



**THE OLD
TESTAMENT**



1. THE CREATOR KING

GENESIS 1 v 1 – 2 v 3

In the beginning, there was God, the King.

But there were no people, nor any place for them to live.

So the King created that place – the heavens and the earth.

The earth was covered with darkness.

So, with a Breath and a Word, the King spoke. And there was light!

Waters covered the earth – there was no shape to things, no order.

So, with a Breath and a Word, he spoke. And between the waters above and the waters below, he made a safe place.




Land! The King's people would need land beneath their feet.

So, with a Breath and a Word, he spoke. And the waters gathered into seas and left behind mountains and plains and hills.

Food! The King's people would need food.

So, with a Breath and a Word, he spoke. And grain flowed through fields, and trees filled with fruit.





The King's people would need a way to tell the time and to mark the seasons.

So, with a Breath and a Word, he spoke. And, up in the heavens, they appeared: a big light for the day; a smaller light for the night; and little lights twinkling far beyond.

The waters were empty.

So, with a Breath and a Word, God spoke. And life, large and small and strange, swarmed and swam through the seas.

Then the King turned to the skies.

With a Breath and a Word he spoke. And flapping and flocking, life burst through the clouds as well!

And as for the land, surely there should be life there too.

So, with a Breath and a Word, God spoke. And paws padded, and hooves hammered, and tiny insect feet skittered and scattered along the ground.

And when God the King looked at all he had created, he saw that it was good.

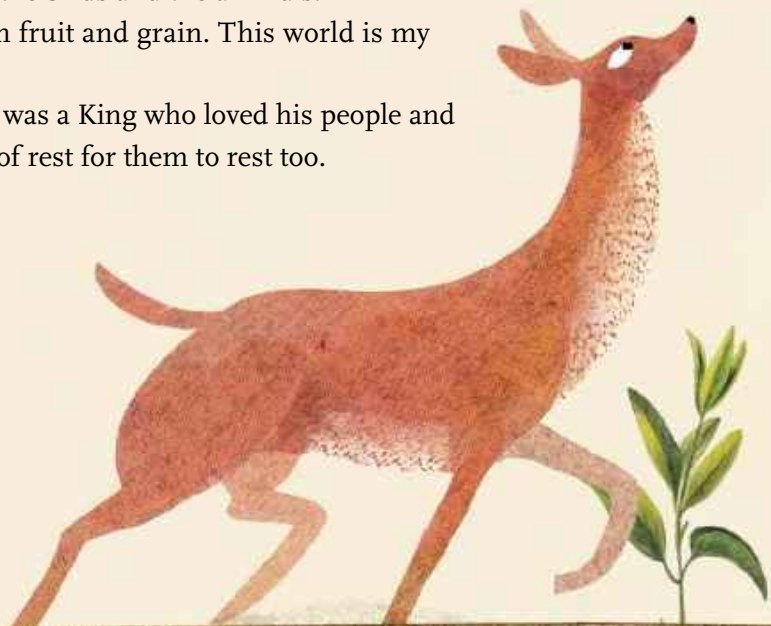
Good, but not finished. For everything the King made was made ready for the crown of his creation – for his people.

