

21.01b Elisha's Beginning Ministry (2 Kings 2:19–25)

✓ “*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:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. (Frankly, these pictures, being too cartoonish, don't meet this teacher's usual standards, but no better ones were to be found.) Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- A bowl, salt, a pitcher of water, small cups for students
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.

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

- *spring*: water coming up from the earth; on the surface, the water forms a small stream, pool, or small lake
- *bald*: having no hair

Scripture (ESV)

2 Kings 2:19 Now the men of the city [Jericho] said to Elisha, “Behold, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees, but the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful.” 20 He said, “Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it.” So they brought it to him. 21 Then he went to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said, “Thus says the Lord, I have healed this water; from now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it.” 22 So the water has been healed to this day, according to the word that Elisha spoke.

23 He went up from there to Bethel, and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, “Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!” 24 And he turned around, and when he saw them, he cursed them in the name of the Lord. And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys. 25 From there he went on to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.

Introduction/Review:

Jericho is an interesting city. It is thought to be the oldest city in the world (claiming to be 10,000 years old)* and the city located at the lowest sea level (1300 feet below sea level) in the world. It has quite a Bible history. [Show picture(s) or flannel background of Jericho. Sing “Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho” and “R-A-H-A-B” found below to recount God's destruction of Jericho and the saving of Rahab (Joshua 6).]

After God destroyed Jericho, He said, “Cursed before the LORD be the man who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho. At the cost of his firstborn shall he lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates” (Joshua 6:26). Later, God fulfilled this promise to curse the man who rebuilt Jericho when “Hiel . . . built Jericho. He laid its foundation at the cost of . . . his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son . . . according to the word of the LORD” (1 Kings 16:34).

We learned recently that Elijah established a school of prophets in Jericho.

The town of Bethel, whose name means “house of God,” also had an interesting Bible history. First, Bethel was the place where Jacob dreamed of angels on a ladder (Genesis 28:12). Quite a bit later, when the Israel and Judah were divided, Jeroboam, first king of the northern tribes of Israel, set up a golden calf and altar for worship there, making it a chief place for idolatry (1 Kings 12:28, 29). ✓ Many people in Bethel worshiped these false gods and mistreated God's true prophets.

One of the greatest of all God's prophets in all ages, Elijah, was gone. He, like Enoch, did not die. God took Elijah in a spectacular way. How did Elijah go to heaven? [God took him in a whirlwind with a chariot and horses of fire.] Because Elisha saw Elijah go to heaven, he knew something would happen to him. What had

Elijah promised him? [That he would have a double portion of Elijah's spirit.] What symbol of God's power did Elijah leave behind—what piece of clothing? [His mantle/coat.] What did Elisha do with this mantle? [Struck the Jordan River in order to make it divide so that he could walk over on dry ground.]

Elisha went back to the city of Jericho while some of the sons of the prophets looked high and low for Elijah for three days. They never found him, just as Elijah had said.

Story:

Jericho's bad water

The men of Jericho said to Elisha, "Look, our city is in a great place, but our water is terrible. Rather than help the plants, the water actually hurts them and even kills them. The land doesn't produce food."

Elisha replied, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." The men did so. [Teacher, do so.] Then Elisha went to the spring that gave water to the city and threw the salt in it. [Teacher, put enough salt into a container of water that will give your students a taste of salty water. Pour into small cups, one for each student.] Now, if you drink this water, it will taste salty. [Have students do so.] But Jericho's water didn't turn salty. Rather, as Elisha threw in the salt, he said, "This is what the Lord says: 'I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive.'"

If God said it, did it happen? Indeed, it did. The Bible states, "And the water has remained wholesome to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken" (2 Kings 2:22).

Bethel's bad "boys"

Elisha left Jericho then and went back to Bethel, going to the same places where he and Elijah had gone just before Elijah went to heaven. Remember, I told you that Bethel was a city that worshiped false gods and probably hurt God's true prophets. As Elisha was walking down the road, some people came and started to harass him, calling him, "Bald head." From this name they gave Elisha, what do you suppose was true of Elisha's appearance? [He had a bald head—no hair on the top of his head at least. Think of an example the children know of someone who is bald.]

Now, we're not positive who these people were who called Elisha names. Some Bible versions call them *little children*. If they were little children, ✓they might have been trained by their parents to make fun of God's prophets. If so, what happened to them was a big punishment to the parents for teaching them false worship and to make fun of God's servants. Other Bible versions call them *youths*—kids who are old enough to be responsible for their actions. Still other scholars [for example, John Gill in his *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*] say ✓these people were between thirty and forty years old. The same Hebrew words translated *little children* and *youths* are used about Isaac when he was 28, Joseph when he was 39, and Rehoboam when he was 40 years old.

