

The Sword of The Lord and Gideon



STORIES OF THE OLD
TESTAMENT

By

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View from Mount Nebo

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Prologue

My Dear Friends,

I love the power of a good story, especially one that teaches correct principles. Some of my favorite and first stories that I have ever done were the scriptures. I began many years ago publishing the stories of the Old and New Testaments. Please consider what the Old and New Testaments largely are.

The Almighty, through his prophets, gathered, edited, and published a book of histories, stories and teachings for us. It is a sacred library selected by God to help us. And while some may say, ‘Oh, I’ve heard all those since I was just a child!’ my response

is, ‘Have you? Have you learned all that the Lord intended for you from that story?’ It seems with the word of the Lord, there is always another layer of meaning.



For that reason, we offer this small collection of stories originally printed for newspapers and produced for radio. Our hope is that they will help in some small way draw you closer to the arms of mercy.

The stories contained in this book are true and intended to help others feel of His spirit and gain a testimony for themselves.

Feel free to use them as needed and share them with whomever you wish.

Blessings to you,

Glenn

Foreword by Jason Tonioli

I can still vividly remember sitting at a piano with my mother many times and after whining and complaining about practicing to her, she would tell me that there would come a day that I would need to be able to play the piano for others. Her desire was that I would be able to play a song out of a hymn book to help at a church meeting. But gradually



as my wonderful mother consistently showed up for the frequent battles over practicing, she won the piano war with her son.

I was able to play a hymn out of a hymnbook as a teenager and somewhere along the way I began to hear the music that was around me that others seemed to not hear. Over the years I began to pencil down a melody from time to time. Eventually I started writing down some of my songs and arrangements to share with others.

I first heard Glenn's stories on the radio as a teenager and as he started to tell his stories through his TV documentaries I would sometimes run across his face and voice on television.

I received a call one day from a friend in Brigham City, Utah who asked if I would be willing to do a fireside on the topic of pioneers. I was told that Glenn Rawson, who had done stories about the pioneers on History of the Saints TV documentary, would be there telling stories. They wanted to know if I could play a few songs.

Right before the meeting started, we decided that it might be cool if I played a hymn on the piano as Glenn told his stories, just like the radio stories. Glenn's radio stories have always had music behind his voice and the music is able to bring a special spirit.

I still remember Glenn announcing to the audience that we were trying something new and that he didn't even know what stories he would be sharing once he started. He went on to explain that we would do our best to follow the spirit and he then turned to look at me and we both laughed that quite possibly the stories he would be telling and/or the music could end up being a complete train wreck.

I know I said a prayer in my heart and took a deep breath as he started to share his first story and I had to play my first notes.

I had my iPad with several of the hymn arrangements I have written over the years but as I listened to the story I quickly realized that playing music from a scripted source would not work and if I did try to play from my music, it would be a train wreck.

After a few minutes I began to focus on the story and listen as best I could for the feeling and music that went with that moment. Something magical happened and the music just came. It was like my fingers knew exactly where to go and even as I type this, I get a bit choked up thinking about that experience.

As the spirit and my fingers helped to add a soundtrack to Glenn's story and I gave in and quit worrying about hitting a wrong note, that's when the real magic happened.

The faces of the people in the audience changed. You could see the light in their eyes. Many people were wiping tears from their eyes. The combination of the spoken word mixed with the right musical soundtrack allowed the spirit to touch people in a way and at a level that you don't find in many places in this life.

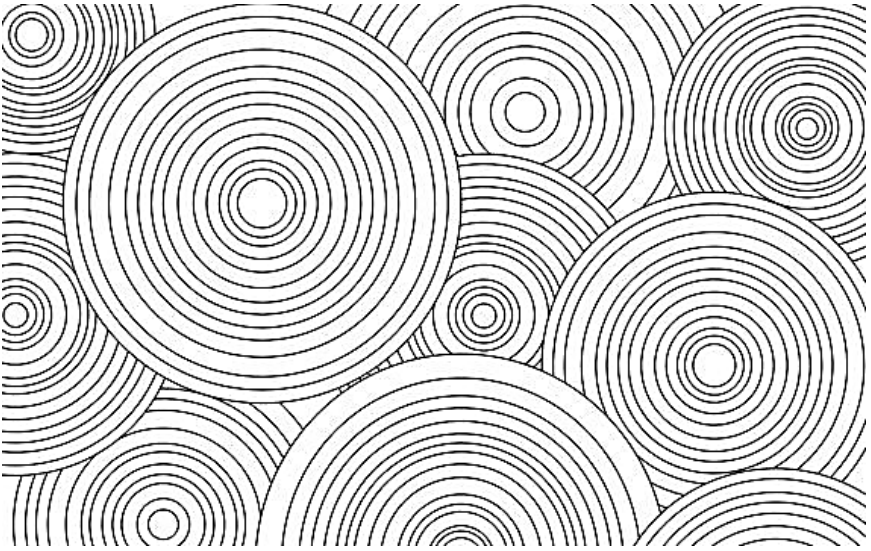
I am so grateful for that experience.

Since that time, I have been able to provide my music as the soundtrack to more of Glenn's stories than I can count. These stories have reached and continue to reach more people than I ever thought possible and I have been able to use my talents to help others feel the spirit.

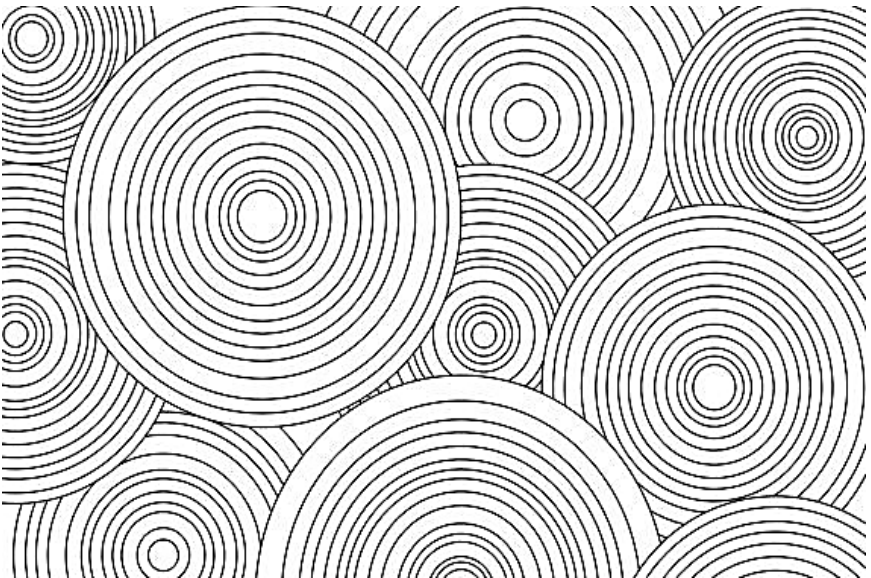
The stories Glenn tells are important and I hope for some people, life changing. Glenn's example and stories have made me a better person and I am so grateful for his friendship.

I have never met someone who is so giving of his time and willing to share his talents with no thought of getting anything in return than Glenn. He has a special gift that allows him to teach in the way our Savior taught.

I hope that Glenn's stories will touch and impact you in a way that will make you want to be a better person and more like our Savior. I know that nothing would bring Glenn more joy than to know that his efforts helped another person come closer to Jesus Christ.



The Faith of Abraham



By any standard Abraham was an amazing man. God called him “my friend.” History has called him the “Father of the faithful.” What made this man so special?

The answer... Faith—

Abraham was a man of Faith. When God commanded him to leave his native land, Abraham left not knowing where he was going.



Abraham and Isaac

Faith—from a high place in the land of Canaan, “the Lord said unto Abraham...lift up now thine

eyes and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever.” Yet, Abraham lived out his days in a tent, never to see the day when he and his seed possessed that land. He received the promises and saw the fulfillment afar off.

Faith—Again and again, Abraham was promised innumerable posterity. “I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth,” the Lord

said. Yet, Sarah was barren. It did not matter, Abraham believed the promises of the Almighty, even when it took a lifetime to see the fulfillment.

Faith, even after Abraham received a son through Hagar, God said, “Sarah, thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him.”

Sarah was 90 years old and yet Abraham believed and “rejoiced.”

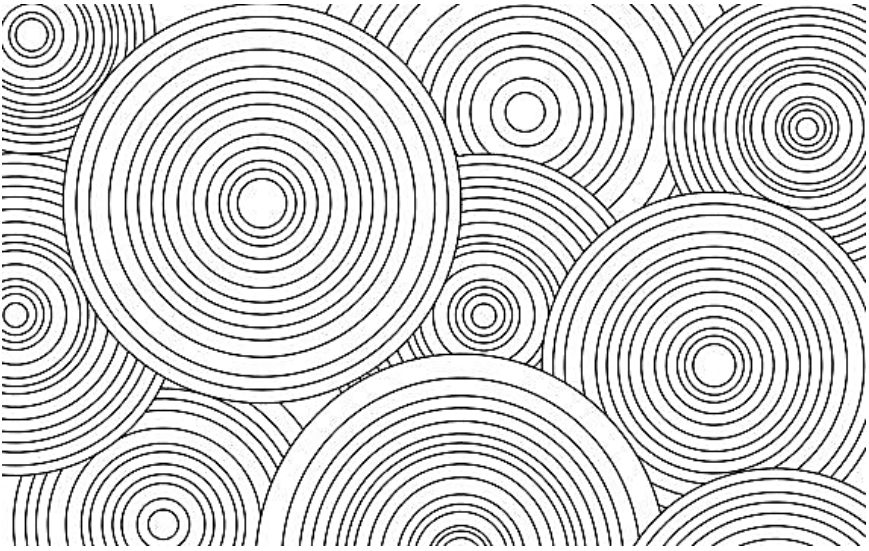
Faith—Isaac was born even of him that was “as good as dead.” And then after a lifetime of believing in impossible promises, the Lord commanded Abraham “take now thy son, thine only son whom thou lovest...and offer him...for a burnt offering.” Without a doubt or hesitation Abraham rose early the next morning and set out to find that mount where he would kill his covenant son. Three days later, Abraham bound Isaac, the son of promise, and “laid him on the altar upon the wood. And...took the knife to slay his son.”

Wait! God had promised Abraham children in number as the stars. He had promised him that his children would be a Gospel blessing to all men ever after. But all those promises resided in that son Abraham was about to kill.

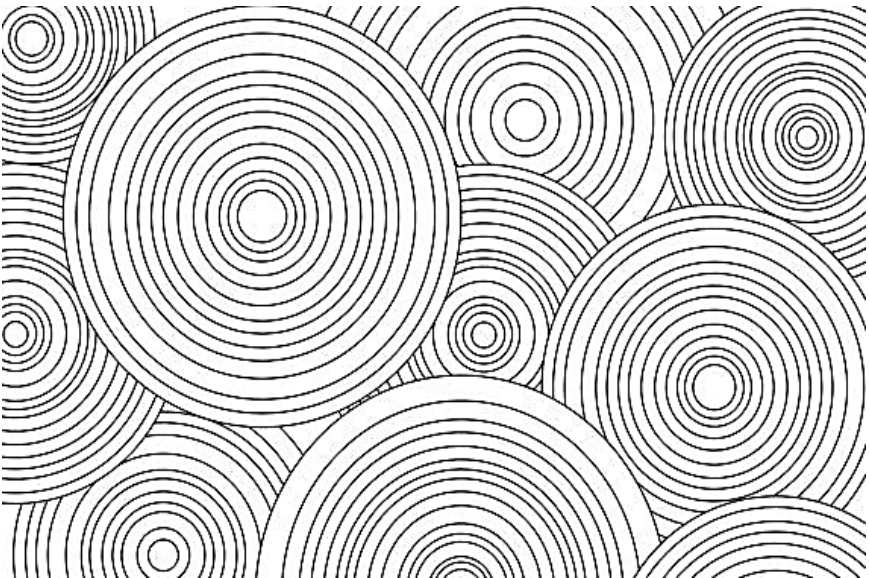
How could the promises live if Isaac died? Abraham believed that if God promised, he would keep that promise even if He had “to raise him...from the dead.”

The knife never fell and the promises were fulfilled.

Faith may be hard to define, but it is relatively simple to live—if God promises—believe Him. If God commands—obey Him.



They That Be with Us



I would like to share one of the first Old Testament stories that ever impressed me as a child. In that story, it seems that the king of Syria declared war on Israel. But every time he attempted to ambush the king of Israel, Elisha the prophet of God would warn Israel's king, and the ambush would be thwarted.

Now, this happened so many times that the Syrian king became convinced he had spies somewhere in his ranks who were tipping off Israel's king.

A servant of the Syrian king told him that Elisha the prophet was the one warning Israel's king. Well, the king of Syria determined that he was going to take Elisha.

By spies, he learned that Elisha was staying in Dothan. The king sent a large army of men with chariots and horses, and by night they surrounded the city of Dothan. Early the next morning, Elisha's servant comes outside, and what does he see? – well, an army of Syrian soldiers surrounding the city. Imagine waking up to that! In a panic, he runs back to Elisha.

“Alas my master,” he says, “[what are we going to do?]” (2 Kings 6:15)

Well now, I think I know in part a little of how he must have felt. I don't know how many times in recent years I have been

surrounded and overwhelmed with opposition, responsibility, and deadlines. There have been times when I could see absolutely no way out, and I, too, was in a worried panic. And I suspect I'm probably not the only one who's been there. Now for that person who's there now, or soon will be, this is the rest of the story.

Elisha came out and surveyed the situation. "Fear not:" he said, "for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." (2 Kings 6:16)

I almost laugh when I think of the reaction of Elisha's servant to that. Surely he could count, couldn't he? Just imagine the look on his face when he counted two against an army!

Elisha knew that his servant didn't understand and so he prayed, "Lord I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see." (2 Kings 6:17)

Suddenly, the eyes of Elisha's servant were opened and he saw on the mountains around the city a great heavenly host with fiery horses and chariots surrounding the Syrian army and standing in protection of the man of God.

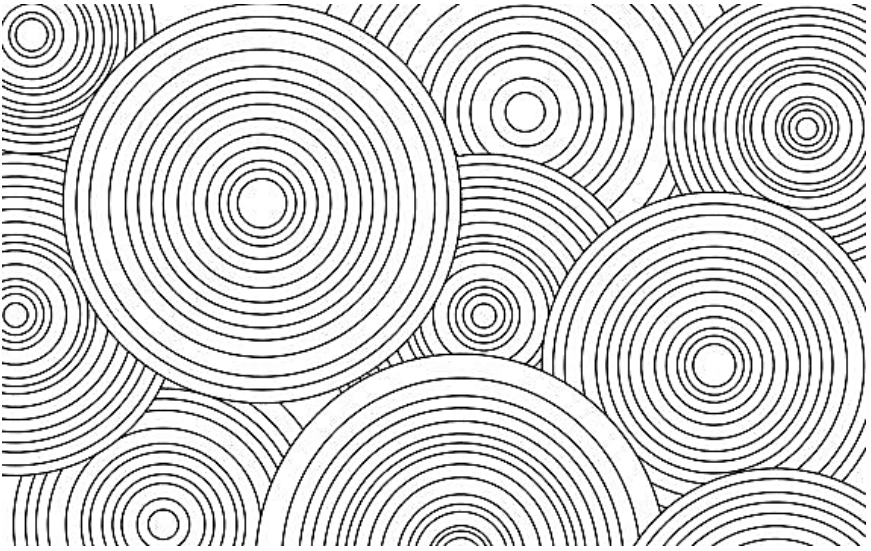
Even though the record is silent, I believe the servant of Elisha had a great boost to his confidence with that, and was no longer worried. (see 2 Kings 6)

Nor should we be!