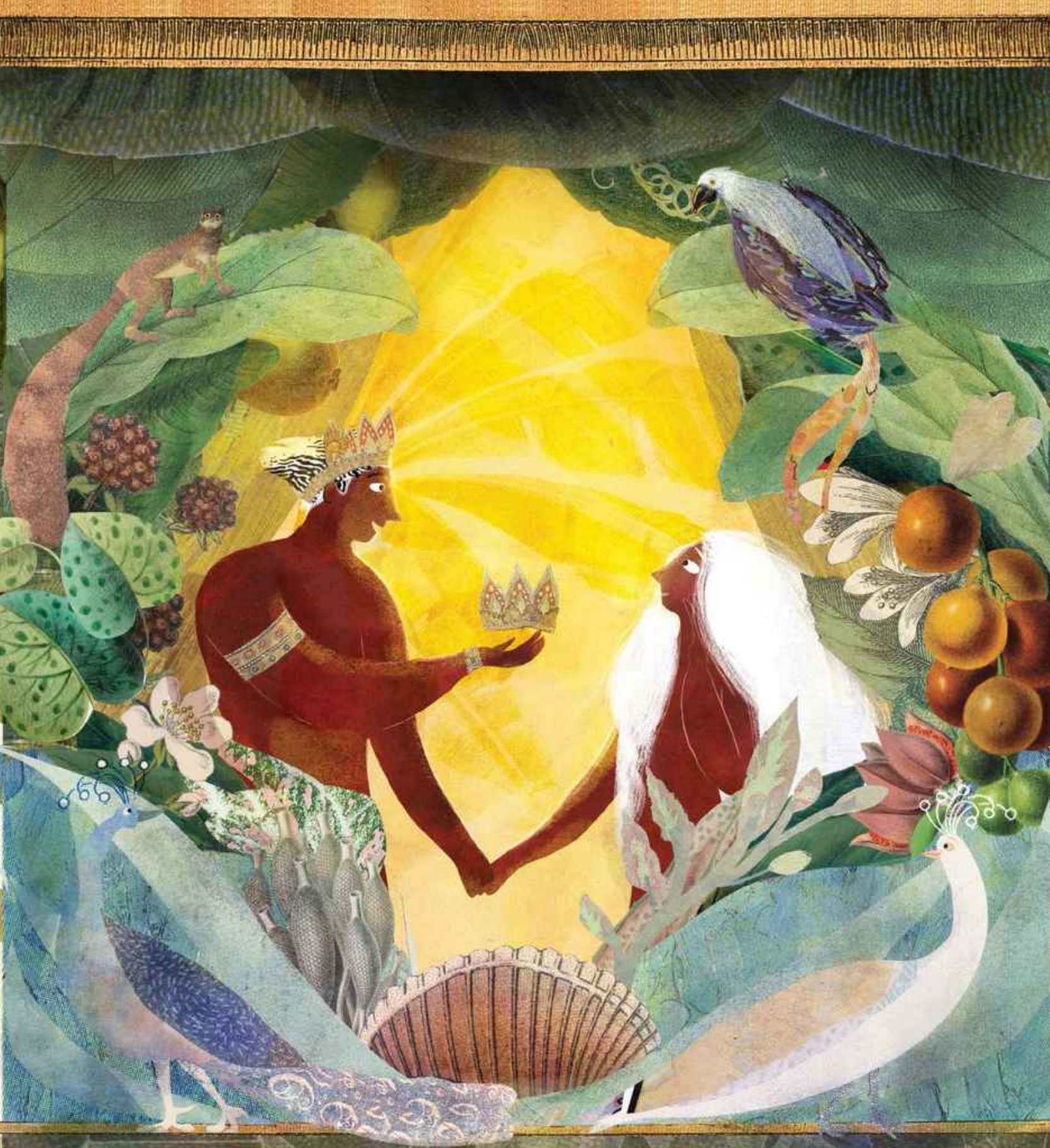
And so, with a Breath and a Word, he made the first man and the first woman. Made them in his image, to be in charge of the fish and the birds and the animals.

“Fill the earth with life,” he told them. “Feast on fruit and grain. This world is my gift—my blessing to you. Take care of it for me.”

And, with that, the King rested. And because he was a King who loved his people and knew just what they needed, he set aside that day of rest for them to rest too.

And that was very good!





2. THE FIRST REBELLION

GENESIS 3

God the King wanted to make a home for the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve. So he found a plot in a spot called Eden, and there he planted a garden.

“Spring!” said the King. And up the from the ground sprouted trees, beautiful to behold and bursting with fruit.

Then, in the middle of the garden, God grew two special trees. One was the tree of life. The delicious fruit from this tree meant that Adam and Eve could live for ever. But the other tree was very different.

“You can eat the fruit from any tree, including the tree of life,” God said, “except for this one – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For if you eat from this tree, you will die.”

No one knows how long Adam and Eve lived there, eating fruit from the trees and meeting each evening with their loving King.

But one day, Eve was approached by the serpent – a crafty creature who did not respect the rule of the King and had decided to rebel against him.

Keen that others should join his rebellion, the serpent asked Eve what sounded, at first, like a completely innocent question.

“Did God really say that you must not eat the lovely fruit in this garden?”

