and the assembled gathering proclaimed him king. Of course, Athaliah was very angry when she learned what had happened, but it was too late. She was driven out of the Temple; and as she was trying to escape, she was killed in the excitement. As long as the Priest of the Temple, Jehoiada, was alive, Jehoash was a good king. He restored the Temple, which had fallen into bad repair through long neglect, and he brought the people back to the worship of Jehovah.

Jehoash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned for forty years in Jerusalem.

Jonah - The Prophet Who Tried To Run From God

Jonah tells the people of Nineveh that they must repent of their sin.

DURING THE YEARS that Elisha was the prophet in Israel, the Syrians were a strong nation, and they often warred against the Israelites. But after Elisha died the Syrian nation grew weaker, and by and by did not trouble Israel any more at all.

Then a new enemy arose, from the far east country. This new enemy was the Assyrian king, who was conquering many little countries round about. And all the while he was sending his armies nearer and nearer to the border-land of Israel, and the Israelites were beginning to fear him.

Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria, and the home of the great king. And Nineveh was a great city. It had stood for hundreds of years, and it had grown larger and larger until thousands and thousands of people lived inside its high walls. These people did not serve the true God, but worshiped idols. And year after year they became more wicked, until finally God thought he would destroy them all.

But God is very merciful. He knew the people of Nineveh had not known about him as had the people of Israel, for no prophets had ever come to warn them about their wrong-doings. So he decided to send them a prophet from Israel to tell them that their city would be destroyed because of their awful sins.

Jonah was the prophet whom God chose to send to Nineveh. But Jonah did not want to go to that wicked city so far from his homeland. He knew the Assyrians were enemies of the Israelites, and he thought it would be better if God would destroy their city than to give them a chance to repent of their sins. So Jonah thought, "I will not go to Nineveh. I will take a ship down at the Great sea, and I will sail away toward the west country instead of going toward the east country. Then maybe I can get so far away that God will not talk to me any more about going to preach to those wicked people of Nineveh."

Jonah went down to the seaside and found a ship ready to sail away. He paid his fare, climbed on board the ship, and started with the sailors to go to a city called Tarshish, far to the west. He thought he was very safe now, and he feared no longer that he should have to go to Nineveh. Indeed, he felt so safe that he went down into the ship and soon fell fast asleep.

But God knew all about Jonah's plans, and God was not willing for his prophet to disobey him. He had called Jonah to go to preach to the heathen people in Nineveh, and he sent a storm on the Sea which threatened to wreck the ship. The sailors became frightened and they called on their gods to quiet the winds; but the winds blew harder than ever. They did not know what to do. Finally the captain went down into the ship and found Jonah lying there asleep.

The captain woke Jonah and told him to call upon his God for help in this time of trouble. But Jonah did not feel much like asking God to help him when he was running away from the work that God had told him to do. No doubt his conscience began to trouble him greatly; and when he saw the strong waves dash against the ship and toss it about like a chip on the water, he feared that he should never again see dry land.

When the storm continued to rage, the sailors decided that one of them on board the ship must be the cause of the trouble, so they decided to cast lots and see on which one the lot would fall. And the lot fell on Jonah. Jonah was a stranger among them, and the sailors wondered what

terrible thing this stranger had done. They gather round him and asked, "Tell us, who are you and what is your business?" And Jonah told them that he was from the land of Israel and that he worshiped the God who had made the sea and the dry land. At once they were afraid, for they did not know about such a great God, and they thought surely he was angry. Jonah told them how he had tried to run away from God, and they believed that God was trying to punish him. Jonah, too, believed that God had sent the storm on his account.

"What shall we do to you that the storm may cease?" asked the frightened men when they saw that their ship would soon be dashed in pieces if the wind and waves continued to toss it about. And Jonah answered,, "Throw me overboard in the water, and then the storm will end." The sailors did not wish to treat Jonah so cruelly, but when they saw that all would be lost if they allowed him to remain on board the vessel, they picked him up and threw him into the sea. But God was not yet finished with Jonah. He had prepared a great fish, and the fish swallowed Jonah and carried him about for three days and three nights before throwing him out onto the land. By that time Jonah was very willing to go to Nineveh and preach God's message to the people there.

When Jonah entered the city he began to cry out: "Within forty days Nineveh shall be destroyed!" On and on he went, for Nineveh was a great city, and in every street where he passed he cried out the same words. And the people stopped to listen to his strange message. They had never see a prophet of God before. Some of them ran to tell their King about Jonah's words, and the King was frightened. He rose from his throne and laid aside his rich garments and dressed himself in sackcloth. Then he sat down in ashes and became sorry for his sins. He commanded all the people of the city to do as he was doing, and to cry earnestly to God to spare their lives.

After Jonah finished preaching he went outside the great walls and waited to see the fire fall from the sky to burn up the enemies of the Israelites. But forty days passed by and no fire fell. Because the people believed Jonah's message and repented of their sins God did not destroy their city. Then Jonah became very much displeased. He feared that people might call him a false prophet, and he wanted to die instead of go back to his own county again.

God taught Jonah a lesson by allowing a gourd-vine to grow up in one night and make a shelter for him from the burning heat of the sun. Then God caused a worm to destroy the gourd, and Jonah became very unhappy. Again he wished that he might die. So the Lord spoke to Jonah and said, "You were sorry to see the plant die, though you did not make it grow. And should I not have more pity on the people of Nineveh than you have on a plant?" Jonah learned that God looks upon people of every nation as being precious in his sight, even though they do not know how to worship him.

The Sad Ending of the Kingdom of Israel

God allowed the Assyrians to carry the Israelites away to a strange land. THE PEOPLE OF Nineveh believed God's prophet and were ready to ask God to forgive their sins. They repented, and they were not destroyed. But the people of Israel did not believe the faithful prophets whom God sent to them, one after another. Some of them, of course, believed; but many of them did not. Their kings refused to worship God in the right way, and kept the golden calves, which the first king of Israel had made.

Many years passed by, and God saw that the Israelites would never return to worship him as they had done in the days of David and Solomon. Nineteen kings had ruled in the land of Israel, and many times God had helped those kings out of trouble. Still they would not lead their people back to the true worship.

At last God allowed an enemy to carry them all away to a strange land. Hoshea was king in Israel when the great Assyrian army came down into the land and took possession of it.

For a while Hoshea and his people paid a large sum of money each year to the Assyrian nation, and they were allowed to live in their own land. But when Hoshea refused to pay the money and sent to the king of Egypt for help, the king of Assyria sent his army again, and the army took Hoshea and all his people away from their homes and led them into heathen cities to keep them for slaves.

This was the terrible punishment that their sins of idol-worship had brought upon them. And they were never again allowed to return to live in their homeland. The Assyrian king now ruled over all of the country where the ten tribes of Israel used to live. He wanted to have some people in

that land, so he took some heathen people from cities in the east country and brought them to live in the cities of Samaria. He told them to work the fields and keep the vineyards, and pay him money from the crops they raised in Israel.

The new people in Israel were idol-worshippers. They did not know about the true God at all. After they had been in the land for some time they became afraid of the God of that land, for lions would come out of the woods and kill some of them when they went out to their fields to work. They believed that the God of Israel was sending the lions among them because they did not know how to worship him. So they sent messengers back to Nineveh to tell the king about their troubles. They asked him to send a priest of the Israelite slaves back to Israel, that he might teach them to worship the Israelites' God.

The king sent a priests of the Israelites, and he went to live in Bethel. He told the strange people about the true God, and they, too, tried to worship him. But they continued to worship their own gods, and their religion became a mixture of right and wrong. Even today some of the descendants of those people are living in Samaria, and their worship is a mixture of idolatry and the religion of the Jews.

The Good King Hezekiah

As Hezekiah lays sick, the prophet Isaiah tells him that he must get ready to die.

AFTER THE PEOPLE of Israel were carried away into captivity by the king of Assyria, only the tribe of Judah remained of the twelve tribes that had entered the promised land under the leadership of Joshua. And Hezekiah was the king of Judah at that time.

Now the kingdom of Judah was very weak when Hezekiah took the throne. For many years it had been ruled by men who were not serving the true God, and they had even shut up the temple of the Lord.

Hezekiah began at once to restore the true religion. He called for the priests and the Levites to come to Jerusalem to cleanse the temple. Then when everything was ready for worship at the house of God, he sent invitations to the people in every part of the land of Judah and Israel, and commanded them to come to the Feast of the Passover, which they had not kept for many long years.

Some of the people only laughed when they received Hezekiah's invitation to attend the Feast. They had worshiped idols for so long a time that they did not care to return to Jerusalem again, to worship the true God. But many from the land of Judah came gladly, and there was a great meeting.

Hezekiah destroyed the idols out of his land, and tried to teach his people to do right. He found in Jerusalem the brass serpent that Moses had made in the wilderness. He saw that the people were burning incense before this brass serpent, just as if it were an idol, so he cast it into the fire. He tore down the altars that had been built to worship heathen gods, and did much to strengthen his kingdom.

The King of Assyria had gained power over Judah before Hezekiah took the throne. Every year the people of Judah had to pay Assyria a large sum of money. But Hezekiah was displeased to have his people oppressed by this heathen King. He decided to quit paying the money. He built up the walls of Jerusalem until they were very strong. Then he gathered an army and made ready to fight against the Assyrians.

But Hezekiah's army was only a handful compared to the hosts of Assyria. The enemies came into the land of Judah and took one city after another. Then they marched toward Jerusalem, and Hezekiah knew that his soldiers could not keep them away. He saw when too late that he had made a sad mistake when he refused to pay the money that the Assyrian King required of his people. So he sent word to the angry King, promising to resist him no more and to pay whatever that King should require.

The King of Assyria thought: "Now is my chance to spoil this little country of Judah." So he demanded a heavier tax than he had ever asked before. And Hezekiah took all the gold and silver that was in his palace, and all that he could find among the people, and even the gold and silver from the temple of the Lord to pay this tax. Still the King of Assyria was not satisfied. He sent a message, saying, "I am going to destroy your city and take you and your people away to a far country, just as I have done to your neighbors who lived in Israel. The gods of other nations did not help them when I came against them, and your God will not be able to save you."

