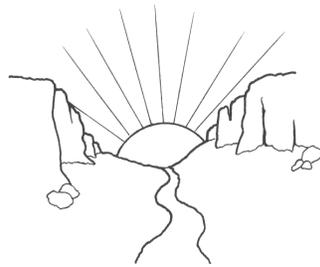
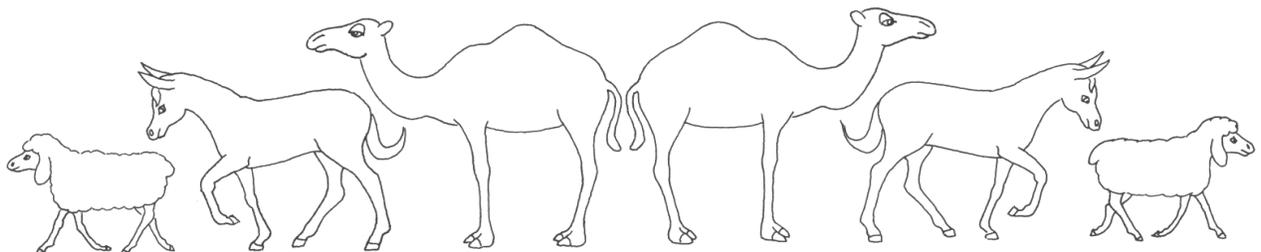


PSALM 119



Diary of a Captive

A Coloring Book



As Jesus Christ prepared to send the disciples for the first time throughout Israel with His message, He included in their instructions this admonition: "Freely you received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). This five word summary of grace explains the financial policy of the publications and tape ministries of Basic Training Bible Ministries. All tapes and publications are provided without charge to anyone who requests them.



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Psalm 119-Diary of a Captive-A Coloring Book

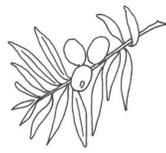
Written by Gene Cunningham 1992, revised 2003.

Illustrations by Sali Owen

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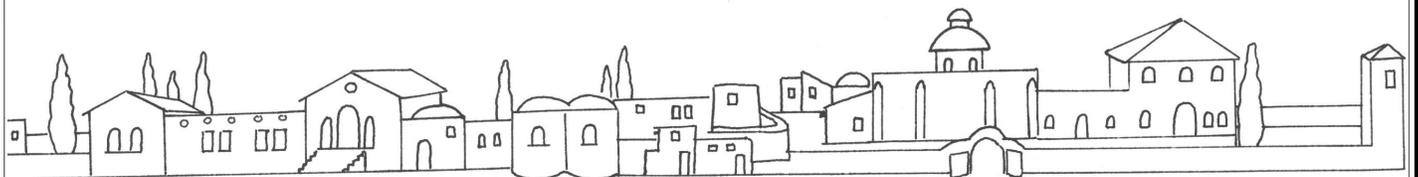
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Three Questions



With every sunrise, with every starry night, the universe sings praise to God. Do you join in that song? When we look at the wonders of creation, we see beauty, power and splendor. And somewhere deep inside, we know there is a God. But do you want to know more? Do you wonder what God is like? How He feels? What He thinks of you?

These are questions we could never answer on our own. We cannot know what is in a person's heart unless that person speaks to us. Well, God *has* spoken to us. He has given us His Word, the Bible. In its pages, He tells us about Himself because He wants us to know Him.

Every time you open your Bible, take a moment to make sure you are ready to hear what God has to say. You will know you are ready when you can answer "yes" to the three following questions:

1. Are you a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ?

Only God's children can understand God's Word (1 Corinthians 2:14). How do we become His children? Jesus said, "You must be born again" (John 3:6). You are born into God's family when you believe in Jesus as your Savior. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," the Bible promises, "and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). The instant you believe in Jesus, you join God's family and you become His beloved child forever (John 1:12).

2. Are you filled with the Spirit?

When you become a child of God, the Holy Spirit comes to live in you forever (Romans 8:11). He comes to be your friend, to guide you in truth, and to give you the power to do God's will (John 14:16-17). But when you sin-by thinking or saying or doing bad things-you stop Him from being able to do His work in you. So, when you sin God wants you to confess your sin-by simply going to Him in prayer and telling Him what you have done. God immediately forgives and cleanses you (1 John 1:9). With that cleansing, you are once again free from sin and filled with the Holy Spirit. Now you are able to learn.

3. Are you willing to believe and obey God's Word?

Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Only when you come to God with child-like faith, will the Word of God make sense to you (Matthew 18:4; John 7:17; Hebrews 11:3). This means that when you think or feel one thing and the Bible says something altogether different, you must be willing to believe and obey what God says. If you are a child of God, Jesus Christ will always be your friend. But you will be His friend only when you are willing to trust Him. "You are My friends," He said, "if you do what I command you" (John 15:14).





The Setting



This is the story of a young man who lived 2,500 years ago in the nation of Israel. At first this may seem a very sad story because of all the terrible things that happened to the boy. He lived through war, famine, disease, even the destruction of the homeland he loved. Enemies took him in chains to be a slave in a strange and distant land. If life were only what happens to us on the outside, this would be a hopeless story indeed.

But real life is not what happens to us. It is what happens *in* us. And so this is NOT a hopeless story. For, as the whole world seemed to come crashing down upon him, this young man learned how to trust in God's Word. And that trust opened to him all the doors of God's grace, mercy, peace and love.



Psalm 119 is the longest prayer in the entire Bible. It has encouraged and comforted hurting people for thousands of years. And it can do the same for you. Over and over, this prayer stresses one point: **the most important thing in the world is the Word of God!** Without God's Word, we are helpless. With it, we are more than conquerors. Which do you want to be?

The events that turned this young man into "more than a conqueror" began about 600 B.C. The place was Jerusalem, Israel's great capital city. The times were peaceful and prosperous. The people felt safe and secure with their grand homes and beautiful clothes and their plentiful food. But in all their health and wealth and busyness, they had forgotten something: they had forgotten God and the great mission He had called them to.

You see, the Jews had been chosen by God to carry a message to the entire world. God told the Jews to proclaim that He so loved the world—and everyone in it that He made a way to save all who trust in Him. That "way" was a person, called in the Bible by many titles—Messiah, Redeemer, the Mighty God. We know Him today as Jesus.

According to the message, God the Son would become a man. He would live a perfect life on earth, and then He would die on a cross to take the punishment for men's sins. By simply believing in this promised Messiah, any person anywhere on earth could be saved. No longer would anyone have to fear death, because to everyone who believes in Him, God gives eternal life. That means living with Him in heaven forever and ever!

This was the wonderful message the Jews were supposed to be telling the world. But, I am sad to say, they were not. Instead, over the years they had become proud and self-centered. They began to think that God had chosen them because they were better than other people. Then they began to think they were so good they did not even need God or His Word!



And so by the time the author of Psalm 119 was growing up, the Jews were much too busy to think about God. Of course they still had "religion," and they still went to their great temple to act as if they were worshiping. But they had no relationship with God. They were not His friends; they did not love Him.



Even though they turned away from God, He never turned away from them. He sent the prophet Jeremiah to warn the people that ignoring their Creator was a dangerous thing to do. But the people would not listen. They would not trust God or call on Him. They kept on thinking they could do without God. "Alas, how wrong they were!

One day everything they trusted in began to crumble. In 588 B.C. the mighty army of Babylon attacked the tiny nation of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, smashed through city after city until finally they reached Jerusalem. This mighty enemy of the Jews broke through the walls. The invaders poured through the city, stealing, killing and destroying. They burned the temple, the king's palace and all the beautiful homes. They tore down the wall surrounding Jerusalem, the city of God.

Most of the people of Jerusalem died in the siege. From the few who survived, the enemy soldiers separated the young and relatively strong. These were chained neck to neck and led off on a 500-mile march across the Arabian Desert toward Babylon.

As the captives were led away, they could hear the sad voice of Jeremiah, singing a song of mourning as he stood in the smoking ruins of the beloved city. You can imagine that Jeremiah thought his heart would break from sorrow. But as he cried out in his despair, Jeremiah saw the sun begin to rise over the ashes. As the light of day swallowed the darkness, the Spirit of God went to work in the prophet's soul. Jeremiah remembered that God is faithful, more faithful than the rising sun. God's love, mercy and grace have never failed, and they never will!

