

27.10 God's Favors and the People's Failures (Nehemiah 9:1–37)

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

[. . .] Brackets indicate a remark to the teacher that will not be read aloud; they also show answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional needed materials. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Most of the visuals for the chronological events listed in this story and found at the end of this lesson are from <http://thebiblerevival.com/clipart.htm>.
- The prayer portion of this story is found separately below and is to be read. The teacher might copy this portion and attach extra paper at the beginning and end to make a scroll from which to read the prayer.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print on colorful cardstock and cut apart.

- *Sabbath*: the seventh day of the week, corresponding to our Saturday, on which God rested after creation. God commanded the Jews to rest on that day every week.
- *fasting*: going without food.
- *to humble oneself*: to make oneself low before another person, particularly God, confessing sins and seeking forgiveness.
- *strangers*: non-Jewish people. Sometimes this term refers to pagan wives who worshiped false gods.
- *sack clothes*: clothes made of burlap, the rough cloth from which sacks, e.g., potato sacks, are made.

Scripture: (ESV)

Nehemiah 9:1 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads. 2 And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. 3 And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the Lord their God. 4 On the stairs of the Levites [seven men]; and they cried with a loud voice to the Lord their God. 5 Then the Levites, [eight men], said, “Stand up and bless the Lord your God from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.

6 “You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you. 7 You are the Lord, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. 8 You found his heart faithful before you, and made with him the covenant to give to his offspring the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite. And you have kept your promise, for you are righteous.

9 “And you saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt and heard their cry at the Red Sea, 10 and performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants and all the people of his land, for you knew that they acted arrogantly against our fathers. And you made a name for yourself, as it is to this day. 11 And you divided the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on dry land, and you cast their pursuers into the depths, as a stone into mighty waters. 12 By a pillar of cloud you led them in the day, and by a pillar of fire in the night to light for them the way in which they should go. 13 You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven and gave them right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments, 14 and you made known to them your holy Sabbath and commanded them commandments and statutes and a law by Moses your servant. 15 You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger and brought water for them out of the rock

for their thirst, and you told them to go in to possess the land that you had sworn to give them.

16 “But they and our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments. 17 They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them. 18 Even when they had made for themselves a golden calf and said, ‘This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,’ and had committed great blasphemies, 19 you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go. 20 You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. 21 Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.

22 “And you gave them kingdoms and peoples and allotted to them every corner. So they took possession of the land of Sihon king of Heshbon and the land of Og king of Bashan. 23 You multiplied their children as the stars of heaven, and you brought them into the land that you had told their fathers to enter and possess. 24 So the descendants went in and possessed the land, and you subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gave them into their hand, with their kings and the peoples of the land, that they might do with them as they would. 25 And they captured fortified cities and a rich land, and took possession of houses full of all good things, cisterns already hewn, vineyards, olive orchards and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and became fat and delighted themselves in your great goodness.

26 “Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their back and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies. 27 Therefore you gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. And in the time of their suffering they cried out to you and you heard them from heaven, and according to your great mercies you gave them saviors who saved them from the hand of their enemies. 28 But after they had rest they did evil again before you, and you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so that they had dominion over them. Yet when they turned and cried to you, you heard from heaven, and many times you delivered them according to your mercies. 29 And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which if a person does them, he shall live by them, and they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey. 30 Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. 31 Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

32 “Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love, let not all the hardship seem little to you that has come upon us, upon our kings, our princes, our priests, our prophets, our fathers, and all your people, since the time of the kings of Assyria until this day. 33 Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly. 34 Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept your law or paid attention to your commandments and your warnings that you gave them. 35 Even in their own kingdom, and amid your great goodness that you gave them, and in the large and rich land that you set before them, they did not serve you or turn from their wicked works. 36 Behold, we are slaves this day; in the land that you gave to our fathers to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts, behold, we are slaves. 37 And its rich yield goes to the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins. They rule over our bodies and over our livestock as they please, and we are in great distress.

Introduction/Review:

Last week we learned about Ezra’s reading the book of the law to the people of Jerusalem. What was their response to the reading? [Praise but then shame and sorrow.] What did Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites tell the grieving people to do? [Rejoice in the Lord for the joy of the Lord was their strength.] What joyous feast did the people celebrate for a week? [Feast of Tabernacles.] What did the people do in this feast? [Lived in huts (tabernacles) made of branches.] Why? [To remember that God had led them out of Egypt and provided

for them while they lived in tents.]

Story:

How do you feel towards someone who corrects you? Do you dislike that person for at least a little while? Do you want to get even with that one? What if what they said is really true but you don't want to believe it? For example, what if I corrected you about something you were doing wrong? You might resent me for at least a while because you don't want to be told that what you did was wrong.

What about the Bible? It often shows us what we have done wrong. Will we resent it and neglect it because we don't like its interfering in our lives? Oh, that would be a dreadfully bad mistake, for the Bible tells us God's will. It protects us from sin. How we need to love the Bible and read it in order to learn about God and His ways and to see our sin so that we may repent and confess it.

Grieving because of sin

Hearing the Bible read had made the Jews in Jerusalem aware of their sins. Instead of getting resentful against God's Word, they humbled themselves and mourned about their sins. Nehemiah and Ezra and the Levites had stopped the grieving for a while because it was time to rejoice in celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles. But now that the Feast of Tabernacles was over, it was time to mourn, weep for, and confess their sins and the sins of their fathers. Indeed, Nehemiah 9 states that the people gathered with fasting, with sack clothes, and with dirt upon themselves. They were in earnest! They saw that the sins of their fathers had caused great distress for them, ✓especially during the past ninety years or so. Oh, how they wanted to be right with God! Therefore, they humbled themselves before the Lord.

Confessing their sins was not enough: they also needed to stop sinning. One way to forsake their sins was to separate themselves from "strangers"—non-Jews. As in time past, these "strangers" were perhaps even those pagan wives who worshiped false gods and wanted to turn away the hearts of their husbands from serving the one true God.

Confessing and worshiping

Being hungry to hear the Word, the people stood and listened to it from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Then from 9:00 a.m. to noon they confessed their sins and worshiped the Lord God! Can you imagine six hours of church—of prayer, of hearing and reading the Word, of confessing sins, of weeping before the Lord, and of praising the great God of heaven? You are young. That would be very difficult for you. I'm older. It's not as hard for me to imagine such a long time being spent in these activities. In fact, sometimes when I study the Word and pray, it seems as if the time goes by very quickly. I would guess the time went by quickly for these Jews who meant business for God. Oh, that we all would be so devoted to God!

Praying

The Levites encouraged the people. Eight specifically named Levites said, "Stand up and bless the Lord your God from everlasting to everlasting." Then they immediately prayed directly to God, saying, "Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. You are the Lord, you alone."