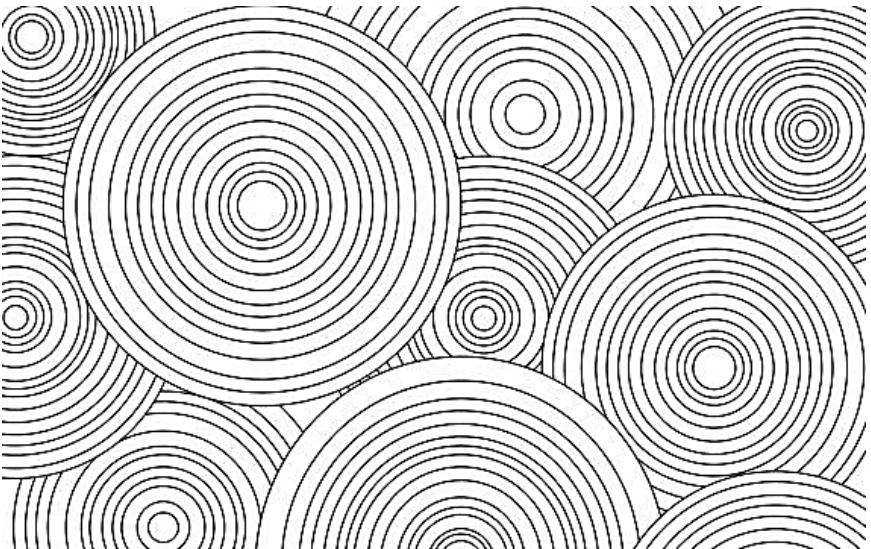
We live in the presence of the hosts of heaven. They see us, they know us, and they love us, and oft times in difficult situations are appointed to help us, though we may never see them. (see Joseph F. Smith, Gospel Doctrine)

The Savior once said, “Be still, and know that I am God: ...”
(Psalms 46:10)

May the Lord so bless you.



Moses and Elijah



I 20 years-old, Moses walked up the slopes of Mount Nebo accompanied by Joshua and the Senate. Despite his age, his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated. He was still strong and vigorous. It was not by his will that he ascended those steep slopes. “Get thee up into this mountain,” the Lord said to him, “...and die...”

Forty years he had labored to prepare and bring the children of Israel into their promised land, and now he would not be allowed to take them in. From a high eminence atop Mt Nebo, called Pisgah, Moses stood and looked out. Beneath him lay the plains of Moab. To the east lay the deserts and empty space of Jordan. Yet these were not what the Almighty wanted him to see.

Moses looked north and “the Lord shewed him all the land of Gilead unto Dan.” That’s a long way. His view moved south through the land that would belong to Ephraim and the others of the tribes of Israel, all the way to the Dead Sea, the Valley of Jericho, and Zoar on the south.

By the power of God, Moses saw and comprehended the promised land that lay before him. Then Moses was taken up into heaven without tasting death. According to some records, a whirlwind of fire came and took him up.

He would ascend beyond Pisgah to heaven taking with him the keys and authority that had gathered Israel and led them to the promised land.

Approximately four centuries later, and just a short distance to the north, Elijah the Prophet, “took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters.” The waters of the Jordan “divided hither and thither, so that [Elijah and Elisha] went over on a dry ground.”

This moment at the end of his ministry was typical of that prophet who would be the last of the prophets until the ministry of Jesus to hold the keys of the sealing power. As he bound or loosed, whether on earth or in heaven—so it would be.

Though Elijah would be famous for such deeds, such as binding the rain of the heavens or loosing fire on the earth, his power to seal would not be fully realized until later.

So remarkable was his ministry and the miracles he wrought that he would become a figure of legend, myth, and mystery.

Elijah crossed the Jordan at Jericho, and as he and Elisha walked and talked, suddenly, “there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.”

In the distance I could see Nebo where Moses was taken up. To my right I could see where Elijah was translated, and I marveled at how close the two places were. A few days later I put my hand to my brow and looked into the distance at another mountain, called Transfiguration, where hundreds of years later in the darkened night those same two prophets, Moses and Elijah,

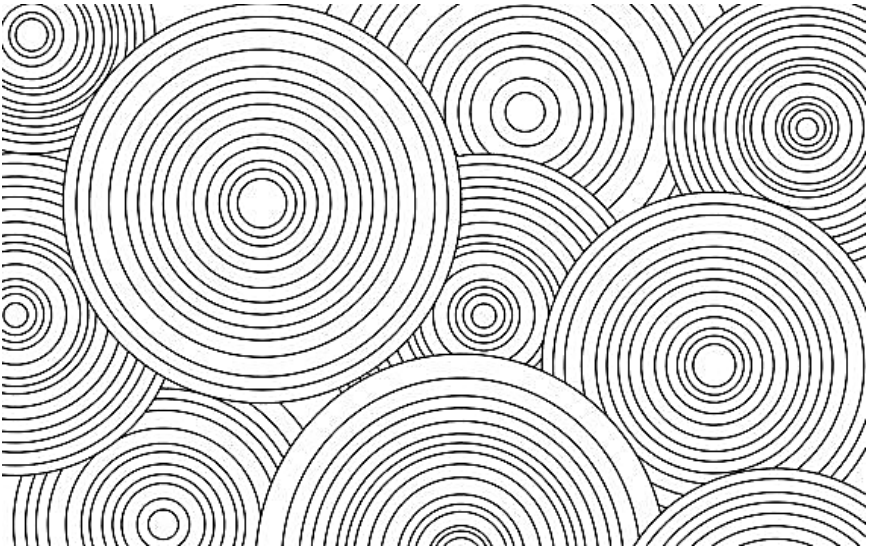
appeared and laid those same mortal hands on the heads of Peter, James, and John and bestowed their keys.

A few weeks later I stood in Kirtland, Ohio, where on April 3, 1836, in the mountain of the Lord's house at Kirtland—a modern mount of transfiguration—Moses and Elijah, now with bodies resurrected, appeared once again and bestowed their keys on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.

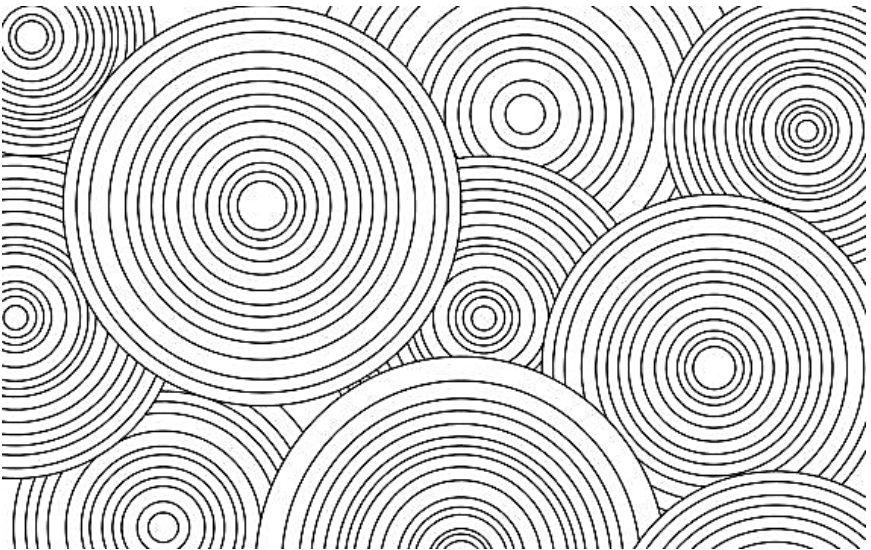


Mount Nebo

Now for the last time, by the authority of God, the law and the prophets would go forth. Israel is gathered again and taught by Moses' keys, and sealed up to God and His mansions by Elijah's. What is it like to stand on the holy ground of four dispensations?—go and find out!



Parting of the Waters



“**F**ear ye not. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.”

Trapped against the sea, the children of Israel cried out in terror as the chariots of Pharaoh descended upon them. They turned on Moses and railed on him. “Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord,” Moses commanded them.

That night, God and Moses parted the Red Sea, and put doubting Israel to silence. That miracle came not until Israel had done all that they were commanded to do, and had gone where they were told to go, and further progress seemed impossible. Then, God made the impossible—possible. They escaped Pharaoh’s trap by walking on dry ground in the midst of a sea. It is an incredible story that survives across our collective Christian consciousness to this day.

Why were they there in the first place? Why did God take them there—to the Red Sea?

If you have studied the maps, the closest route to the promised land of Canaan from Egypt was straight up the Mediterranean coastline.

Had they gone that route there would have been no need for a Red Sea Crossing, no struggle in the desert, no Mt. Sinai experience. So why did Israel take the long way?

I don't know the entire answer, but this much is plain—Israel's experiences in the Sinai changed them as a people, and prepared them for the blessings of the Almighty.

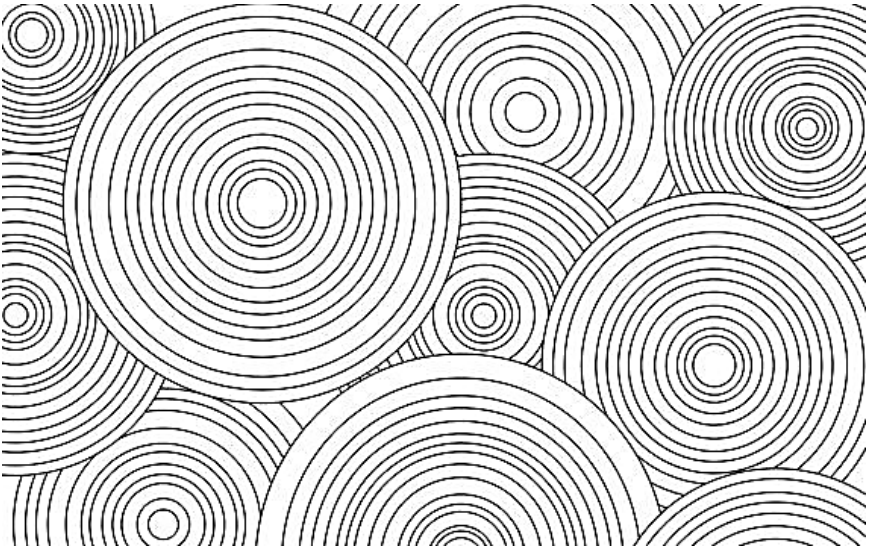
Some 40 years later, Joshua led the people again, to the water; to the banks of the Jordan at flood stage.

Once again, God had brought them to the impossible, but this time, there is no record of murmurings, doubtings, or reviling. The Priests stepped into the water and Jordan parted. Israel crossed an impassable river on dry ground.

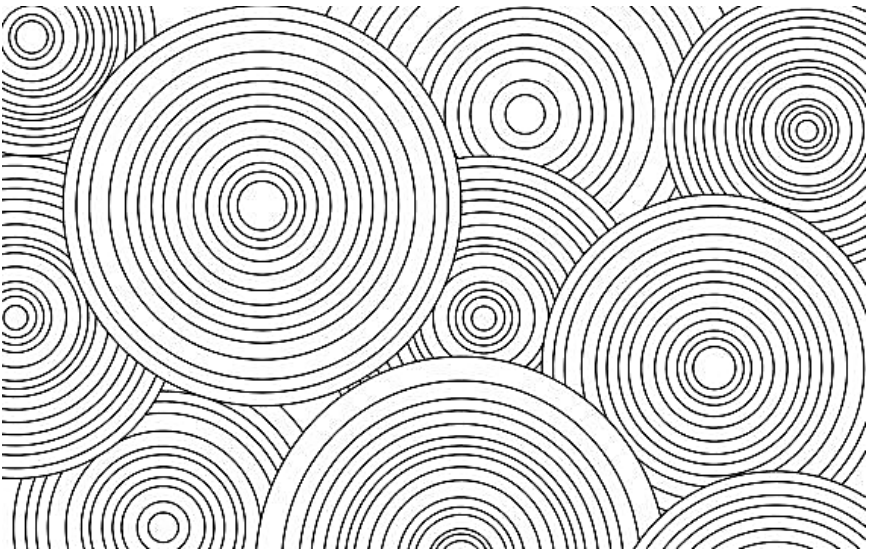
Just before the crossing, God said to Joshua, “this day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.”

With Moses and Joshua, God used water to establish his power and their authority. To a desert people who cherished water, that God with power over water was God. Perhaps that is why Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine.

When you are up against the impossible—when you have done in faith all you can do, and you can go no further, “Be strong and of a good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee”—also. And you too, can, “stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.”



Cross Yourself



I don't like it, but today I need to tell the story of a terrible tragedy that could have been avoided.

King David walked up onto his roof one evening, presumably to refresh himself with the cool evening breezes that blew through Jerusalem.

As he looked down he saw a very beautiful woman bathing herself in a private courtyard below. He stood and he watched. Later, unable to get her out of his mind, he sent for her and took that which was not his to take.

Later Bathsheba sent word back to the King that she was expecting his child. Thinking to hide his sin, David sent for Uriah to be sent home from the battlefield. Uriah returned unaware of the events at home.

After delivering his message, the King instructed him to go home. Considering his comrades suffering in the field, Uriah refused and spent the night camped with the King's servants. That which Uriah could take he would not out of honor and fidelity.

David attempted again the next night to get Uriah to go home, but once again, Uriah crossed himself and slept with the servants.

Finally David sent Uriah back to the war carrying instruction for Joab, his chief captain, saying, "set ye Uriah in the forefront of

the hottest battle and retire ye from him that he may be smitten.”
(2 Samuel 11:15)

Subsequently, Joab orchestrated a foolish battle against the Ammonites and not only was Uriah killed, but so, too, were others of the King’s men. When Joab sent word back that the deed was done, David passed it off casually. He then sent for Bathsheba and took her as his wife.

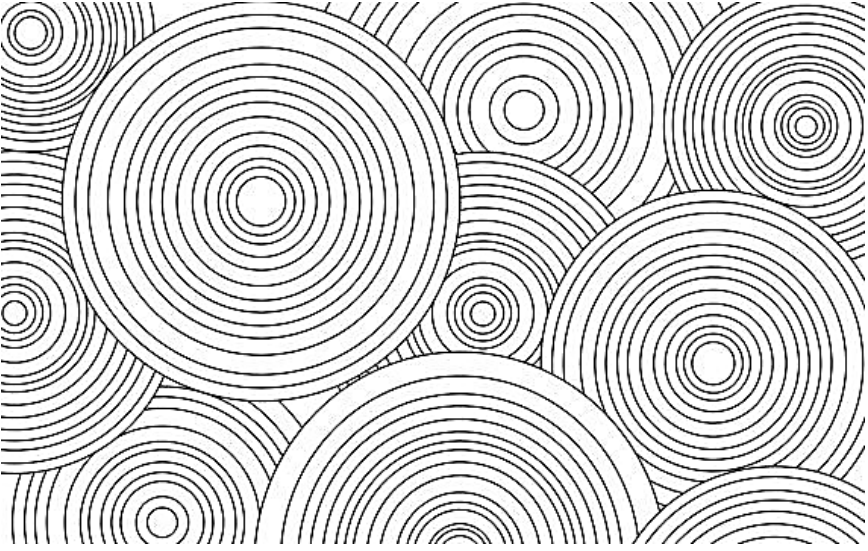
No one hides from God. David’s sins were declared openly to him by Nathan the Prophet. David lost everything. His peace became guilt and self-loathing. His throne, his wives and children were all taken from him and given to another. He fell from his exaltation.