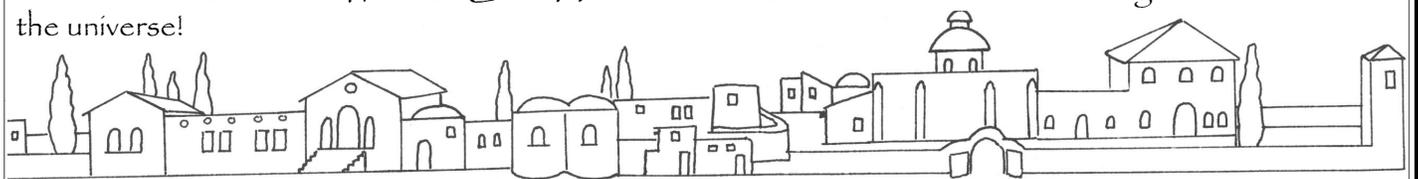
Knowing these things, Jeremiah was able to have hope. He wanted the captives to have hope too. He wanted them to know that not even the mighty army of Babylon was strong enough to stop God from keeping His promises. As Jeremiah looked to the rising sun he remembered the faithfulness of the Lord and sang this song-

*This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope.
The Lord's loving kindnesses indeed never cease,
For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul,
"Therefore I have hope in Him."
The Lord is good to those who wait for Him,
To the person who seeks Him. Lam 3:21-24*

As the line of captives pushed eastward, Jeremiah's cry to remember the Word of the Lord echoed off the hills of Jerusalem. In that line of sad slaves was one young man who said in his heart, "I will remember!" For the next 22 days, this captive boy set his heart totally on God's Word. Psalm 119, which you are about to study, is his diary.

Before the war began, this young man was one of the people who had been too busy to bother with the things of God. He had turned his back on the Creator. He and his friends had not wanted to listen to Jeremiah's warnings.

Sometimes young people think they have much more important things to do than listen to the teachings of God's Word. This young man was like that. But now, he was a slave and everything looked different to him. He had no family, no home, no money, food, clothes, teachers, or friends. He had no temple and no Bible. All he could take into captivity with him was what he had hidden in his soul of the Word of God. He was about to discover that this was the greatest treasure in the universe!



At first, he likely thought his soul was empty. But it was not, for all Jewish children were taught to read by using the Bible as a textbook. Just as we learn our alphabet by putting letters together with pictures-A is for apple, B is for ball, C is for cat-so this young man had learned his ABC's in the Hebrew alphabet. As a child he had been taught to put each letter together with a picture and to put each picture together with some verse or truth about God from the Bible. So, as he learned to read, he also learned many verses.

But he had not thought about these verses for so long, how could he ever remember them? There was only one way: he would have to ask God for help. So every morning, as soon as he woke up, the young captive made himself think about a letter of the alphabet and the picture that he had learned with it. All day he concentrated on that picture and remembered everything he could from the Bible that had to do with it.

He knew God promised to always bless the person who trusts in His Word. He believed God could still make something out of his life. God proved Himself faithful on the long journey across the desert and in the years of slavery that followed.

Of the thousands of Jews who were taken as slaves, only a handful decided to stay focused on God's Word. But how great were those who did! They survived the march to Babylon. They resisted the enemy's attempts to make them forget God. They endured hunger, attack, hatred and persecution. But God was always faithful to deliver them because they trusted in Him.

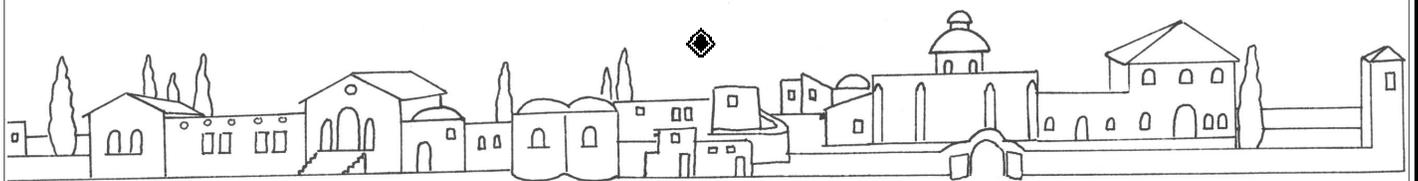
Eventually some of these faithful captives became great men and women in the Babylonian empire. More important, they became heroes of the faith, heroes with names like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the brave young men who were thrown into the fiery furnace! And there were heroes named Nehemiah, Ezekiel, Ezra, Esther, and the great Daniel. Because these young men and women set their minds day after day on the Word, God made them lights in a dark, dark world. Eventually even King Nebuchadnezzar himself saw that light and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. These young peoples' lives were proof that God is faithful. He always keeps his promises!



As you read this book, imagine that you are a boy or girl, torn away from your home and your family. You are tired, hungry, thirsty and fearful. As you turn the page to a new letter of the alphabet, close your eyes for a moment and imagine that you are lying helpless in the sand. As the sun begins to rise, you hear the rattle of chains, the shouts of angry guards, the moans of dying prisoners.

Everything outside of you is chaos, but you turn your mind to the inside, to the place where the Word of God lives in your heart. And you remember that Jesus Christ, the Living Word, is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He is the Mighty God, the Wonderful Counselor, the Prince of Peace. He is Redeemer, Friend, Teacher, Shepherd, and Savior. He loves you completely and forever!

Now, let's start the march and see how our prisoner faced each day. Remember that as a child, he learned to think of each letter of the Hebrew alphabet in connection with some verse or truth about God from the Bible. In his march to Babylon, he made it his task every day to concentrate on a different letter of the alphabet. And as he concentrated, each letter became a key that the Holy Spirit used to unlock the Word of God treasured in his soul.



IN JESUS I AM SO RICH!



Aleph is an ox.

In Bible times most people worked on farms. With an ox, family could cultivate much more land and raise more crops to sell at harvest time. But not many families owned oxen, because only the rich could buy and feed and care for such large animals. So the ox pictured wealth and prosperity.

Would you consider yourself rich if everything you owned were destroyed and you were taken away in chains to a strange country? This young man did! Instead of thinking about all the things he had lost, he set his mind on the one thing he could never lose—the Word of God.

As he was led away from the ashes of his nation, he thought about the *aleph* and lifted his heart in the prayer: “How happy are those whose path is straight, who keep on walking in the way of God’s Word! How happy are those who guard His Word, who keep on seeking Him with all their heart!”

No matter how many things we may lose, our real riches can never be destroyed because they are all wrapped up in Jesus! In Ephesians 1:3, the apostle Paul said, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”





WITH JESUS, WHEREVER I AM IS HOME!



Beth is a house.

To the Jews beth was a picture of a home. Think about home—that special place where every member of the family can love and laugh and work and learn and grow and be safe.

Never again would this young man see his home. Never again would he help his mother take her fresh-baked bread from the oven. Never again would he sit in the lamplight and listen to his father tell stories of what it was like when he was a child. Never again would he wake up to the excited chatter of his little sister.

Now the shelter of his family was gone. His only bed was sand and his roof the sky. But he did not lose heart, because he remembered that nothing could ever tear down the shelter of God's love. As he thought about the *beth* he said, "Lord, I will come home to Your Word because here I am safe and secure."

Everyone who believes in Jesus has a home no one can destroy: the Word of God. It is the shelter where we can always find safety and rest and love! In John 8:32, Jesus said, "If you abide [live] in My Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free!"





IN JESUS I CANNOT LACK!



Gimel is a camel.