The prayer they prayed is so good and tells us so much about the history of Israel that I am going to read much of it as it was prayed in Nehemiah 9. I will show you some pictures of what they remembered as they prayed. We have heard all these stories before, but it's been a long time since we studied them. As I read the words of Scripture, listen respectfully to God's Word. [Teacher, decide whether or not you want your students to stand as the Jews did during the Scripture reading. Remind the students that the Jews did stand.] Here is the prayer:

Teacher, the following paragraph divisions and numbers indicate places in which to display a picture with a corresponding number.]

(1) "Lord, You made heaven with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them.

- (2) “You are the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. You found his heart faithful before you and made the covenant with him to give the land to his offspring. You have kept your promise, for you are righteous.
- (3) “You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt and heard their cry at the Red Sea and performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants, for you knew they acted arrogantly against our fathers.
- (4) “You divided the sea before them so that they went through the midst of the sea on dry land, and you cast their pursuers into the depths, as a stone into mighty waters.
- (5) “By a pillar of cloud you led them in the day, and by a pillar of fire in the night to light the way in which they should go.
- (6) “You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven, and you made known to them your holy Sabbath. You gave commandments by Moses your servant.
- (7) “You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger and brought water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and you told them to go in to possess the land that you had sworn to give them.
- (8) “But our fathers stiffened their necks and did not obey Your commandments. They were not mindful of the wonders that You performed among them. But You are a God ready to forgive, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. You did not forsake them. Even when they made for themselves a golden calf and said, ‘This is your God who brought you out of Egypt,’ You in Your great mercies did not forsake them.
- (9) “The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light the way by which they should go. You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna and gave them water. Forty years You sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.
- (10) “And You gave them kingdoms and peoples; they took possession of the land. You multiplied their children as the stars of heaven, and You brought them into the land that You had told their fathers to possess. You subdued the inhabitants of the land and gave them their kings and the peoples of the land. And they captured fortified cities and a rich land, and took possession of houses full of all good things, cisterns already hewn, vineyards, olive orchards and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and delighted themselves in Your great goodness.
- (11) “Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against You and cast Your law behind their back [Teacher, you might demonstrate this terrible evil by tossing a Bible behind you] and killed Your prophets, who had warned them not to turn back from You. Therefore You gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. In the time of their suffering, they cried out to You, and You heard from heaven, and mercifully gave them leaders [Teacher, point to “The Judges” on a time line] who saved them from enemies. But after they had rest they did evil again, and You abandoned them again to the hand of their enemies. Yet when they cried to You, You heard, and many times You delivered them according to Your mercies.
- (12) “The people kept on sinning and repenting—mostly sinning. Therefore You gave them over to kings of other countries. [Teacher, point to Nineveh and Babylon on a map.] Nevertheless, in Your great mercies You did not forsake them, for You are a gracious and merciful God. You have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly.
- “Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept Your law or paid attention to Your commandments and Your warnings. Even in their own kingdom—the large and rich land You set before them—they did not serve You or turn from their wicked works.
- (13) “We are slaves today in the land that You gave to our fathers to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts. We have to give its rich yield to the kings whom You have set over us because of our sins. We are in great distress.”

The prayer basically ends there. Next week we will learn more about what the Jews did in their

determination to serve the one true God who rules over all—the God who was faithful to His people even when they consistently failed Him. Let's be faithful to our God!

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
Jesus is the Saviour. Before anyone trusts Jesus to be his or her own Saviour, he or she must recognize, as the people in today's story did, one's own sinfulness and repent of that sin, understanding that only Christ Jesus can save anyone.
- We will sin. When we do, we must confess with a true, repentant heart.
- Sometimes we have to forsake friends who are not good for us and cause us to sin.
- It is important to give Bible study and worship large amounts of time.
- Here are some considerations of how Israel had treated the prophets throughout their history: What had the people of Israel done to the prophets who corrected and warned them? [Had slain them.] Who had sent the prophets? [God.] Who were the people resenting? [God.] Godly people take correction and warning and do not resent the messenger of God.

Activities:

- Play dough: praying hands, Bible
- Snack: Coriander cookies to remind of manna: "It was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey" (Exodus 16:31). Here's a recipe that may need some substitutions. Also, one ingredient is orange juice, which the Israelites did not have: [Healthy Orange Coriander Cookies – Rumi Spice](#)
- Have students stand up during prayer or during the story. (This will probably be no more than fifteen minutes. Imagine six hours.)
- Students who read may recite Nehemiah 9:17, 32, 33 in unison. (Prepare a copy of the large-print version found below.) "You are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love . . . Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love . . . You have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for You have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly."
- Review questions: (Game: Everyone will stand up while the questions are asked. A student who answers a question correctly may sit down.)
 1. Fill in the blank. Hearing the Bible read had made the Jews in Jerusalem aware of their _____. [Sins.]
 2. How did the people feel about their sins? [Sorry, sad, repentant.]
 3. The prayer the Levites prayed mentioned several things that had taken place in Israel's history. The first event of the entire world was what? Hint: It's in Genesis 1 and 2. [Creation.]
 4. What man had God chosen out of Ur of the Chaldeans? [Abraham.]
 5. What did God do at the Red Sea? [Opened it up so that Israel could walk across on dry ground.]
 6. Fill in the blank. God led the people by a _____ of cloud and fire. [Pillar.]
 7. When Moses went up Mount Sinai to get God's law, how did the people rebel against God? [By making a golden calf.]
 8. What did God give the people in the new land? [Teacher, accept an answer of one or two of the following: Land, cities, wells, vineyards, olive orchards, houses, and fruit trees.]
 9. Why did God let enemies of the people make them suffer? [Because they rejected God's Word and sinned against His commandments.]

Memory Verse[s]:

- Review Psalm 1:1–6. The video at [Bing Videos](#) is a great aid in learning this psalm. Song sheet is below.
- **1** Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.
3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.
4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
6 for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Handwork:

- Make copies on yellow paper of the praying hands picture found at the end of this lesson. Cut around window. Glue the picture to blue construction paper. Glue different colors of paper or tissue paper, cut in 1” squares, around the praying hands.

