

ENRICHMENT LESSON

THE PROPHETS

LESSON NOTES

FOCUS: THE WORDS OF THE PROPHETS TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD

- **SACRED STORY**
- **ENRICHMENT PRESENTATION**

THE MATERIAL

- **LOCATION: SACRED STORY SHELVES**
- **PIECES: DESERT BOX, CHAIN, BLUE YARN, BLOCKS, 4 SCROLLS**
- **UNDERLAY: USE THE DESERT BOX**

BACKGROUND

This lesson, especially suitable for older children, serves as an excellent introduction to lessons about the prophets, such as the story of Jonah (p. 107). We have come a long ways in time and space since creation. The People of God have been led out of slavery, ruled their own country, were defeated, carried off into exile, and returned to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem. God had been with them all the way—but they had not always been with God.

The prophets' job was to show the people, the king and the priests when they turned away from God. When the prophets communicated what God told them, they might use words, or they might act out God's message in dramatic ways. Jeremiah put a yoke on his own neck and walked about the streets of Jerusalem to show the people that would become captives. The priests understood the message and smashed the yoke.

In Jeremiah 18:18, the people say that priests teach and wise men give advice, but the prophet speaks the "word" or message of God. A secular messenger of those times, who spoke on behalf of a king, used traditional messenger-speech, first naming the one spoken for, then using the first-person voice to recite the message. Prophets spoke the same way: they identified themselves as speaking for God, then spoke "with God's voice" on behalf of God to the audience God had chosen for the message.

The role of prophets changed over time in Israel. In ancient Israel, a judge was like a priest, a ruler and a prophet all in one person. After Samuel anointed Saul, kings

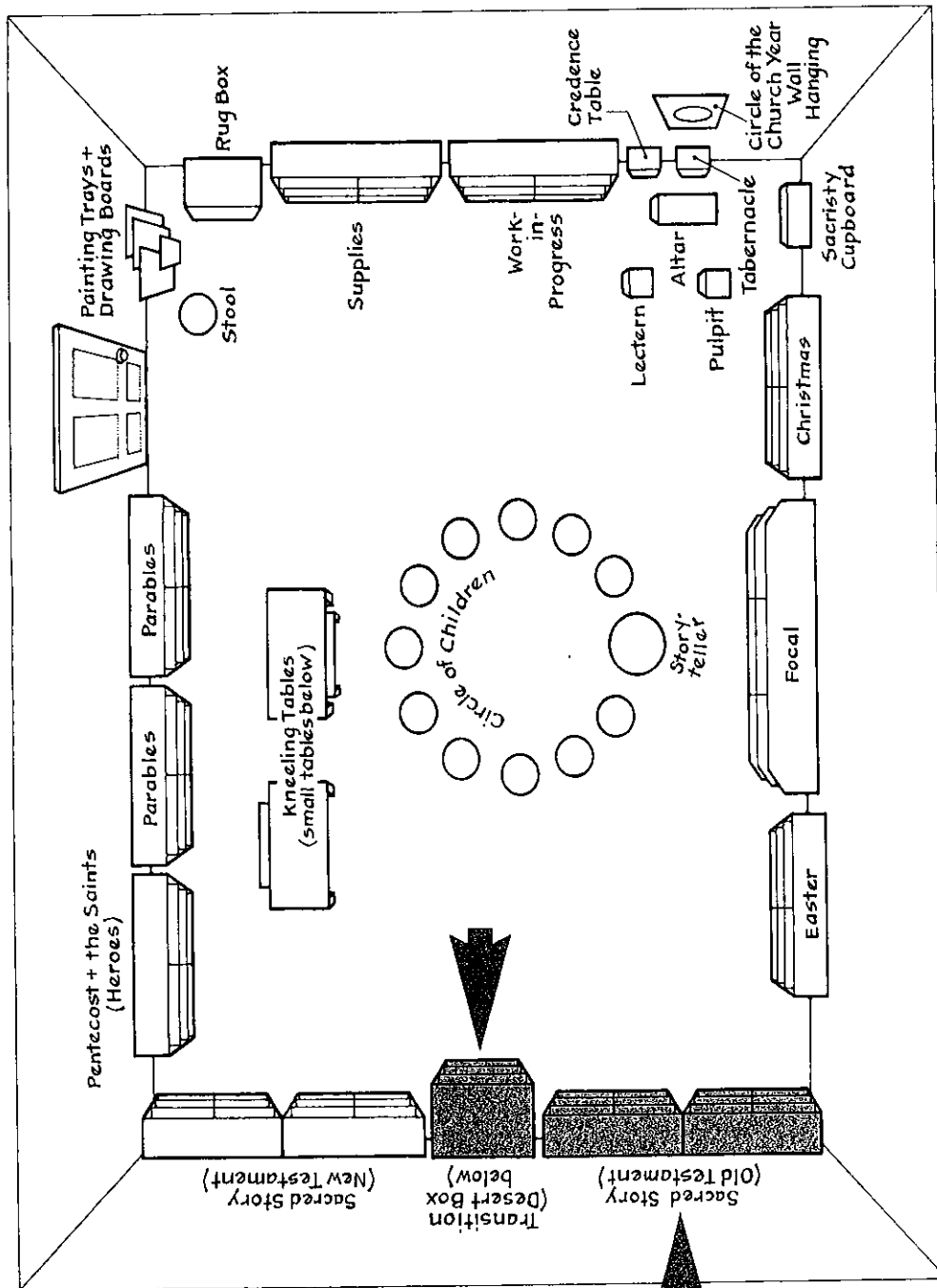
began to rule. The priests led the people in worship. At that time, prophets arose to challenge the kings, the priests and the people. After the exile there were no more independent kings, and the priests needed support to help the people keep their identity. The role of the prophets was absorbed into the role of the priest.