Hezekiah was afraid when he heard this message. He knew that his army was not strong enough to drive away such a powerful enemy. He took the

letter that this King had written and went into the temple to pray. There he spread the letter before the altar and asked God to help him and his people out of their trouble. Then he sent some of his princes to visit the good prophet Isaiah and ask him to tell them about God's will.

Isaiah answered, "The Lord has said that the King of Assyria shall not come into this city, nor shall he even shoot an arrow against it. But he shall go back to his own country by the way that he came, and there he shall be killed with a sword."

That same night an angel of God visited the camp of the Assyrian King and caused a terrible sickness to fall upon the soldiers. By morning many of them lay dead. All of the leaders in the army were among the dead men, and the King rose up and hastened back to his own land.

Never again did he return to fight against Hezekiah, for God had heard and answered the prayers of the good King. And years after this, while he was worshiping the temple of his god in Nineveh, two of his own sons killed him.

At one time Hezekiah became very sick, and there was no cure to be found for his sickness. Isaiah, the prophet, came to him and said, "God has commanded that you get ready to leave this world, for you must die." Hezekiah did not feel that he could leave his people. He turned his face to the wall and prayed earnestly that God would make him well again. Then he wept bitter tears, and reminded God how faithfully he had tried to rule the people. And God heard Hezekiah's prayer.

Isaiah was returning to his home when the Lord spoke to him again, saying, "Go back to the King and tell him that I have heard his prayer and seen his tears; and now I will add fifteen years to his life. On the third day he shall be able to go up to the temple to worship."

Hezekiah was glad to hear Isaiah's second message. He asked for a sign from the prophet, and Isaiah answered, "The sign shall be according to your choice. Shall the shadow on the sun-dial go backward or shall it go forward ten degrees?"

The sun-dial was the instrument by which the King might know the time of day; for he had no clocks as we have now. And Hezekiah asked that the shadow might go backward, as it would not seem like a sign for the

shadow to move forward. So Isaiah prayed, and the shadow moved backward ten degrees.

And Hezekiah was healed of his disease, according to God's word, and he lived for fifteen years more. During that time he built up his kingdom and became very rich.

He grew proud of his riches; but God rebuked him, and he humbled his heart again. When he died all the land mourned for him, because they knew he had been the best king Judah had known.

King Josiah and the Story of a Forgotten Book

The pagan altars are torn down and removed from the temple.

IT WAS HOUSE-CLEANING time in the temple of the Lord. Many years had passed since this building had been repaired by the boy king, Joash, and during those long years the temple had been much neglected.

It had even been mistreated, for one king had set up altars for the idol of Baal right in the courts of the Lord's house. Now that king was dead, and his grandson, Josiah, was ruling the people of Judah. And because Josiah was trying to do right he had given the command that God's house should be repaired and made ready for the proper kind of worship.

Many skillful workmen were hired to help repair the temple. And the heathen altars were torn out of the temple courts and carried outside the city, where they were burned with fire. While this work was going on, the high priest was setting things in order in the rooms of the temple. And there, hidden away beneath some rubbish, he found a strange book.

This strange book proved to be the same as one Moses had written before he died. It was called the Book of the Law, for in it Moses had written the words of the law, which God gave to the Israelites.

And Moses had commanded that the book should be read in the hearing of all the people once every seven years. But now many years had passed by since the book had been read. And during those years the book had been entirely forgotten.

The high priest carefully removed the dust from this precious book and called for a servant of King Josiah. Shaphan, the servant, came quickly, and the high priest told him to carry the book of the King.

Now, Josiah had never heard the words of God's law before this time. He

asked his servant to read aloud from the book, and Shaphan read about God's promise to bless the people if they should serve him faithfully. Then he continued to read, and Josiah heard about God's promise to punish the people if they should forsake him and turn to worship idols. Josiah was alarmed. He knew the people had disobeyed God's law, and he feared the awful punishments, which God promised to send upon them. He tore his clothes and wept bitter tears. Then he sent servants to a woman named Huldah, who was a prophetess, to ask her about God's plan to punish the people for their great sins.

Huldah told the servants that God would surely send all the great punishments upon the people just as he had promised to do if they should forsake his law and worship idols. But because Josiah, the king, had humbled his heart and had wept tears of sorrow for their sins, Huldah said that God would not let the punishments come upon the land during his lifetime.

Josiah did not try to forget about the words of God's law. He wanted all his people to hear them, too. So he called for a great meeting at Jerusalem, and when the people came together he read to them out of the book. Then he promised God to keep that law and to serve God with all his heart. He commanded his people to keep the law, too. And they obeyed their King.

Afterwards Josiah prepared to keep the Passover Feast, which the Israelites were commanded in God's law to keep once every year. He assembled the people from every part of the land, and when they came together he gave from his own flocks many lambs for the Passover supper. And the people rejoiced together, and kept the Feast for seven days. Not since the days of the prophet Samuel had there been such a great Passover Feast as this one.

Josiah ruled the people for thirty-one years. He began to rule when he was only a child, eight years old. Of course some older men had charge of the important affairs of the kingdom until he grew to manhood. But Josiah longed to be a good king when he was only a boy. And at the age of sixteen he began to seek God earnestly, and God helped him to rule wisely.

At the end of Josiah's good reign the king of Egypt went out to fight

against the Assyrian king, and he marched through the land of Judah. Josiah have him pass through the country so he called out his army and prepared to fight against him.

Now the king of Egypt did not wish to fight against Josiah, and he sent word for Josiah to return home from the battle-field; but Josiah would not go. He dressed himself in the clothes of a common soldier and went out to battle anyway.

And in the midst of the fight he was shot by an archer and wounded so severely that his servants brought him back to Jerusalem in a chariot. Soon afterwards he died, and the people buried him among the honorable kings of Judah. The prophet of God wept for him, because he knew that Josiah was the last king who would ever try to keep the words that Moses wrote in the Book of the Law.

Jeremiah, The Weeping Prophet

Jehoiakim burns the Word of God

WHILE JOSIAH WAS the king in Judah, God called a young man named Jeremiah to be a prophet. At first Jeremiah thought he could never obey his call, for he was a shy, timid young man.

He told the Lord that he could not speak to the people because he was only a child. But God answered, "Do not say you are only a child; for you must go to every person to whom I send you, and you must tell them every word I bid you." Then the Lord touched Jeremiah's mouth and said, "I have put my words in your mouth, and I have set you over the nation to do a great work for me."

Jeremiah was no long afraid to obey when God promised to be with him and help him out of his troubles. For Jeremiah knew he would have many troubles. He knew how the prophets before him had been cruelly treated because they dared to speak God's words to the sinful people. He knew that he, too might have to suffer many things.

While Josiah was king in Judah, Jeremiah was treated kindly. But after Josiah died the people soon turned back to idol-worship again. They did not care for the true God, and they refused to listen to his faithful prophet. The king of Egypt took their new king away as a prisoner, and made them pay great sums of money every year. Then he placed another of Josiah's sons upon the throne of Judah.

Josiah's sons were not good men like their father. They forsook God and allowed idols to be set up all through the land. They even treated God's prophet unkindly because he warned them about the dangers that God would send upon them as punishments for their sins.

One day Jeremiah told his dear friend Baruch the words that God spoke to him, and Baruch wrote the words in a book. Then he took the book and went out to read it among the people. Soon the princes of Judah heard about it, and they called Baruch and asked him to read to them.

They were frightened when they heard what Baruch had written; for they believed God's words, and they knew their land would soon be taken away from them. They asked Baruch to let them have the book to read to the King. But first they told Baruch to hide himself and Jeremiah, lest the King be angry when he hear the words of God and try to punish them for putting the words into the book.

Jehoiakim, Josiah's son, was the king at that time. He was sitting in his palace when the princes came to him, bringing the book that Baruch had written. And he listened while they read. But as soon as they finished reading a page he called for the book and took his penknife and cut the page out.

Then he threw it into the fire. This he did with every page that Baruch had written. He would not believe the words of the Lord. And he wanted to punish Jeremiah and his friend; but he could not find them.

The princes sent word to Jeremiah and Baruch, telling them how the King had treated the book, and once more the prophet and his friend wrote down the words of God.

And the words that they wrote were true; for not long afterwards a great king from the east country, of Chaldea, came and took some of the people away to Babylon And Jehoiakim was placed in a prison-house and kept for a prisoner as long as he lived.

But Jeremiah's troubles were by no means ended. After the death of Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim, who had reigned just a little over three months, a new king, Zedekiah, another son of wicked Jehoiakim, was soon ruling the people of Judah, and he was more wicked than his father had been.

He caused Jeremiah to be cast into a prison-house because he spoke the words of God. And the men who put him into the prison tied ropes about

his waist and lowered him into a deep hole beneath the prison floor. Such a hole is called a dungeon, and there the prophet was kept for some time. In the dark, dreary dungeon Jeremiah was very unhappy. He had no comfortable place to rest, and he had only dry bread and water to eat and drink day after day.

While this trouble was happening to Jeremiah, the people of Jerusalem were also in distress. The king of Babylon had come again, with a strong army, and was camping around the walls of their city. They could not go away, and none of their friends could come to help them. And their food-supply was growing smaller every day. Soon they would have nothing left to eat.

The King of Judah was afraid of this army outside his city. He called for Jeremiah to tell him what to do. So the men let ropes down into the dungeon and pulled the prophet out again to send him to the King.

And Jeremiah told the King that God was going to allow the army to capture the city and break down its walls and even destroy the beautiful temple of the Lord. But he said that God would not let the Chaldean king, Nebuchadnezzar, kill the people of Jerusalem if they would willingly offer themselves to become his prisoners. Then they would not need to starve to death inside the city.

Jeremiah asked the King not to send him back into that dark dungeon again. So afterwards he was kept in the court of the prison, and treated more kindly. But he was not allowed to go about through the city and talk to the people.

The people of Jerusalem and their King were not willing to give themselves up as prisoners to Nebuchadnezzar, as Jeremiah had told them to do.

So weary months passed by, and they stayed inside the walls of Jerusalem and suffered from hunger and thirst. Jeremiah suffered with them, for he could not escape. At last, when all the food was gone, the King decided to slip away from Jerusalem during the night. He thought the Chaldean army and King Nebuchadnezzar might not see him.