Sabbath

fasting

to humble oneself

strangers

sack clothes

[Scroll for reading the Levites' prayer]

- (1) "Lord, You made heaven with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them.
- (2) "You are the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. You found his heart faithful before you and made the covenant with him to give the land to his offspring. You have kept your promise, for you are righteous.
- (3) "You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt and heard their cry at the Red Sea and performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants, for you knew they acted arrogantly against our fathers.
- (4) "You divided the sea before them so that they went through the midst of the sea on dry land, and you cast their pursuers into the depths, as a stone into mighty waters.
- (5) "By a pillar of cloud you led them in the day, and by a pillar of fire in the night to light the way in which they should go.
- (6) "You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven, and you made known to them your holy Sabbath. You gave commandments by Moses your servant.
- (7) "You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger and brought water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and you told them to go in to possess the land that you had sworn to give them.
- (8) "But our fathers stiffened their necks and did not obey Your commandments. They were not mindful of the wonders that You performed among them. But You are a God ready to forgive, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. You did not forsake them. Even when they made for themselves a golden calf and said, 'This is your God who brought you out of Egypt,' You in Your great mercies did not forsake them.
- (9) "The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light the way by which they should go. You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna and gave them water. Forty years You sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.
- (10) "And You gave them kingdoms and peoples; they took possession of the land. You multiplied their children as the stars of heaven, and You brought them into the land that You had told their fathers to possess. You subdued the inhabitants of the land and gave them their kings and the peoples of the land. And they captured fortified cities and a rich land, and took possession of houses full of all good things, cisterns already hewn, vineyards, olive orchards and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and delighted themselves in Your great goodness.
- (11) "Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against You and cast Your law behind their back [Teacher, you might demonstrate this terrible evil by tossing a Bible behind you] and killed Your prophets, who had warned them not to turn back from You. Therefore You gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. In the time of their suffering, they cried out to You, and You heard from heaven, and mercifully gave them leaders [Teacher, point to "The Judges" on a time line] who saved them from enemies. But after they had rest they did evil again, and You abandoned them again to the hand of their enemies. Yet when they cried to You, You heard, and many times You delivered them according to Your mercies.
- (12) "The people kept on sinning and repenting—mostly sinning. Therefore You gave them over to kings of other countries. [Teacher, point to Nineveh and Babylon on a map.] Nevertheless, in Your great mercies You did not forsake them, for You are a gracious and merciful God. You have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly.
"Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept Your law or paid attention to Your commandments and Your warnings. Even in their own kingdom—the large and rich land You set before them—they did not serve You or turn from their wicked works.
- (13) "We are slaves today in the land that You gave to our fathers to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts. We have to give its rich yield to the kings whom You have set over us because of our sins. We are in great distress."