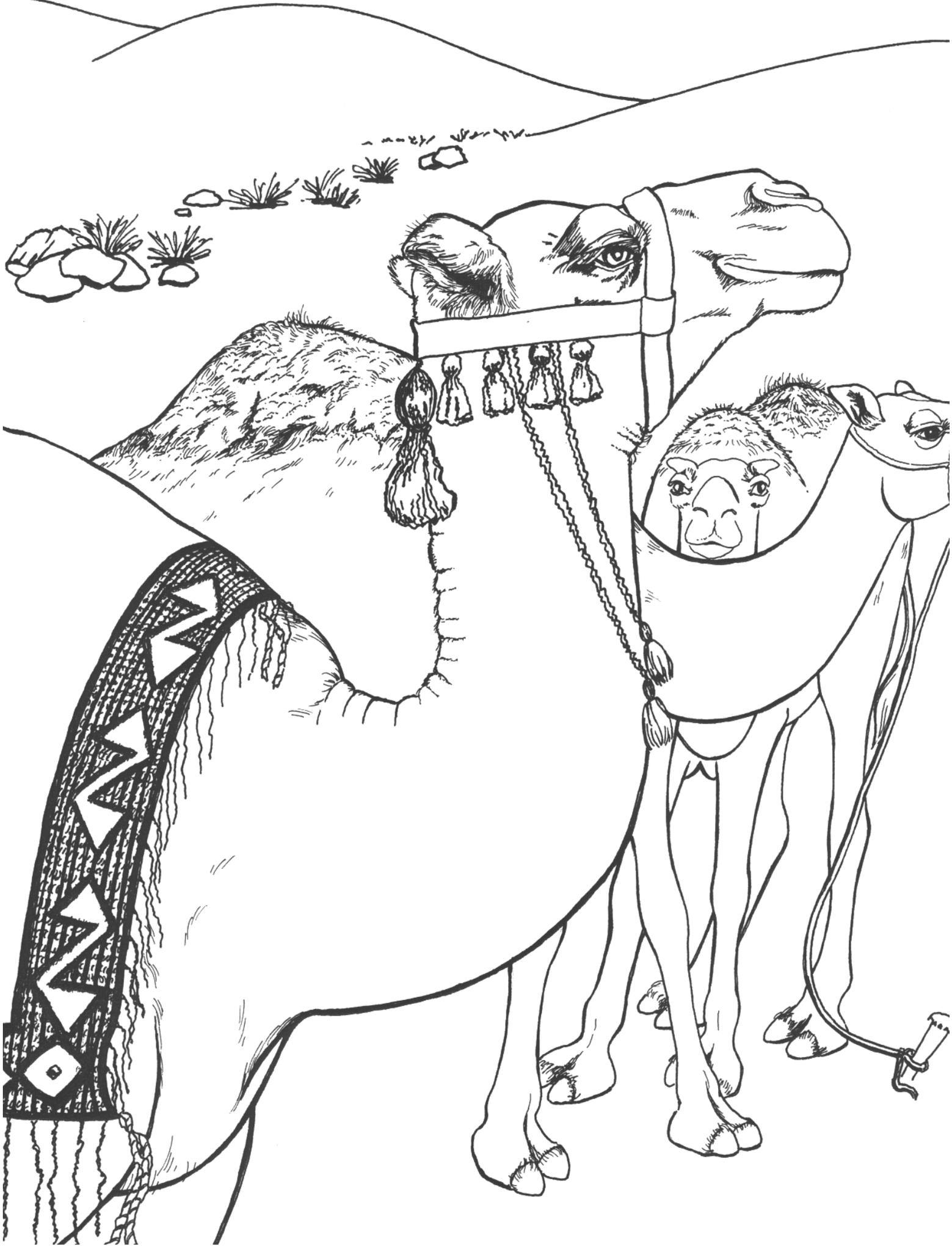
God made the camel the perfect desert animal! For walking on sand, he has big, flat feet. For surviving in the desert-sometimes going weeks without water-he has three stomachs for storage.

In ancient times, the only way to get supplies across the desert was by loading them on caravans of camels. The caravan was a supermarket on wheels, so when people thought of the *gimel*, they thought of all the things they needed to live. It was a picture of God's supply.

What would you do if you had nothing- no food to eat, no sandals for your feet, no clothes to shield you from the blazing sun, no blankets to shelter you from the chilly nights winds? Would you fret about all the things you did not have? This young man did not! Instead, he remembered the *gimel* and decided to trust in God. "Lord, be rich with me, for I am Your servant," he prayed. "Give me all I need to live a life that is pleasing to You!"

Our Father cares tenderly for us. He knows everything we will ever need, and there is no place on earth His caravan of grace can't reach! In Philippians 4:19, the apostle Paul said, "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."





JESUS GUIDES ME EVERY DAY!



Daleth is a door.

Have you ever gone through a door expecting to find something wonderful and stumbled onto something terrifying instead? Or maybe you were expecting something terrible and you were greeted by something absolutely splendid!

Doors are like decisions we make, like the doors we enter, lead us into new places. When people thought of *daleth* they thought about how much they needed God's guidance every time they faced a decision.

This young man knew how easy it is to make wrong choices. For years and years he and the people of his nation chose to turn away from God's Word. Now they were in a place more terrible than they could have imagined, and he was afraid of making more bad decisions. So he made the best decision anyone can ever make—he asked God for help.

“Lord, I am so weak,” he said, “Make me strong through Your Word. I cried out and You answered me; now teach me what You want me to know.”

No matter what kind of trouble we may face, there is one door that always leads to a safety. That door is Jesus! As we turn to Him, He guides us to marvellous things everyday of our lives! In John 10:9, Jesus said, “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”





JESUS IS MY WINDOW ON THE WORLD!



He (pronounced hay) is a window.

What does a window do? It gives us a view of the world outside. Have you ever tried to see out of a dirty, grimy window? Nothing looked quite right, did it? How well we see things depends on the kind of window we look through.

That is why *he* was a picture of perspective—the way a person looks at or thinks about himself and other people and the things that happen to him.

How would things look to you right now if you were hot and thirsty and hungry and tired? Your answer would depend on whether you were looking through the perfect window of the Word.

This young man felt all those things. But he knew that unless he looked at everything with the eyes of God, he would drown in fear and sadness. So he remembered the he and prayed, “Make me able to see what You want me to do, so that I may guard Your Word with all my heart.”

The Word of God is the mind of Christ, and the mind of Christ is the clearest window in the world. The more we look at life through the Word, the more we will share in the perfect peace and joy of Jesus! In Corinthians 2:16, the apostle Paul said, “We have the mind of Christ.”





JESUS IS THE ANCHOR OF MY SOUL!



Vav is a peg.

A large wooden nail-like stake that was pounded into sand to keep tents from blowing away in the violent desert wind.

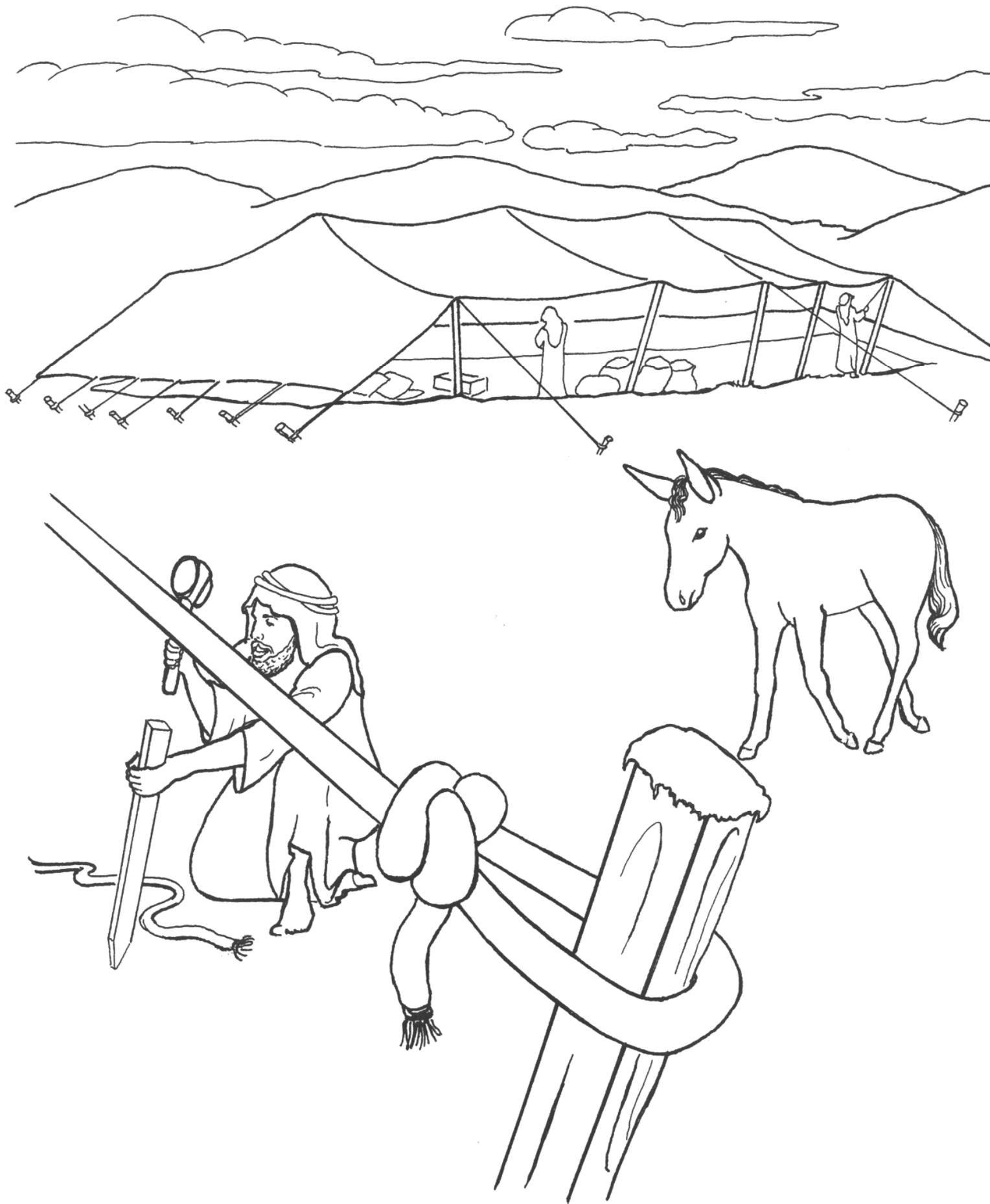
Have you ever gone camping and heard a big wind blow in at night? Maybe you worried it might blow your tent down, but then you remembered how hard your dad pounded the tent-pegs into the ground, and your fear disappeared. Because pegs anchored tents to the ground, the *vav* pictured safety and security.