But King Zedekiah had not gone far from the city when he was captured by his enemies, the Chaldeans. They put heavy chains on his hands and feet, and then put out his eyes and led him away to Babylon.

Many of the people of Judah were taken with him, and only a few of the

poorer people were left in the land. Nebuchadnezzar and his army broke down the walls of Jerusalem and set fire to the temple of the Lord. They first took out all the vessels of gold and silver that they found in the temple, and carried those precious vessels to their own land.

Jeremiah was allowed to remain in the land of Judah among the poorer people. And he lived to be an old man. But as long as he lived he faithfully warned the people according to all the words that God spoke to him. Because he lived during such a time of trouble, Jeremiah was a sad-face man. He talked more about the sorrows of his people than about their joys. And often he wept because of their sins. For this reason he was called the "Weeping Prophet."

The People of Judah Live in a Strange Land

The Chaldean army marches the Jews as prisoners to Babylon.

WHEN THE CITY of Jerusalem was finally broken up, the Chaldean army started back on their long journey to Babylon. They took with them Zedekiah, the king of Judah, and a host of his people for prisoners. Old men and women, young people, and even children were among the number who marched as prisoners to Babylon.

Day after day this host of people walked on and on, stopping only at night to camp by the roadside and rest from their weary journey. And at every camp they knew they were farther away from their home and nearer the land of strangers.

The captives were called "Jews" -- a word that means "the people of Judah." And the Jews of today are descendants of those very people who marched as prisoners from Jerusalem to Babylon so long ago.

When at last the weary journey came to an end, the Jews found that their new ruler treated them more kindly than they had hoped. He gave them fields and houses in that strange land, and permitted them to work for themselves just as they had done, in their own country. He even took some of them into his capital city and trained them to become his nobles and rulers.

God did not forget the people after they were carried away to Babylon. He sent messages to them from this faithful prophet Jeremiah. And he promised to bring them back again to their own country if they would try to please him while they were living among strangers.

The people listened to these messages, and some of them rejoiced to hear Jeremiah's letters read. They longed for the time to come when they would return to the land of their fathers.

In the land of Babylon the Jews refused to worship idols. They saw around them the idolatry of their heathen neighbors, the Chaldeans; but they remembered how God was displeased with idol-worship, and they were trying now to please him.

They often met together in little groups and talked about the land of Judah and the beautiful temple of the Lord, which had been destroyed. And when they talked about these things they wept for sorrow.

Sometimes the Chaldeans would ask the Jews to sing for them. Perhaps they had heard that the Jews were lovers of music, and were skilled musicians. But the Jews hung their harps away and refused to sing. They would answer, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" They thought the beautiful songs of joy and victory that David and other musicians had written would sound out of place in a strange country.

Now the Jews were careful to teach their children about the true God. They were glad when the priest and the Levites came to talk to them about Moses' law. And as the days and the years passed by they did not forget the hope which Jeremiah had given them--the hope of returning again to Judah.

In the land of Babylon another man began to hear messages from God and to speak those messages to the people. This man was Ezekiel, who was one of the captive Jews.

He had been among the first captives, when Jehoiachin was taken to Babylon. And he afterwards warned the other people in Judah about God's punishment upon them for their disobedience.

Ezekiel saw wonderful visions from God, and he encouraged the people to believe that the time would come when they might return again to their own land.

Daniel and His Friends Stand Before a Great King

Daniel and his friends refuse to eat the King's food.

IN THE KING'S palace at Babylon a company of young boys were being

entertained. These young lads were strangers in Babylon. But there were not strangers in a king's court, for they had lived in a royal palace in their home country.

Among this company were four bright-eyed, handsome youths who seemed to be more thoughtful than their friends. These boys were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and they had come from Jerusalem with the first captives whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Judah.

They have been princes in Judah during the rule of King Jehoiakim, and they served the God of Israel. King Nebuchadnezzar had commanded his chief officer of the palace to choose this company of young boys and to teach them the learning of the Chaldeans. He wished to have them well trained, that when they should become grown men they might be able to help rule the great kingdom of Babylon.

And he had appointed his servants to carry choice food from his own table to set before them every day, that they might eat of it and grow into sturdy manhood.

Now, Daniel and his three friends wished to keep the law that God gave to the people of Israel; and that law forbade them to eat of certain kinds of food. But the heathen nations, like the Chaldeans, had no regard for that law, and they prepared food that the Jews called unclean.

They also cooked their food in certain ways that the law of Moses condemned. Daniel and his three friends knew about these differences between the Chaldeans and their own people. And they decided to refuse the King's food, lest it should be the kind of food that Moses in his book had forbidden the Israelites to eat.

God knew about the desire of Daniel and his friends. And God caused the chief officer of the King's palace to love these young boys. When the food was brought before them from the King's table, Daniel stood up and bravely told the officer about his desire not to eat of that food, lest he should be breaking the law of his God.

He also pleaded for his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, that they, too, might be allowed to refuse the King's food.

At first the officer was afraid that the King might be displeased if the boys

refused to eat food from his table.

He said, "When you appear before Nebuchadnezzar and he sees, that you are not looking so well and strong as the other young boys, then he will think that I have not cared for you as I should have done. And he will kill me." But Daniel said, "Try us for ten days with the kind of food we desire to eat, and then see if we do not look as well fed as the other young men." Because the officer loved these boys he agreed to do as Daniel had asked. And for ten days he fed them vegetable food and bread instead of the meats and wine from the King's table.

At the end of the ten days the officer saw that Daniel and his friends were even healthier-looking than their companions. So he continued to give them the food that they desired. And God blessed these boys with much wisdom, so that they quickly learned the language and the wisdom of the Chaldeans.

When three years had passed the King requested that the young boys should be brought before him. He examined them with hard questions, and he saw that Daniel and his three friends were wiser by ten times than were any of the wisest men in all his kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar was well pleased with these young Jews. He gave them places of honor among his own people, and they continued to live in Babylon for many years.

Daniel in Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

AFTER YOUNG DANIEL and his free friends were numbered among the wise men in Babylon, one night the King had a very strange dream.

When he awoke from the dream he could not go to sleep again. And the dream troubled him greatly. He believed that surely that dream must have a deep meaning, and he decided to call the wise men in his kingdom and have them explain the meaning to him. Morning came at last, and Nebuchadnezzar arose from his bed. But now he could no longer recall his dream. This fact troubled him, too, for he knew the dream had been strange and he believed it had a deep meaning.

He sent at once for the wise men who had often stood before him, and when they came he told them about his troubled thoughts regarding the

strange dream which he could no longer remember. He asked them to tell the dream and the meaning of it.

The wise men were puzzled at this request from their King. They thought he was being unreasonable, for they did not know what he had dreamed about. So they asked him to tell the dream first, and then they would tell the meaning.

"I have forgotten the dream," replied the King, impatiently, "and if you are as wise as you claim to be you can tell me what it was. Then you can tell its meaning."

When the wise men insisted that no human being could do such a thing as tell what some one else had dreamed and forgotten, the King became very angry with them.

He said, "Unless you tell this dream and its meaning you shall all be killed." Even this cruel threat could not enable the wise men to know the dream, so they turned away from his presence in great fear.

Nebuchadnezzar then called the captain of his guard and commanded him to kill all the wise men in Babylon. So Arioch, the captain, took his sword and prepared himself to do the terrible deed.

When he came to Daniel's house he found that the brave young man and his three friends had heard nothing about the the King's command. They had not appeared with the other wise men before Nebuchadnezzar.

When Daniel heard what had happened he begged the captain to delay the cruel work until he might first speak with the King. Then he hurried to the palace and went boldly in to tell Nebuchadnezzar that he would find out the dream and its interpretation if only a little time were given him to prepare. And Nebuchadnezzar granted him a little time.

Daniel knew that no living person could be wise enough in himself to do what the King had required; but Daniel knew also that secret things are known by the great God of all the earth, whom he and his three friends were serving.

So the four young men prayed very earnestly that God would cause Daniel to know his dream, and that night God showed Daniel in a vision what the dream had been and what it meant.

Now Daniel was very thankful to God. He knelt down and prayed a

beautiful prayer of thanksgiving.

Then he went quickly to Arioch, the captain of the King's guard, and said, "Do not destroy the wise men, but bring me in to speak with the King; for I can tell the interpretation of his dream."

Arioch was glad, and he took Daniel and brought him to the palace. Then he told the King that he had found a man among the captives from Judah who could make known the strange dream and its meaning.

Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that the power to make known his dream was given by the great God in heaven, for no wise man of earth could know such secret and reveal them.

Then he said: "O King, when you lay down to sleep on your bed you wondered what should come to pass in future years. Then you fell asleep, and in your dream God showed you what would happen hereafter. And this was your dream: You saw a great image, exceedingly bright, standing before you. The head of this image was of gold, the breast and arms were of silver, and the waist and hips were of brass, the legs were of iron, and the feet were part of iron and part of clay.

Then you saw a stone that was cut without hands roll toward this great image and strike the feet of it. And the stone broke the feet, and the whole image fell to the ground in broken pieces, and it became like dust, which the wind can blow away. Then while you looked in wonder, the stone grew until it became a great mountain, which filled the whole earth." Nebuchadnezzar listened eagerly to the young man's words. Then Daniel continued:

"Now I will tell you what this dream means, for God intends to teach you something by it. This great image represents four great kingdoms of earth. Your kingdom is the first, and the head of gold represents this kingdom.

After you there will come another king not so great, and he is like the breast and arms of silver. The third kingdom is shown in the dream by the parts of brass, and the fourth by the iron legs and the feet. This fourth kingdom will be very strong at first, but afterwards it will become weaker; for the iron in the feet was mixed with clay.

"In the days of these kings," said Daniel, "God will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and his kingdom is represented in your dream by that stone cut out without hands, which smote the great image

till it fell. God's kingdom will increase until it fills the whole earth, and it will break in pieces every other kingdom. This, O King, was your dream, and this is the meaning of it."

Nebuchadnezzar was astonished at the wisdom of this young Jew. He believed that Daniel was a wonderful person, like a god, and he fell on the floor before Daniel to worship him.