(1) Creation



Day 1

Day 3

Day 6

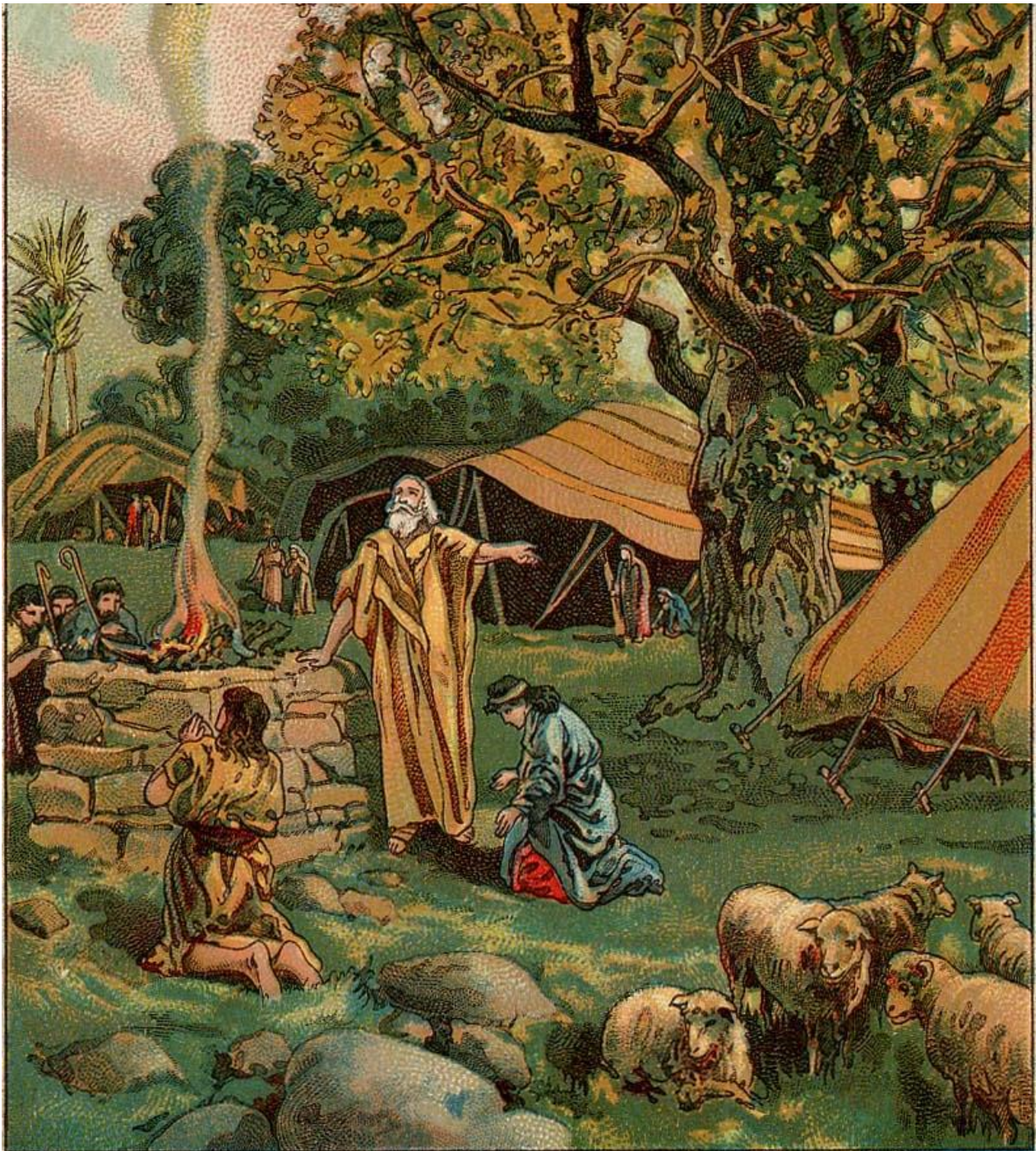
Day 2

Day 4

Day 7

Day 5

(2) The call of Abraham and covenant to give him the land



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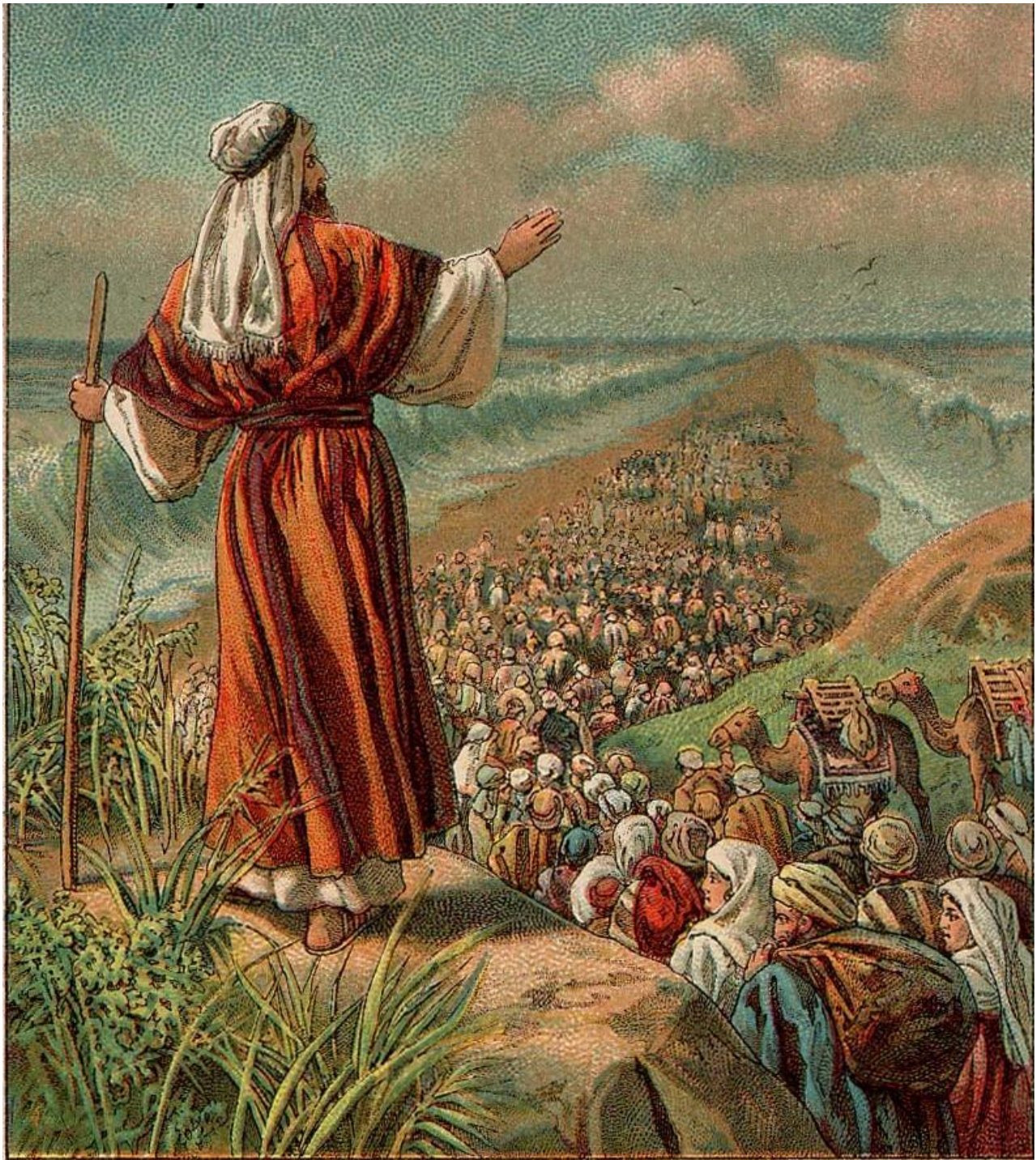
ABRAM CALLED TO BE A BLESSING

Gen. 12:1-8.

GOLDEN TEXT:—I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.

Gen. 12: 2.

(3) The parting of the Red Sea



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ISRAEL'S ESCAPE FROM EGYPT

Ex. 14:13-27.

GOLDEN TEXT:—Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hands of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.

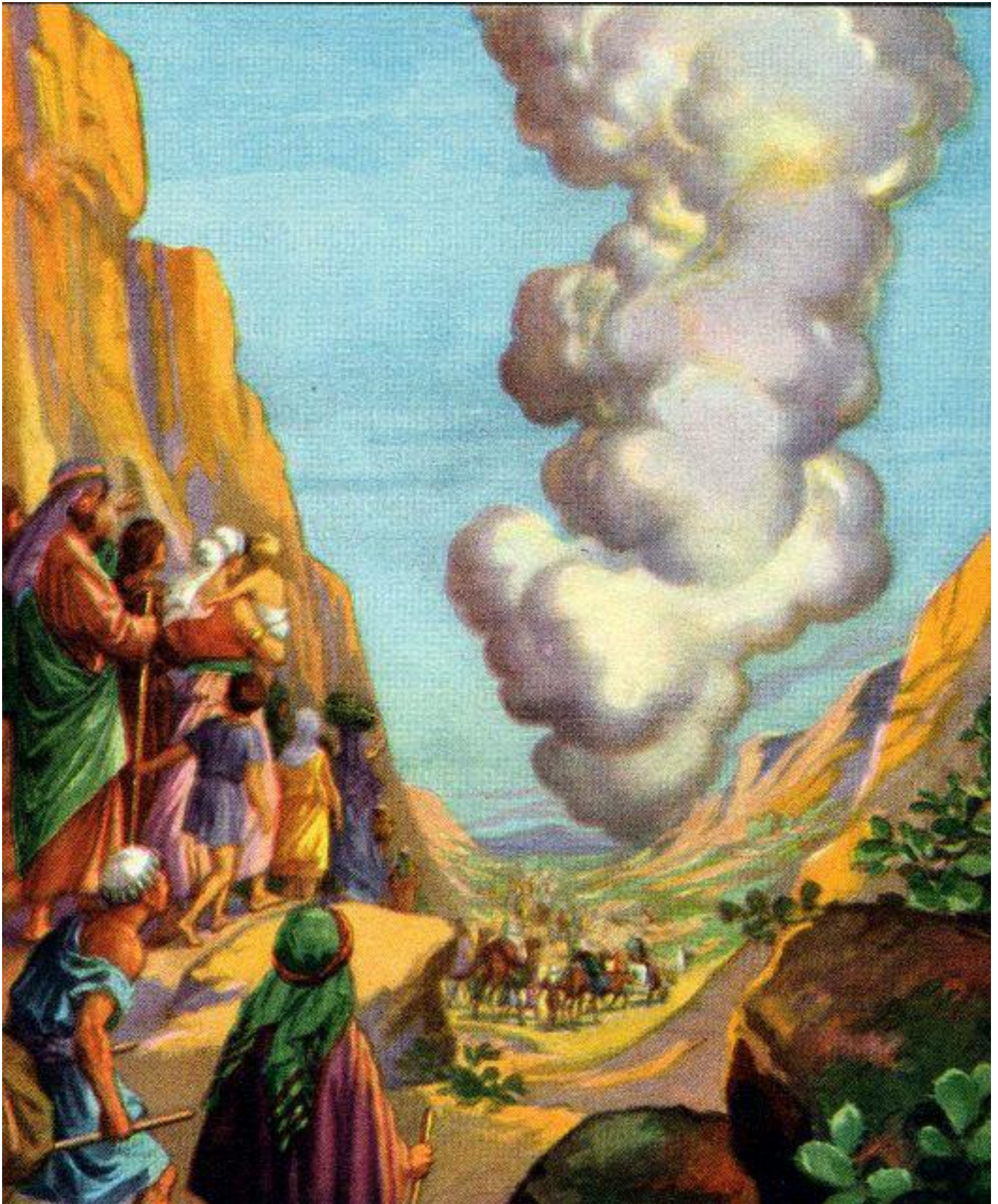
Ex. 14:30.