Everything this young man had trusted to keep him safe and secure was gone. Daily he watched other slaves die from hunger and disease and exhaustion. He never knew when his captors might come to torture him. But instead of giving in to feelings of helplessness, he reached for the only real security in the world: the Word of God.

He thought of the *vav* and said, "Lord, be gracious to me! You have promised in Your Word to deliver me! When my enemies make sport of me, I will know what to say because I cast all my cares on You."

We never have to fear the stormy winds and waves of life, because Jesus is the everlasting anchor of our souls. His Word will never fail! In 1 Peter 1:24-25, the apostle Peter said, "The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord abides forever."





JESUS LEADS ME TO VICTORY!



Zayin is a sword.

It was a picture of winning victory by God's power. After the Exodus, the Jews came out of their wilderness wandering with sword in hand to conquer the Promised Land. In the same way, we are to march forward to find our own "promised land"-the place God has set aside where we can serve Him and enjoy life.

Our battle is not on land or sea or air. We wage war in our minds, and our weapon is the Word. Our mission is to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ so we can tell people how to be set free from the kingdom of darkness and enter the kingdoms of God's light.

If you were naked and in chains would you be able to act like a soldier on the advance? Would you think of yourself as a conquering hero? This young man surely did not feel like a hero, but he thought like one, and that is what really makes heroes! He remembered the *zayin* and lifted his heart in prayer to God, "Lord, bring Your Word to my mind, for it is my sword in this battle. Knowing that I am armed gives me great comfort!"

The Lord Jesus Christ goes before us in every battle. No matter where we are, we can put on our armour and follow Him! In Ephesians 6:17, the apostle Paul said, "Take up the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."



JESUS GUARDS MY BLESSINGS!



Heth is a fenced-in area.

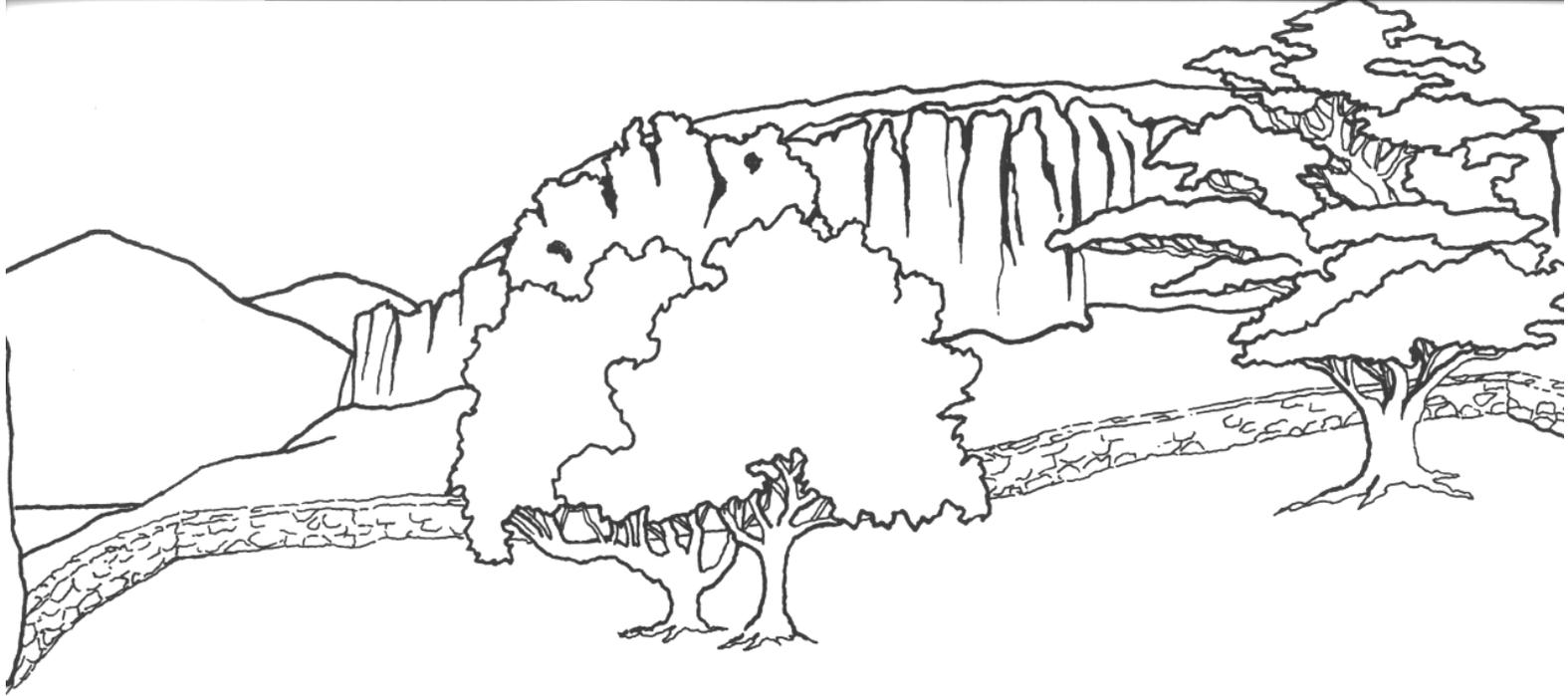
Because fences were often built to protect a family's property, the *heth* was a picture of inheritance. If your dad promised to one day give you the special gold watch his father gave him, you would know what "inheritance" means. An inheritance is something valuable handed down within families.

In the ancient world, when a father died, each of his sons received a share of all he owned -land, livestock, money, possessions. This gave the sons a special purpose in life, because with each share came the privilege and responsibility to wisely use what they had been given.

This young man's country had been destroyed and his freedom taken away. He spent every day chained to other starving, miserable slaves. But he knew he could not be robbed of his real inheritance! He set his mind on the *heth* and remembered that what God gives, no man can ever take away. "You have a plan for my life," he said to God. "You are able to give me what You have marked out for me, so I will press on!"

God has set aside for each of us a special share of blessings and riches that no one can ever take from us! In Colossians 3:23-24, the apostle Paul said, "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance."





JESUS IS MY BEST FRIEND!



Teth is a folded hand.