But Daniel had told him that the God in heaven had made known the dream and the meaning to him, so Nebuchadnezzar said, "Of a truth, your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets."

Then Nebuchadnezzar gave many great gifts to Daniel, and made him the ruler of all the province of Babylon, and the chief of all the wise men in his kingdom. He did not allow his captain to destroy the wise men, after Daniel had revealed the meaning of his dream.

At Daniel's request the King placed Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in honorable offices of the province, among the governors of the land. And the names of these young men were known to the King as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the Fiery Furnace

Nebuchadnezzar sees four men, unbound and walking freely about in the midst of the fire.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR, THE king, grew in power until he became the greatest king in the world at that time. Year after year he added new countries to his kingdom, and in every country the people feared him greatly. These things caused him to become very proud, and to think himself a wonderful man indeed.

Then Nebuchadnezzar decided to make a god and compel the people of every country to worship that god. So he built a great image, ninety feet high, and covered it with gold. This image he set up on the plain of Dura, which was near Babylon. There it could be seen at a great distance.

After the image had been set up, the King sent a command to the princes and rulers and officers in every nation, that they should come to the great gathering on the plain of Dura. And they dared not disobey. When they came together, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Daniel's three friends, were among them. For some reason Daniel himself was not there.

King Nebuchadnezzar was pleased to see such a vast company of men assembled on the plain before the image.

He wished to have every one of them bow down and worship the god that he had made, so he caused one of his servants to cry out in a loud voice and say: "O people, nations, and languages, to you it is commanded that when the sound of music is heard you must fall down upon your knees before this great image of gold, which the King has set up. But if you refuse to fall down and worship the image, then you shall be thrown into a furnace of fire."

Soon afterwards the music began to play, and the people fell down on their knees, trembling in fear of the great King who had given such a stern command. All the people except three men bowed with their faces to the ground. These three stood up boldly, and would not kneel at all. They were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Because Nebuchadnezzar had given these young men positions of honor in the kingdom, some of the Chaldeans were jealous of them.

And now these jealous Chaldeans watched to see if Daniel's friends would kneel before the image. When they saw the young men standing bravely alone among all the kneeling princes and nobles, they hurried to tell Nebuchadnezzar.

And Nebuchadnezzar was surprised to hear that these men had dared to disobey his command. He knew they were good rulers, and he did not wish to destroy them in the furnace of fire. He thought perhaps they might have misunderstood, so he sent for them at once, and told them that he would give them another chance to obey.

But they bravely answered: "O King, we will not accept another chance. We will not bow before your image, for we will not worship any god except the one true God. And our God is so great that he can deliver us from the fiery furnace that you have prepared. But even if he will not deliver us from any such a death, we will not worship any other god."

Nebuchadnezzar could not understand why these Jews should refuse to worship the image, and he was very angry indeed. He believed these young men were too stubborn to obey him, and he no longer wished to spare their lives from the cruel furnace.

He commanded his servants to throw more fuel into the fire and make it

seven times hotter than it had been before. Then he called the mightiest men of his army and gave them orders to bind stout cords around Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and throw them like pieces of wood into the fire.

But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not afraid. They stood quietly while the mighty men wound the cords tightly around their bodies, and they did not cry out when the men picked them up and threw them into the furnace. But the flames leaped out of the furnace door and killed the mighty soldiers who carried them to the place of burning.

Nebuchadnezzar sat in his royal chair near by, watching. He saw the flames leap out and burn the soldiers to death. He saw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego fall, bound hand and foot, into the fire.

Then his eyes grew wide in surprise; for he saw the three men who had dared to disobey his command rise up and walk about in the fire with no cords to hinder them. And another Person, one who looked to the astonished King like a god, was walking about with them in the furnace.

At first Nebuchadnezzar refused to believe his own eyes. He called to the nobles who stood near his chair and asked, "Did we not cast only three men into the fire?" They replied, "True, O King."

"But now I see four men, unbound and walking freely about in the midst of the awful flame!" he cried out. "They seem to have no hurt and the fourth one is like a god."

Now Nebuchadnezzar rose from his royal chair in haste and ran to the door of the furnace. He called loudly to the three men and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth! and come to me at once!"

The princes and nobles and rulers of the kingdom gathered around in amazement to see these three men walk out of the fire and come before Nebuchadnezzar. And they saw that the fire had not harmed these Jews at all.

Not even had their hair been singed by the flames, and the smell of fire was not noticed on their garments. But the stout cords that the soldiers had wrapped tightly around them before throwing them into the furnace had been burned to ashes.

Nebuchadnezzar was no longer angry with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Now he believed they were great men, and he wished to honor them. He knew they served a great God, one who could do miracles, and

he blessed the God of the Jews.

He said to all the people, "Now I shall make another commandment, that no man in all my kingdom shall speak one word against the God of these brave men." And after this Nebuchadnezzar set these men up in higher places in his kingdom

God humbles the Proud Heart of Nebuchadnezzar

For seven years, God gave Nebuchadnezzar a heart like a beast's instead of a man's

ONE NIGHT WHILE Nebuchadnezzar lay asleep in his palace, God caused him to have another strange dream. This time when he awoke in the morning he remembered what the dream had been, and he wondered about its meaning. So he sent again for the wise Chaldeans, and told them about the dream that was troubling his mind.

The Chaldeans were glad because Nebuchadnezzar had remembered his dream; but when they listened to it they could not tell its meaning. So the King sent them away and called for Daniel. He believed that the spirit of Daniel's God dwelt in Daniel and caused him to understand the deepest mysteries. And he called Daniel the master of all his wise men.

Daniel listened while Nebuchadnezzar told the dream that was troubling him. And God caused Daniel to understand what the dream meant. But at first he was afraid to tell the King. For a whole hour he sat quietly, wondering that he should do. Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Do not be afraid, nor let the dream or its meaning trouble you." So Daniel took courage and spoke to the great ruler.

Now, the dream had been this: Nebuchadnezzar had seen a tree grow up in the earth and become so great that the top of it reached to the sky. Underneath its branches all the beasts of the field found shelter, and in its leafy boughs all the birds of the air made their nests.

And the people of the earth from the near and far came to eat of its fruit. Then Nebuchadnezzar had seen the Lord come down from heaven and cry out: "Cut down the great tree; cut off its branches, shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get away from under the shadow of it, and let the dew come upon it for seven years.

But let the stump of the great tree remain with its roots in the ground until the seven years be passed. Let this be, that all who live may know there is a God in heaven who rules over all the kingdoms of earth."

Daniel knew the dream was sent as a warning from God to the proud King. He knew Nebuchadnezzar was not willing to believe in the great God, who is over all.

But he spoke bravely and said, "This great tree which you have seen means you, for you have become a great king and you are known in every part of the land. And the meaning of that voice which you heard crying out that the great tree should be cut down is that you shall lose your kingdom for seven years and go out from men to live among the beasts of the field.

You shall eat grass like an ox, and the dew of heaven shall be upon you. But when you humble yourself and believe that the Most High God rules in the kingdoms of earth, giving them to whomever he pleases, then you shall return again to live among men and be restored to your kingdom."

Daniel knew that God is very merciful, and he believed that God would save the King from such severe punishment if only the King would quit his sins and do right. So he urged Nebuchadnezzar to turn away from his wicked doings and begin to live differently. Then he went back to his own house.

One year passed by, and nothing unusual happened. Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar almost forgot the strange dream, at least he did not try to do as Daniel had urged him to do. He saw about him all the splendors of his kingdom and all the beauties of his palace grounds. He saw the famous city of Babylon, which he had helped to beautify, and his heart grew more proud and haughty.

Then one day as he walked about in his kingly palace, admiring the grandeur of his surroundings, he said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for my own royal house by my own power and for my glory?" And while he spoke the words a voice called him from heaven, saying, "O King Nebuchadnezzar to you it is spoken: The Kingdom is taken from you!" In that very hour the great king lost his mind and became like a wild beast. And the people were afraid of him, and they drove him out of the city. There he lived in the fields and ate grass like the oxen.

And his hair grew like eagle's feathers and his nails grew like claws. For seven years he roamed about in the fields, with a heart like a beast's instead of a man's. Then God allowed his mind to return again, and his heart to become like a man's heart, and Nebuchadnezzar rose up like a man and thanked God for his mercies, and praised him for his greatness. When the people of Babylon saw that their King had returned again to their city with the mind of a well man, they welcomed him back.

And they honored him as their king just as they had done before. But Nebuchadnezzar did not forget the lesson that God taught him, and he no longer believed that his greatness and his glory had come by his own strength.

The Strange Handwriting on the Wall of the Palace

Daniel interprets the strange handwriting on the wall.

A GREAT FEAST was being held in the palace of Babylon. The king, Belshazzar, had invited a thousand princes and nobles to enjoy the feast with him and his many wives. And the palace was ringing with their voices and laughter and song.

Presently, while they were drinking wine together, the King remembered the beautiful vessels of gold that Nebuchadnezzar had brought from the temple of the Lord, in Jerusalem

He commanded his servants to bring the vessels into the palace, that he and his company might drink wine from them. And the vessels were brought, and the King commanded that they be filled with wine and passed among the guests. Then, as they drank from the golden vessels they praised the gods of gold, and of silver, and of wood, and of stone. Belshazzar's heart was merry, and he felt very secure and happy in his palace-home among his guests. He joined with them in praising the gods of gold, silver, wood, and stone.

Then suddenly he turned pale, and the gladness died out of his heart. A great fear swept over him, and caused his knees to tremble. For there on the wall of the palace, over near the candlestick, he saw the fingers of a man's hand writing strange words, which he could not read.

All at once everything grew quiet in the banquet-hall.. And everybody became afraid, for no one could understand the strange words that the hand had written.

Then the King commanded that the wise Chaldeans be brought in at once; for he thought they might be able to read the words and tell their meaning. He promised to give a rich reward to the one who could do this; but none of the Chaldeans were able to earn that reward. They could not read the writing on the wall.

News of the strange handwriting spread rapidly through the palace, and soon the old Queen Mother heard about it. She heard, to, that the wise men could not read the writing nor tell its meaning.

So she came into the banquet-hall, where the King sat trembling among his frightened guests.