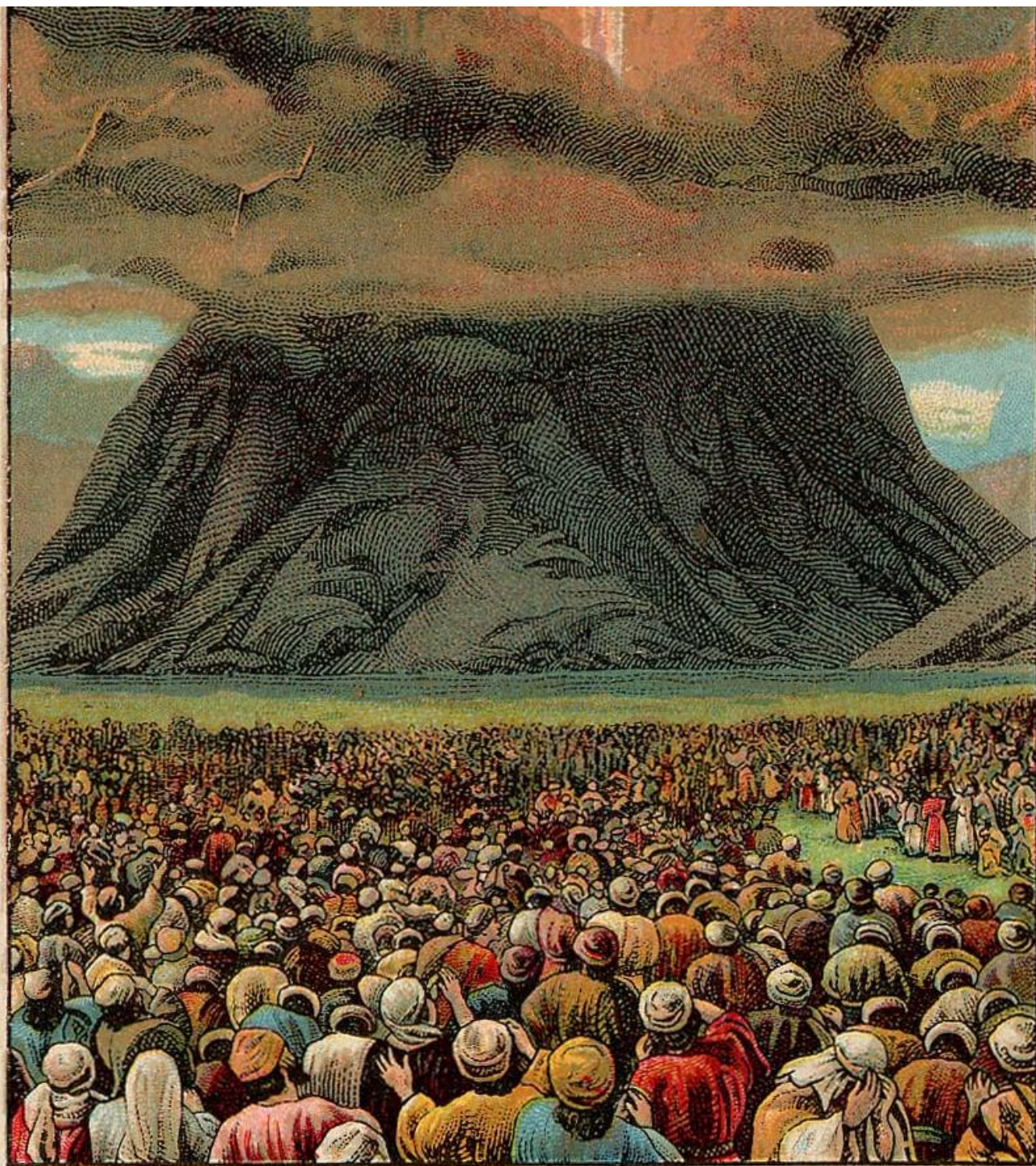
(4) Pillar and Pharaoh's Army being destroyed



(5) Being led by the pillar

(lavistachurchofchrist.org)





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THE TEN COMMANDMENTS—DUTIES TOWARD GOD