I can’t point a jeering finger at David. I’ve made too many of my own mistakes, but I can learn from him.

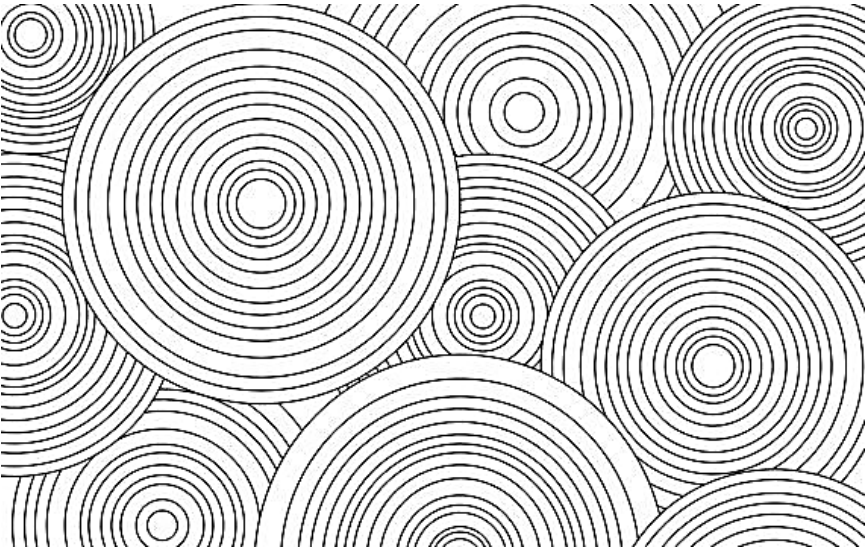
Our mortal bodies and minds are constantly demanding that which they should not have.

Therefore, it is critical that we learn to cross ourselves.

No, this is not something we do with our hands, but rather, that which we do in our hearts. It means to deny ourselves of every ungodly thing. It means to tell ourselves NO!



Hezekiah's Test



“**B**e strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed ... for there be more with us than with him.” (2 Chronicles 32:7)

I like those words.

So spoke Hezekiah, king of Judah, on the day that the Assyrian army entered his land and began conquering the outlying towns and villages. Hezekiah worked desperately to prepare his people against the most powerful army on the face of the earth. But, what could he do? Now, let me tell you a little about Hezekiah.

Hezekiah was one of Judah’s most righteous kings. He not only kept the commandments of God more faithfully than any king before or after him, but he persuaded his people to do the same. To an apostate Jewish nation, he brought faith, joy, and prosperity once more. But now everything was threatened by Assyria.

Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, even sent messengers to Jerusalem, who stood upon the wall before the people and said to them, “Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his [my] hand: Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord...” (2 Kings 18:29-30) “Hearken not to Hezekiah.” (2 Kings 18:31)

Well, the Assyrian army then moved up, and almost 200,000 men surrounded Jerusalem.

Now even though Isaiah, the great prophet, had assured Hezekiah that the city would not fall, still, consider this situation. The odds are incalculable – Hezekiah’s pitiful band of farmers, women, and children armed with darts and shields against the mightiest army on earth surrounding them on every side. Hezekiah has on one hand the simple promise of deliverance by God’s prophet stacked against 200,000 men, and the open and avowed hostility of the mightiest nation on earth. Do you see the test?



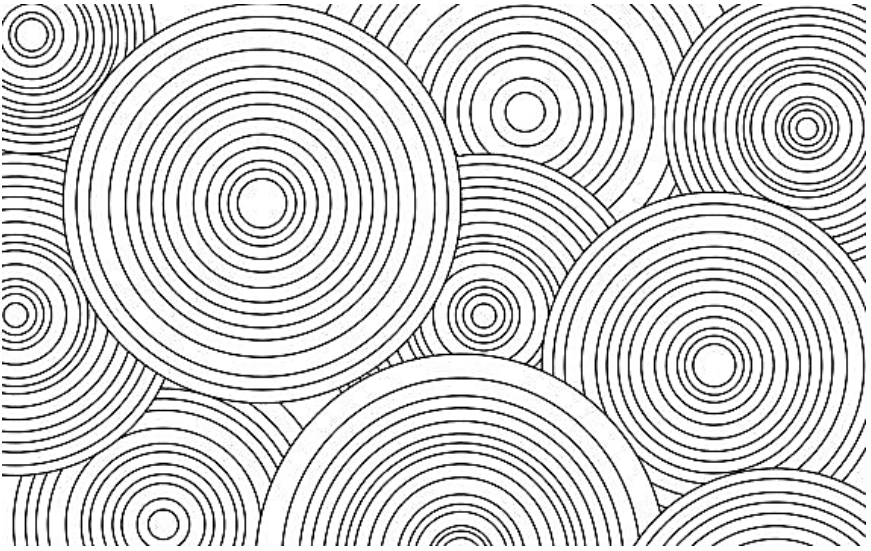
What God has promised looks absolutely impossible in the face of the opposition. Is it any wonder that Hezekiah humbles himself, bows before the Lord, and enters the temple to pray saying, “...O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the Earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only?” (Isaiah 37:20)

In response to this humble and sweet prayer, the Lord sends Isaiah, the prophet, with this assurance, "...[Sennacherib] shall not come into this city, nor [even] shoot an arrow there..By the way that he came, by the same shall he return...saith the Lord." (2 Kings 19:32-33)

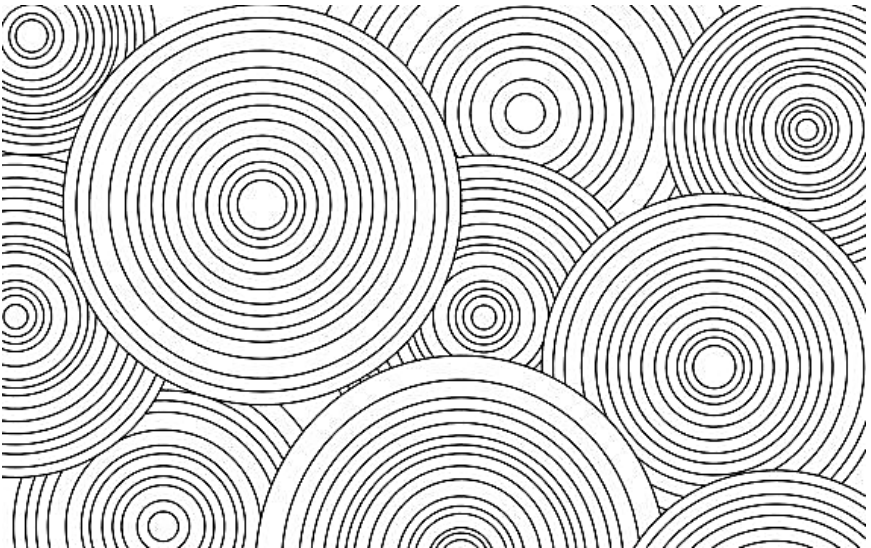
That night, as Judah prayed and Assyria slept, the angel of the Lord entered the Assyrian camp, and the next morning 185,000 Assyrian soldiers lay dead upon the ground around Jerusalem. Those still alive ran for home. The Lord's promises were fulfilled in every detail.

My friends, the faithful – the faithful will always be tested. Why? How else can they show, in deeds done, the intentions of their hearts? It's not enough to want to be good. We must prove ourselves good. How can the faithful ever know their strength or the Lord's strength unless they are given the opportunity under stress to discover both?

Further, when the opposition and the obstacles make the promises of the Lord seem impossible, remember, "Be strong..be not afraid...for there be more with us than with him:"(2 Chronicles 32:7)



Ahaz's Sign



More than 700 years before the birth of the Savior, the people of Jerusalem were frightened. Their peace was threatened by a ruthless power from the north, called Assyria who was taking over country after country. Judah's neighbors, Ephraim and Syria were hastily forming political alliances to guard against the threat.

Judah's king, Ahaz refused to join the alliance, choosing instead to bargain with Assyria directly for his nation's safety. The Kings of Ephraim and Syria were angered that Ahaz and Judah would not join them and promised to invade and remove Ahaz as King. Isaiah the prophet came to Ahaz and told him not to fear the two allied kings. Don't listen to them, be at peace and trust the Lord. But the imminent political threat was too much for the wicked Ahaz. In his heart he would not believe it. How could he? Their doom seemed sure in spite of Isaiah's promises. Knowing that, Isaiah said, "Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above." (Isaiah 7:11) To seek signs of ourselves is evil, but when the Lord commands us to ask for one, it is evil not to. Moreover, to be told that his sign can come from the depths of hell or the heights of heaven, whatever he wants, must mean that God is very determined that this doubting man believe His promises.

Stubbornly, Ahaz refused to ask. Isaiah was disgusted with him and all his nation, and said the Lord would give him a sign anyway. “Behold,” He said, addressing himself now to all the nation, “a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” Which means God with us. A virgin bearing a son?

That’s impossible. Yet, God did the impossible on that first Christmas when Jesus was born. But Ahaz would not live to see the sign fulfilled.

Christ would not be born for another seven hundred years. So why was it given? Because this was not just a sign to Ahaz, but to all the children of God that doubt Him and His promises. Every Christmas is a reminder that God did once and can do again the impossible.

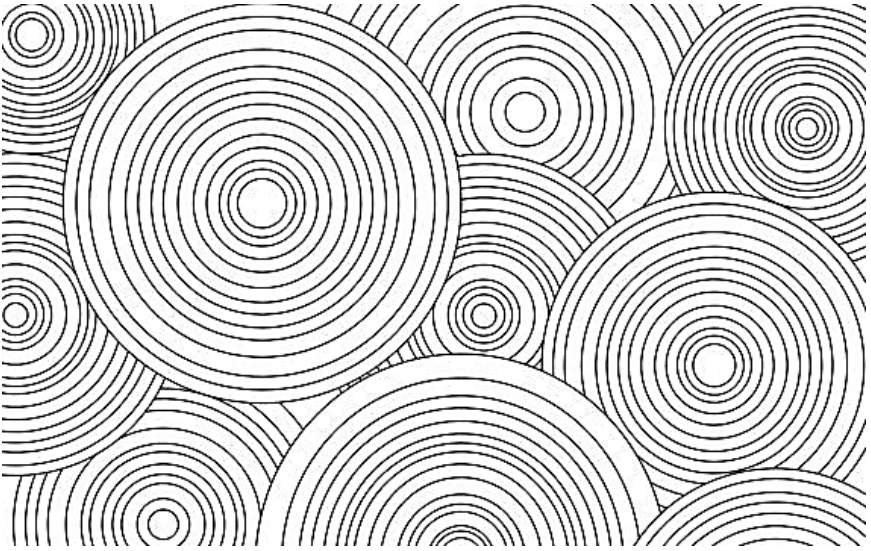
Any of you listening to me that are troubled for any reason and seek peace, need only look at the miracle of Christmas to awaken your latent faith.



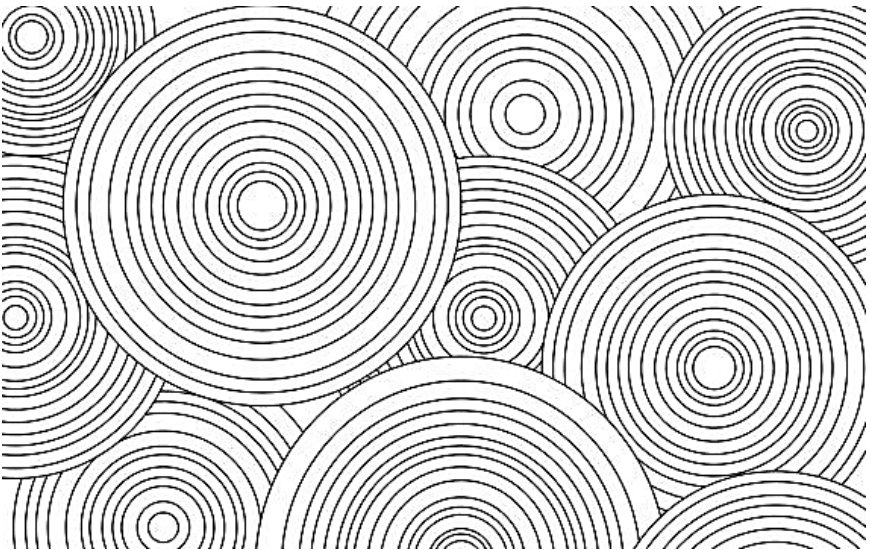
This is, ironically, the season of the coldest weather and yet for a time, the warmest hearts. When Christmas comes “God is with us” again, in our hearts, our homes, and even our music. One need

only look how our world changes this time of year to know that Christ is still in Christmas.

Indeed, Christmas is an everlasting sign to a doubting world that God is still with us, that He loves us, and that He can still do the impossible, this time for you and me.



Balaam



It is one thing to know the truth and another matter entirely to be true to the truth. What does it mean to be true? Maybe this story will explain.

The children of Israel were nearing the end. They were camped on the east side of the Jordan across from Jericho. The Moabites and Midianites, on whose land they were camped, were frightened.

They saw what Israel had done to the Amorites and knew that they were next. They also recognized they were grossly outnumbered against the hosts of Israel. In short,



The Mount of Olives, Jerusalem

they didn't have a chance. So Balak, the King of the Moabites, sent for Balaam, a man renowned for his power with God. Balak's reasoning was that if Balaam would curse Israel in God's name then he could defeat them.

After hearing the proposition, Balaam took the matter to the Lord. The Lord said, “Thou shalt not go with them, thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.” (Numbers 22:12)

That answer did not satisfy Balak. He sent more honorable princes than the first saying, “Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: for I will promote thee unto very great honor.” (Numbers 22:16-17)

This time Balaam was given leave by the Lord to go, but with this strict command, “The word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.” (Numbers 22:20)

Balaam and Balak looked down on the numerous hosts of Israel. Balak asked him again to curse Israel. “How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?” Balaam responded. (Numbers 23:8) And to Balak’s consternation, Balaam proceeds to bless Israel in God’s name.

Balak takes Balaam to another higher place where he can see more of Israel’s numbers and pleads again for the prophet to curse them, but once again, Balaam blesses them instead.

In a last effort, Balak takes Balaam to the top of Peor and asks him to curse Israel, but once again, Balaam stands true to his original command and blesses Israel.