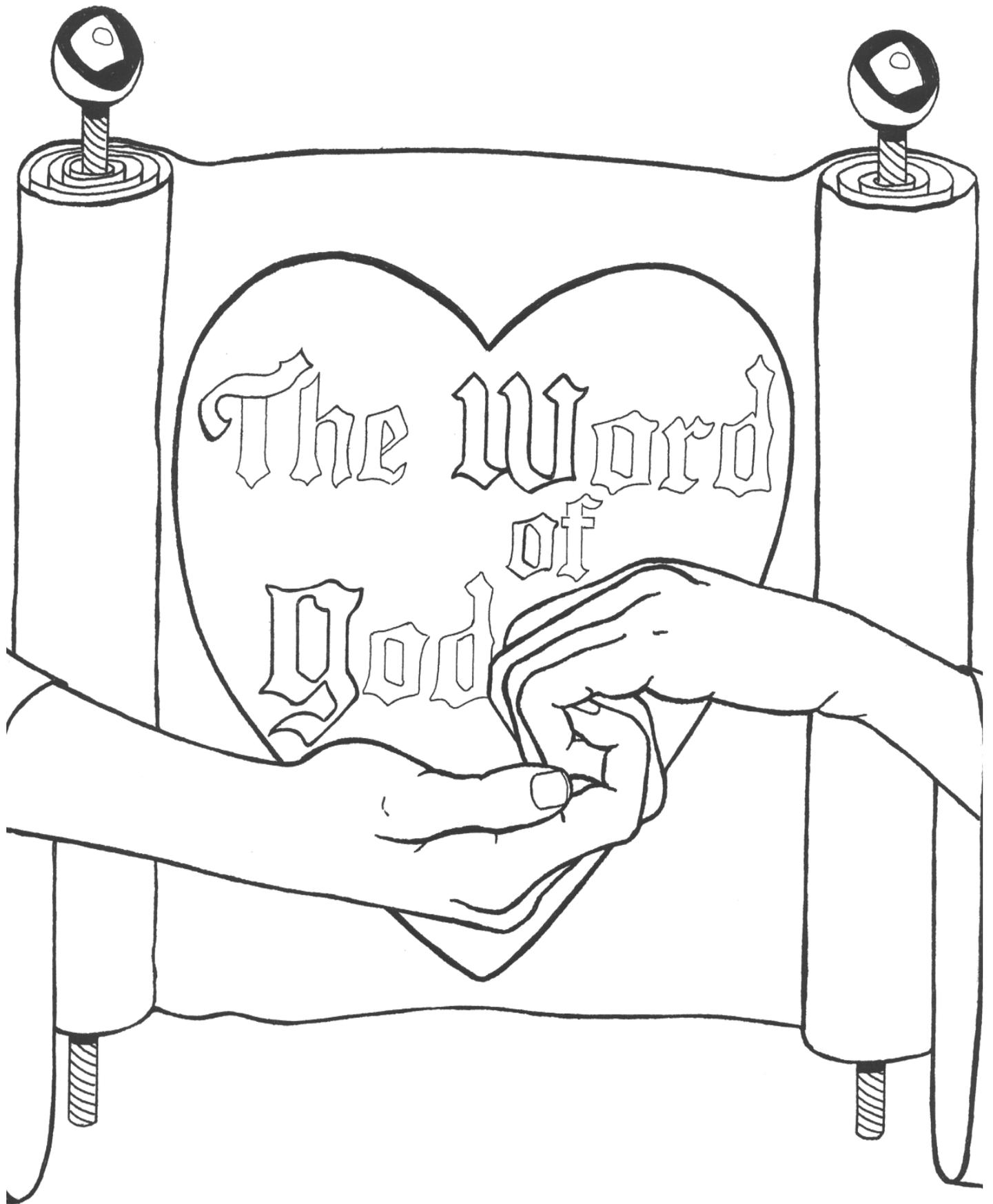
Because it almost looks like one hand reaching out to another, it was a picture of love, like that between father and child or friend and friend.

Has someone you love very much ever reached out to take your hand as you were about to cross a busy street? Did it make you feel safe? Imagine how our young slave felt—he had been brutally torn away from his father and mother and brothers and sisters and friends! How he must have been tempted to give in to feelings of loneliness and sorrow.

But he thought about the *teth* and was not lonely because he remembered that wherever a child of God goes, there God goes too! So he said to the Lord, “Though I am all alone and there are no arms to hold me, I hold on to Your Word, and You comfort me.”

When we believed in Jesus, God came to live in us forever. We may sometimes feel lonely, but we are never alone! In John 10:27-28, Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.”





JESUS WORKS THROUGH ME!



Yodh is a cupped hand, a hand ready to take hold of something, ready to work.

When a potter cups his hands around a lump of clay and sets to work, he makes something beautiful and useful, and maybe a pot or cup or bowl. The *yodh* was a picture of that act of making something. To the Jews it was a reminder of how God not only created us, but desires to use us.

How could this young man chained in a line of slaves marching across the desert ever hope to be useful to God? Surely he was tempted to think that all the talents and skills and desires God had given him were now worthless. But instead of thinking about all the things he could not now do, he thought about the *yodh*. He chose to believe that God is always able to put a willing heart to work.

And so he said, "Lord, You are like a potter who makes beautiful things out of lumps of clay. Your hands have made me and prepared me."

God has a special work He wants to do through every one of His children every day of our lives. If only we have a willing heart, nothing can stop Him from working through us! In Ephesians 2:10, the apostle Paul said, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."





JESUS FILLS ME UP!



Kaph is an open hand, empty and waiting to be filled.

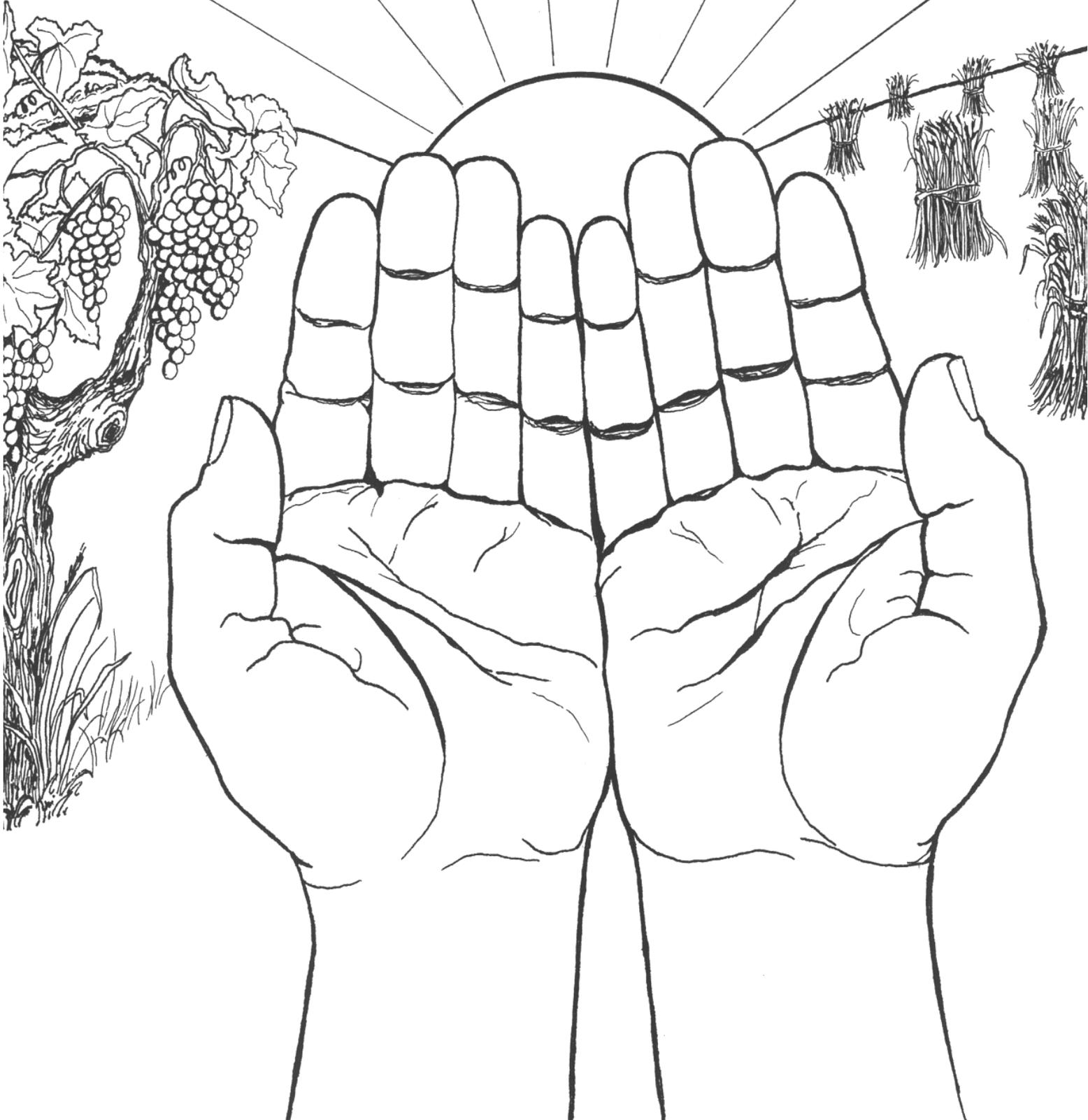
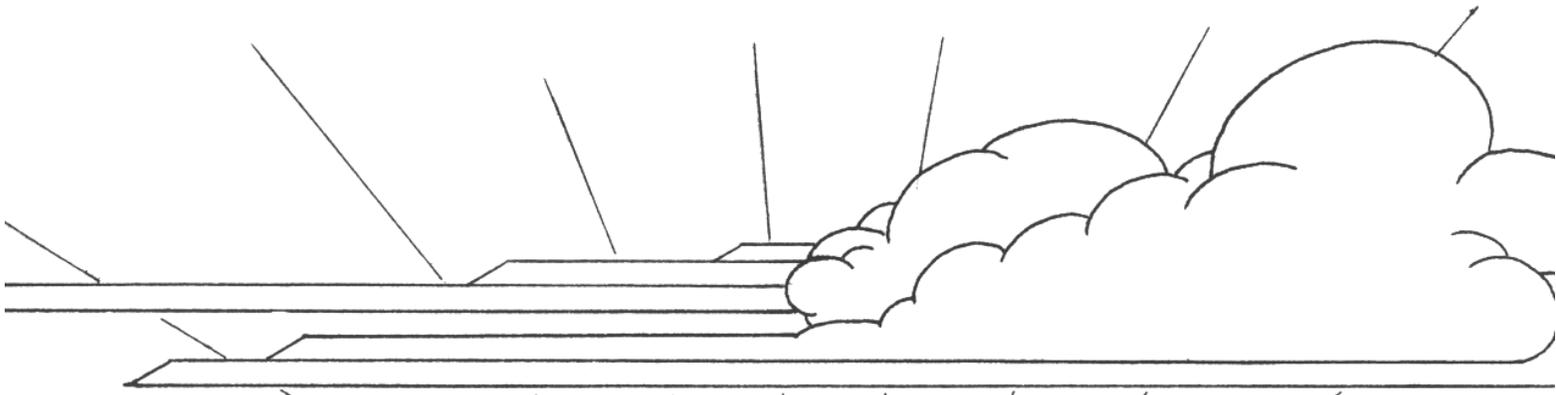
When we go to someone with our palms turned up and open, it is as if we are saying, "I am helpless. My hands are empty, will you fill them?" So the *kaph* was a picture of need.

