

13.14 Joshua's Final Words (Joshua 23:1–16; 24:1–33)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- “Joshua” Flash-a-Cards by A Beka Book, Pensacola, FL, copyright 1985, and/or pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional needed materials.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Tips and terms are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- (none for this lesson)

Scripture: (ESV)

Joshua 23:1 A long time afterward, when the Lord had given rest to Israel from all their surrounding enemies, and Joshua was old and well advanced in years, 2 Joshua summoned all Israel, its elders and heads, its judges and officers, and said to them, “I am now old and well advanced in years. 3 And you have seen all that the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake, for it is the Lord your God who has fought for you. 4 Behold, I have allotted to you as an inheritance for your tribes those nations that remain, along with all the nations that I have already cut off, from the Jordan to the Great Sea in the west. 5 The Lord your God will push them back before you and drive them out of your sight. And you shall possess their land, just as the Lord your God promised you. 6 Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left, 7 that you may not mix with these nations remaining among you or make mention of the names of their gods or swear by them or serve them or bow down to them, 8 but you shall cling to the Lord your God just as you have done to this day. 9 For the Lord has driven out before you great and strong nations. And as for you, no man has been able to stand before you to this day. 10 One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the Lord your God who fights for you, just as he promised you. 11 Be very careful, therefore, to love the Lord your God. 12 For if you turn back and cling to the remnant of these nations remaining among you and make marriages with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, 13 know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you, but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good ground that the Lord your God has given you.

14 “And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed. 15 But just as all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you have been fulfilled for you, so the Lord will bring upon you all the evil things, until he has destroyed you from off this good land that the Lord your God has given you, 16 if you transgress the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them. Then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and you shall perish quickly from off the good land that he has given to you.”

24:1 Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel. And they presented themselves before God. 2 And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods. 3 Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac. 4 And to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. And I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. 5 And I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with what I did in the midst of it, and afterward I brought you out.

6 “Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea. And the Egyptians pursued your

fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. 7 And when they cried to the Lord, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians and made the sea come upon them and cover them; and your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness a long time. 8 Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the other side of the Jordan. They fought with you, and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you. 9 Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel. And he sent and invited Balaam the son of Beor to curse you, 10 but I would not listen to Balaam. Indeed, he blessed you. So I delivered you out of his hand. 11 And you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho, and the leaders of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And I gave them into your hand. 12 And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites; it was not by your sword or by your bow. 13 I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant.’

14 “Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

16 Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods, 17 for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. 18 And the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God.”

19 But Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. 20 If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good.” 21 And the people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the Lord.” 22 Then Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” 23 He said, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel.” 24 And the people said to Joshua, “The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey.”

25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem. 26 And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. 27 And Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord that he spoke to us. Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God.” 28 So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance.

29 After these things Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being 110 years old. 30 And they buried him in his own inheritance at Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash.

31 Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the Lord did for Israel.

32 As for the bones of Joseph, which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt, they buried them at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money. It became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph.

33 And Eleazar the son of Aaron died, and they buried him at Gibeah, the town of Phinehas his son, which had been given him in the hill country of Ephraim.

Introduction/Review:

Major battles had been fought and won by Israel as they conquered their Promised Land. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and one-half Manasseh had returned to their inheritances on the east side of the Jordan River after helping their fellow Israelites fight for victory.

Story:

Warnings

✓About twenty-five years passed after the Lord had given rest to Israel from all their surrounding enemies.

Joshua was old. He called the leaders of all Israel to him. The Bible doesn't state where they gathered, but we can guess it was ✓either at his own inheritance [locate these places on the map below] at Timnath-seram; at Shiloh, where the tabernacle was located; or even at Shechem, where they gathered later. Wherever it was, Joshua gave the following warnings and admonitions [Teacher, show enlarged charts found below]:

1. "The land is divided, but nations are still living among you.
2. "You need to drive out those nations in order to possess the land as God promised.
3. "Be courageous to keep God's law.
4. "Don't live among these nations or even mention the names of their gods or swear by them or bow to them.
5. "One man of you shall chase one thousand of them if God fights for you.
6. "Be sure to love the Lord your God.
7. "If you marry women from the nations, God will no longer fight for you. Those pagan wives will become snares and traps and scourges in your sides and thorns in your eyes.
8. "You know in all your hearts that not one thing of all the good things the Lord your God promised has failed; all have come to pass.
9. "Just as God brought all this good, so will He bring all the evil to pass, even destroying you from this good land, if you sin against His covenant and serve other gods."