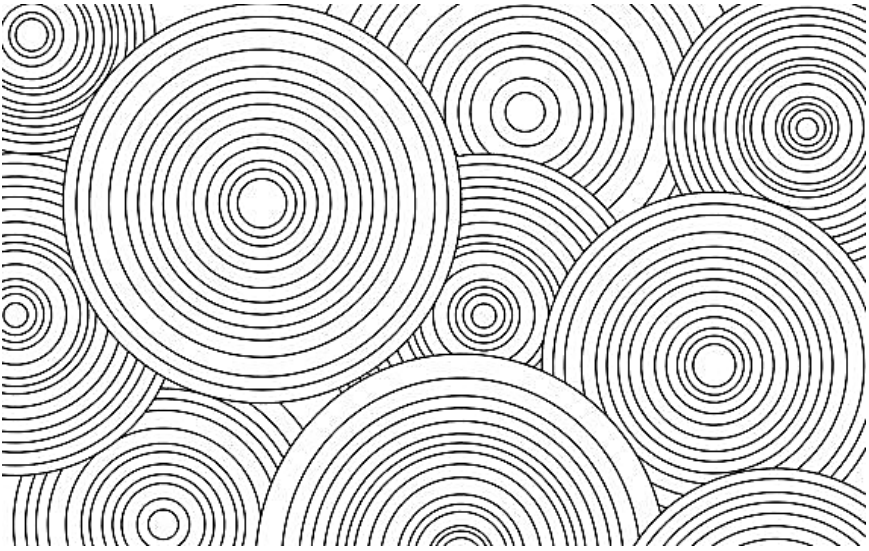
Balak is angry and says, “I called to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honor; but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honor.” (Numbers 24:11) To which Balaam says in effect, ‘I told you at the beginning that I would only say what the Lord told me to say.’

At this point it appears as though Balaam has stood true to the Lord. However, when Israel goes to war with the Midianites they kill Balaam. Why? Hadn't Balaam defended them? No, Balaam did not stay true. Moses, Peter, Jude, and John all make reference to Balaam.

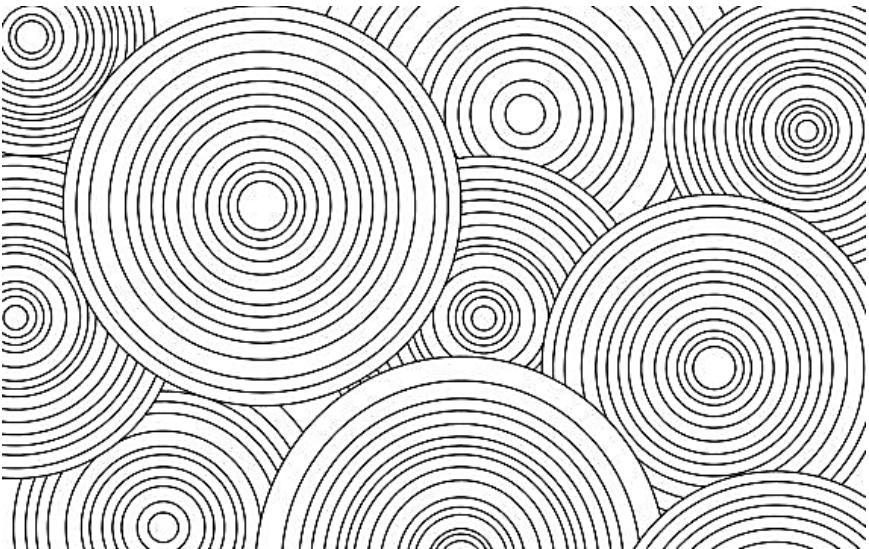
Evidently, Balak's last offer of wealth and honor was too much for Balaam. He would not curse Israel, but he showed Balak how to do it. Balak sent beautiful women among the men of Israel to seduce them into idolatry and curses followed.

To be true means to stick to the truth. It means to always take the Lord's side, never deviating.

Balaam spoke the truth but was not true to the truth, and he perished, as will all who are seduced by the world.



Naaman's Miracle



Question: Why should I read the scriptures if the book is boring? Why should I pray? Nothing ever happens. Why should I go to Church if I don't get anything out of it? And lastly, why should I serve if no one cares if I do?

Well, I don't think I have a perfect answer, but in the Old Testament there's a story about a man named Naaman, the Syrian. I think there's an answer in this story.

Naaman was not a Jew. Naaman was a gentile. He was not a worshipper of Jehovah either. He was a pagan idol-worshipper. As a leader of Syria's army, Naaman had delivered his nation out of the hands of the Assyrians. He was considered a great and a good man.

But, Naaman was a leper. And in that day and time, leprosy was called the living death. There was no known cure – that is until one day when a little Israelite girl in Naaman's house who served Naaman's wife made the following comment: "Would God my Lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! For he would recover him of his leprosy." (2 Kings 5:3)

Well, Naaman heard about this. With a glimmering shred of a last hope, and a small fortune, Naaman sets out for Israel, the prophet, and a cure. Riding in the horse drawn chariot that is the symbol of his power and position, Naaman comes to the door of

Elisha's house. From within, the prophet sends a messenger. Now get this – he sends a messenger out to Naaman telling him to dip himself seven times in the Jordan River.



Jordan River

Indignant and outraged that the prophet wouldn't even so much as come out to meet him, Naaman turns away and starts for home in a huff. Well, it just so happened that the way home took him relatively near the Jordan River.

As he passes near the Jordan River, one of Naaman's servants approaches him and says with respect, "... My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, wash and be clean?" (2 Kings 5:13)

Now the way I read that is, "Come on, man, all you have to do is wash. What do you have to lose?"

This was an eternally critical moment for Naaman. Had he shrugged off the counsel of his servant, ignored the prophet; there would likely have been no miracle on Naaman's behalf, and we would not know of the man today. But Naaman made a decision.

He steps into the water, – and get this – he lowers not only his body, but his haughty pride as well. Seven times he dips his body

into that filthy water. As he rises the seventh time, the scripture records, “He was clean.” The leprosy was gone.

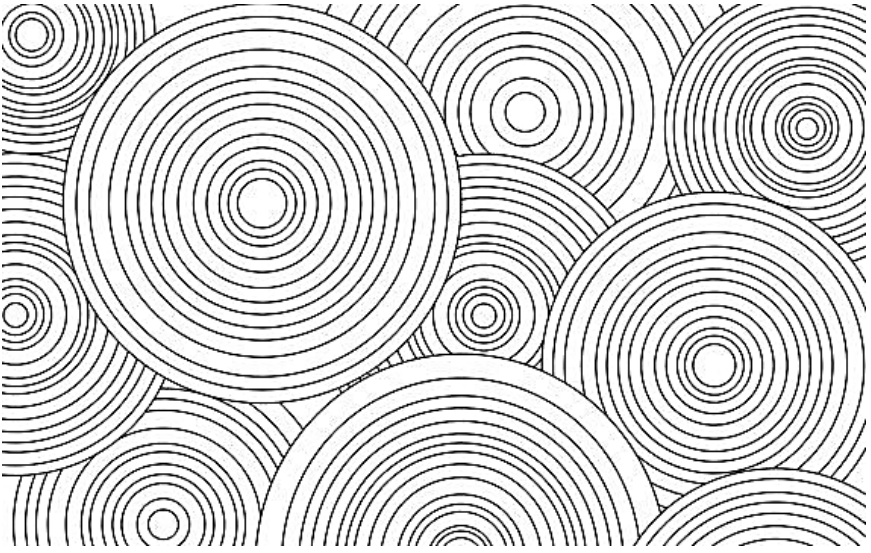
Now as then, the Lord’s messengers ask us to do some – well, they ask us to do some things that make us look pretty silly in the eyes of the world, all the while extending marvelous promises to us and to our families if we will be obedient.

I have a question for you: Did Naaman’s leprosy vanish on the first washing? – the second? – the third? – the sixth? No – no, it was the seventh time.

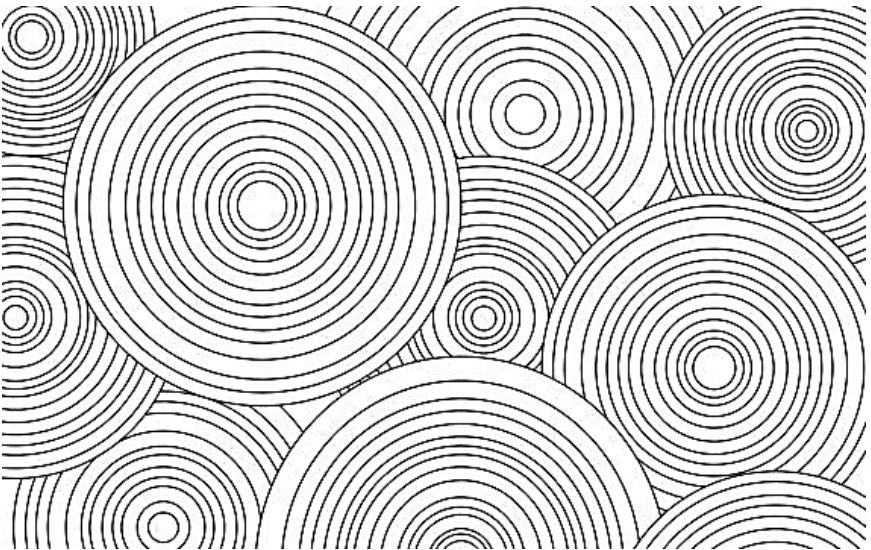
My dear friends, I wonder if we realize that our greatest test in this life is probably not going to be the great challenge that comes once. But rather, our greatest test in this life is probably going to be the little side journeys of time and obedience, like going to Church, reading the scriptures daily and praying daily, that in and of themselves may seem inconsequential.

Yet – yet eventually they will add up to seven, and a miracle!

Based on 2 Kings 5.



Elijah and the Widow



We live in the dark ages, in a manner of speaking. The world we live in is covered with gross spiritual darkness, and as time goes on, it's only going to get worse – more and more difficult to keep the faith. As one who has experienced those dark times—they are terrible. Now I ask you, how can we be sure that we will not drift? How can we be sure that in that day when the Lord calls we will be sufficiently attuned to answer His voice? Is there a key to spiritual safety? If ever there was a time to know what it is, it is now.

About 920 B.C., there lived a poor widow in a small gentile village bordering Israel called Zarephath. Like everyone else, this poor widow suffered from the effects of a devastating famine brought on by the wickedness of God's covenant people. Her food supply dwindled until there was virtually nothing. Resigned to her fate, she went out one day to gather sticks to make a fire to cook the last of her flour into bread.

There came upon her a stranger who asked for a drink of water. Graciously she complied, and as she turned away to fetch the water, he called again to her, "...Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand." (1 Kings 17:11)

She turned back and explained to him that she had only enough food left for one last meal for her and her son, and then they

would die. How could you sit and watch your own son die? Can you sense something of the suffering and the despair that this woman has endured?

The stranger then says, “...Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me [thereof] a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and [for] thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.” (1 Kings 17:13-14)

What a request! How could anyone ask such a thing? – especially of a starving widow and a tender child. If this man is an imposter, she will be trading her life and that of her son for a stranger.

I don't know what happened. Maybe this gentile woman sensed something in this holy man. Whatever it was, she fed him – first, and according to his promise, both



her barrel of meal and cruse of oil never failed. They lived on miraculously, many days.

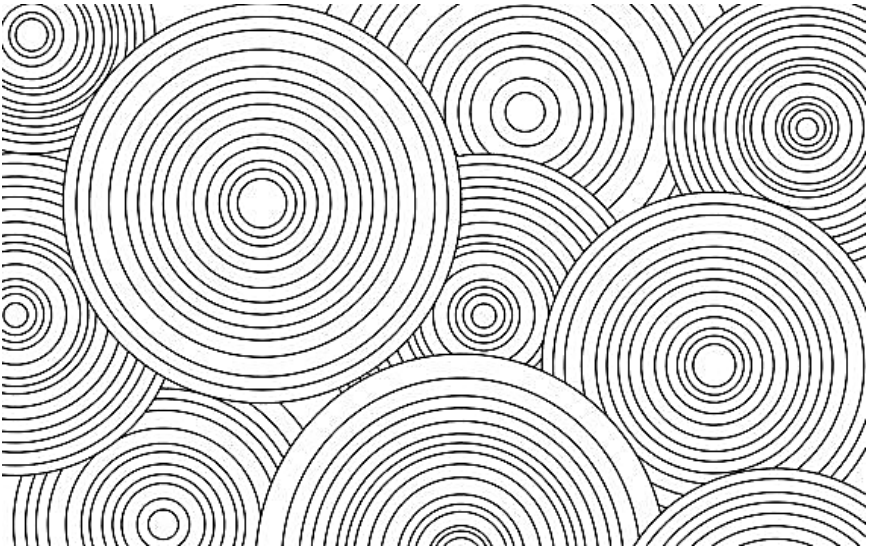
But as it is with us, her test wasn't over yet. She had yet more to prove—more to gain. Her son died suddenly, and in her agony of grief, she cried out to the man of God while holding her son, and blamed herself. Tenderly the prophet reached and took the child out of her bosom, carried him up to a loft room leaving the widow

to her grief. She could not have known what was going to happen next. Death is, and always has been permanent, but not now. Her faith and devotion to the prophet makes the impossible probable. The man of God appears shortly thereafter carrying her son alive again, and presents him to his mother. “...See,” he says, “thy son liveth.” (1 Kings 17:23)

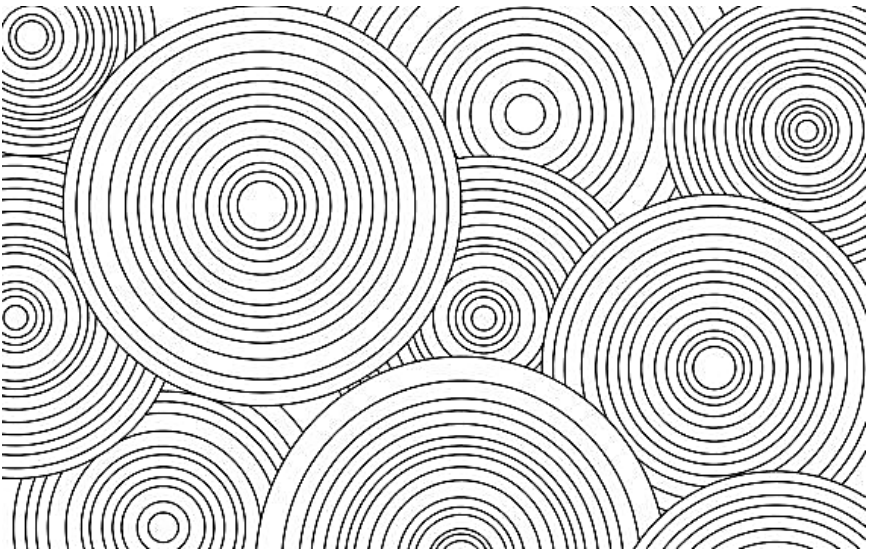
As she held her son, the mother cried out in faith and joy, “...Now by this,” she said, “I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.” (1 Kings 17:24)

That man of God was the great prophet of the sealing power, Elijah. And that woman: She was lifted up by the Savior Himself as an example to us all of faith. (Luke 4:25) What she did, my friends, is what we must all do in trying times: Obey the prophets, and that with exactness. In mortality they may seem as other men, and in scripture they may seem larger than life. They are neither. They are men of God made powerful by Him. They are our only safety. If we hold to them, when it’s all over, we too will live eternally with our sons and daughters, and mothers and fathers – and our joy will be full forever.

Adapted from 1 Kings 17



Ruth



In an age when it seems to be more and more fashionable to be fickle, faithless, and an infidel, there is a story in the Old Testament that is inspiring and refreshing.