Sometimes we think that we are so rich in knowledge and wisdom and strength that we don't need God. When we think that was-when we are all filled up with ideas of how fine we are-we are being proud of ourselves. God can't help the proud any more than He can fill our hands when they are already full.

This young man was not proud. He knew that without God's help, he could do nothing right. He remembered the *kaph* and cried out, "Lord, I feel so empty and weak-how I need Your salvation! I believe Your Word; it will bring healing to my soul."

If we are hungry for His help and will come to Him with open hands, God will always fill needs! In Luke 1:53, Mary said this about God, "He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich [the proud] empty-handed."





JESUS KEEPS ME MOVING!



Lamedh is a goad, a long sharpened stick for prodding animals.

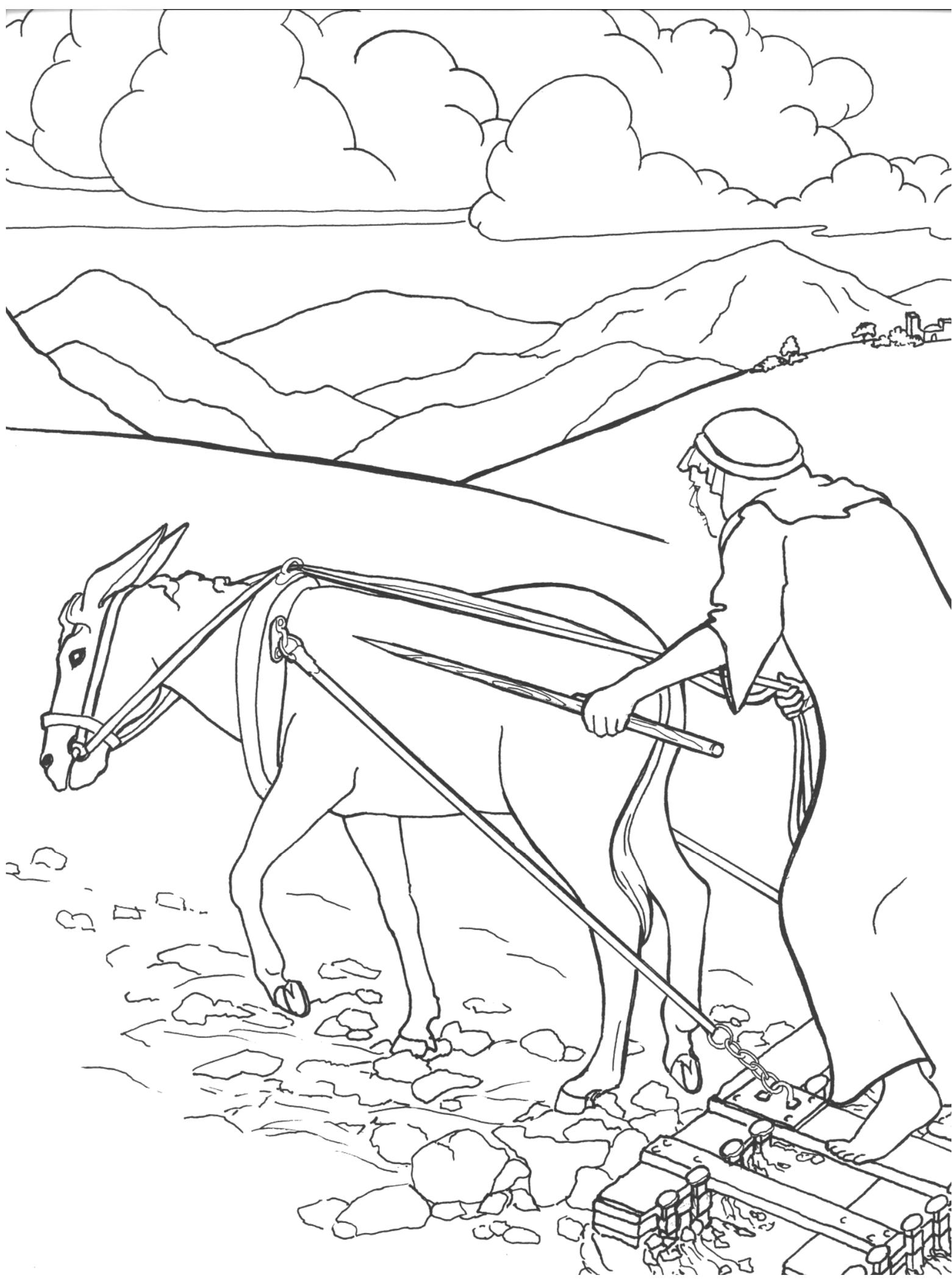
When the ox or mule pulling a plow or cart got lazy, a quick poke with the goad gave him some get-up-and-go! So the *lamedh* was a picture of the desire that keeps us moving toward our goal.

As Christians, our goal is to be like Jesus. To do that, we have to keep on studying and believing and obeying the Word of God. Do you sometimes get lazy about learning? That's just when you need a tough parent or teacher or coach to give you some get-up-and-go!

This young man had no parents or teachers or coaches to encourage him to keep on learning. He knew he would be a slave for years and years. He surely was tempted to sit down in the sand and feel sorry for himself. But instead, he thought about the *lamedh* and let the memory of God's Word move him forward. "Forever, O Lord, Your Word stands," he said. "You have always been and will always be faithful. You are the One who set the earth in its place, and it stands."

God wants us to keep on being excited about knowing and serving Him! In 2 Timothy 2:15, the apostle Paul said, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth."





JESUS QUENCHES MY THIRST!



Mem is water.

No one can appreciate water like people who have lived in desert land. Have you ever been hot and tired and really thirsty? What did you want more than anything in the world? You wanted a big glass of cold water, didn't you? Nothing quenches thirst like a fresh, cold water.

So to the people of Israel, the *mem* was a picture of refreshment. God's refreshment is much more than just water when we are thirsty. It is love when we are lonely, laughter when we are sad, and encouragement when we are afraid.