And she said, "O King, there is in this city a very wise man whom you have quite forgotten. In the days of Nebuchadnezzar, the king, this man was the master of all the king's wise men, for the spirit of the gods dwells in him. Now send for him, and he will tell you the meaning of this strange handwriting on the wall."

Daniel was now an old man. For a long time he had lived quietly in Babylon, for the kings who followed Nebuchadnezzar had not set him up to places of honor in the kingdom. And he was almost forgotten.

The Queen Mother, however, remembered how he had interpreted the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, and she knew that his wisdom was greater than any of the wisdom of the Chaldeans.

Belshazzar sent in haste for Daniel, and when the old man came before him he asked, excitedly, "Are you that Daniel whom my fathers brought out of the land of the Jews?"

Daniel replied that he was, and the King said, "I have heard of you, that the spirit of the gods dwells with you and enables you to understand deep mysteries. Now, if you can read the writing upon the wall and tell its meaning, I will cause you to be dressed in royal garments, and will make you the third ruler in this kingdom."

Daniel did not care for the honors of the Babylonian kingdom. He did not care for the beautiful, kingly robes, and he told the King to give those gifts to someone else. But he said, "I will read the writing, and will cause you to understand its meaning."

First Daniel reminded Belshazzar of great punishment that God had sent upon Nebuchadnezzar because of his wickedness and pride. Belshazzar had known about this, yet he had dared to be proud and to despise the

God of heaven and earth. He had dared to use the vessels that belonged in the Lord's house, in Jerusalem, for drinking wine, and he and his guests had praised the gods of gold and of silver and of wood and of stone, which can not see nor hear.

Daniel told Belshazzar about these things, and then he said, "Because you did these things, God sent his hand to write upon the wall of your banquet-room, that you might see it and become afraid. The words that this hand has written are Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin, and they mean this:

"Mene; God has numbered your kingdom and finished it.

"Tekel; you are weighed in the balances and found wanting.

"Upharsin; your kingdom is divided, and is given to the Medes and Persians."

Belshazzar commanded his servants to bring a royal garment and put it on Daniel, then he fastened a gold chain about Daniel's neck and proclaimed before all the guests that Daniel was the third ruler in the kingdom.

But that very night the kingdom of Babylon was destroyed; for the Medes and Persians came into the city and killed Belshazzar, and placed the Median king Darius upon the throne.

Daniel in the Lions Den

God protects Daniel from the lions.

KING DARIUS, THE new ruler, chose one hundred and twenty princes to help him govern the people of his great kingdom. Over these princes he appointed three presidents, and because he found that Daniel was a very wise old man he made Daniel the first president. So Daniel was more highly honored than any of the princes or other presidents.

A better feeling of jealousy began to stir in the hearts of these princes and presidents. They hated Daniel because the King had honored him so greatly. They decided to watch him carefully, and find fault with him at their first opportunity. But their careful watching only revealed to them the fact that Daniel was a very faithful man, with no faults that might displease the King. Their careful watching revealed another fact, too; and this one was that Daniel was deeply religious. Often they saw him kneel before his open window and pray to his God. He never seemed too busy to take time to pray.

At last the men confessed among themselves that they could find no fault with Daniel. But they planned another way to rob him of his great honor. A cruel way, it was, but they were wicked men and they did not mind at all. Darius was surprised to see the great company of his princes assembled before him. He did not notice that Daniel was not among them. He did not guess that they were plotting against his faithful servant.

So he permitted them to tell the purpose that had brought them to his palace, and they said, "King Darius, live forever. All the presidents of the kingdom, and the princes, the governors, the counselors, and the captains have planned to establish a royal law and to make it very binding. This is the law: That whoever shall ask a request of any god or man for thirty days, except of you, O King, he shall be cast into a den of lions."

Now the truth was that all the presidents of the kingdom had not helped to plan that law, for Daniel had no part in it. But the King did not know. And because he was a heathen king, with a proud heart, he felt flattered to hear the law. So he readily consented to it, and he caused it to become published among all the people.

Of course Daniel heard about the law. But three times every day Daniel knelt, just as he had done before, and prayed by his opened window with his face toward Jerusalem, the city where God's house used to stand.

And there these men found him on his knees thanking God. Now they were sure they should soon be rid of this good man whom they despised. So they came to tell the King how Daniel had dared to disobey the new law. They reminded the King that the laws he made could not be changed, and Daniel would have to be punished for his disobedience.

Darius understood, when too late, why this law had been made. He knew the presidents and princes had not desired to honor him, but only to rid themselves of the one whom they hated.

And Darius was sorry, very sorry, that he had listened to the flattering words of these wicked men. All day long he tried to think of some way in which to spare Daniel from such a cruel fate; all day long he worked hard, studying the laws of his country and hoping to find something that would release him from enforcing such a punishment upon his faithful servant. But finally the sun went down, and the presidents and princes came impatiently to the palace and told the King that his new law must be

obeyed. And Darius feared to try longer to save Daniel, so he told them to bring him out and cast him into the lions' den.

The King told Daniel how sorry he was to see this dreadful punishment brought upon him. And he said, "The God whom you serve so faithfully surely will deliver you from the lions." Then he saw Daniel thrown into the den, making Daniel a prisoner inside among the savage beasts. Afterwards, according to the law of his country, he put his own seal upon the great stone, so that no one would dare to remove it without the King's command. Then, with a heavy heart, he went back to his palace.

All that night long Darius could not sleep. He was too troubled to enjoy any kind of entertainment, for he thought constantly about his faithful servant in that terrible den. He longed for the morning light, and with the first break of dawn he rose up from his bed and ran quickly to the lions' den. Then, in a troubled, anxious voice, he cried out, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is your God whom you have served so faithfully able to save you from the lions?"

Then the King listened, and soon he heard an answering voice from the deep pit, saying, "O King, live forever. My God has sent his angel, and the angel has shut the mouths of these savage beasts, and they have done me no harm at all. For God has seen that I was not guilty of any wrong-doing before him nor even before you."

Darius was very glad, and he called his servants to come and take Daniel up out of the den. Then he commanded that the wicked men be brought who had planned to get rid of Daniel, and he told his servants to cast them into the den of lions where Daniel had been all the long night.

When they fell, screaming, into the deep pit, the lions rushed upon them and tore them in pieces, for they were not worthy to live.

Darius wrote letters to the people of every nation, telling them about the wonderful way in which God had delivered Daniel from the lions. And he made a law that all the people in his great kingdom should fear the God of the Jews.

Daniel's Angel Visitor

DANIEL HAD LIVED many years in the beautiful capital cities of the eastern kings, and he had helped these kings rule the people. But during those

many years (for he was now old) he had never forgotten his childhood home in Jerusalem nor the temple of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar and his soldiers had destroyed.

Daniel had read the letters that Jeremiah the prophet had written to the captive Jews in Babylon, and he knew Jeremiah had prophesied that the Jews might return again to their own land after seventy years.

And now, when he was an old man, Daniel knew the seventy years would soon be passed, and he longed to see his people return again and rebuild the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem.

Instead of praying three times everyday for himself and for his people, now Daniel sometimes prayed all day long. Sometimes he refused to eat his food because he wished to have more time to spend alone, talking with God. And he even dressed himself in sackcloth and sat in ashes when he prayed, to show God that he was very sorry for his sins and for the sins of his people. And Daniel's earnest prayers were heard. One evening while he was praying an angel came to talk with him. This angel had come one time before, when God had caused Daniel to see a wonderful vision; but this time the angel came to comfort Daniel.

He said, "O Daniel, you are a man greatly loved by the Lord, and you shall know what shall come to pass in after years."

And the angel told Daniel about the coming of the Savior, Jesus Christ, who should suffer and die for the sins of the people.

Daniel, after he became a very old man, continued to do business for the King. And when Darius died, the new King, Cyrus, took Daniel to his capital city in Persia and kept him there for a helper. And Daniel continued to pray earnestly even while he did business for the new King.

One day during the rule of king Cyrus, Daniel and several companions were by the riverside when all at once Daniel saw a heavenly visitor stand before him. The face of this heavenly visitor shone like lightning and his eyes like fire.

Even his arms and his feet shone like polished brass. Daniel could not look upon him, and fell to the ground. The men who were with Daniel did not see the heavenly visitor, but they felt the earth trembling beneath their feet and they ran away in fear.

As Daniel lay on the ground like one dead, the angel came and touched him. Then Daniel rose up on his knees, and the angel spoke. And his voice sounded like a multitude of voices. At first Daniel could not answer, for he had no power of speech left in him. But the angel touched his lips and caused strength to return into his body. And Daniel talked long with his heavenly visitor. And all these things he afterwards wrote in a book. Daniel was one of the greatest prophets, as well as a great man in the country where he lived. By his courage and trueness to God he caused several heathen kings to respect the religion of the Jews, and he lived to see the time when King Cyrus allowed the Jews to return again to Judah.

The Home-Coming of the Jews

The Jews begin their journey back to Judah.

A GREAT COMPANY of people were gathering in the valley along the Euphrates River, preparing to start on a long journey. There were old people, and young people, and even little boys and girls.

These people were the Jews, and they were arranging soon to start back to the land of their fathers--Judah. For Cyrus, the new king, had sent this message to the Jews scattered everywhere throughout his kingdom:

"The Lord God of heaven was given me all the kingdoms of earth; and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Now who is there among his people--the Jews--who will go up to Jerusalem and build this house for God?"

Daniel was too old to return on this long journey to Jerusalem. And perhaps the King would have been unwilling to spare this great man from his work. But there were others, many others, who were just as eager as Daniel to see the temple of the Lord rebuilt.

And one of these persons was Zerubbabel, a brave young man who belonged to the family of David. He became the leader of the people who returned to Jerusalem, but he ruled as a prince under the command of King Cyrus; for the throne of David was not restored in Jerusalem again. When the long journey began, the people moved slowly up the highway that led northward from Babylon, the same highway over which some of them had traveled seventy years before.

Many of them walked, but some rode on horses, others on camels or donkeys. Now they were singing songs of joy, and they were carrying their

beautiful harps back to their own land. There they would be glad and there they would play sweet music in the new house of the Lord which Cyrus had commanded them to build.