During a time of famine in ancient Israel, a man named Elimelech moved his family from Bethlehem to the country of Moab. While there Elimelech died, leaving behind his wife, Naomi, and two sons. The two sons married Moabite women. It wasn't long before the two sons died also, leaving Naomi alone. Naomi heard that the famine had ended in Israel, and she set her mind to go home. Orpah and Ruth, her two daughters-in-law went with her. Somewhere near the border between the two countries, Naomi begged the two girls to go back, to return to their families and make themselves a new life; she had nothing to offer them. Well, after many tears, Orpah kissed Naomi and went back, disappearing into history. Ruth, on the other hand, would not turn back.

“...Entreat me not,” she said, “to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: The Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.” (Ruth 1:16-17)

Powerful words, but they were not empty drama. In making such a declaration, Ruth would be leaving behind the family of her childhood to follow an impoverished old woman from whom she stood to gain nothing. Ruth would leave behind the country, the customs, and the traditions she had grown up with to enter a strange new land and society that did not always look with favor upon foreigners. And perhaps most significant of all, she would be denouncing the religion and the God of her upbringing for the strange new worship of Jehovah.

Ruth was a virtuous woman filled with faith and loyalty. She stayed with Naomi, and true to her word, labored to support her and never left her. Then and now, Ruth's loyalty was noticed and honored.

Now I've thought about this and that quality we call loyalty. Loyalty is – well, it's a quality stronger than iron in the human soul that binds us to causes, promises, country, spouse and family. It holds us firmly in that place where we committed ourselves to be, especially when there's no other reason to stay other than 'we ought to.' History will always honor those loyal to the last measure for true causes. And in that spirit, Ruth was no exception. For her undying loyalty and devotion, Ruth would find much joy in Israel. By an intriguing chain of events, she would marry a righteous Israelite named Boaz, and to them would be born a son named Obed. Obed had a son named Jesse. Jesse had a son named David.

Ruth was to be honored for all time as the great-grandmother of David, King David, Israel's mightiest king.

And that's not all. Matthew makes a special mention of Ruth as being an ancestress of the greatest man who ever lived, the Lord Jesus Christ.

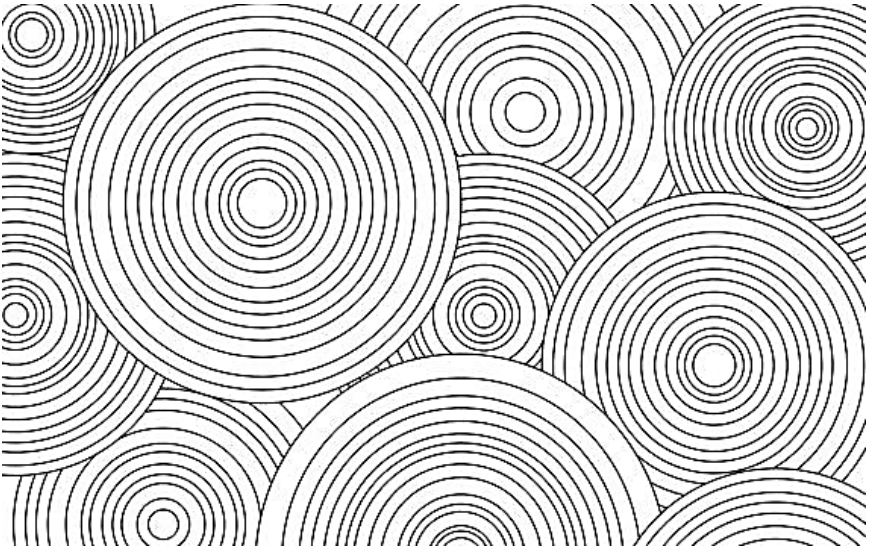


Ruth and Boaz

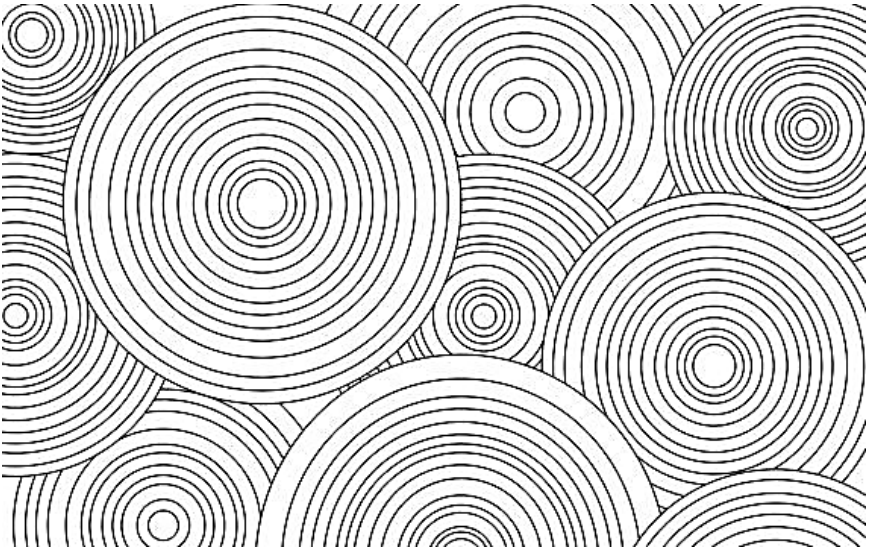
Now I don't know how to

say this – except this: Stick tight where you ought to be. Be loyal, whether it be to your cause, your country, your spouse, or your children. Don't let the opposition pull you out of place.

Adapted from Ruth 1



Josiah and the Scriptures



Sometime today I would guess that most of you that are listening to me will hold a set of scriptures in your hands. Just how precious are they to you? And what will you do with them?

Centuries ago, a high priest was working to repair damage to the temple of Solomon. He chanced to find “the book of the law” in the House of the Lord. He delivered it to King Josiah. What this ancient king did with those long-lost scriptures is my story.

The scriptures were delivered and then read to Josiah. He listened and then suddenly rent his clothes in a show of deep anguish. “Go ye,” he commanded, “and enquire of the Lord for me, and for the people...concerning the words of this book that is found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us; because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book.”

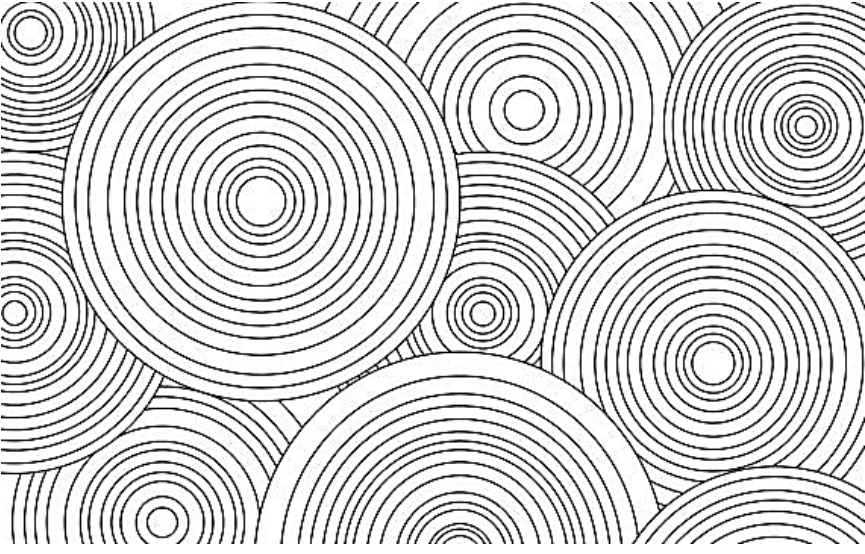
The word of the Lord came back that indeed He was angry with the people of Judah for their neglect. So Josiah gathered all his people to the Temple and read the word of the Lord to them. Then, in utmost solemnity, standing by a pillar of the Temple, he placed himself and all his people under solemn covenant to obey the scriptures.

To Josiah it was not enough to once more own a copy of the scriptures, nor was it enough to simply read them, he had to live them with exactness. Josiah then proceeded to turn his nation and his people politically, culturally, and religiously inside out.

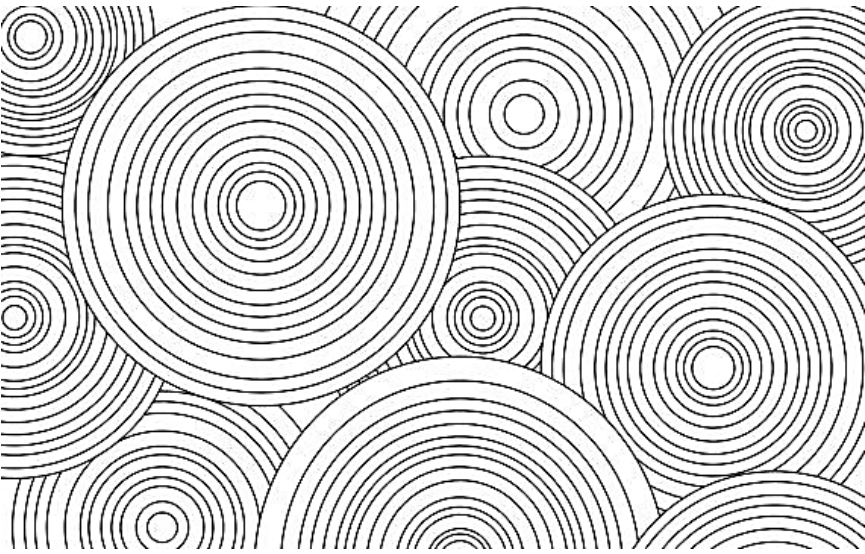
He destroyed every vestige of idolatry that he could discover, from the destruction of shrines to the execution of false priests, stamping their evil altars and traditions into fine powder. One can only imagine the courage and fortitude of Josiah as the floodtide of opposing public opinion surged against him. Nonetheless, he stood firm. Then with the filth of idolatry returned to the dust that spawned it, Josiah commanded his people to renew the Passover of Moses. Never before had there ever been such a spiritual feast as was this Passover week.

In the end, Josiah did what his people would not. The scriptures became written on the fleshy tables of his heart. The Lord loved him and he died a martyr in a place we now call Armageddon. After he was gone though, his people cast out The Word and were slaughtered and scattered in disgrace.

Listen to the epitaph God gave to Josiah, “Like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul and with all his might...neither after him arose there any like him,” And this because a noble young son understood in his day that the word of the Lord is a precious treasure and must be obeyed with exactness. God bless us with such an almighty conviction.



Jezebel



It was once wisely observed that “our Heavenly Father is...more boundless in His mercies, than we are ready to believe or receive, and at the same time, more terrible to the workers of iniquity, more awful in the executions of His punishments...” than we are apt to suppose Him to be.

By the time of Hosea, Israel had sunk to such wickedness that they were only days away from awful destruction at the hands of Assyria. What had brought them to such a moment? It began years before when Israel’s king, Ahab, married Jezebel. This is the story of Jezebel.

Jezebel was a Phoenician Princess. She married Ahab and introduced the worship of Baal in Israel. She “stirred up” her husband to all manner of the grossest wickedness. Ahab went along, and as Ahab went, so went the nation of Israel. The people halted between two opinions.

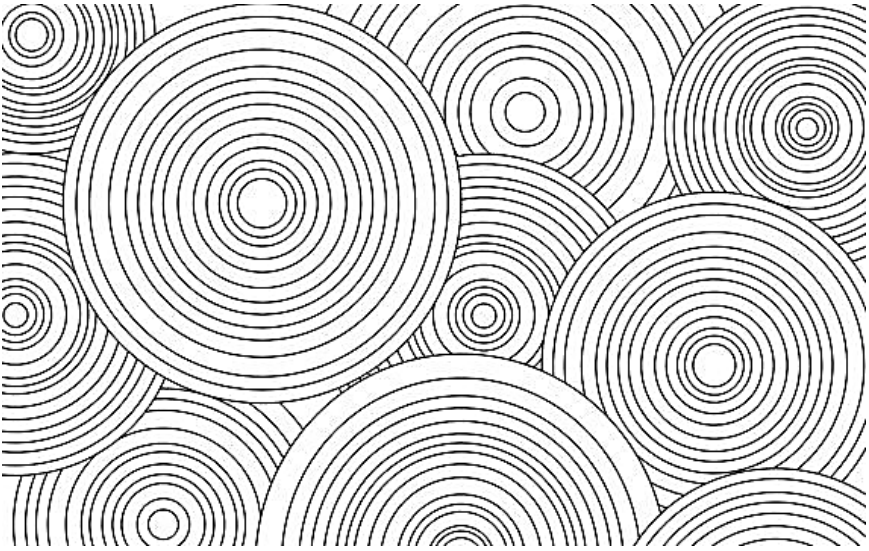
Great struggles such as these not only illuminate terrible villains—Jezebel—but they also glorify great heroes. These were the days of Elijah.

In addition to introducing idolatry, Jezebel also slew the prophets of the Lord, and few things anger the Lord more than that. She even tried to kill Elijah, causing him to have to run for his life.

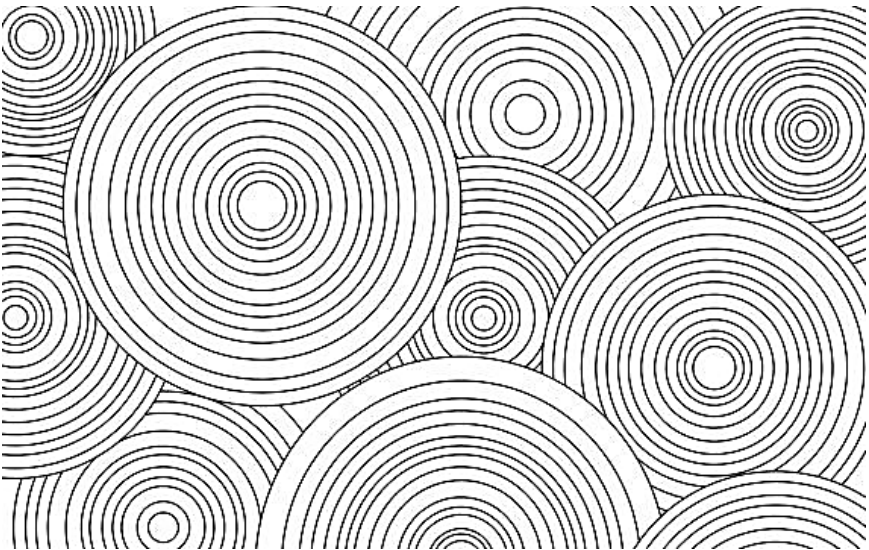
Theft, adultery, murder and the like was the way of Jezebel. Finally the Lord had had enough. “Thus saith the Lord...” he said through Elijah, “the dogs shall eat Jezebel, by the wall of Jezreel.”

Some time later, the Lord sent Jehu to fulfill His word upon her. He entered Jezreel. Jezebel taunted him from a second story window. At Jehu’s command, Jezebel’s servants tossed her from the window. Jehu and his men rode their horses over her body again and again until the Queen was dead. When they returned later to bury her, nothing remained. The dogs had devoured her. In fulfillment of the Lord’s decree, Jezebel was dung in the field.

Why does the Bible preserve such a gruesome story? Because, yes, the Lord is merciful, but do not forget that He is also just, and His punishments can be terrible. Never, ever trifle with Him—ever!