Review

Then Joshua gathered all the tribes to Shechem, ✓about thirty miles north of his home. ✓It seems significant that this meeting took place at Shechem, the city between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, the mountains of blessing and cursing. Here Joshua reviewed the people and places of Israel's history: [Teacher, you might have students fill in the underlined words or summarize the facts using the enlarged copy found below.]

1. Terah lived in Ur and served other gods.
2. Terah's son, Abraham, came to Canaan. God gave Abraham a son named Isaac.
3. God gave to Isaac twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Jacob moved his family to Egypt.
4. [Four hundred years later,] God plagued Egypt and brought Israel out.
5. At the Red Sea God sent darkness to the Egyptians and deliverance to Israel.
6. Israel was in the wilderness a long time.
7. God destroyed the Amorites on the east side of the Jordan River.
8. Balak, king of Moab, hired Balaam, who blessed instead of cursed God's people.
9. God drove out two kings of the Amorites with hornets.
10. Israel crossed the Jordan and fought Jericho and other nations.

11. God gave land, cities, vineyards, and olive yards for which Israel hadn't worked and which they hadn't planted.

Challenge and response

After his review of Israel's history, Joshua challenged the people. The verses in this passage are magnificent. Listen to these: "Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River [Euphrates in Ur] and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River [Euphrates] or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:14, 15).

So Joshua first challenged the people and led by example, saying, "Serve the Lord."

The people answered with a lengthy but hearty response: "Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods, for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. And the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, even giants, who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God" (24:16–18).

Joshua next challenged the people with a warning: "The Lord is holy. You are not able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good" (24:19, 20).

The people answered a second time, "We will serve the Lord" (24:21).

Again, Joshua cautioned, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him" (24:22a).

"Oh, yes," the people responded for the third time, "we are witnesses that we will serve" (24:22b).

"If that's the case," said Joshua, "then put away the foreign gods that are among you right now, and incline your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel" (24:23). Ooo! The Israelites already had false gods among themselves! I hope they got rid of them quickly and forever.

One final and fourth time, however, the people protested, promising, "The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey" (24:24).

See how earnest and sincere the people were?! What an important promise to follow the Lord! Oh, that they might do what they promise!

Final actions

Joshua wrote these words (and the whole book of Joshua) in the Book of the Law of God—the Bible—which was kept in the ark of the covenant. He also took a great stone and set it up under a tall tree ✓by the tabernacle in Shiloh.* "This stone shall be a witness (an *Ed*), for it has heard all the words that the Lord spoke to us. It will witness against you if you deal falsely with your God," declared Joshua.

With these final words Joshua's work was done. He died at the age of 110 and was buried in his inheritance, Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim.

Joseph, also at the age of 110, had died long ago in Egypt. His family had brought his bones to the Promised Land and buried them in Shechem, also in the territory of Ephraim.

One other man also died and was buried in Ephraim at this time—Eleazar the priest.

One of the last verses in the book of Joshua is this: "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the Lord did for Israel" (24:31). Will they serve the Lord longer than that? As we study the book of Judges, we will learn the answer.

*A discussion on the place and meaning of “the sanctuary of the Lord” (Joshua 24:26) can be found at <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/joshua-24-26.html>.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:

Joshua is Hebrew for the Greek name *Jesus*; thus, we can look at Joshua as a type of Jesus, who is the believer’s Conqueror and the One who leads His people into the “Promised Land” of salvation and eternity with Him.

- Serve the Lord with all your heart, for consider what great things He has done for you (1 Samuel 12:24).