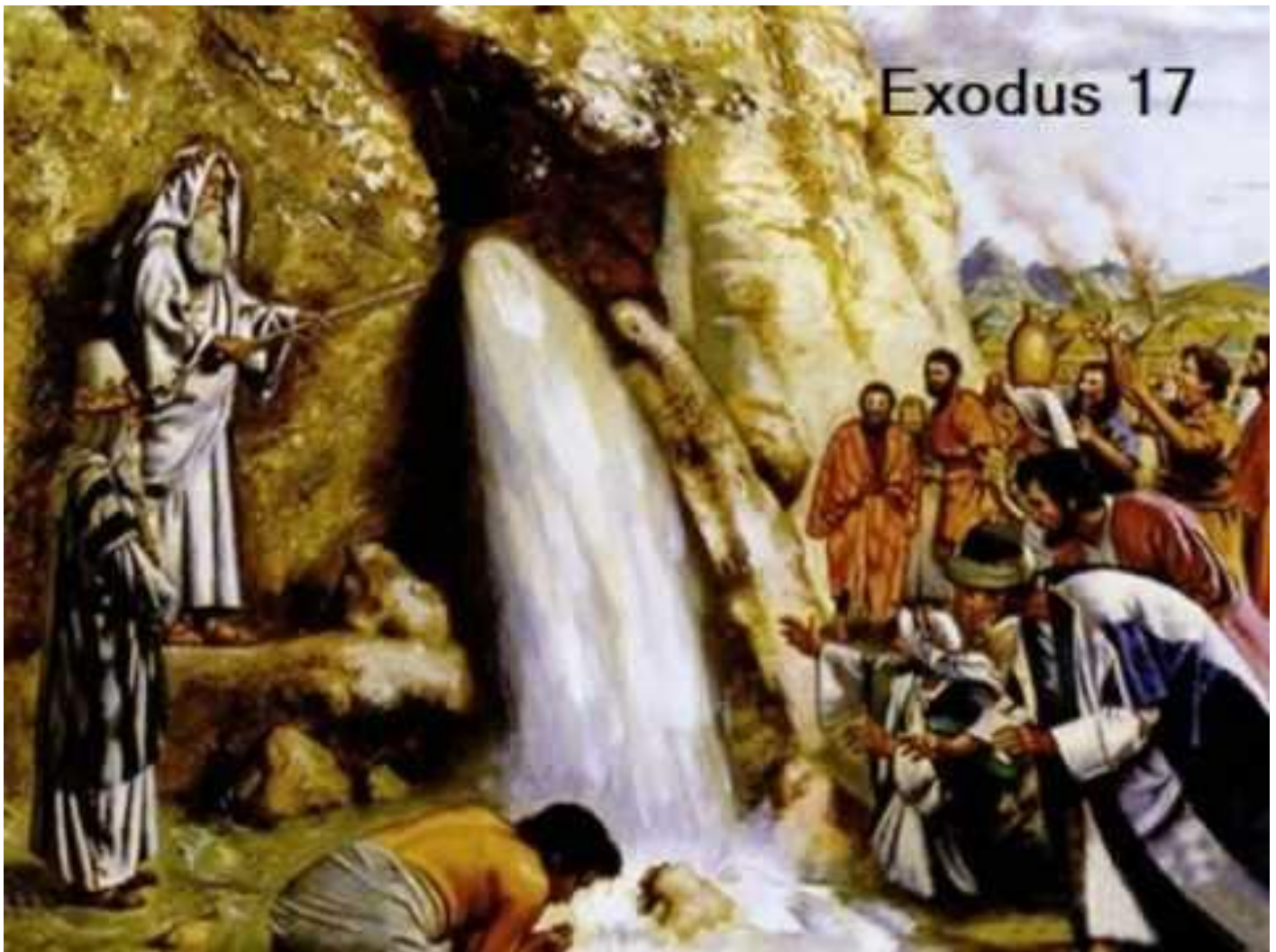
Ex. 20:1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT:—Thou shalt love the Lord thy God
with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all
thy might.

Duet. 6:5.

(7) Providing manna and water out of a rock

(<http://greenbd.info/Rephidim/>)



(8) The golden calf



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THE GOLDEN CALF

Ex. 32:1-8, 30-35.

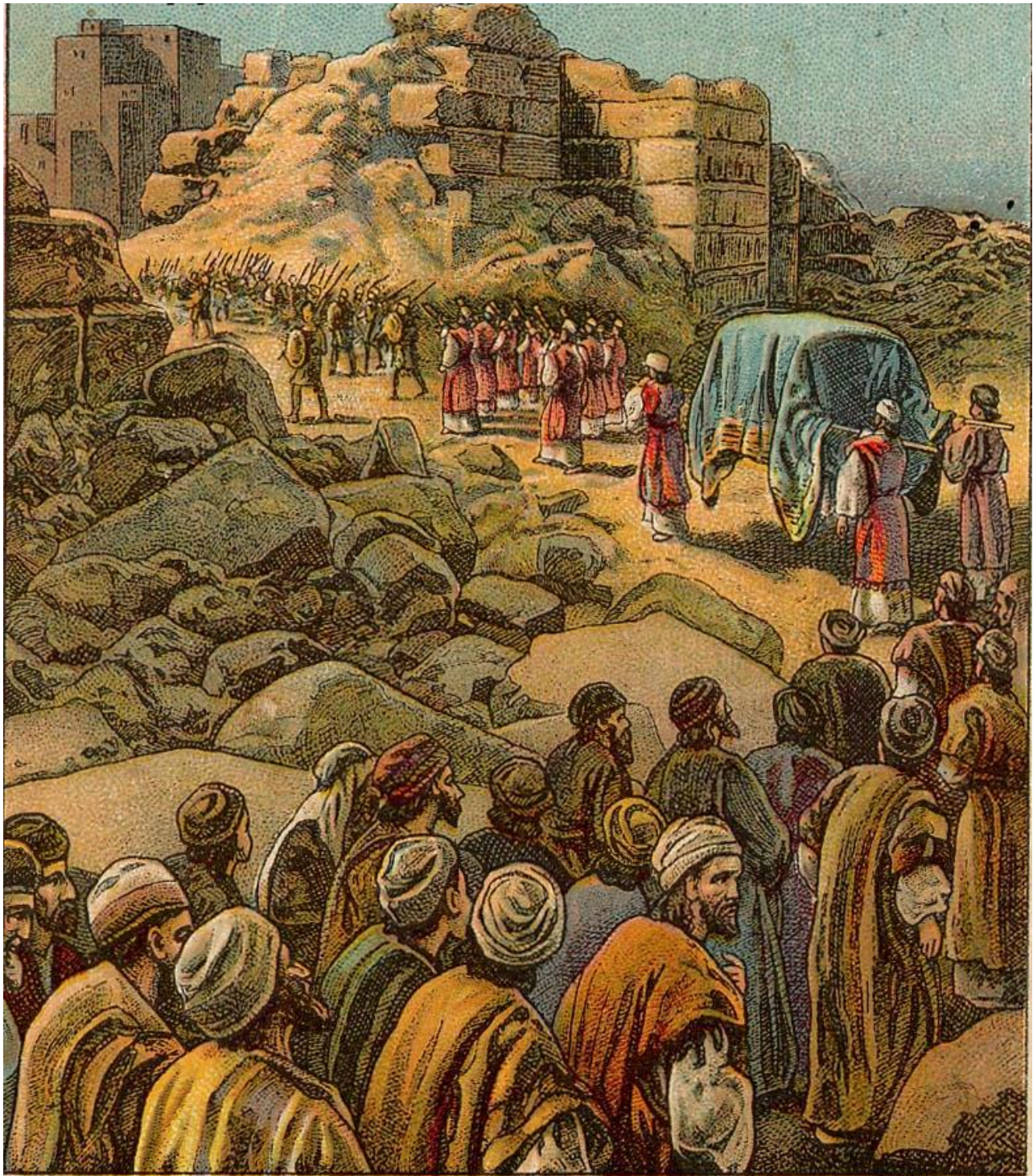
GOLDEN TEXT:—Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

I John 5:21.