Gideon



Welcome to a New Year! I trust you survived. For those of you working hard now on your New Year's resolutions, may I share a key – and note this – a key to success with you? It is found inside the story of Gideon, the mighty warrior of Israel's past.

Now here's the story: A people called the Midianites had conquered Israel and destroyed their land, leaving them with little food. The Lord came to a young man, a farm-boy named Gideon, and called him to free Israel. Gideon humbly protested the Lord's choice, not feeling worthy, but the Lord made it known to him that he was indeed the man chosen to free Israel.

Well, Gideon subsequently gathered an army of 32,000 men to go to war against the Midianites to drive them out of the land. But the Midianites came into the land with an army of 135,000 men. Now get this: The Lord then spoke to Gideon and told him he had too many men. Yeah, that's right, 'too many men!'

Now, the way I figure it, the odds were 4 to 1 against Gideon, and the Lord says he has too many men? Well, obediently, Gideon steps forward and asks his assembled troops how many of them are afraid to go into battle. 22,000 men raise their hands, and Gideon sends them home. He is now left with an army of 10,000 against an army of 135,000.

That makes the odds approximately 13 to 1. Yet still, the Lord says to Gideon, ‘you have too many.’ He then reduces Gideon’s army to a measly 300 men. Now get it: The odds are now 450 to 1. The Lord says to Gideon “...By the three hundred...will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand...” (Judges 7:7) Why? The Lord does not waste words or time or effort. There had to be a reason for this. Why does He do this to Gideon?

The story continues: Gideon takes his 300 men and divides them into 3 companies, giving each man a lantern, a trumpet, and a pitcher – like for holding water. Late that night after the Midianites have gone to bed, Gideon’s men come down off the mountain and they surround the Midianite camp.

Suddenly at Gideon’s signal, each man breaks his pitcher, waves his lantern, blows his trumpet, and shouts, “...The sword of the Lord, and [of] Gideon.” (Judges 7:20) And can you imagine – can you imagine the chaos that exploded in the Midianite camp?

They bailed out of bed in stark terror grabbing their swords as they ran. While Gideon and his men make all the noise and commotion they can, the Midianites in the darkness and confusion can’t tell a friend from a foe, and they start running around and killing each other. When it’s all over, 135,000 Midianites are driven and dead, and Israel is free.

So grateful are the Lord’s people that they offer to make Gideon and his sons kings. But he declines. He does lead Israel, however, in peace and righteousness for the next 40 years. Gideon became a legend in Israel.

Now my question: Why did the Lord reduce Gideon’s number? Answer: Because it had to be with Gideon as it must be with us.

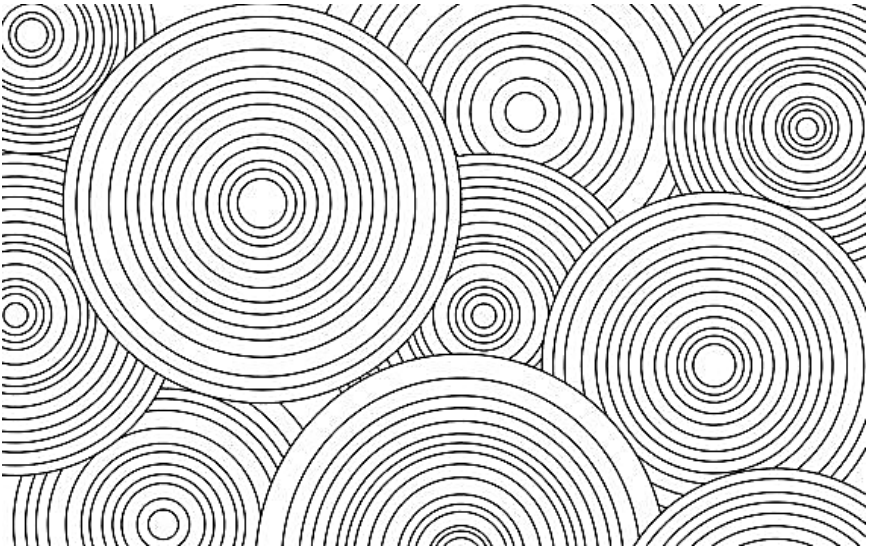
We must know, as Gideon had to know, that our victories in the large and small battles of life are fought and won by the Lord, not us!



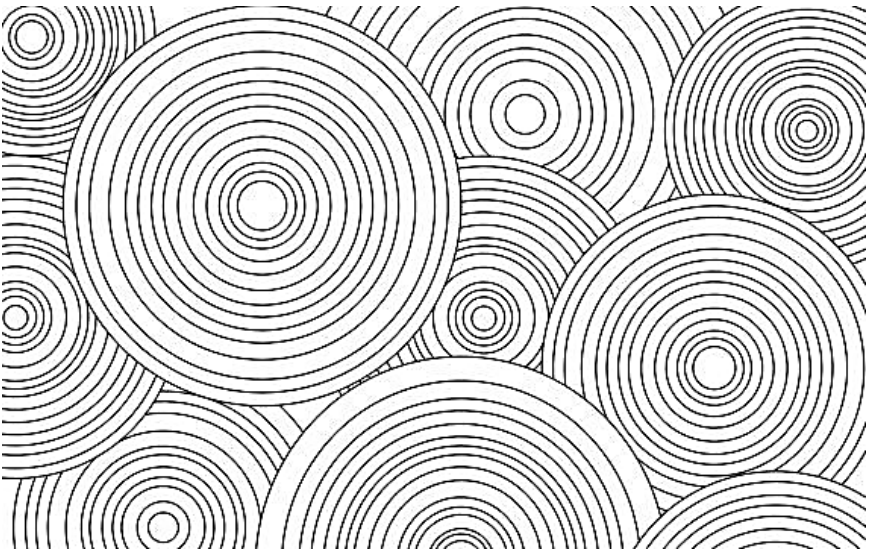
My friend, you cannot win alone! Whether it be the small battle of a habit, or the major war against the natural man, victory will come to those warriors, and only to those warriors, who rely on the Lord of Hosts, the God of battles.

May the Lord bless you.

Based on Judges 6-8



Joshua and the Spies



The children of Israel had been out of Egypt only a few months when Moses gathered 12 men, and sent them as spies into the land of Canaan. They were to "... see the land ..." (Numbers 13:18) and bring back a report. Also they were told to bring back some of its fruit. "... be ye of good courage ..." Moses told them. (Numbers 13: 20)

They were gone for forty days, and traveled the length of the land. When they returned, they stood before Moses and all Israel to make their report. They carried a cluster of grapes so large as to have to be carried between two men on a staff. That's a lot of grapes. "... the land ..." they said, "... floweth with milk and honey; ..." (Numbers 13:27)

But then ten of the spies turned their description to that which had most caught their attention, the present inhabitants of Canaan. In an exaggerated fashion, they told of great walled cities, and of giants before whom they were as grasshoppers. "... they are stronger than we," was their cowardly conclusion. (Numbers 13:31)

Two of the spies however, Joshua and Caleb, were filled with a different spirit. With faith, they "... stilled the people ... and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." (Numbers 13:30)

Unfortunately, the children of Israel believed the report of doom and gloom, and they wept all that night. The next day they arose, and appointed a new leader and made preparations to return to Egypt.

Caleb and Joshua “... rent their clothes ...” (Numbers 14:6) and with great courage stood before the people of Israel and pled with them to have faith in their God and “... rebel not ...” (Numbers 14:9) In reply to their pleadings, the people sought to “... stone them ...” (Numbers 14:10)

The Lord intervened and saved Caleb and Joshua, but Israel and especially the weak-hearted spies were cursed. One year for every day the spies searched Canaan would Israel wander in the wilderness, until all of that generation were dead. Only the children that faithless Israel said would be a prey to their enemies would be privileged to inherit the rich land. And so it was fulfilled.

Now I ask: Is it any different now? We are striving for a promised land that floweth with milk and honey. Yet there are those among us who lack vision, and see only the obstacles and dangers along the way. Continually we are bombarded by the negative and inundated by the gloom. Ah! – It’s enough to depress you.

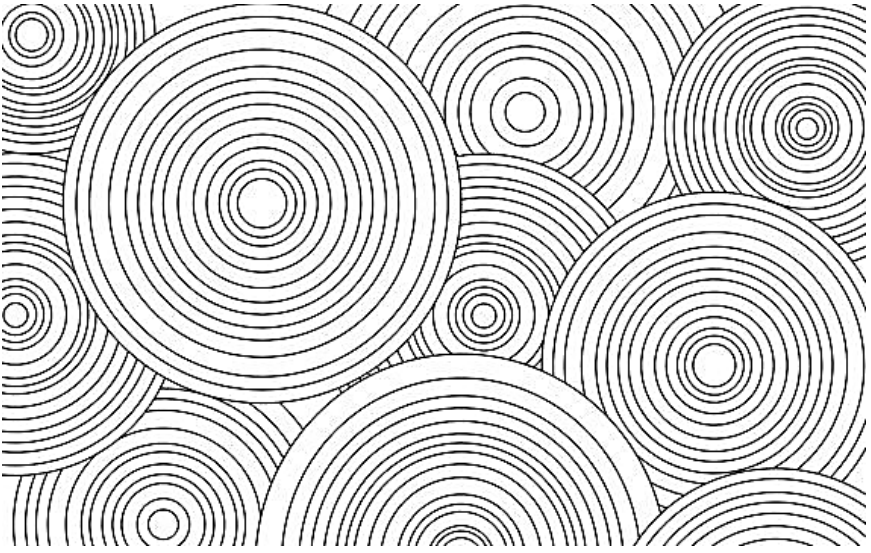
And I tell you this is wrong! We are the children of God, and He has the power to see us through. To focus on the negative is like unto doing the evil. Both come naturally; they are the easy way, and they are of the evil one. We need to be aware of the obstacles – yes – but focused with faith on their conquering.

This is pleasing to the Lord. As we are obedient of Him, there is no need to worry and be afraid of anything

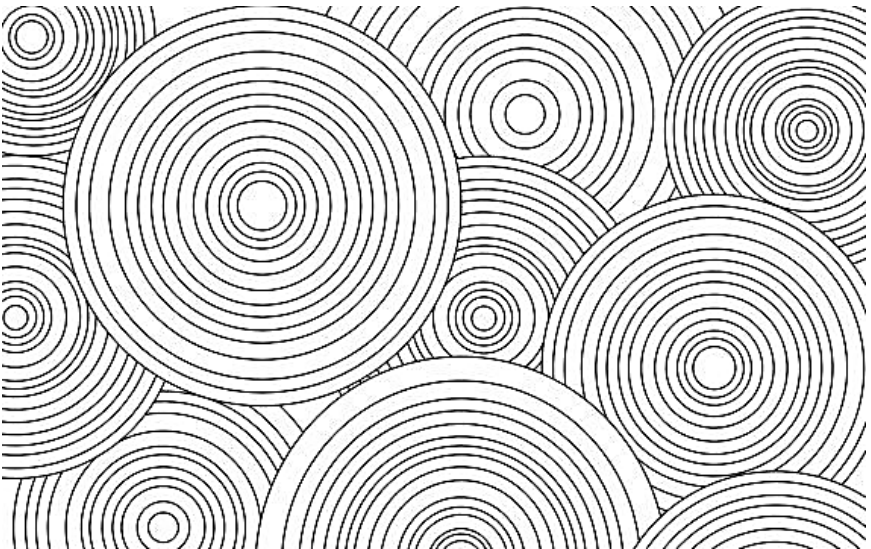
I close with Joshua's inspired words: "Be strong and of a good courage: ..." (Joshua 1:6)

Be not afraid.

Adapted from Numbers 13-14



Ezra and The Law



It seems to be a truth that we mortals often do not appreciate what we have until we don't. May I illustrate?

The people of Judah were destroyed as a nation and carried captive into Babylon where they remained for some 70 years. Then Cyrus, the King of Persia, moved by the Spirit of the Lord, gave leave for those Jews who so desired to return and rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem. (see Ezra 1:3)

Under Zerubbabel some did so. But those many years in captivity had cost them so much of their sacred heritage. They had become corrupt in their law, their language, and their worship. Many Jews never returned to the Holy Land and were swallowed up in gentile society. And for those who did return, there was a powerful moment of sacred awakening.

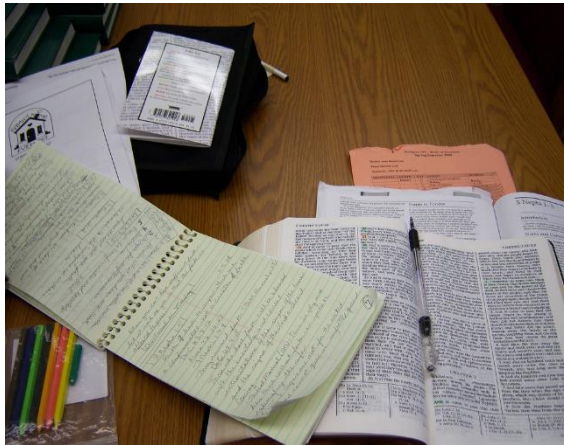
Ezra, the Priest, journeyed from Persia to Jerusalem bringing with him the Law of Moses. (see Ezra 7: 6, 10) On a specific day "all the people gathered themselves" (Nehemiah 8:1) and asked Ezra to bring forth the law. He did so, and when he opened up the book, "all the people stood up," and then bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord crying "amen, amen." (Nehemiah 8:5-6)

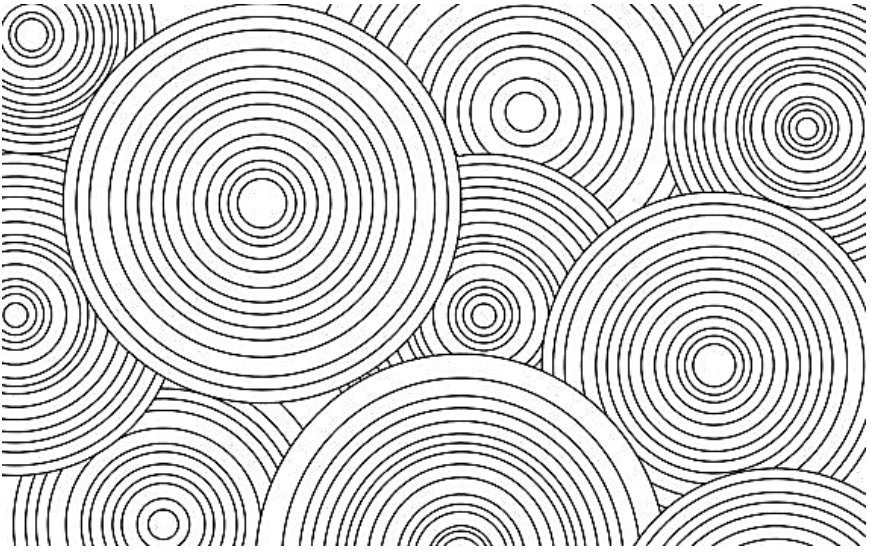
Then Ezra began to read the scriptures to them. He read from "morning until midday," and "all the people were attentive."