Activities:

- Play dough: tall tree; stone of witness; hornets
- Snack: Sugar cookies in the shape of a rounded headstone  with the number 110 in frosting to denote both Joshua’s and Joseph’s age at death.
- Remind students of stories in Joshua when stones represented a witness. [Four times: the stones in the Jordan; the law written on plastered stones near Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal; the giant altar [Ed] made by the two and one-half tribes; Joshua’s stone of witness.]
- Discuss what the Bible says about God’s use of hornets in conquering the land. God promised to send hornets to drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites (Exodus 23:28). He also said He would send hornets among the people who fled and hid themselves from Israel until those people were destroyed (Deuteronomy 7:20). But it is not until Joshua 24:12 that we learn exactly who and how God utilized the hornet in battle: “I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites [Sihon and Og east of Jordan]; it was not by your sword or by your bow.” Note that God said the victory was not by sword or bow but by His hornet method. What a creative means only God could use to fight for Israel! What are other examples of God’s fighting for Israel? [Causing Jericho’s walls to fall; sending hailstones; lengthening one day.]
- Sing the “Hornet Song” (lyrics are found below; a cartoon video with audio sung by Evangelists Paul Levin and Bob Findley may be found at <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=the+hornet+song+gospel+sheet+music&view=detail&mid=2106DEB32DEB3DC0E1272106DEB32DEB3DC0E127&FORM=VIRE>).
- Tell facts found below about the hornet. Also, note these differences between bees and hornets:
Bees die after they sting while hornets don’t.
Bees are smaller. They have more hair on their bodies and pollen baskets.
Bees are of great economical value, while hornets have no value for humans (except when God used them to fight for Israel).
Bees build their nests out of wax, while hornets do it out of wood pulp.
Bees are less aggressive than hornets.
- Review questions: (Game: Print on cardstock the clipart of hornets found below. If using a flannel board, print on paper and back with paper towel. Cut the hornets apart in rectangles. For each correct answer, a student may place a hornet in a pocket chart or on a flannel board.)
 1. Fill in the blank. One thing Joshua said to the people was, “You may not mix with these _____ remaining among you.” [Nations or people.]
 2. Fill in the blank. Joshua also said, “You shall not mention the names of their _____ or swear by them or serve them or bow down to them.” [Gods.]
 3. Fill in the blank. God had promised, “One man of you will put to flight _____, since it is the

Lord your God who fights for you.” How many? [A thousand.]

4. Why did God not want the people to marry the people of the land? [Because they would turn the hearts of Israel away from the Lord and to idols.]
5. If Israel mixed with the people of the land, God said those people would be like four things, one of which was a snare. Name one of the other objects God mentioned. [A trap; a whip; thorns.]
6. Name one event of the eleven that Joshua reviewed about Israel’s history. [See the “Review” list below.]
7. What did Israel promise God and Joshua at least four times? [“We will serve the Lord.”]
8. Three people were buried in Ephraim during this time. Name one of them. [Joshua; Joseph; Eleazar.]

Memory Verse[s]:

- Joshua 24:14–17 (or any portion thereof): [Joshua said,] “Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” 16 Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods, 17 for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed.”

Handwork:

- Two possible crafts for the theme “We Will Serve the Lord,” a door hanger and a table decoration, are found at <https://craftingthewordofgod.com/2013/04/23/we-will-serve-the-lord-two-ways/>.

Warnings

- “The land is divided, but nations are still living among you.
- “You need to drive out those nations in order to possess the land as God promised.
- “Be courageous to keep God’s law.
- “Don’t live among these nations or even mention the names of their gods or swear by them or bow to them.
- “One man of you shall chase 1000 of them if God fights for you.
- “Be sure to love the Lord your God.
- “If you marry women from the nations, God will no longer fight for you. Those pagan wives will become snares and traps and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes.
- “You know in all your hearts and souls that not one thing of all the good things the Lord your God promised has failed; all have come to pass.
- “Just as God brought all this good, so will He bring all the evil to pass, even destroying you from this good land, if you sin against His covenant and serve other gods.”