This young man knew what it was like to crave many things. As his parched throat and his open wounds screamed for relief from the burning heat and the blowing sand, what did he think about? Jugs of cold water? A clear blue lake to splash about in? No! He set his mind on the only thing in the universe that can really give refreshment: the Word of God.

As he remembered the *mem*, he lifted his voice in a prayer of thanksgiving, "O Lord, how I love Your Word. It is like a cool drink on a hot day. I think about it all day long."

All our thirsts are quenched in Jesus Christ! In John 7:37, Jesus said, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink."





JESUS IS IN ALL MY THOUGHTS!



Nun is something very, very strange—a fish standing on its tail!

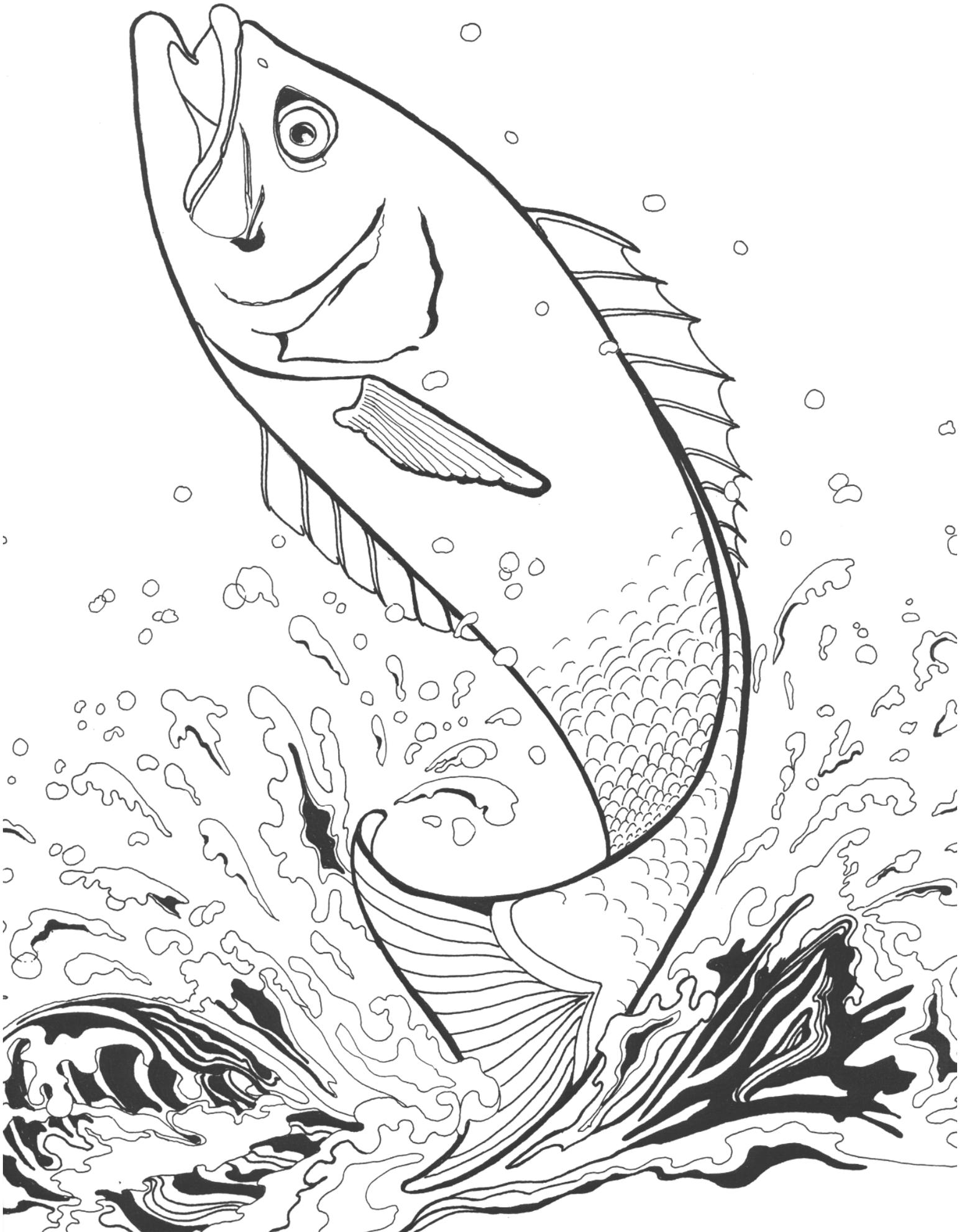
What would a fish have to do to stand on its thin little tail? It would have to block out of its mind every other thought and sound and sight and concentrate only on keeping its balance! So the *nun* is a picture of total concentration—pinning your thoughts on just one thing.

This young man was sick and tired and sore and hungry. How natural it would be for him to think about where he hurt and how much he needed sleep and how empty his stomach was. But he thought about the *nun* and decided to keep his mind off his problems and on how God would take care of him!

“I am surrounded by darkness,” he said, “yet I know that God is light. I can keep going because Your word is a lamp that always shows me where to put my foot for one more step.”

If we learn to concentrate on Jesus, our problems won't look like problems any more! The author of Hebrews 12:1-2 said, “Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith.”





JESUS IS MY STRENGTH!



Samekh is a fulcrum.

A fulcrum is the prop on which a lever turns. If you had to move a rock that was too big for you to lift, what would you do? You could find a long board or stick (a lever) and push it as far under the rock as you could. Then you could put a smaller rock (a prop) under the middle of the board. By leaning with all your weight on the free end of the board, you could move the rock.

This device would be like a see-saw. The stick is the lever; the rock in the middle is the fulcrum. The *samekh* is a picture of the power of the Word of God.

This young man was in chains and had no hope of escaping his enemies, yet he did not think of himself as powerless. He remembered the *samekh* and called on the power of God, "Lift me up, Lord, by Your Word, for I am wounded in the battle."

The Word is the rock, our fulcrum. Our faith is the lever. When we rest our faith on the Word, we have the power to move any obstacle! In Ephesians 3:20, the apostle Paul said, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory."





JESUS IS MY LIFE!



Ayin is a well or fountain.

In ancient desert climates, water meant life. Because people needed water for drinking, for washing, and for growing the food they ate, they could only live in places where there were good springs. Settlers had to know that the wells they dug would not dry up in five years or ten years or twenty. So the *ayin* was a picture of life—the security of eternal life and the joy of abundant life.

In even the cruellest and most dangerous circumstances, this young man knew God had given him eternal life and that he would live forever in heaven with the Lord. He knew, too, that every day of his life God would offer him abundant life—the full, happy life of fellowship with Him.

So he remembered the *ayin* and ran to drink at the fountain of the Word of God. “Bring good into my life,” he asked the Lord, “not because of what I am, but because of who and what You are. And teach me Your Word.”

Jesus offers us a well of life that can never run dry—all the joy we want for life on earth and then eternity with Him. In John 4:14, Jesus said, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water spring up to eternal life.”





JESUS SATISFIES ME!



Pe is an open mouth.

Think of a baby bird with his beak wide open to receive a worm from his mother. God wants us to be hungry that way for His Word. The *pe* was a picture of that deep-down-inside hunger to know God.

This young man lived day after day on the brink of starvation. Even as his body wasted away from lack of food, he faced deeper and more bitter hungers. He longed to see his mother's smile, to feel his father's hand on his shoulder, to hear the sound of friends singing and laughing as they worked together in the fields.

But he refused to yearn for the things he did not have. Instead he remembered the *pe* and turned all his longing to the one thing he could have—the pleasure and fulfilment of feeding on the Word of God. And so he said, “Lord, Your Word is so wonderful! The instant I taste it, I say, ‘Yes! Give me more!’”

As surely as our bodies need food every day, so our souls need the Word of God! In Matthew 4:4, Jesus said, “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”





JESUS TENDS THE GARDEN OF MY SOUL!



Tsadhe is a reaping hook, a hand tool with a hook-shaped blade on the end.

Imagine all the men and women and children of a village at harvest time sweeping the fields with their reaping hooks to gather in the crops. The *tsadhe* was a picture of the fruit that God produces in and through us as we believe His Word.

Driven across the desert by people who hated God's Word, this young man would certainly have been tempted to be discouraged. It would have been easy for him to think that God really could not do anything to produce good through his life. But he thought about the *tsadhe* and refused to give in to the temptation. He knew that if he had faith, God would be faithful to bring growth!