(Nehemiah 8:3) Teachers stood by who interpreted the language and meaning of the Holy Word for them—giving them the sense of the scripture. (Nehemiah 8:7-8)

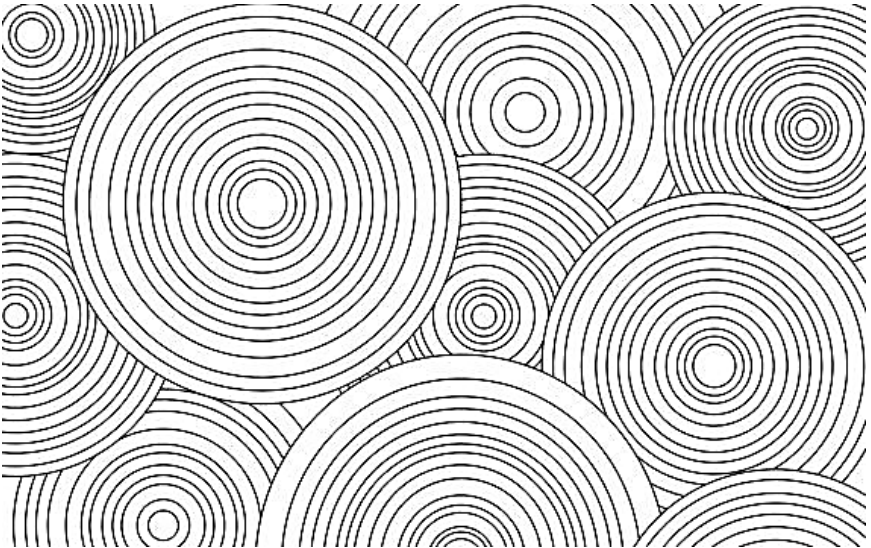
At the conclusion, “All the people wept.” The day was proclaimed as holy (Nehemiah 8:9). Israel was changed. From that day forward the scriptures were read, revered, and followed in a way that had not been since Moses. (Nehemiah 8:14-18)

How is scripture study going at your house? There has never been a day in the history of this planet when the precious word of the Lord has been more plentiful to more people than now. Thank God!





Nehemiah and the Wall



To any of you entrusted with the Lord's work, please consider this story.

Some 400 years before Christ, Nehemiah, a prominent Jew in Persia, learned that his people in Jerusalem suffered terribly. The walls of the city were broken down and his people a shame among men. He took the matter to the King who gave him leave to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city's wall. That wall was not only their protection, but also a symbol of their identity and solidarity as a people. It had to be rebuilt or the Jews could not be a nation.

Nehemiah traveled to Jerusalem and surveyed the walls. They were gone—just piles of rubble and the great gates burned. He gathered his beleaguered people, and said, "Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." Inspired, they answered with a will, "Let us rise and build." (Nehemiah 2:17-18)

As the Jews went to work however, their enemies began to mock them. They paid them no mind but continued to build until the wall was halfway up. Seeing this, their enemies became more vicious in their opposition, forcing the Jews to set guards. (See Nehemiah 4) The greatness of the task wore them down. There

was so much stone rubble to be moved and rebuilt, and now they had to work, as it were, with a tool in one hand and a sword in another. It

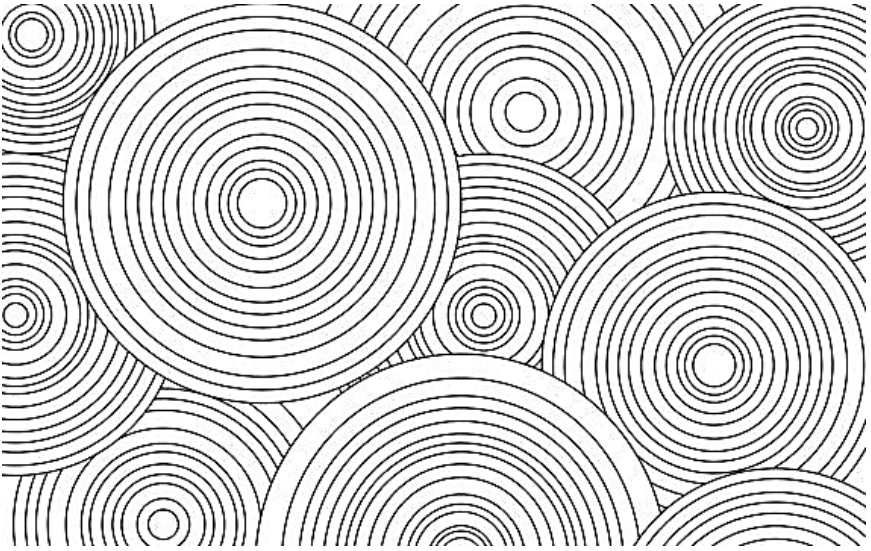


Wall of Jerusalem

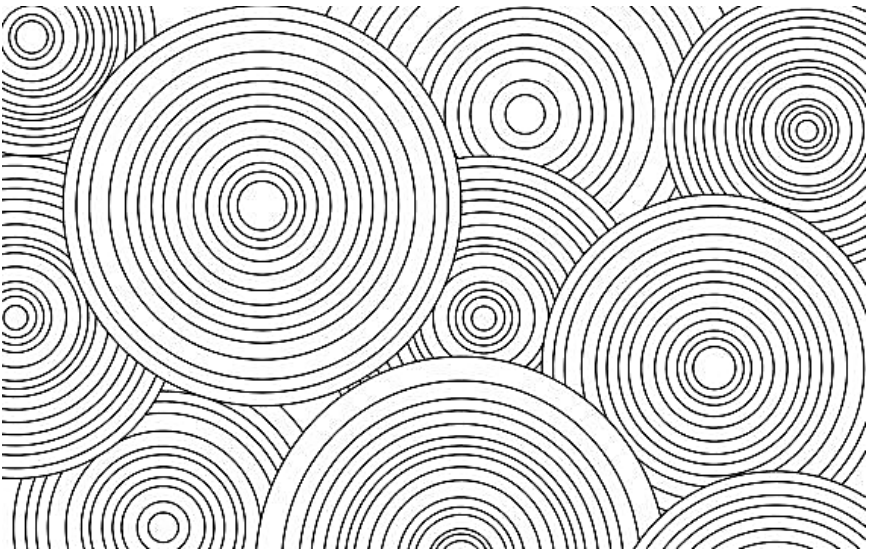
became so dangerous that while half of the men labored on the wall, the other half stood guard over their brethren. They would work by day and stand guard by night.

Finally, when the Samaritans saw they could not stop the work by force, they resorted to stratagem. Messengers were sent to Nehemiah requesting a meeting. They found him on the wall hard at work. Upon hearing their request, he said, “I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease whilst I leave it and come down to you.” (Nehemiah 6:3)

Within 52 days the wall was done. This is how we must see it. We too are doing a great work and must not leave it for lesser things. Let the Hounds of Hell yap if they will. Whether our part of the wall is the nursery or the presidency--no matter, God needs you!



The Vision of Isaiah



Anyone who has set out to read the Book of Mormon has not gone far before they encountered Isaiah, and as often as not he proved a formidable stumbling block. Paradoxically Isaiah is some of the most difficult scripture to understand and yet, by far, the most widely quoted of all the prophets. Nephi, especially, quoted him at considerable length. Why? Because of a rare and singular experience that Isaiah had.

Somewhere around 740 BC Isaiah was caught away in a heavenly vision. He saw the Lord Jesus Christ seated upon an exalted and glorified throne. Surrounding the blazing throne of God, angels sang praises to the Lord Almighty. The Temple was filled with the glory of God and its foundations trembled. It was the same indescribable vision that Daniel, Ezekiel, John the Revelator and others had experienced.

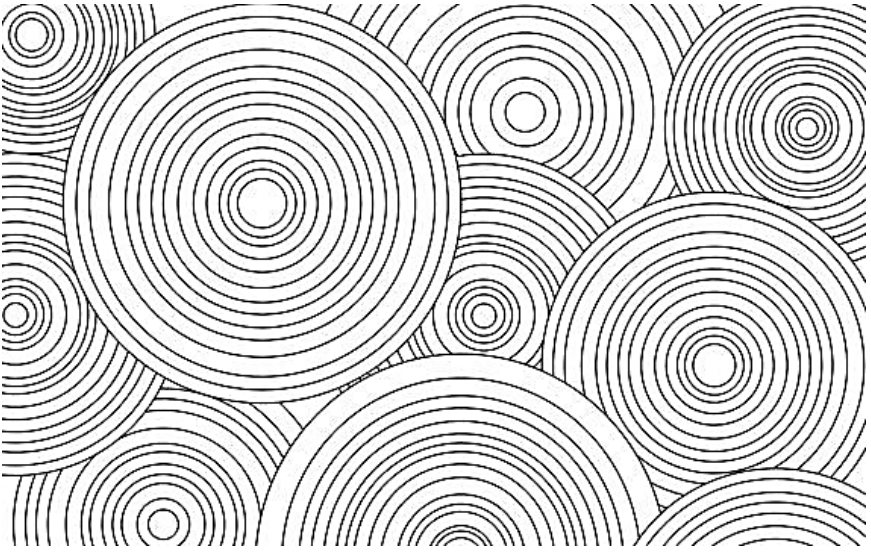
Isaiah was overwhelmed with a sense of his own unworthiness at the grandeur of who and what he saw. “Woe is unto me,” he said, “for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.” (Isaiah 6:5)

In response to his humble cry, an angel placed a live coal upon his mouth symbolically sanctifying and justifying him before God. Now clean before the Lord, he heard the Savior ask, “Whom

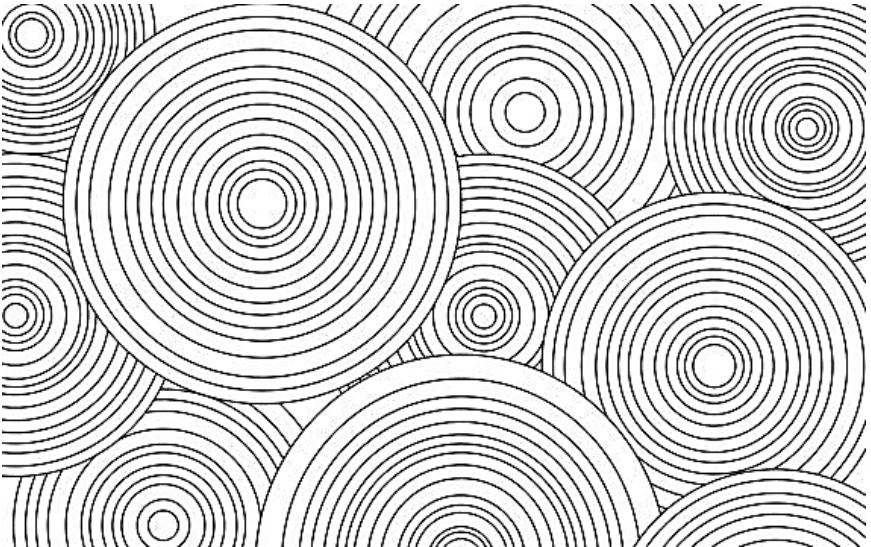
shall I send, and who will go for us?” (Isaiah 6:8) Isaiah answered, “Here am I; send me.” (Isaiah 6:8)

By those words Isaiah accepted a call that would span his life and end in his martyrdom. “Go,” the Lord said, “and tell this people hear ye indeed, but they understood not; and see ye indeed, but they perceived not.” For the next 40 years Isaiah did go, dedicating his life to bringing souls unto Christ.

He was called to labor to the last extremity in saving the House of Israel, but they would not listen and were destroyed. It was once said, if you could look into heaven for five minutes you would know more than had ever been written on the subject. In that regard you will recall that the first 135 pages of the Book of Mormon are the words of three men who looked into Heaven, saw the Lord, and knew Him. They are Nephi, Isaiah, and Jacob—the three great witnesses. Isaiah has never been more widely read, received, and popular than now, and that is a great thing.



The Promises of Isaiah



Isaiah is a book of promises and thereby one of the most inspiring, hope-filled books in scripture, as illustrated...

“Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself; let him be your fear and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary.” (Isaiah 8:13-14) These days who doesn’t need a sanctuary?

“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death upon them hath the light shined.” (Isaiah 9:2) Jesus is a great light shining in a world of darkness and death.

“Cry out and shout, thou inhabitants of Zion for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.” (Isaiah 12:5-6) If we only realized how close he really is and how much he actually does for us. He is in our midst and we do not know it.

Isaiah said of Jesus, “I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his Father’s house” (Isaiah 22:23). These days who can you trust? Jesus is sure and certain. All our worthy hopes and dreams are fulfilled in Him.

“He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.” (Isaiah 25:8) Death sooner or later stings us all and makes us weep, but in the Lord our loved ones will be returned to us and our tears turned to joy.

“Hearken unto me, O House of Jacob...which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: and even to your old age, I am he; and even to your hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.” (Isaiah 46:4) From the cradle to the grave the Lord will carry His people and deliver them. You do not walk alone!

“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame



Prophet Isaiah

kindle upon thee.” (Isaiah 43:1-2) In the hardest of times, stay with Him, and He will not let the trials overwhelm you.

“I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.” (Isaiah 47:10) It is in those times of trial that the Lord watches us most closely.

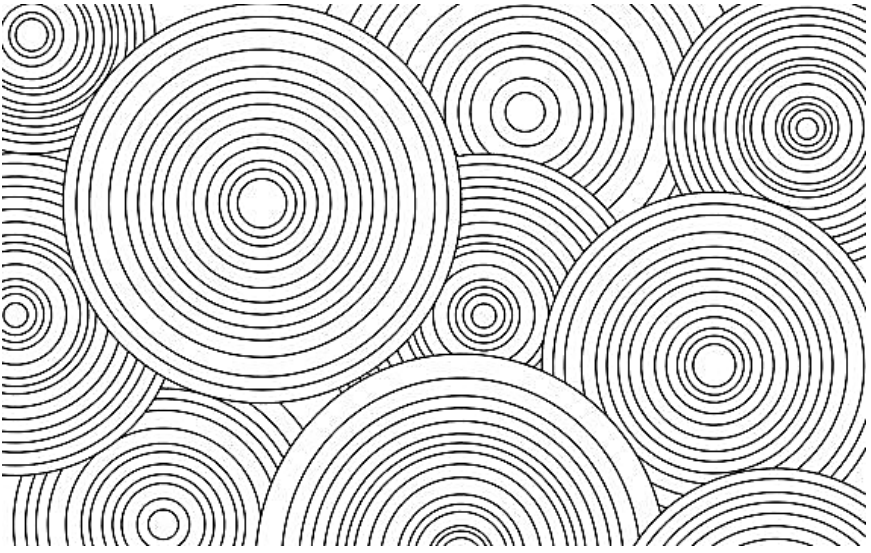
“Thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.” (Isaiah 49:23) All your life you have foregone worldly pleasures for the Lord’s sake. Is it worth it? It is!