Review

- Terah, living in Ur, served other gods.
- Terah's son, _____, came to Canaan. God gave Abraham a son named _____.
- God gave to Isaac twin sons, _____ and _____. Jacob moved his family to Egypt.
- [Four hundred years later,] God plagued _____ and brought Israel out.
- At the _____ Sea God sent darkness to the Egyptians and deliverance to Israel.
- _____ was in the wilderness a long time.
- God destroyed the Amorites on the _____ side of the Jordan River.
- Balak, king of Moab, hired _____, who blessed instead of cursed God's people.
- God drove out two kings of the Amorites with hornets.
- Israel crossed the _____ and fought _____ and other nations.
- God gave land, cities, vineyards, and olive yards for which Israel hadn't worked and which they hadn't planted.

Joshua's Challenge

The People's Response

1

vv. 14, 15: "Serve the Lord."

vv. 16–18: "Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods, for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. And the Lord drove out before us all the people, even giants, who lived in the land. Therefore we will serve the Lord, for he is our God."

2

vv. 19, 20: "The Lord is holy. You are not able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good."

v. 21: "We will serve the Lord."

3

v. 22a: "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him."

v. 22b: "We are witnesses that we will serve."

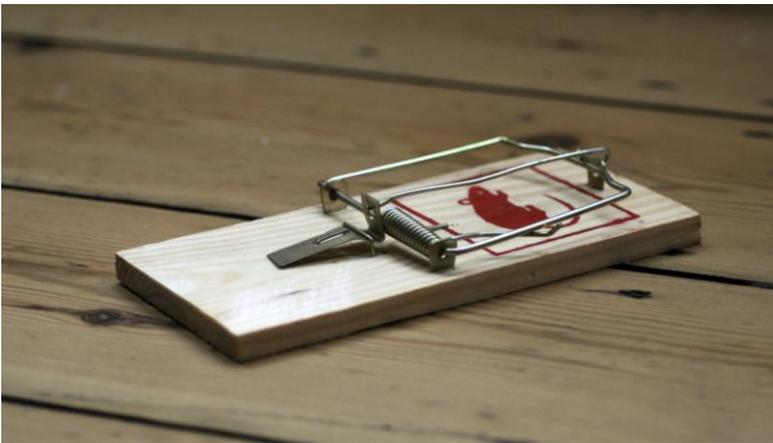
4

v. 23: "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel."

v. 24: "The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey."