So he turned to God with words of praise, "You have set Your Word forever in goodness and faithfulness. Every line is like a seed that has inside it the power to grow in the soil of my soul."

Jesus said the Word is like a seed ready to grow into a wonderful crop. He promised that the more we believe the Word, the more good will grow in our lives. In Mark 4:20, Jesus said this about people hungry to hear Him, "They hear the word and accept it, and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."





IN JESUS I REMEMBER GOOD THINGS!



Qoph is the back of the head.

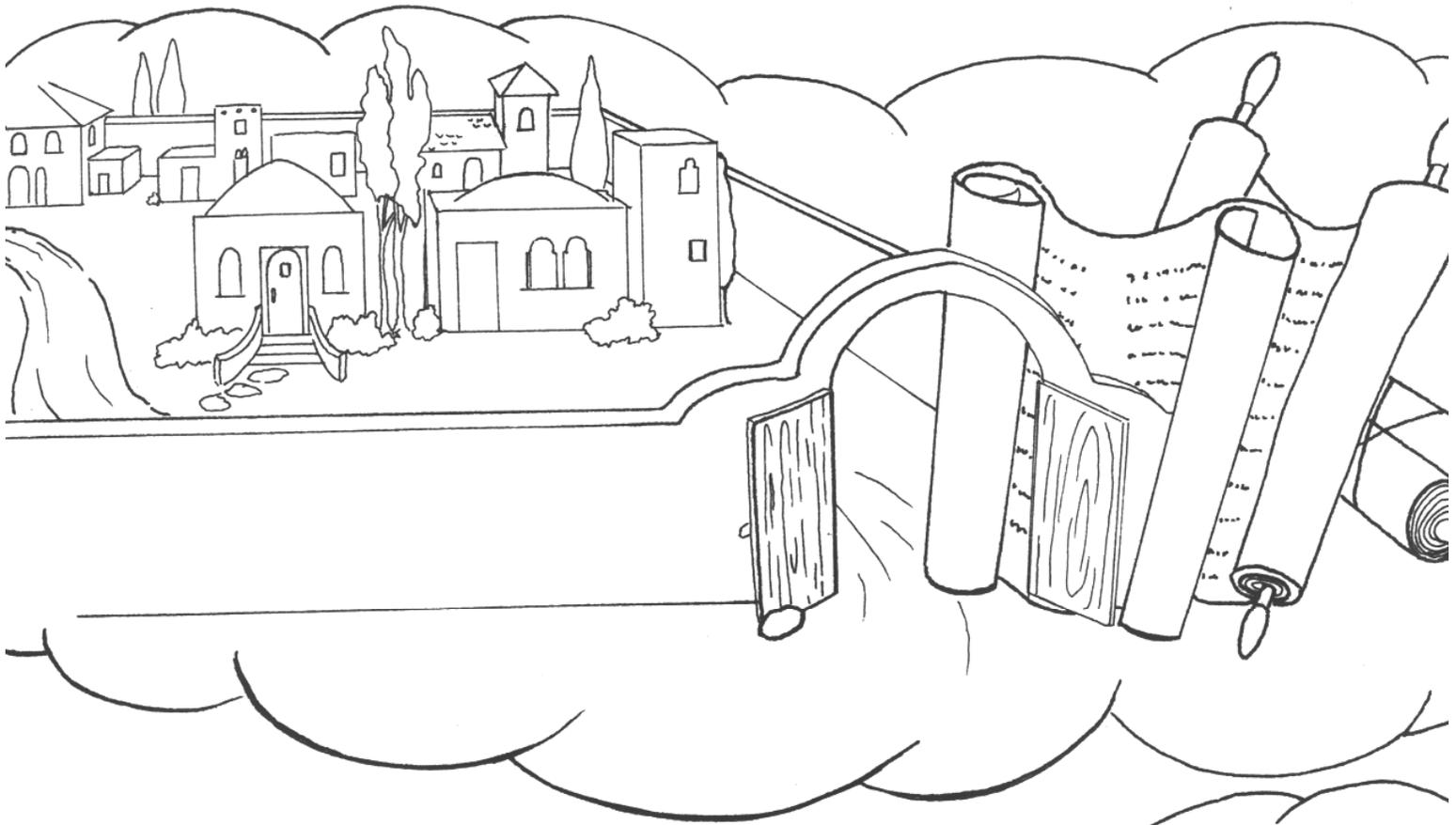
It was a picture of remembering. Do you ever look at a photograph of someone you love who now lives far away? Does that picture make you remember good times you had together?

Think of all the things this young man could have remembered on that march across the desert. He could have thought about all the fun things he did before there was a war. That would have made him very sad. He could have filled his hours wishing he had listened to the teaching of God's Word when he had the chance. That would have made him feel very bad.

So he decided to spend his days remembering the parts of God's Word he did learn. "Every morning before the sun rises," he said, "I cry to You for help. I have hope because Your Word heals me. At night, every time the guards are changed, I pray to You; I remember Your Word, and it gives me peace."

If we spend our time thinking about sad things or bad things, we will become very unhappy people. But the more we remember the Word of God, the more we will please God and the happier our lives will be every day! The apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:8, "Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things."





JESUS TEACHES ME HOW TO THINK!



Resh is the front of the head.

It was a picture of thinking based on knowledge. Do you remember when you first started to learn arithmetic? Your teacher explained how one plus one equals two and four minus one equals three, and pretty soon you had a lot of knowledge. But that knowledge did not do you any good until you started to use it, like the first time you figured out all by your self how many pieces of candy you could buy with your one dollar bill.

It's the same with God's Word. First you have to learn it, but then you have to think about how to use it. This young man had many Bible verses in his heart; now he needed to know how to use them to solve the problems he faced every day.

As he remembered the *resh*, he thought about the Word and asked God to show him how to use it every day. "Lord," he said, "look down on my troubles and rescue me, for Your Word is the most important thing in my life!"

Jesus said if we know God's will, we are happy if we do it. As we think about His Word, He will show us how to do the things He wants us to do, and we will find happiness! In Romans 12:2, the apostle Paul said, "Do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is."





JESUS INVITEDS ME TO A FEAST EVERYDAY!



Shin is a mouth-an open, smiling mouth with a tooth in it!

Have you ever bee to a big party, where you found table after table full of delicious and delightful treats? The shin reminded people of such a party. It was a picture of a feast, a wonderful celebration where there was plenty of good food and good fun!

If you had walked for weeks in the hot sun, never having enough food to stop your stomach from growling for hunger, would you feel as good as if you had been at a great feast where you could eat everything your heart desired? This young man did! Do you know why? Because he remembered the *shin*, and he knew that thinking about the Word of God is better than eating any treat on earth! He knew God wanted him to have a feast every minute, and so he said, "Though I am in chains, I rejoice in Your Word!"

The Word of God is a feast waiting to be enjoyed. Whenever we come to Jesus, there is cause for celebration! In John 6:35, Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believed in Me shall never thirst."





JESUS IS THE SHEPHERD OF MY SOUL!



Tav is a signature.

A signature-like the way we sign our name at the end of a letter-is our way of letting other people know how we want them to see us. So the *tav* was a picture of identification.

If you wrote a letter to God today, how would you sign it? If your name were John Jones, you might sign the letter, "Sincerely, Mr. J. Jones" or "Truly yours, John" or "Your friend, Johnny" or "Love, J.J." If you were lost and alone and scared, how would you want God to think of you?

This young man wanted the Lord to know that he needed and trusted Him completely, that without Him he was lost and lonely and in great danger. And so he signed this alphabet letter to God, "The Lost Sheep." "I have gone astray like a lost sheep," he said. "Look for me, Lord, for I do not forget Your Word!"

The Bible says that all of us like sheep have gone astray; each of us has turned to his own way. But God sent the Lord Jesus Christ to die on the cross and take the punishment for our sins. When we believe in Jesus, we can say, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want!" Jesus promised He will forever care for those who are His! In John 10:14-15, Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."





PSALM 126

A SONG OF ASCENTS



*When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion,
We were like men who dreamed.
Our mouths were filled with laughter,
Our tongues with songs of joy.
Then it was said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”
The Lord has done great things for us,
And we are filled with joy.*

*Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
Like streams in the Negev.
Those who sow in tears
Will reap with songs of joy.
He who goes out weeping,
Carrying seed to sow,
Will return with songs of joy,
Carrying sheaves with him.*