Cyrus had given them the vessels of gold and of silver which Nebuchadnezzar had stolen from the temple before he set it on fire, and they were taking those vessels back to be used in the new temple. And Cyrus had commanded their neighbors and friends to give them rich gifts of gold and of silver. So they were well laden for their journey.

Not all the Jews returned to Jerusalem; for many were becoming rich in their new homes, and they did not care to go back to Judah. But they sent precious gifts to help in the building of the new temple. And they were glad because some of their own people were returning to build up the altar of the Lord, which had been torn down.

When at last the long journey was nearing its end, the people came in sight of the crumbled walls of Jerusalem. Some of them remembered how the city looked before it had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and their hearts were filled with sadness.

But many of them had never seen Jerusalem, for they had been born in the land of captivity. They had heard their parents tell about the land which God had given to them long ago, and which he had allowed King Nebuchadnezzar to take away from them because they had worshiped idols. And they were glad to come back and build homes in that land which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away from them.

In the ruins of Jerusalem the people found the place where the temple of the Lord used to stand. They found the rock where the altar of the Lord had been built. And here the priests and the Levites cleared away the rubbish and gathered stones to build a new altar.

Then they began to offer sacrifices to God each morning and each evening, just as the law of Moses commanded them to do.

How the New Temple was Built in Jerusalem

The prophet Haggai urges for work to begin on the new temple.

WHEN ZERUBBABEL AND his company came to Jerusalem they did not begin at once to rebuild the temple of the Lord. Winter was coming on, and first they built houses for themselves. But at the return of springtime

they set to work at the great task that had brought them back to Judah. Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the high priest, hired carpenters and masons for the new building, and put to work every man among their number who was twenty years old or more. Again they sent to the Lebanon Mountains for wood to use in the building, for Cyrus the king had given them permission to do this.

When everything was ready, the workers laid the foundation of the new temple. And the priests and Levites and singers stood ready with their trumpets and musical instruments to worship the Lord. They sang together, giving praise to God. And all the people stood near by, rejoicing because the great work was so well begun. They shouted with a loud noise.

But some among them had seen the temple which Solomon had built, and when they saw the foundation of this new building they remembered how beautiful the first temple had been. Instead of shouting with joy they wept for sorrow. There were strangers living in the country places near Jerusalem who were not Jews. When they saw the work that the Jews had commenced at Jerusalem, they asked permission to help in the building of the temple; they said, "We seek your God, as you do."

But Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the high priest, knew these men did not worship God in the right way, and they would not accept help from them. These strangers were Samaritans, the people who came to live in Israel after the northern tribes were carried away into captivity. These were the people who had mixed religion--a mixture of the true religion and idol-worship. When Zerubbabel and Jeshua refused to let them help build the temple they grew angry and tried to hinder the work.

They sent letters back to the king of Persia, accusing the Jews of falsehoods, and they continued to do this for a long time. Finally they caused the building of the temple to come to a standstill.

Several years passed by, and the Jews were not allowed to finish the temple. So they build comfortable homes for themselves and began to work in the fields near Jerusalem.

Finally God caused the new king of Persia, another king named Darius, to be friendly toward the Jews. But the Jews did not ask him to help them. They did not try to finish the work which they had begun on the temple. So God sent a prophet, named Haggai, to urge them to get at work again

on the temple. This prophet said that Zerubbabel had begun the new temple, and he should finish the building of it.

So Zerubbabel and Jeshua took courage and began once more on the temple-building. When they commenced work the Samaritans came down to see what they were doing.

They asked, "Who had given you orders to do this?"

And they answered, "Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us to build this house of God."

The Samaritans did not believe their words, and they wrote a letter to King Darius, telling what the Jews had said. But when Darius looked in the records that had been kept during the rule of Cyrus he found that Cyrus had indeed commanded the Jews to rebuild the temple. So he sent word back to the Samaritans, telling them not to hinder the Jews, but rather to give them money to help hurry on the great work which Cyrus had commanded them to do.

And he said that if they refused to obey his words their own houses should be torn down and they should be killed. This message caused the Samaritans to become afraid, and they ceased to hinder the Jews.

When the temple was finally completed, the Jews had a great feast, and they offered many sacrifices to the Lord. They rejoiced very much because God had given them a friend in the new king of Persia, and had helped them to overcome the wicked plans of their neighbors, the Samaritans.

Esther—The Beautiful Girl who Became a Queen

Esther comes before the king.

ESTHER, THE JEWESS, was only a little girl when both her parents died and she went to live in the home of her cousin, Mordecai. Her new home was in the great city of Shushan, where the King of Persia lived. Her cousin, Mordecai, had an office in the household of the king. He was very kind to Esther, and loved her as his own child.

After Esther grew up to young womanhood the King of Persia made a great feast in his palace. He invited all the nobles and rulers of his kingdom. Then, at the last of the feast he invited all the men of Shushan, both great and small, to come to the palace and share in his entertainment. Perhaps Mordecai was there, too.

Women in that country always wore veils over their faces when in the

presence of men other than their own husbands, and they could not attend the same feasts with them. So the Queen, Vashti, gave a feast to the women at the same time as the King's feast to the men.

On the last day of the feast, which continued for a whole week, the King grew very reckless because he had drunk much wine. And he wished to see his beautiful wife, the Queen. He wished that all the people attending his feast might see how beautiful she was. So he sent some of his servants to bring her into his part of the royal palace, where all the guest could behold her beauty.

But Vashti, the Queen, refused to appear in the presence of all the men of Shushan. And she told the King's servants that she would not come. She believed that the King's request was unwise because it was contrary to the customs of her people.

King Ahasuerus was very angry when the servants returned alone and told him that Vashti would not come with them. He called his wise men and asked what should be done with Vashti, the Queen, who had dared to disobey him.

And one of the wise men said, "The queen has done wrong, not only to you, O King, but also to the princes and to all the people who dwell in your kingdom. For when this deed becomes known, the women everywhere will no longer respect their husbands as they should. Therefore let her be queen no longer, but choose another who is better than she to take her place."

This advice pleased Ahasuerus, and he refused to let Vashti come into his presence again. He refused to let her be queen any longer, and decided to choose another beautiful young woman to become queen in her stead. So he sent commands through all his kingdom that the most beautiful young women should be brought to his palace, where he might choose among them the one who would please him best. This one he would make queen instead of Vashti.

Mordecai knew that Esther was a beautiful young woman, and he believed she would make a beautiful queen. So he sent her to the palace with the other young women who came from different parts of the kingdom. And there she was taught the manners of the courtlife, so she would know how to please the King. But Mordecai told her not to let the fact become known that her people were the Jews.

After living in the palace for some time, Esther was brought before the King; and she pleased him so much that he chose her at once to become the queen instead of Vashti.

He placed the royal crown of Persia upon her head, and gave her rooms in his palace and many servants to attend her. Then he made a great feast for his princes and nobles, called Esther's feast, and he published the fact that Esther had been chosen as the new queen.

Mordecai could no longer see the young woman whom he had cared for as tenderly as his own daughter. But every day he passed by the palace where she lived, and she could see him from her window.

She would send messages to him by her faithful servants, and they would bring back the messages Mordecai wished her to receive. Then Mordecai would return to the king's gate and sit there as a watchman.

While sitting in the gate, Mordecai saw two servants of the king who whispered together about some secret matter. He watched closely and learned that they were angry with the King and were planning to kill him. So he sent word to the King by Queen Esther, and she gave the warning in Mordecai's name.

The King investigated the matter, and found that the men were guilty, so he put them to death. Then the warning of Mordecai, and how he had saved the King's life, were written in a book. But the King forgot about Mordecai's kindness to him, and did not promote him in the kingdom. He did not know that Mordecai, the Jew, was a relative of the beautiful young woman who wore the royal crown.

Haman's Plans to Destroy All the Jews

Mordecai refuses to bow before the king.

AMONG THE PRINCES at the royal palace in Shushan was a proud man named Haman. He was very rich, and clever, and he knew how to behave in the most pleasing manner whenever he appeared before the King. So the King honored Haman above all the princes, and commanded all his servants to pay respect to this proud man.

Among the King's servants who sat in the gate of the palace was Mordecai, the Jew. And whenever Haman passed through the gate the King's servants were supposed to bow down before him, with their faces in the dust. And they all did so except Mordecai. He would not bow down

before any man to give him the honor that belonged to God only. The King's servants were not pleased when they saw that Mordecai refused to bow down before the honored prince. They asked him why he dared to disobey the command of the King. And Mordecai told them that he was a Jew; and doubtless he told them that the Jews worshiped God only and would not reverence a man as if he were a god. Then the servants hurried to tell Haman of Mordecai's unwillingness to bow before him.

Haman's pride was deeply wounded when he heard Mordecai, the Jew, refused to give him honor. He became very angry, and determined to punish Mordecai. But he thought that because he was such a great man it would look petty to punish only one Jew; he must resort to some great form of punishment. So he planned to kill all the Jews. He did not know that Esther, the beautiful queen whom the King loved, was a Jewess. Now Haman helped to rule in the great kingdom of Persia, and he often came before the King. He thought it would be an easy matter to get the King's consent to have the Jews killed. And he planned carefully, that Ahasuerus might not know he was angry with the Jews because Mordecai would not bow before him.

Then he came to the King and said, "O King, there is a certain people scattered throughout your counties whose laws are contrary to your laws and they refuse to obey you. They are different from other people and they are unprofitable to our kingdom, therefore if it please you, let a law be made that those people be destroyed. And I myself will pay the money to hire soldiers to kill them."

Ahasuerus did not know much about the Jews nor their strange religion. He did not know that his beautiful queen was a Jewess. And he supposed that Haman, his great prince, knew all about the people who were so unprofitable to his kingdom, so he told Haman to write letters to the rulers in every part of the kingdom, telling them that on a certain day they should destroy all the Jews in their part of the country, every man, woman, and child.

After the letters were written, Haman gave them to postmen, who carried them to every part of the kingdom. Then he believed he had done a great deed that would bring him much honor, and he went to the palace to dine with the King. He felt that no one in all the realm of Persia was quite so

important as himself, for even the King allowed him to do just as he pleased. Soon the news of this letter reached the ears of the Jews in every part of the land. And they wondered why Ahasuerus had suddenly become so displeased with them. They had always lived peacefully among his people, and had never given him any trouble.