Whoever these people were, they kept shouting at Elisha, "Go up, you bald head! Go on up, you bald head!" By this ✓they might have meant, "Go on up to heaven like Elijah, you bald-headed man!" or "Get out of here. We don't want you! Leave as Elijah did! Ha, Ha-ha, ha, ha!" In other words they were saying, ✓"We don't want you, an ugly bald-headed man, around here telling us we worship false gods. We want to worship as we please."

It is good for us to stop a minute and ask ourselves, "Do we make fun of some people?" Should we ever act as if we don't like someone simply because they are different? When I was a girl, another girl in my neighborhood had a deformed face: one side of her head seemed bigger than the other, and the large eye looked gross. I'm ashamed to admit that I didn't like this girl, mostly because she looked different. I was wrong to shun someone who had a deformity. Rather, I should have accepted her as she was—as God had made her.

Another girl in my first-grade class had a stiff arm. I started out not liking her. That was not right. When I got to know her, she was one of the sweetest girls I've ever known. She couldn't help what her arm looked

like, and I was wrong to avoid her because of it.

Another lesson to learn is not to mock God's true servants. This is a serious sin.

God was not pleased with the people who mocked Elisha. How serious was their sin? Well, when they continued jeering even after Elisha had turned around and looked at them very sternly, Elijah, ✓ not for his own sake but for the sake of God's reputation, called down a curse upon them in the name of the Lord. "Then," the Bible states, "two [she-]bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths," killing them. Oh, it was a sad day in Bethel! Sad that forty-two people died; sadder still the reason for their death. May we always honor the Lord and honor His servants.

*This claim puts Jericho's founding before creation if one goes by Ussher's time line with creation taking place around 4000 B.C.

Lessons from This Lesson:

- We see Jesus:
Jesus healed blind men in Jericho. Jericho was also the city mentioned in the story of the Good Samaritan in which a despised man takes care of a wounded man. Zacchaeus, the "wee little man" who was a tax-collector, came to Jesus in Jericho.
- Don't ridicule people for their physical features.
- Respect God's leaders.

Activities:

- Play dough: bowl; bears
- Snack: A salty snack like pretzels or potato chips or saltines
- If you haven't already done it during the story, put salt in water now for students to drink or taste. How does it taste? Good? [No.] What Elisha did was a miracle of God because the salt made the water good and because the water continues to be good.
- If the songs, "Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho" and "R-A-H-A-B" were not sung earlier in the lesson, sing them now.
- Warn children that real bears are dangerous, despite our idea that "Teddy" bears are soft, cuddly, and comforting.
- A video of modern Jericho's water with Elisha's spring may be seen at [Elisha spring, Jericho, the oldest city in the world \(the Palestinian Authority\) - YouTube](#).
- Read the following poem found in a children's Bible story book:

Elisha and the Spring

The men of Jericho came out,
Saying, "Elisha, look at our land—
Withered, wasted, dry with drought,
It is barren and useless sand!"

Elisha took a pot and cast
Some salt into the spring.
He cried, "The Lord says now at last
The water's a living thing."

And then the spring began to flow.
The grass once more was green.
The trees and flowers would always grow,
And drought no more be seen.

- Review Questions: (Game: For each correct answer, give individuals or teams 7 points. Tally points on a chalk board or white board or piece of paper. Ask students what the total number of points would be if all questions were answered correctly. [42.] Why is the number 42 significant in this story? [It is the number of people who harassed Elisha at Bethel.]
 1. What was the problem with the water at Jericho? [It was bad and made the land unproductive.]
 2. How did Elisha fix the water problem? [He put a bowl of salt into the spring, and it became good water.]
 3. How long did the water remain good? [It is still good today.]
 4. Some translations of the Bible state *small boys* harassed Elisha. Name one man described with the same Hebrew words sometimes translated *small boys*. [Isaac at age 28, Joseph at age 39, and Rehoboam at age 40 years.]
 5. How did the men harass Elisha? What did they say? ["Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!"]
 6. How did those forty-two men die? [Two she-bears came out of the woods and attacked them.]

Memory Verse[s]:

Psalm 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. 6 The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. 7 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

8 Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth. 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. 10 "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" 11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Handwork:

- Glue salt to a picture of a bowl. At the end of this lesson is a page with two bowls and a Scripture verse. Print a copy for each student. Cut the page either above or below the Scripture verse depending on which bowl you wish to have children use. Spread glue on the inside of the bowl. Sprinkle salt over the glue. Have a container over which students will shake off excess salt.

a spring

bald

Songs:

Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho

(Refrain): Joshua fought the battle of Jericho,
Jericho, Jericho,
Joshua fought the battle of Jericho,
And the walls came tumbling down!