NOTES ON THE MATERIAL

Use the desert box to present this lesson. You'll again use material from earlier stories: the blocks representing Haran and Babylon and the large chain from the story of the Exile and Return. As you face the sacred story shelves, you'll also find one special material for this story on the top shelf, to the right of the material for the story of the Exile and Return. This special material is a basket with four scrolls: the scroll of the twelve minor prophets, the Isaiah scroll (that represents the writings of three Isaiahs), the Jeremiah scroll and the Ezekiel scroll.

SPECIAL NOTES

Storytelling tip: There were many prophets named in the Old Testament, but this lesson will tell about only a few to give the children an idea of what prophets do. These prophets, as well as prophets not mentioned here, can be more fully explored by using object boxes. For more information on making and using object boxes, see pages 22 and 72 in *The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volume 1: How to Lead Godly Play Lessons*.



WHERE TO FIND MATERIALS

MOVEMENTS

Get the desert box and place it in the middle of the circle.

Bring to the circle the basket with the materials for the Exile and Return. Place it beside you.

Bring the basket of four scrolls and place it on the other side of where you are sitting.

As you begin to introduce the story, mark in the sand a square about five inches on each side in the corner of the desert box on your far right, closest to the children. This represents Jerusalem.

Place a block of wood in the center of the box, close to you, to represent Haran. Place a larger block at your far left to represent Babylon. Place two pieces of blue yarn at the left to represent the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Now you are ready to begin.

Point to the corner of the desert box on the far right, close to you, to show the northern kingdom. Then point to the rectangle you have traced in the sand for Jerusalem, the capital of the southern kingdom.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go, so you will always be able to find this lesson.

Keep looking. I am not finished yet.

This is Jerusalem. Here is the wall. This was the city of David, the city of the People of God.

Here is Haran and here is Babylon.

Sometimes the People of God forget who they are. They hide from God, and pretend that God isn't there. Sometimes they even worship other gods.

There are also people who come so close to God, and God comes so close to them, that they know what God wants them to say or do. These people are called prophets. They know the best way. Both men and women are prophets, so both boys and girls can be or grow up to be prophets.

After King Solomon died, his kingdom was divided into two parts. A prophet named Ahijah showed that God knew this was the best way. He took off his new cloak and cut it into twelve pieces.

Ten pieces were for the tribes that were around the city of Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, and two pieces were for the tribes around Jerusalem, the capital of the Southern Kingdom.

MOVEMENTS

Show the basket of scrolls.

Pick up each scroll named to show to the children.

Point away from yourself, in the direction of Jerusalem traced in the sand.

Open the scroll of the twelve minor prophets to read these words from Amos, together with the names of the prophets on the scrolls.

Roll up the scroll of the twelve and place it between you and Jerusalem.

WORDS

Some prophets, like Elijah and Elisha, left none of their own words. They were either lost or never written down. Others wrote down what God told them to say, or some of their friends wrote down their words.

☛ I want to show you something about the ones who left their words for us. The words are on four scrolls. Here are four small scrolls to help us remember.

☛ This one is very interesting. It has the writing of twelve prophets on it. This one is called Isaiah, but it really has the writing of three Isaiahs on it. This one is all the words of Ezekiel, and this other one is all the words of Jeremiah.

☛ Now let's see what happened. Here is the southern kingdom.

☛ A prophet who spoke to them is Amos. I will put the scroll of the twelve prophets there to remind you. Let me read something from the scroll:

"I hate, I despise your feasts,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
Take away from me the noise of your songs;
To the melody of your harps I will not listen.
But let justice roll down like waters,
And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

(Amos 5:21, 23-24)

Amos spoke for God to the priests and to the king. This is what all the prophets did.