They had worked at honest toil and many of them had become very rich. Now they were to be destroyed and their riches were to be seized by wicked men. They could not understand why this cruel law had been passed against them. And everywhere they wept with loud cries, tearing their clothes and dressing themselves in sackcloth. Many of them sat in ashes, and mourned and fasted and prayed.

Mordecai was among the first of the Jews to hear about the cruel law; for he lived in the city of Shushan. And he knew at once that Haman had made the law. He knew that even Esther would have to suffer death if the law were obeyed, for every Jew was to be destroyed. And his grief was very great.

Tearing his garments, he wrapped himself in sackcloth and threw ashes upon his body. Then he went out into the streets and cried with a loud and bitter cry. But he did not dare to pass through the king's gate, for no one was allowed to enter the gate when dressed in sackcloth. And he could not come near the palace to send a message to the Queen.

He hoped that Esther might hear about him, and send a messenger to learn why he was so deeply troubled. Then he would tell her all about the cruel law, and then perhaps she could think of some way to help them and save their lives.

How Queen Esther Save the Lives of Her People

Esther tells the king of the wicked Haman's plot to kill the Jews.

ESTHER WAS HAPPY in her beautiful palace-home. She was kind to her servants, and they liked to obey her. But she did not forget how Mordecai had taken her into his own home when she was a poor little orphan.

And every day she watched from her window to see him pass by, and always she was eager to receive the messages that he sent. She still obeyed him just as cheerfully as when she had been a little girl in his own humble home.

But one day Mordecai did not pass by as usual. And Esther missed him. Perhaps she thought he might be sick. But soon her servants came to tell her that he was walking through the streets of the city, dressed in sackcloth and crying with a loud and bitter cry.

"What has happened?" wondered the Queen, as she hurriedly gathered some new clothes to send to him. How she longed to run out to comfort him, herself! But now she was the queen, and now she could not go about in the streets. Perhaps she wished that she were not the queen, after all.

As she sat watching anxiously from her window, soon she saw the servant returning with the clothes she had sent. Mordecai would not take them, and Esther knew that some terrible sorrow had come into his life. So she quickly called another servant, one of the King's servants who sometimes waited on her, and told him to learn from Mordecai the cause of his intense grief.

Mordecai told this servant about all that had happened to him, how Haman had planned to kill all the Jews and had even promised to give money to the King for this cruel purpose. He gave the servant a copy of the letter that Haman had written, and the servant brought the letter to Esther. He told Esther, too, that Mordecai had commanded her to speak to the King and tell him that she was a Jew, and that Haman had planned to kill her and all her people.

At first Esther was afraid to go to the King. She knew the law of the palace: that any one, either a man or a woman, who should approach the throne without being called by the king would be put to death unless the king should hold out to that person the golden scepter.

And she feared to take such a risk; for the King had not called for her in many days, and she supposed he was attending to important matters and did not wish to be disturbed. She sent her servant back to Mordecai to tell him that she dared not go into the presence of the King without being called by him.

Mordecai believed that God had permitted Esther to become queen on purpose, so that she might at this time save the lives of her people. So he sent word again, telling Esther that she must go, for if she refused she would be sparing her life at that time only to lose it later, when all the Jews in Shushan should be destroyed. Esther still was fearful to obey the

wishes of Mordecai; but she longed to help her people, and she promised to try. She commanded Mordecai to gather all the Jews in Shushan into one place, and there to fast and pray for three days that God would give her favor in the eyes of the King.

She and her servants would also fast during that time, and then if Ahasuerus had not yet called for her she would go to him, contrary to the law of the palace, and plead for her life and for the lives of her people. Mordecai hastily called all the Jews in Shushan and told them of Esther's words. And they fasted and prayed as she had commanded. Then, on the third day she dressed in her most beautiful garments and went in to speak to the King.

Ahasuerus was surprised to see the Queen standing timidly in the court before his throne. He knew some urgent matter had brought her there, and because he loved her he held out to her the golden scepter, which was in his hand.

Then she came near to his throne and touched the scepter, and he asked, "What is your request, Queen Esther? It shall be given to you though it should be the half of my kingdom."

Esther did not tell him at once about the great sorrow that clouded her life, but she requested him and his friend Haman to dine with her that day. And the King promised to come. Then she went away, and Ahasuerus sent word to Haman, telling him of the Queen's invitation to dinner.

Haman felt highly honored because he was the only guest invited to eat with the King and the Queen. But Ahasuerus guessed that Esther had some great request to make of him, so again he asked, "What is your wish, my queen?"

And again Esther answered simply, "If I have found favor in your eyes, O King, my request is that you and Haman shall return tomorrow and dine with me as you have done today. Then I shall tell you what is my greatest wish." And the King promised that they would come.

After the banquet Haman hurried home to tell his wife and his friends about the great honor that Queen Esther had shown to him. But as he passed through the king's gate he saw Mordecai sitting there and refusing to bow before him as the other servants were bowing.

This spoiled all of Haman's gladness of heart. How he despised that Jew! He longed to be rid of Mordecai's presence in the king's gate, and he told his wife and his friends how greatly Mordecai's presence annoyed him. He boasted loudly to them of the honors both the King and the Queen were bestowing upon him, but he complained about the contempt this humble Jew, Mordecai, had shown.

Haman's wife and his friends urged him to prepare a high gallows and ask permission of the king to hang Mordecai. Then he might enjoy fully the honors that were being shown by every one else except by this much-despised Jew. Haman thought their advice sounded good, and he set to work at once to have a gallows built.

That night Ahasuerus, the King, could not sleep. As he tossed restlessly about on his soft pillows he commanded his servants to bring the book of records and read to him about the things that had happened since he had been the ruler of Persia.

And among the other things he heard them read from the book was Mordecai's report of the evil plans of two servants who intended to kill the King. "Has any honor been shown to Mordecai for that kindness done to me? And the servants answered, "Nothing has been done for him,"

Haman rose early the next morning and went to the palace, intending to ask the King's permission to hang Mordecai on the gallows he had made. But just as he entered the court of the palace, Ahasuerus sent for him. And he came in proudly, wondering what service he could perform to please his ruler. "What shall be done to the man whom the King delights to honor?" asked Ahasuerus of Haman.

And Haman thought quickly, "Whom would the King delight to honor more than me?" so, believing that the honor would be shown to him, he answered, "Let the man whom the King delights to honor be dressed in the King's royal garments, and let him ride upon the King's horse, with the King's crown upon his head. Let one of the most noble princes place the royal garment upon this man, and the crown upon his head, and let the prince bring him on horseback through the streets of the city and cry out before him that all may hear, 'This is done to the man whom the King delights to honor.'"

The King was pleased with Haman's answer, and he said, "You are my noble prince, so I command you to take my royal garment and my crown, and hasten to dress Mordecai in them. Then put him on my horse and lead him through the city, proclaiming before him the words that you have spoken. See that you do everything as you have advised should be done to the man whom I delight to honor."

Now Haman was frightened, but he dared not disobey the King's command. He took the garments, dressed Mordecai, the Jew, in them, and led him on horseback through the city streets, crying out, "This is done to the man whom the King delights to honor!"

Then he returned with Mordecai to the palace, and brought back the royal garments to the King. Afterwards he ran home, covering his head in shame and sorrow, for he dared not speak to the King about the matter that had brought him to the palace at the early morning hour. And his wife and friends heard this story, and feared that greater troubles might soon befall him if the King was showing favor to the despised Jew.

Haman had forgotten about his invitation to dine again with the King and Queen. So the King sent a messenger to bring him to the palace. And then, as they sat about the table the King asked Esther the third time what her wish was, that she desired of him. And the third time he promised to grant that wish even though it should be the half of his kingdom. Now Esther was ready to tell her story. She may have heard that very morning how highly the King honored Mordecai; for she spoke with courage and said, "If I have found favor in your sight, O King, and if it please you, I ask that my life and the lives of my people may be spared, for we have been sold--not to become slaves, but to be killed."

Ahasuerus was surprised to hear these words. He asked, "Who is he, and where is he, who would dare to do such a thing?" and Esther answered, "That enemy is this wicked Haman."

Now Haman was frightened, and he did not know what to do. He had never guessed that the beautiful Queen was a Jewess. He did not know, even yet, that she had been brought up by Mordecai, the man whom he so much despised. Speechless he sat before them, and when he saw the King rise up in anger and leave the room, he sprang from his seat and fell before Esther, begging for mercy from her.

The King walked about in the garden, wondering what he should do to

punish Haman. Then he returned and found Haman pleading for his life. But his pleading could not profit him nothing, for the King's servants came in and covered his face, ready for death.

Then they led him out, and one of the servants showed the King the high gallows that Haman had prepared to hang Mordecai.

"Hang Haman on the gallows!" commanded the King, and Haman was hung on the gallows he had commanded others to build for an innocent man. After Haman's death, the King raised Mordecai to a place of great honor in the kingdom, and he sent letters to every part of the land where Haman's letters had gone, telling the Jews to fight for their own lives on that day appointed when Haman had wished to put them to death.

Because their enemies feared them, they did not try to kill the Jews on that day, for even the rulers of those lands helped the Jews. And the Jews celebrated the day of their great victory with a great feast, called the Feast of Purim.

Even today the Jews keep this feast, and they always tell the story of Esther, the beautiful queen, who saved the lives of her people.

Ezra, the Good Man Who Taught God's Law

King Artaxerxes gives the Jews their liberty.

YEARS PASSED BY, and another change came in the Persian rule. A new king, name Artaxerxes, sat on the throne in Shushan and governed the people in many lands. His kingdom included the land of Judah, where Zerubbabel had gone long before with a company of Jews to rebuild the temple of the Lord.

Now Artaxerxes, wished to know how things were going in Judah, and he planned to send a messenger to Jerusalem to learn about the people and their needs. The messenger whom he chose to send was Ezra, the priest. Ezra was an earnest-hearted Jew, as Daniel had been. He was also called a scribe, because he wrote the words of God in books. And he longed to teach the Jews everywhere about the law of God, which had been given by Moses to the Israelites.

At the King's command he assembled other Jews from Babylon and from the country places and cities near by who wished to go to Judah and help strengthen the courage of the poor Jews who lived there.