You may talk about your men of Gideon,
You may talk about your men of Saul,
But there's none like good old Joshua
And the battle of Jericho!

(Refrain)

Right up to the walls of Jericho
They marched with spear in hand;
"Go blow them ram horns," Joshua cried,
"Cause the battle is in my hand."

(Refrain)

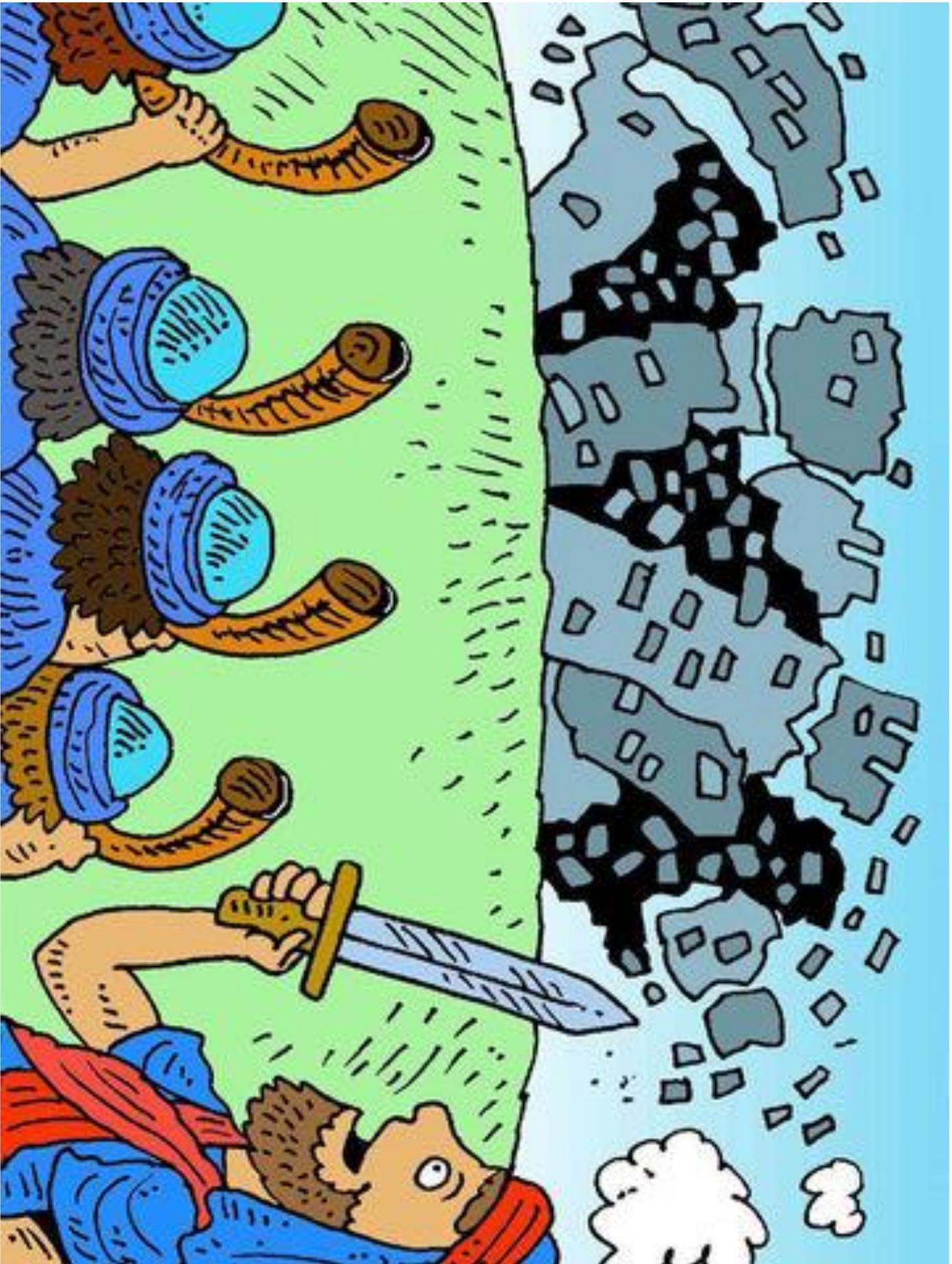
Then the lamb, ram,
Sheep horns began to blow,
And the trumpets began to sound,
Joshua told the children to shout that morning
And the walls came tumbling down!

(Refrain)

R-A-H-A-B from <http://www.sundayschoolsources.com/lessons/OT/Judges/rahab.htm>

(Tune: B-I-N-G-O) lyrics written by Sharon Broome

There was a girl God used for good and Rahab was her name-o
R-A-H-A-B, R-A-H-A-B, R-A-H-A-B
and Rahab was her name-o.