(9) Manna and care for the people in the wilderness

(augsbuurgfortress.org)





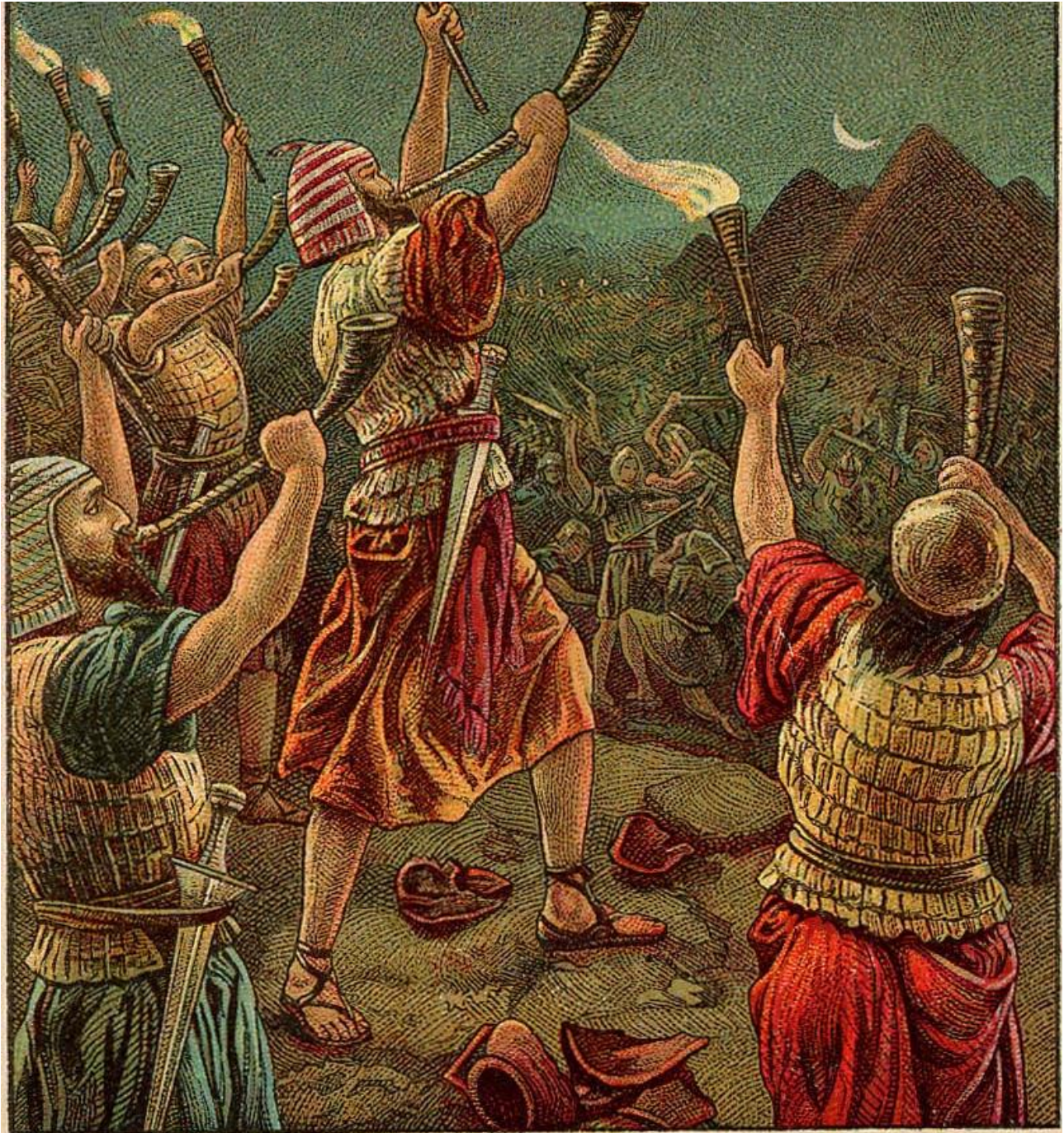
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THE CAPTURE OF JERICO

Josh. 6:8-20.

GOLDEN TEXT:—By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

Heb. 11:30.



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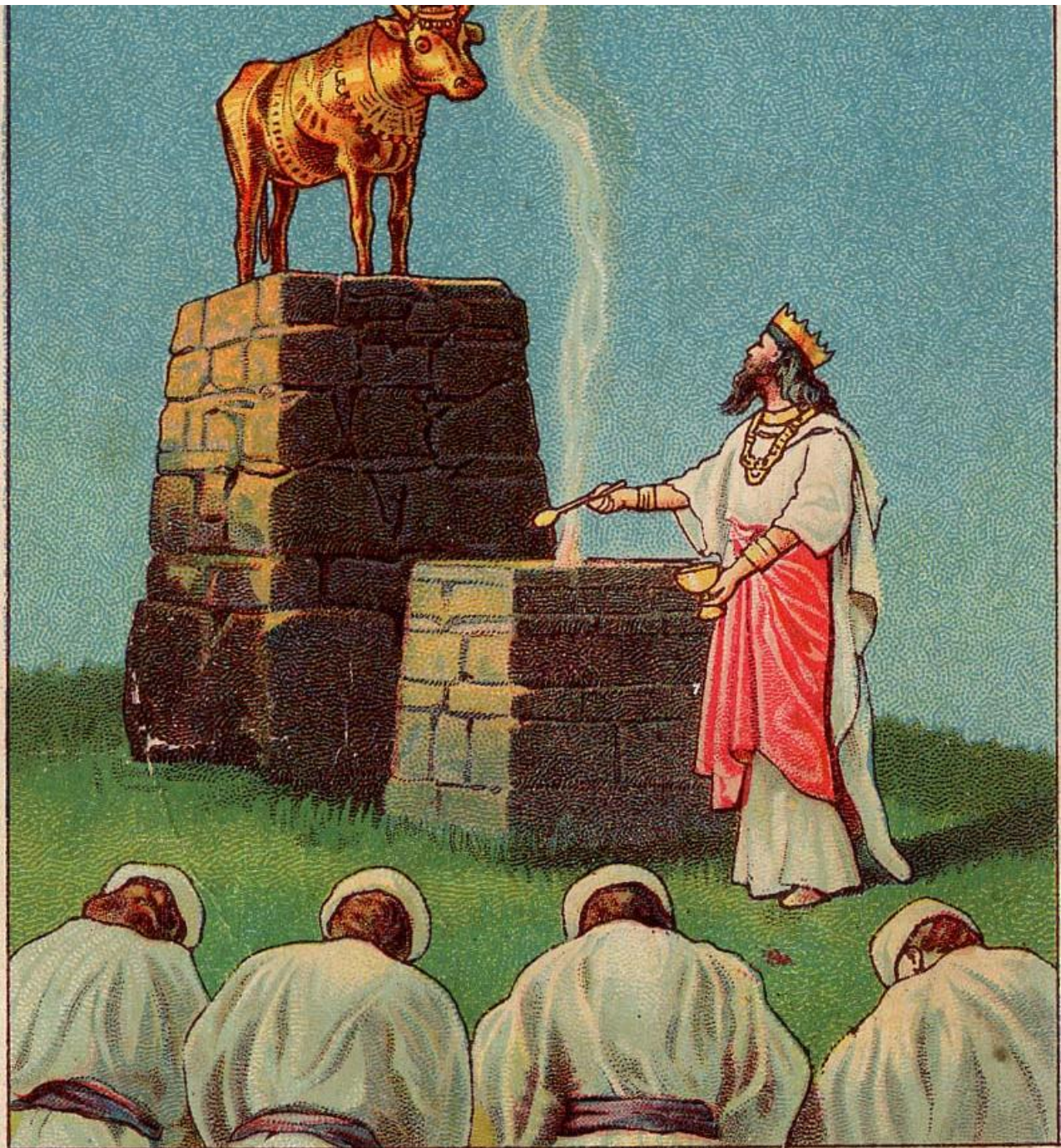
GIDEON AND HIS THREE HUNDRED