Ezra had talked much to the King about the true God, and about his great power and his willingness to care for those who love and serve him. And

the King was interested.

He believed that the God of the Jews must be a very powerful God indeed. He feared to displease such a great God, so he commanded that much gold and silver be given to Ezra and his companions to carry back to Jerusalem and use in the temple of the Lord.

When Ezra and his companions were ready to start on their long journey, they first spent some time fasting and praying God to bless them and protect them from the many dangers along their way.

For the road over which they must travel led through dangerous places and wild people of the desert often stopped travelers and robbed them of their possessions.

Ezra knew this, and he had no soldiers of the king to go with him and protect him and his companions from the attack of robber bands. He was ashamed to ask the King for soldiers because he had told the King that God would care for those who served him.

So he and his companions prayed earnestly that God would bring them through the dangers without letting any harm befall them. Then they started down the long, long road.

After about four months of travel, this company of Jews reached Judah in safety. They had lost nothing by the way, for God had heard their prayers and had cared for them. And they came with joy to the city where the temple of the Lord stood, just as Zerubbabel had built it.

After resting for three days they brought their gifts of silver and gold, which the King had sent, and gave them to the priests who had charge of the temple.

Ezra soon found out that things had not been going well in Judah. The poor Jews had become much discouraged, and some of them had made friends with their heathen neighbors.

They had even allowed their sons and their daughters to marry heathen people, and they were not teaching their children to keep the law as God gave it to Moses. They had never rebuilt the city of Jerusalem, and the walls lay in ruins just as Nebuchadnezzar and his army had left them long years before.

When Ezra learned about the condition of the poor Jews, he was deeply troubled. He knew they had sinned again by marrying heathen women, and

he saw that God could never bless them while they were not obeying his law. So he prayed earnestly that God would forgive their sins, and he called them to Jerusalem to warn them about the wrong that they had done. The people were glad to have Ezra teach them what to do. They needed a teacher from God, like this good man, and they listened to his words. For a long time they had been without God's law, and now, when they heard his words, they quit their wrong-doing.

Ezra stayed with the people for some time and taught them the words of God. He read to them from the great rolls that he had written, and they never grew tired of listening.

They had no copies of God's law in their homes, for books were very few in those days and only rich people could afford them. Ezra had collected the books that Moses and Samuel and David had written, and the books of the prophets. These were the books from which he read to the Jews.

Nehemiah-The King's Cupbearer

Nehemiah rises up quietly during the night and takes a few soldiers with him to see the condition of the wall of Jerusalem.

IN THE PALACE of King Artaxerxes was a noble young man who daily waited on the great ruler. This young man's name was Nehemiah, and he was a Jew. Although he was very rich, and favored more than any of the King's servants, yet Nehemiah was a humble-minded young man. And this is a story that tells us about a part of his eventful life:

"In the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign I was in the palace of Shushan as cupbearer of the King when my brother Hanani and certain other men came from the land of Judah. I was eager to see them and to hear news from the land of my fathers, so when my duties were done I asked them about Jerusalem and about those Jews who had gone back to rebuild the temple of the Lord.

"My brother and his companions shook their heads sorrowfully, and replied that things were not going well in the city where David once ruled so gloriously as king of God's people. They told me that the wall which Nebuchadnezzar and his soldiers had torn down and burned many years ago had never been repaired, and that the place looked very desolate, and unworthy of the great name that once had made it a glory in the earth. They also told me that the Jews who had returned were now poor

and greatly oppressed by their enemies round about.

"When I heard these words I sat down and wept, for my heart was grieved, and I longed to see the prosperity of my people. Then there stirred within me a desire to help them, so I fasted and prayed earnestly to the God of heaven, and besought him to grant me the favor of the King. For I knew I could do nothing to help my people except the King should give his consent.

"One day while I stood by the King's table pouring wine into his goblet, I could not keep my thoughts on my work. And I could not speak so cheerfully as was my usual manner, for my heart was saddened by the great needs of my people.

The King noticed my sad countenance, and he asked what had caused my sorrow of heart; for he knew I was not sick. Then I was afraid, for I thought surely he was displeased with me. But I told him that I had heard sad news from my people in Judah, and I told him about the broken walls of Jerusalem and the oppressed condition of the Jews.

"The King listened patiently, then asked what I desired of him. Before answering, I breathed a prayer to the God of heaven, and then I said, 'If it please the King, and if I have found favor in your eyes, I ask that you send me to Jerusalem to rebuild the city of my fathers.' The Queen also was sitting by, listening, and the King asked how long I should be absent from his palace.

I told him how long my journey would be, and that I might not return for many days. But it pleased him to send me, and to give me letters to the rulers near Judah, telling them to help me on the way. He also gave me a letter to the man who was the keeper of his forest, telling him to permit me to get trees from the forest with which to rebuild the gates of the city walls.

"I did not start out on this long, dangerous journey alone, for the King sent captains and soldiers of his army with me, and we rode on horses, which he provided.

After many days we came to the rulers of the countries near Judah, and I showed to them the letters that King Artaxerxes had written. These rulers were not friendly with the poor Jews at Jerusalem, and they were sorry because I had come to strengthen the city. But they dared not hinder me, so I passed on and soon came to Judah.

"For three days I rested, then I rose up quietly during the night and took a

few of my soldiers with me to discover the true condition of the city wall. We passed out through the entrance by the valley gate and I rode around the city. No one except my companions knew what I was doing, and none of the people of Jerusalem knew why I had come to visit them. But after my ride that night I felt prepared to talk to them about the task that I had come to accomplish. For I found the broken walls lying in heaps of ruins, and in some places my horse could not find a path.

"Then I talked to the rulers and to the priests and told them why I had come. I told them that Jerusalem was a reproach among all nations, and that God was not pleased to have his people let it remain in this broken-down condition. I told them how God had answered my prayer causing the king to allow me to come; and when the rulers and the priests heard my words, they said, 'Let us arise and build the wall.'"

Nehemiah Rebuilds the Walls of Jerusalem

Nehemiah supervises the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

NEWS OF NEHEMIAH'S talk with the rulers and the priests spread rapidly among the Jews living in Jerusalem. And they rejoiced because God had sent this nobleman from the palace in Shushan to help them rebuild their city.

The great work began at once, and nearly everybody seemed interested. Of course there were some who stood back to find fault; but they could not crush the zeal of the busy workers. Even the women wished to help in the building, and some of the rich women hired workers to build a part of the wall.

The high priest said he would rebuild the Sheep Gate. There were several other gates to rebuild, and soon there were several other persons promising to rebuild them.

So the Sheep Gate, and the Horse Gate, and the Fish Gate, and the Valley Gate, and the Water Gate, and every other gate of the broken-down wall was soon rising up in the same place where Nebuchadnezzar had burned the former gates many years before.

And some promised to repair the wall in front of their homes, while others promised to repair longer stretches. But before this work could be done, the people set to work clearing away the rubbish and gathering out the great stones. What a busy crowd of workers they were! Nehemiah rode around the walls on his horse and directed in the

building. When Sanballat and Tobiah, two enemies who lived near Jerusalem, heard that was taking place, they were very angry. They did not wish to see this great city rebuilt, for they feared that the Jews would no longer allow them to come into Jerusalem and oppress the people who lived there.

So they planned many ways to hinder the building of the wall. First they made fun of the Jews, and pretended that the wall was not strong enough to offer protection in times of danger.

They said, "If a fox should try to walk on the wall it would tumble down in ruins again."

But Nehemiah and his workers paid no attention to the jokes and jeers of their enemies. They kept right on with their great work, and would not stop to answer back.

Finally Sanballat and Tobiah saw they must do something else to hinder the work, so they wrote letters to Nehemiah, saying, "You have come to rebuild Jerusalem and set yourself up as a king over the city. Then you plan to rebel against the king of Persia."

But Nehemiah answered, "I have not come for such a purpose," and he kept on with the building.

Now the enemies were angry, and they planned to come and fight against the men of Jerusalem, and kill them. But Nehemiah heard about their plan, and he armed the men with swords and spears on every part of the wall. Some worked with one hand while they held a spear in the other hand. And all the while, both day and night, guards stood about to watch for the approach of the enemy.

At last the walls were built, but the doors of the gates were not yet set up. The enemies had been afraid to come and fight, for they had heard that Nehemiah and his workers were armed with swords and spears, so they planned to act friendly and call Nehemiah away from Jerusalem, on a business trip, to one of their cities.

Then perhaps they intended to kill him there. But Nehemiah would not go, for he said, "I am doing a great work, and I can not leave it to come down to your city."

After fifty-two days, or nearly two months, the entire wall was finished. And the people of Jerusalem were very thankful that Nehemiah had come to encourage them and to build up the broken wall of their ruined city. They saw he was interested in them, and soon they came to tell him about other things that troubled them. They explained why they were so poor and so discouraged.

Nehemiah listened to their words, and then he called the rulers and told them what the poor people had said. The rulers were ashamed because they had never tried to help these people. Now they promised Nehemiah that they would do better.

For twelve years Nehemiah stayed in Jerusalem and acted as governor of the city. Then he knew that Artaxerxes, the King, would be expecting him back in Shushan; for he had promised to return at that time.

So he appointed his brother Hanani and another man to rule the city while he should be absent, and then he hurried back to see the King. Artaxerxes permitted him to return the second time to Jerusalem, and Nehemiah's work on this second visit was more the work of restoring the customs that God had commanded by Moses for the people to obey. Because of the faithful efforts of men like Nehemiah and Ezra, the priest, the Jews began to pay more heed to the teachings of God's law. They began to act more like a separate people, uninfluenced by their heathen neighbors, and they refused to worship idols any longer.

By and by other teachers rose among them, and these teachers wrote law-books, which they called "traditions." These teaching were very strict; but God was not pleased with them, for he had not commanded that they should be written and obeyed.

Malachi, the last of the prophets, came to speak God's words to the people while Nehemiah yet lived. This faithful prophet told the Jews about the coming of Jesus, the Savior, into the world, and he wrote his words in a book.

The Jews kept his book with the other books that Ezra, the priest, had given to them. And Malachi's writings are the last words we find in the Old testament.