“For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a

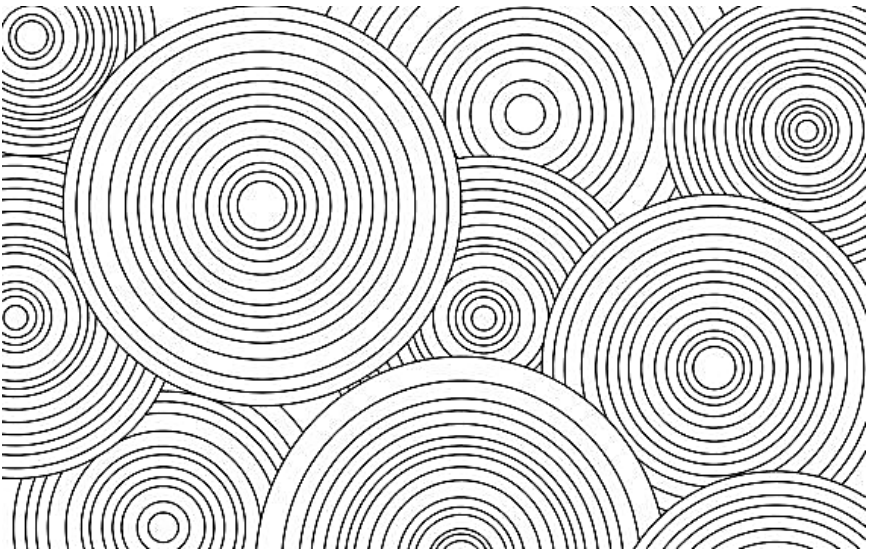
moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.” (Isaiah 54:7-8) Thank God for this promise. There is little joy to compare with the joy of forgiveness.

“He that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain.” (Isaiah 57:13) You may be poor and struggling now but keep the faith and that will eventually change. In the scripture the Lord offers promises.

As we read these, the Spirit bears witness when they apply to us and that fills us with hope and the strength to carry on. That is how we liken Isaiah to ourselves.



The Imagery of Isaiah



Sometimes it is not what you say but in how you say it. And when your desire is to bring souls to Christ through the written word, every word has to be powerful. Perhaps that is why Isaiah is at once so difficult and so rewarding to read.

In Isaiah 48:18, he said, “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.” If anyone has ever wondered why they should subject themselves to the disciplined life of a Christian, go, sit by the great river and ponder it. Just as that ever-flowing river is a peaceful tranquil place, so the Lord’s peace will continually flow unto you and fill you if you keep his commandments.



Olive Tree, Garden of Gethsemane

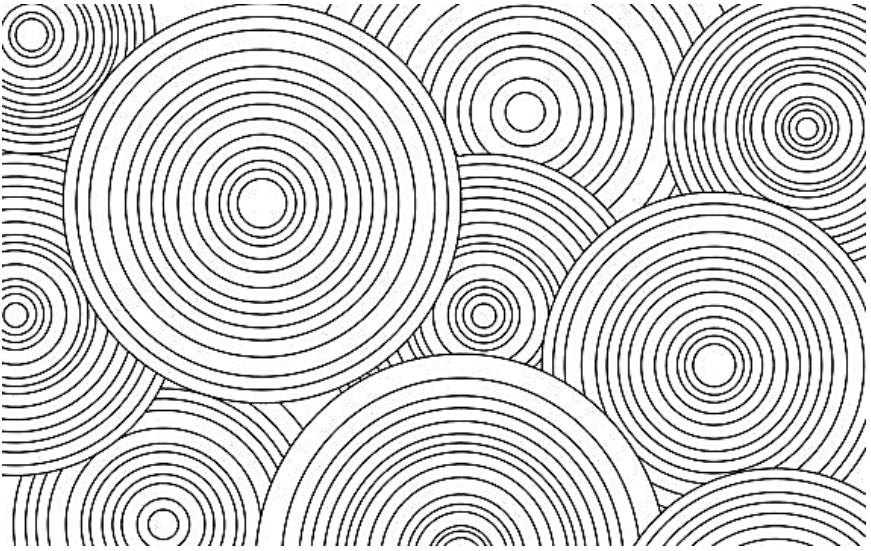
And for those who have committed terrible sin, Isaiah wrote, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isaiah 1:18) I’ve seen the brilliant and vivid hue of scarlet and crimson. And I know how they can stain. Have you ever stood in fresh-fallen snow so gloriously white under the sun you could not look at it? Isaiah could have said “By the Atonement, you can be forgiven,” but from scarlet to snow, from crimson to wool, the metaphor conveys so much more. Christ is mighty to save and His Atonement defies all earthly description in power and scope.

And again, “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength...They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:31) Have you ever watched an eagle take flight? It is a huge bird and yet it makes it look so easy. I’ve watched them high in the sky riding the air currents. Not only are they great power, but they are grace and beauty.

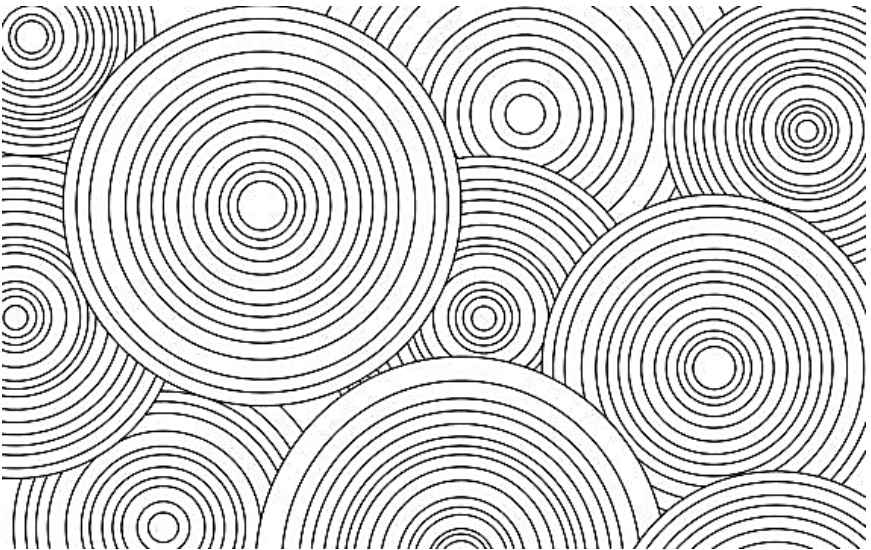
To those overwhelmed by a sense of their own weakness, God is power and he can make you powerful. And to those bearing heavy burdens and feeling alone...”But Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” (Isaiah 49:14-15) This overwhelms me. It is one thing to say the Lord loves us, but to say that it is more likely that a mother will

forget the child nursing at her breast before the Lord forgets me; that is compassion and commitment.

Sheep and shepherds, snow and rain, wolves and lambs, mountains and valleys, voices and dust—stop, think about the metaphors, and you will know why Jesus said, “Great are the words of Isaiah” (3 Nephi 23:1).



Jacob and Esau



To me one of the greatest mistakes that we mortals make is giving up what we want most forever for what we think we have to have now, as illustrated by this story.

Even in the womb, these brothers were rivals, struggling and fighting against each other to the dismay and discomfort of their mother. And in birth they were still battling for place.

They couldn't have been more different. The older brother, the birthright son, was a hairy man and a cunning hunter; a man of the outdoors, while the younger brother was smooth-skinned and simple; a plain and righteous man.

The older son was rebellious, impetuous, and headstrong. When it came time to marry, he married out of the faith against the wishes of his parents. It broke his mother's heart. The younger son gave heed to the counsel of his parents and patiently waited for the opportunity to marry the right person in the right way.

One day the older son came in from the fields and he was hungry, very hungry. "Feed me," he said to his brother, "with that same red pottage, for I am faint." The younger brother said to him, "Sell me this day thy birthright."

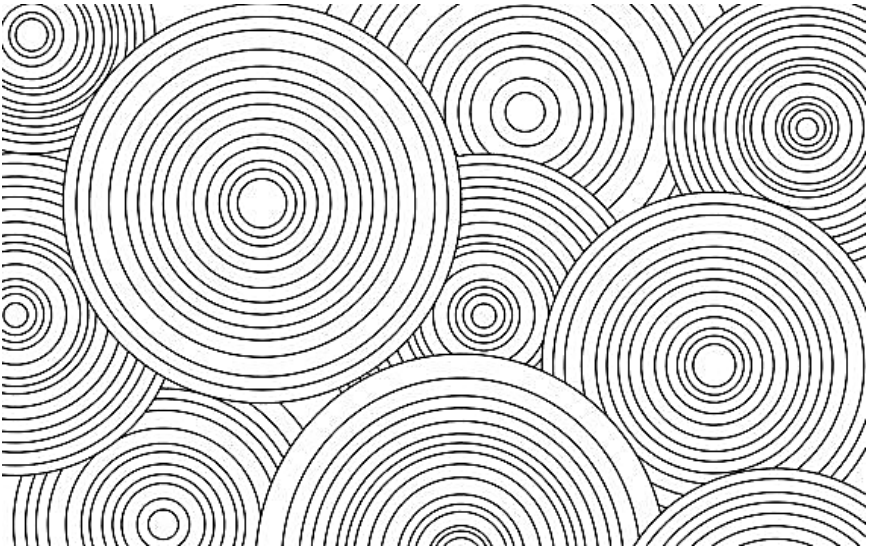
Now that may not seem all that significant to us now, but in the ancient east, being the birthright son meant the leadership of the

family and the largest inheritance once the father was gone. In the case of these two brothers, it meant much more. It also meant title to the land of Canaan and all the other blessings of the Abrahamic covenant.

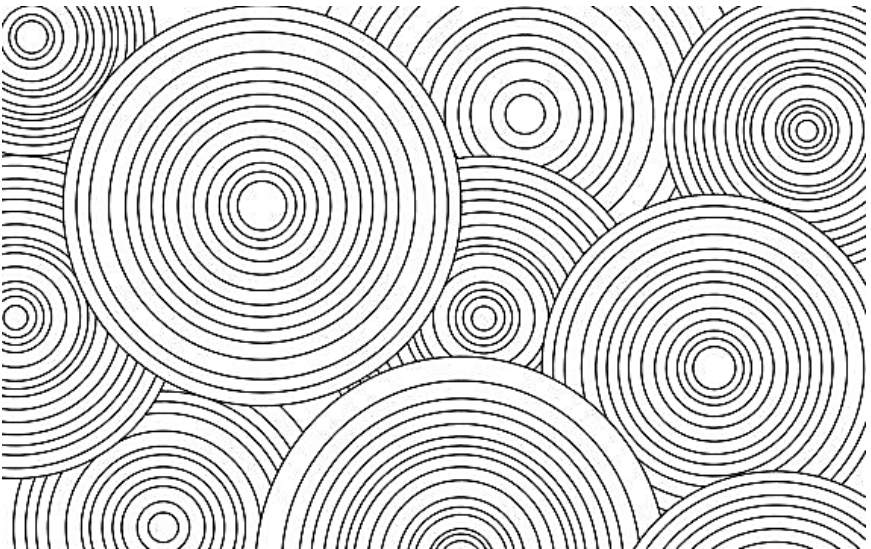
This was the older brother's response. "I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" He despised his birthright and sold it to his brother for a bowl of red soup.

His name was Esau, but ever after that his peers called him Edom, which means "Red," in remembrance of that soup for which he sold his future. His younger brother was Jacob. He too, would later receive another name, this one from God. The name was Israel.

By patience and determination, Jacob prevailed to become one of the most powerful men in all eternity and the father of an innumerable family—the House of Israel. Indeed, small dumb choices now can have big painful consequences later.



David and Goliath



There is a popular story in the Old Testament, the story of David and Goliath. David, whose name means ‘beloved’ or ‘my beloved,’ enters the story as a rosy-cheeked teenager, the youngest of the eight sons of Jesse.

When Samuel came among Jesse’s sons searching for Israel’s new king, no one took David seriously enough to even send for him at first. And even after he was anointed, the incident seems to have been discounted by David’s family: ‘David, a king? – ah!’ Later, when Israel went to war with the Philistines, it was David who was left behind to tend the sheep.

One day Jesse sent David with food and supplies to the battlefield in the valley of Elah some ten miles away, to find out also how his sons were doing. David left the sheep in the hands of a keeper, and made the journey.

He arrived among the men just as Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, walked out into the valley between the two contending armies. For forty days the two armies had been at a standoff, and every day, twice a day, Goliath would come out and taunt and insult the armies of Saul, calling for them to send out a man to fight. Rather than having the two armies fight, it was a custom of the time for the champion of each army to fight, and let the victor of their fight be the victor of the cause.

But no one dared challenge Goliath, and who can blame them [him]? According to our present text, Goliath stood over 9 ½ feet tall. His armor weighed in around 150 pounds. The staff of his spear was like a weaver’s beam, while the head of it weighed somewhere between 12 and 26 pounds. He was a part of the feared race of the Anakim and a warrior trained from his childhood.

Well, David heard the blasphemy of the giant and was incensed, especially when the armies of Israel around him cowered in fear. “... who is this uncircumcised Philistine,” he said, “that he defy the armies of the living God?” (1 Samuel 17:26)



David and Goliath

When David’s brothers heard him, they were angry and scolded him for pride, naughtiness and neglect of his duty at home. David’s words reached the king, and David was brought before Saul. “Let no man’s heart fail because of him;” David said, “thy

servant will go and fight with this Philistine.” “... Thou are not able to go against this Philistine ... ,“ Saul said, “for thou art but a youth ...” (1 Samuel 17:33)

David pleaded for the chance to fight. Finally – finally the king said, “... Go, and the Lord be with thee.” (1 Samuel 17:37) When David entered the field, Goliath was insulted that they would send a mere boy. He cursed David by his gods, and threatened to feed his flesh to the birds.

David’s response to the giant allows us a glimpse into his great heart, wherein was the source of his power. He said, “... Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts ... This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; ...” (1 Samuel 17:45-46)

Enraged, the giant charged, David rushed to meet him, drawing from his shepherd’s purse as he went a smooth stone, which he slung with a practiced aim. When he released that stone, it flew true and buried itself in the forehead of the giant, dropping him to the ground. David ran, pounced on him, drew out the massive sword, and with it slew the arrogant Philistine. The horrified Philistine army scattered with Israel in hot pursuit. It was not just a victory; it was a rout.

I love this story. It proves to me that if the cause is just, and there is faith in the God of Israel, what does it matter who scorns you or insults you?

Now, why do I tell this story? Well, there are a lot of beloved, ruddy-cheeked youth who are graduating about now. To them I say, ‘Welcome to the field, David. Goliath is waiting.’

Adapted from 1 Samuel 16-17

About the Author

Glenn Rawson has been telling inspirational stories for over 30 years. His stories started as a way to teach and share with his family and a few close friends.

Glenn Rawson was born and raised in Idaho. He grew up on a cattle ranch, and to this day still carries a little bit of cowboy in him. When he was 18 years-old he joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and later served a mission in Iowa. He graduated from Brigham Young University with a degree in Wildlife and Range Science, and



later from Idaho State University with a Masters degree in Education. He spent almost 20 years as a seminary and institute teacher.

In 1997, he began writing and producing stories for the radio. His stories continue to be heard on numerous stations around the country. That work in radio later turned into production work for Church specials. Then in 2008, he joined with KJZZ television

in Salt Lake City and the Joseph Smith Papers team to produce a weekly documentary television series entitled, The Joseph Smith Papers. In 2010, he teamed with Dennis Lyman and Bryant Bush to produce a new series called History of the Saints. Glenn and his wife Debbie have seven children and nine grandchildren. They live in Utah. Glenn is a simple storyteller whose goal is to inspire and lift people.

In addition to traveling around the world, he has studied the scriptures extensively and is happy to present this book to you. For information about receiving weekly stories and other books available, please visit: GlennRawsonStories.com or HistoryoftheSaints.org