Judg. 7:9-23.

GOLDEN TEXT:—Ye shall not fear them: for the Lord your God he shall fight for you.

Deut. 3:22.

(12) Disobedience of Israel's kings bringing them just punishment



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JEROBOAM'S IDOLATRY

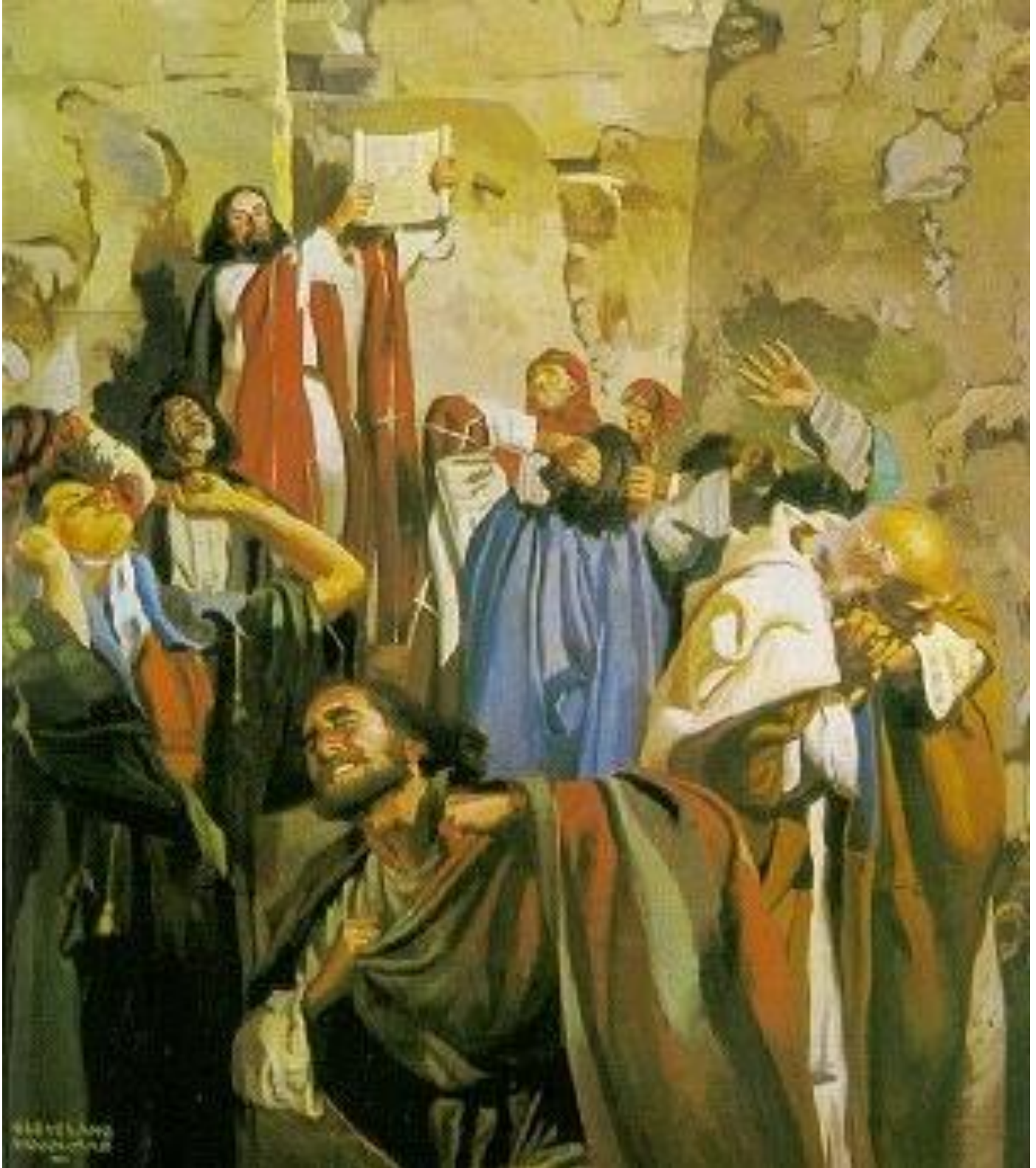
1 Kings 12 : 25-33.

GOLDEN TEXT :—Keep yourselves from idols.

1 John 5 : 21.

(13) Present distress and servitude to foreign kings

(http://www.biblical-art.com/artwork.asp?id_artwork=14019&showmode=Full)



Nehemiah 9:17, 32, 33: “You are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love . . . Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love . . . You have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for You have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly.”

Psalm 1 - Blessed Is the Man

Psalm 1 - ESV

Betsy James



1 Bless-ed is the man who walks not in the coun-sel of the wick-ed, nor

5 stands in the way of sin-ners, nor sits in the seat of scof-fers; 2 but his de -

10 light is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he med-i-tates day and

15 night. (tick, tick, tick) 3 He is like a tree plant-ed by streams of wat-er that

20 yields its fruit in its sea-son and its leaf does not with-er (with-er) In

25 all that he does he pros-pers. (pros-pers!) 4 The wick-ed are not so, but are like

30 chaff that the wind drives a - way. 5 There - fore the wick-ed will not stand in the judg-ment,

34 nor sin-ners in the con-gre - ga-tion of the righ-teous. 6 for the Lord knows the

40 way of the righ-tous, but the way of the wick-ed will per-ish. (per-ish,)



"You are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love . . . Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love . . . you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly" (Nehemiah 9:17, 32, 33).