Snare



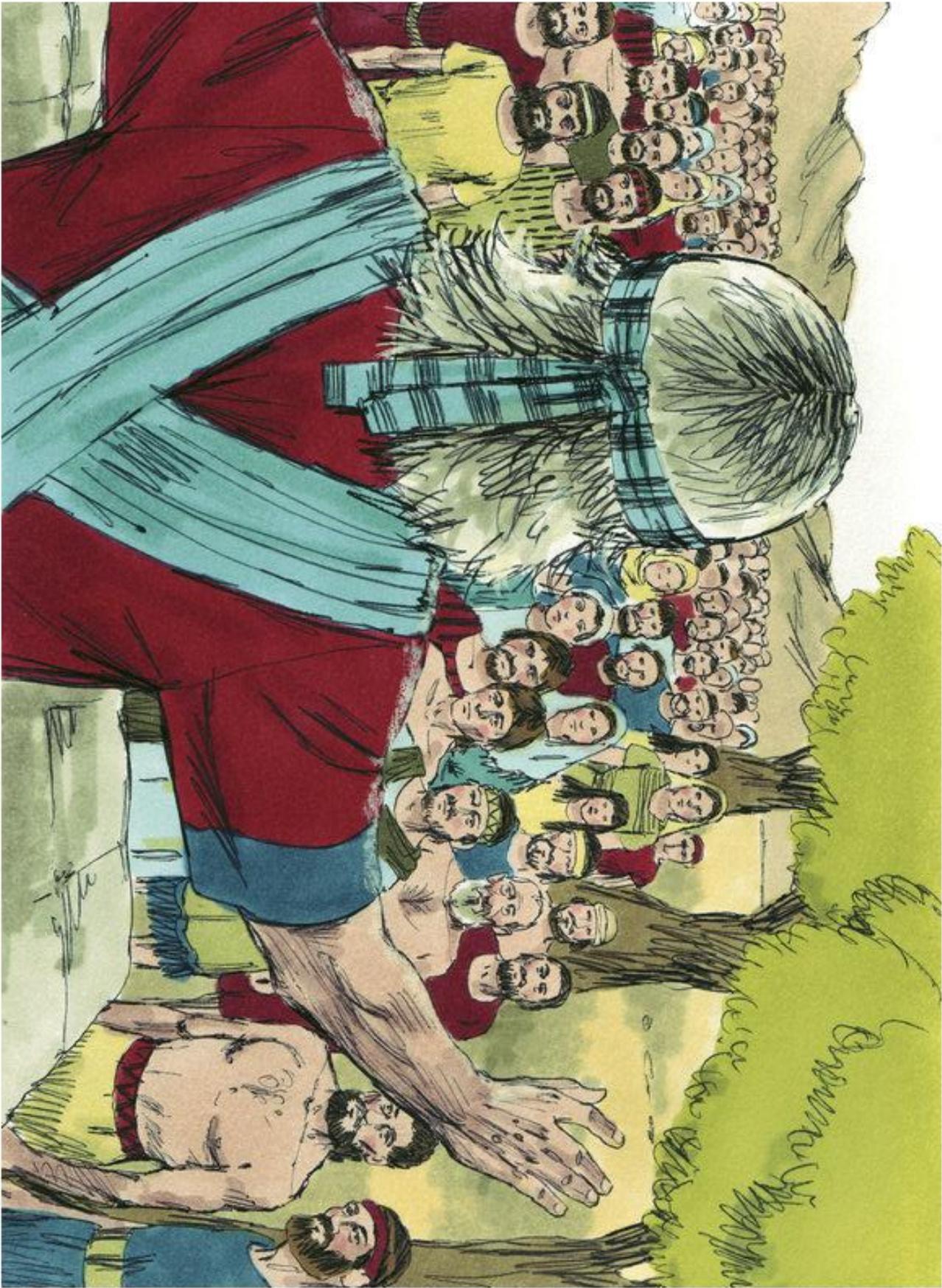
Trap

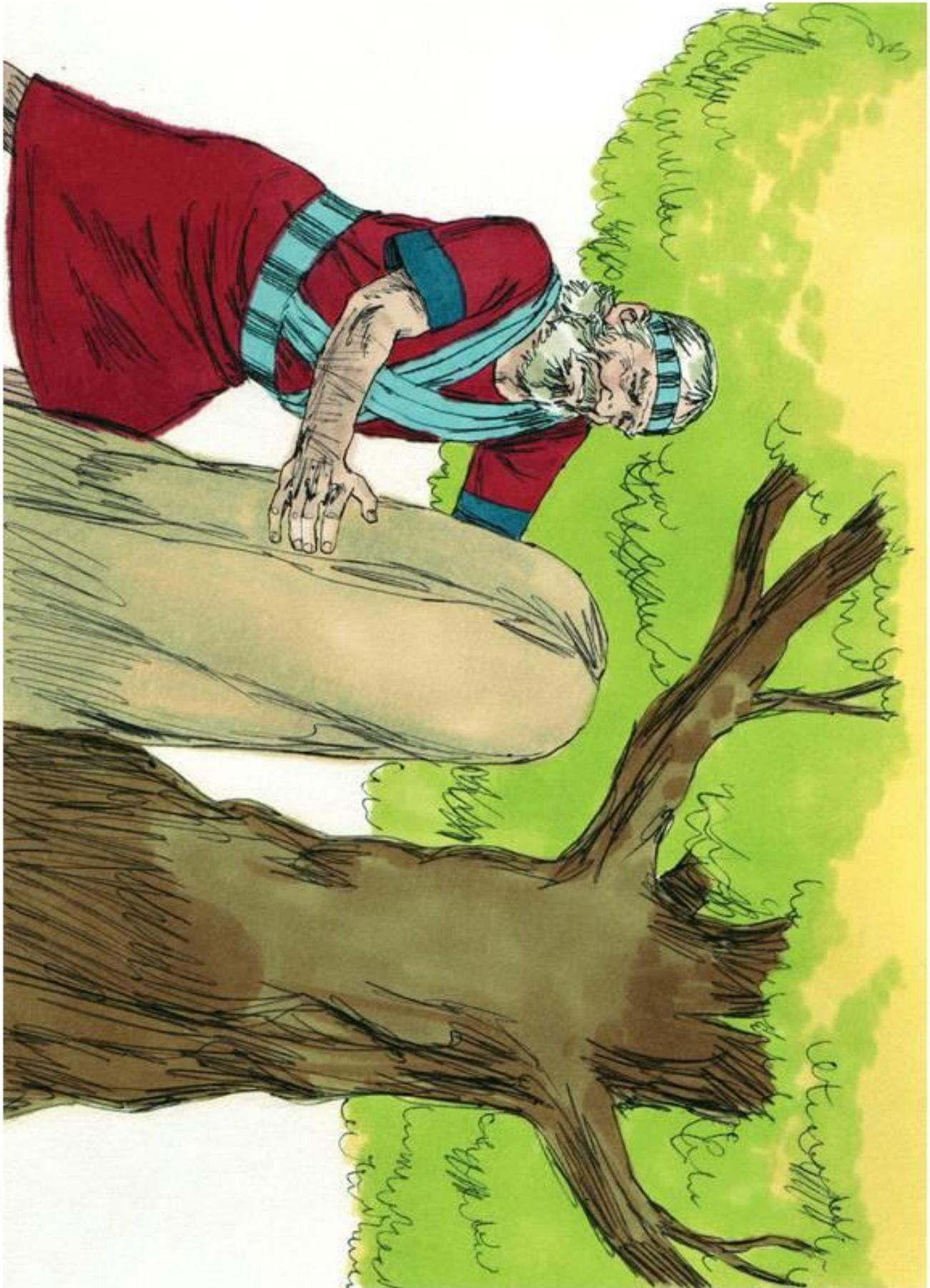


Scourge



Thorns









The Hornet Song

(Tune: "This Is Like Heaven to Me")

by Thora Harris

1. When the Canaanites hardened their heart against God
And grieved Him because of their sin,
God sent along hornets to bring them to time
And to help His own people to win.
The hornets persuaded them that it was best
To go quickly and not to go slow;
God did not compel them to go 'gainst their will,
But He just made them willing to go.

Chorus: He does not compel us to go (no, no),
He does not compel us to go;
He does not compel us to go 'gainst our will,
But He just makes us willing to go.
2. If a nest of live hornets were brought to this room
And the creatures allowed to go free,
You would not need urging to make yourself scarce;
You'd want to get out, don't you see?
They would not lay hold and by force of their strength
Throw you out of the window, Oh, no!
They would not compel you to go 'gainst your will,
But just make you so willing to go.
3. When Moses was sent to lead Israel out
To Canaan's rich fruit-bearing land,
Resisting His Spirit, they worshiped a calf
But refused to obey God's command.
God did not compel them to go to the land
Which with wine, milk, and honey did flow,
But fed them on manna for forty long years
'Til He got them all ready to go.
4. When Balaam was sent to the Moabite king
And wanted things run his own way,
His mule, ever faithful, spoke at the right time,
Made him willing God's voice to obey.
God can use any man, since He used Balaam's mule,
For He is Almighty, you know;
He does not compel us to go 'gainst our will.
But He just makes us willing to go.
5. There's so much in man that resembles a mule,
He is contrary, you know.
When you say, "Come here," he is sure to go there,
And say, "Whoa," he will then start to go.
My song may seem funny, but I know it's true
And I don't want a sting from a hornet, do you?
You'd better not fight, for you might not be right,
But just be made willing to go.

(The stanza about Jonah is not included here.)

Hornet (from Wikipedia)

It is in the wasp family.

Wingspan: up to 3 inches (Asian giant hornet)

Body length: 2 inches (Asian giant hornet)