Now here are the names of all the prophets on that scroll:
Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk,
Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

One day, the southern kingdom was conquered by Assyria. Then the Assyrians surrounded Jerusalem. The people were afraid, but the Assyrians went away.

MOVEMENTS

Put the Isaiah scroll down by Jerusalem.

As in the story of the Exile and Return, pick up the large chain and drop it across the middle of the desert box between Babylon and Jerusalem. Listen to the terrible sound of the metal chain striking the sand.

Move the scroll of Isaiah from Jerusalem to Babylon.

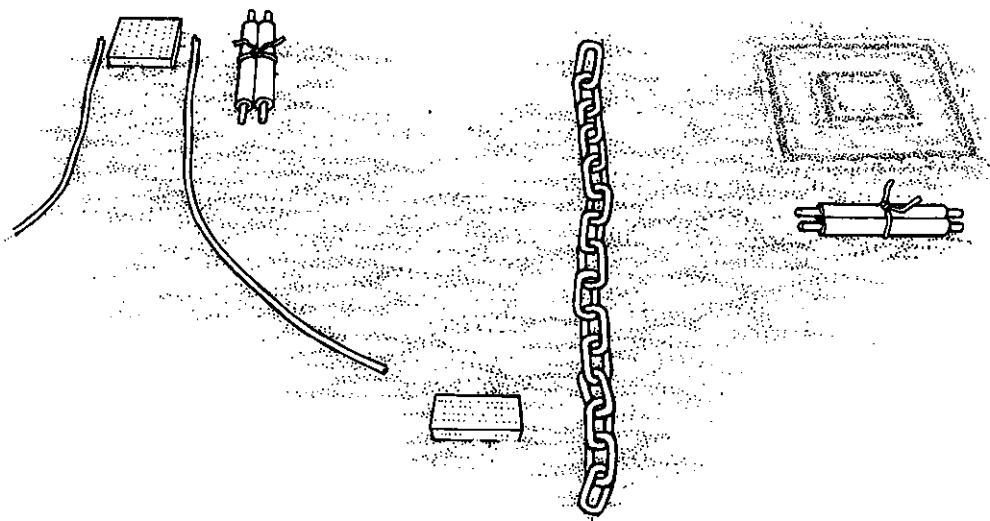
WORDS

Isaiah of Jerusalem said that the kingdom would fall, but that a remnant, a few of the people, would be saved.

It was not the Assyrians but the Babylonians who took the city, and they took many people away into exile.

The second Isaiah must have been one of those people who was taken, and he wrote his words in Babylon.

He said there would be a highway, made straight in the desert, that they would go home one day. He was hopeful.



THE CHAIN AND THE SCROLLS OF ISAIAH AND THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS (STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE)

Move the scroll of Isaiah from Babylon back to Jerusalem.

The third Isaiah was one of the people who went back to Jerusalem. The people there were not really glad to see him and the others who returned. The city was still broken down. Many of the walls were still black from the fires the Babylonians had set. This Isaiah helped the people and the priests get ready for a time when they would not have their own king.

MOVEMENTS

Put the Jeremiah scroll down by Jerusalem.

Put the Ezekiel scroll down by Jerusalem.

Sit quietly and reflect on the scene for a few moments. Then begin the wondering.

Gather up the scrolls and place them in the basket. Gather up the other materials and place them in the basket for the Exile and Return. Put the baskets back and then roll the desert box back to its place. Return and sit quietly for a moment, then help children, one at a time, choose their work.

WORDS

- ☛ Jeremiah stayed in Jerusalem. He said that the city would fall, but that the people of Jerusalem would not understand what he was talking about.

Finally, when the Babylonians came, he and Baruch, his scribe, went to Egypt with some others to be safe. But he was very sad.

- ☛ Ezekiel wrote in Babylon. He was taken away with one of the first groups, even before Jerusalem was torn down. He was a prophet in his new home.

He told the people in exile that Jerusalem would be destroyed, and that they would not go home soon. After Jerusalem was destroyed, he had visions of hope that they would go home again. They would be like dry bones in a valley that put themselves back together again, turned into people and walked to their old home.

These are most of the prophets in the Old Testament. We know a lot about them because their words were written down a long time ago.

Today there are still prophets. They speak to the rulers, to the priests, the ministers and rabbis, and to the people. They still say and do what God wants them to. They help all of us know the true way to live and die.

Prophets come from all kinds of places and are all kinds of people—just like you. So some of you in this circle may be or become prophets.

- ☛ Now I wonder what you like best about the prophets?

I wonder what's most important about the prophets?

I wonder if you know any prophets, or if any prophets know you?

I wonder if the prophets in the Bible are all the prophets we need?