



STORY FROM...

Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 2 Samuel, 2 Kings

PROPHECIES FROM...

2 Sam. 7, Isaiah 7, 9, 40, 53, 61, Psalm 22, Micah 5, Zachariah 12

Judges, Kings & Prophets

◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** (Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)

▼ **TELL THE STORY** (Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)

The people of Israel continued on their journey back to the Promised Land. God covered the Tabernacle with a cloud during the day that changed to a pillar of fire at night. When this cloud moved they followed it and set up camp wherever it stopped.

But when the people of Israel got close to Canaan—within a few miles from the border—they wouldn't enter the land because they were afraid of the people who lived there. They said, *"We can't defeat them, they are stronger and bigger than us. Next to them we are like little grasshoppers!"*

God had promised to fight for them and give them this land, but the people did not trust him. So God punished them by making them wander in the dessert for 40 years. This was a time filled with struggle and complaints against Moses and God.

As Moses neared the end of his life, he reminded the people of Israel of all of God's promises, laws, and commandments. Moses challenged them, *"You must love God with all of your heart, mind, soul and strength ... for he is your life!"*

Then Moses said to Joshua in front of all of the Israelites, *"Be strong and courageous! Now Joshua will lead these people into the land God promised us. Do not be afraid or discouraged; God will never leave you or forget about you."* (If you remember from a previous story, Joshua was Moses assistant that went up the mountain with him to meet with God.)

After Moses died, Joshua became the new leader of Israel and led them to recapture the Promised Land from their enemies. As the Israelites entered the land, God told them to drive out all of the people who lived there because they were full of evil. But the Israelites didn't listen and eventually started worshipping the false gods of the people who remained in Canaan. This led into many other sins. Because of their disobedience, God removed his protection and allowed other nations to come into Canaan and overpower them.

As they were defeated, the people of Israel began to suffer, so they begged God for help and forgiveness. God once again forgave them and sent leaders, called *judges*, to lead them in defeating their enemies. (These are not like judges we have today, but more like generals). Battle after battle, Israel conquered their enemies at every border. In victory, the people would worship God, but soon after, the people turned away from God again and lived their own way.

Unfortunately, this became a pattern from generation to generation... the people of Israel would come to God and worship him when they needed help, but when things were going well, they returned to worshipping other things. This was a time where everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

Because other nations were ruled by kings, the people of Israel complained to God saying, *"We want a human king, who we can see, to rule over us."* God appointed a king named Saul to rule Israel. However, because of his disobedience, God eventually removed Saul as king. God searched for a king who would love him and live in his ways.

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(story continued from previous page)

He chose a young boy named David. When David grew up and was made king, God blessed him and the Israelites greatly. David deeply loved God and tried to live in his ways. God told David, *“One of your descendants will rule Israel forever—his kingdom will never end!”*

Solomon succeeded his father David and became the wisest and richest king in history. Solomon prayed to God, *“Give me your wisdom so I can rule the people the right way.”* God answered his prayer and gave Solomon great wisdom; in fact, rulers traveled from all over the world just to hear him. Solomon wrote books like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, which are full of the wisdom that God gave him.

Under Solomon’s leadership, the people of Israel enjoyed peace and great prosperity. The *Temple* was built in the capital city of Jerusalem to replace the Tabernacle. This Temple was a more permanent symbol of God’s presence remaining with the people.

But later on, Solomon married foreign wives who led him into worshipping false gods. Because of Solomon’s failures, God allowed civil war to break out, and the Israelites divided into a northern kingdom called Israel and southern kingdom called Judah. Eventually, kings that worshipped false gods led both of these kingdoms.

Because of their rebellion, God removed his protection from both Israel and Judah and allowed other nations to come in and conquer them. The Israelites were forced out of the Promised Land and many were taken away to be slaves once again.

During the time of these kings, God sent *prophets* as messengers, calling people to return to his ways and follow his commandments. These prophets warned the Israelites of what would happen if they continued to rebel against God.

A prophet named Jeremiah proclaimed God’s message, saying, *“A day is coming when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel. I will put my laws in their minds and write my commands on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people.”*

Prophets also told people about a coming king, one who would rule forever and save them—a *Messiah*. God gave the prophets visions of what this Messiah would be like. (Listen carefully to these as they will tie into some future stories).

Prophets like Isaiah told them that ...

- ... *He will be a descendant of King David.*
- ... *A virgin will give birth to him in Bethlehem.*
- ... *A messenger from the wilderness will challenge people to prepare for his coming.*
- ... *He will bring good news and healing to the poor, brokenhearted and the sick.*
- ... *He will do no wrong, living a life without sin.*
- ... *He will be beaten, whipped, and wounded—all so we can have peace, healing and forgiveness.*
- ... *He will be silent when faced with accusations. He will be put on trial and thrown in prison.*
- ... *His hands and feet will be pierced. He will be killed like a criminal and buried in a rich man’s tomb.*
- ... *God will lay the punishment and guilt for all of our sins on him. His life will be made an offering for us.*
- ... *Because of him, many will be made right with God.*

After these prophets, God did not speak to humans again for 400 hundred years...



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▲ **RETELL THE STORY** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- **Why did God tell the Israelites to drive out everyone who lived in Canaan? What happened?**
- **What is the pattern that the Israelites got into?**
- **What was the role of the prophets? What did the prophets foretell about the Messiah?**

FROM ALL OF THE STORIES SO FAR...

- **What have you seen for the first time in these stories? What do you wonder about?**
- **What common themes run through all of the stories?**
 - God wants us to live closely with him—listening and obeying.*
 - He provides the best possible way of life for us to live.*
 - God desires to rescue his creation and bring them back to himself.*
 - He will go to amazing lengths to accomplish this.*
 - Our sins require sacrifice—a life for a life.*
- **What have we learned about what humans are like? Where have we seen that?**
- **What have we learned about what God is like? Where have we seen that?**
 - He does what is good, right, and perfect—he is holy. He is powerful, creative, knows all things, has control over the elements, punishes rebellion, keeps his promises, does not allow evil to remain with him, provides a way of forgiveness, loves his creation, provides us with the best way to live, wants to protect us and bless us, wants us to continue his blessings, and much more!*

◆ **APPLICATION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*

- What did you notice from the story for the first time?
- What questions do you have about the story?
- How did the story challenge or encourage you?

- Are we like the Israelites? What patterns do we get into that are not good?
- What does it mean for you to live in God's ways?
- How could a group of people committed to live in God's ways and be God's blessing make a difference in the world?