[FreeBibleimages :: Joshua and the battle of Jericho :: Joshua obeys God and starts marching around Jericho \(Joshua 5-6\)](#)



[FreeBibleimages :: Elisha and the miracle water :: Elisha puts salt into a spring giving impure water \(2 Kings 2:19-22\)](#)

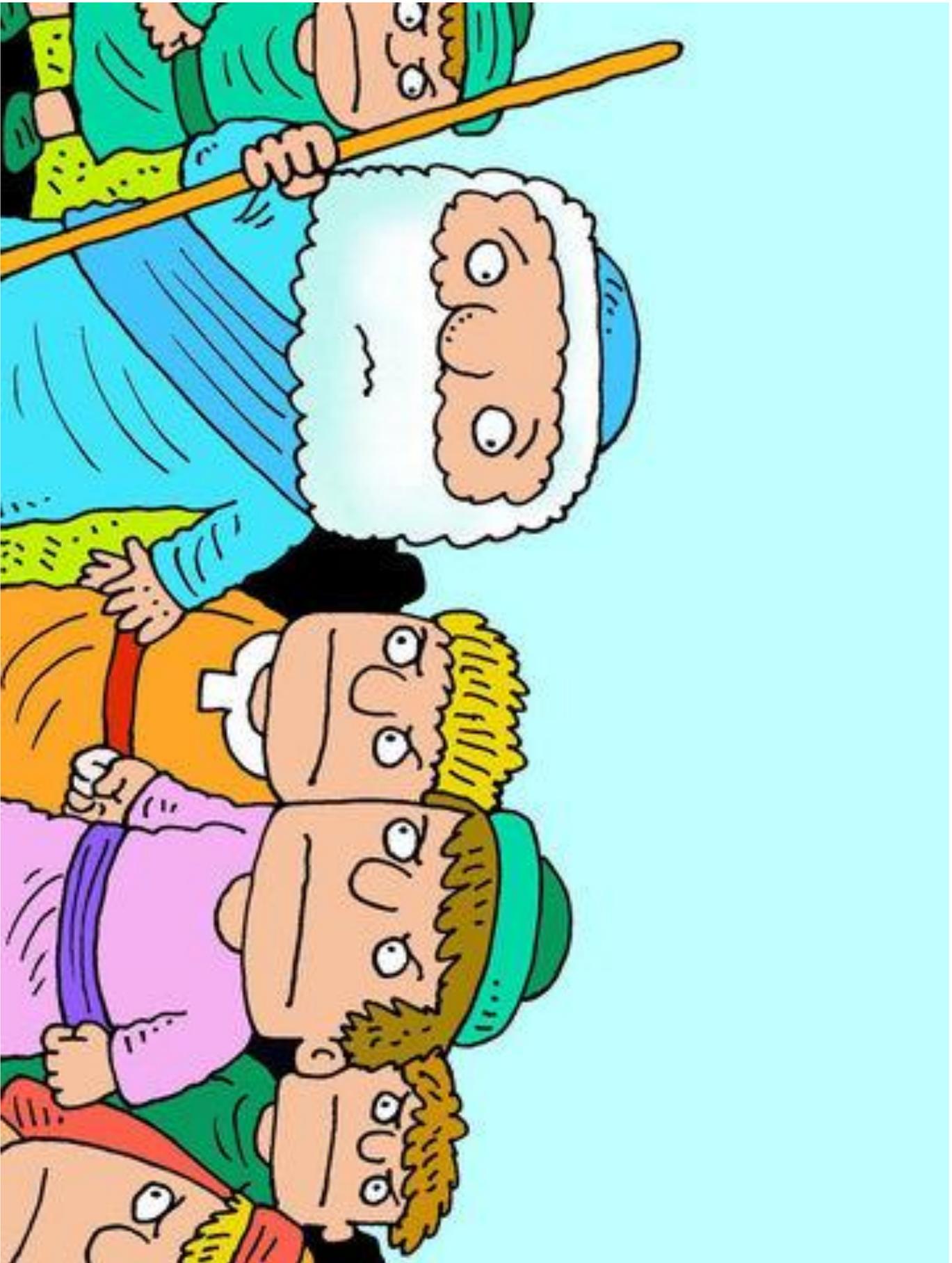


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FreeBibleimages :: Elisha and the bears :: Two bears come to Elisha's rescue when he is threatened by a gang of mocking youths (2 Kings 2:23-25)



[FreeBibleimages](#) :: Elisha and the bears :: Two bears come to Elisha's rescue when he is threatened by a gang of mocking youths (2 Kings 2:23-25)



The water [of Jericho] has been healed to this day, according to the word that Elisha spoke (2 Kings 2:22).