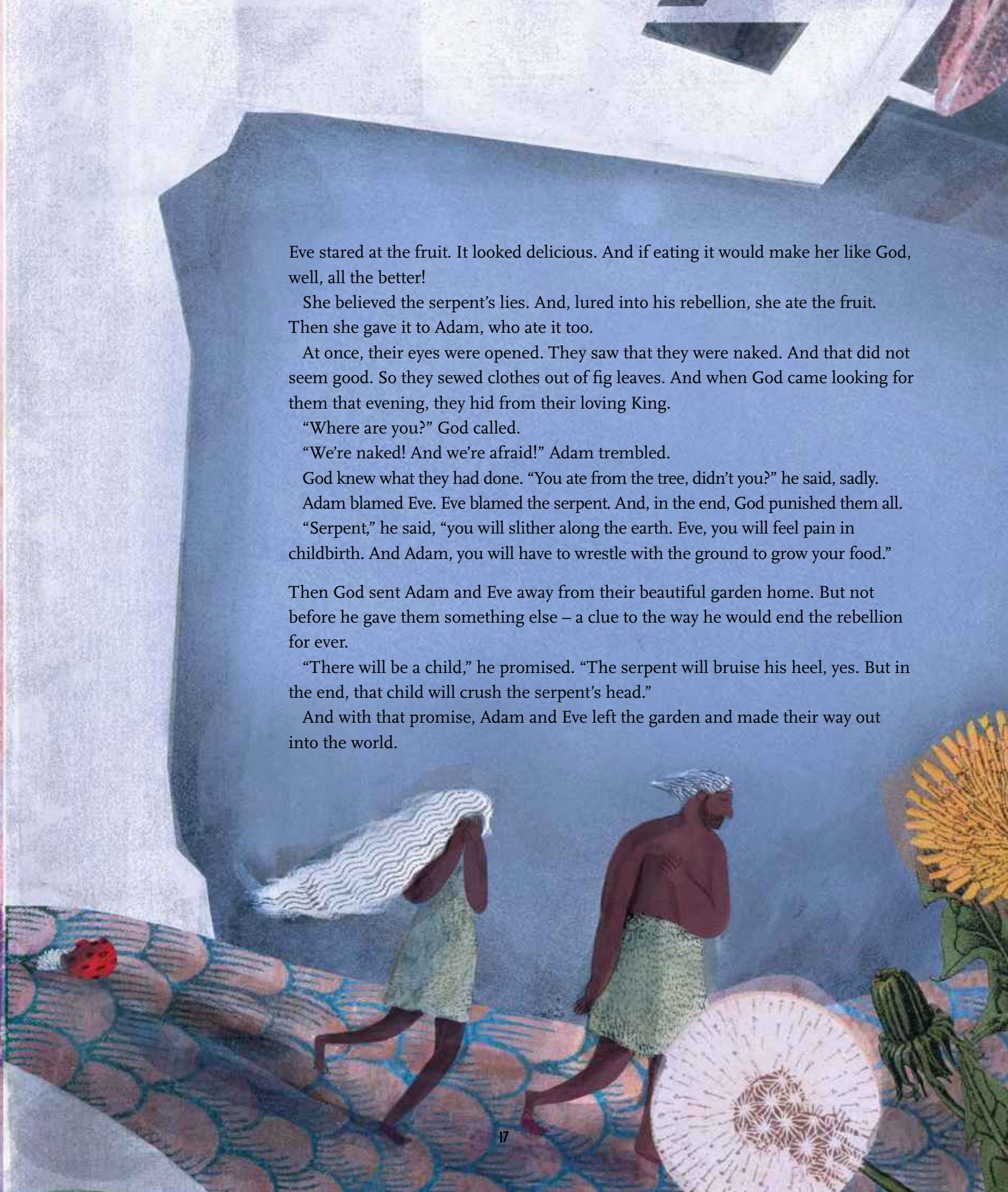
“Oh no,” she replied. “It’s just the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that we must avoid. If we eat the fruit from that one, or even touch it, we will die.”

“Ridiculous!” cried the serpent. “You won’t die!”

That was his first lie. And the second soon followed.

“Here’s the real reason,” he whispered. “God alone decides what is good and what is evil. If you eat the fruit from the tree, you will also be able to decide what is good and what is evil.

And the last thing God wants is for you to be God too!”



Eve stared at the fruit. It looked delicious. And if eating it would make her like God, well, all the better!

She believed the serpent's lies. And, lured into his rebellion, she ate the fruit. Then she gave it to Adam, who ate it too.

At once, their eyes were opened. They saw that they were naked. And that did not seem good. So they sewed clothes out of fig leaves. And when God came looking for them that evening, they hid from their loving King.

"Where are you?" God called.

"We're naked! And we're afraid!" Adam trembled.

God knew what they had done. "You ate from the tree, didn't you?" he said, sadly.

Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. And, in the end, God punished them all.

"Serpent," he said, "you will slither along the earth. Eve, you will feel pain in childbirth. And Adam, you will have to wrestle with the ground to grow your food."

Then God sent Adam and Eve away from their beautiful garden home. But not before he gave them something else – a clue to the way he would end the rebellion for ever.

"There will be a child," he promised. "The serpent will bruise his heel, yes. But in the end, that child will crush the serpent's head."

And with that promise, Adam and Eve left the garden and made their way out into the world.

3. THE ARK AND THE RAINBOW

GENESIS 6 v 1 – 9 v 17

When God the King made the world, he carved out a safe place between the waters above and the waters below, where his people could live.

But when Adam and Eve decided to choose for themselves what was good and what was evil, the rebellion that had started as a lie on the serpent's tongue and fruit in their mouths spread throughout the world, so that it was no longer a safe place for humans to enjoy.

One of their sons murdered the other, and within ten generations, violence had overwhelmed the world. Evil was all anyone could think about or do.

That made God sad – and sorry that he had put men and women on earth in the first place.

If they did not want a safe place, God decided that he would give them what they wanted. He would let the waters above crash down upon the waters below and take away that space with a great flood – and every living thing with it.

And yet... there was the loving promise God had made – of a child who would crush the serpent's head to set things right.

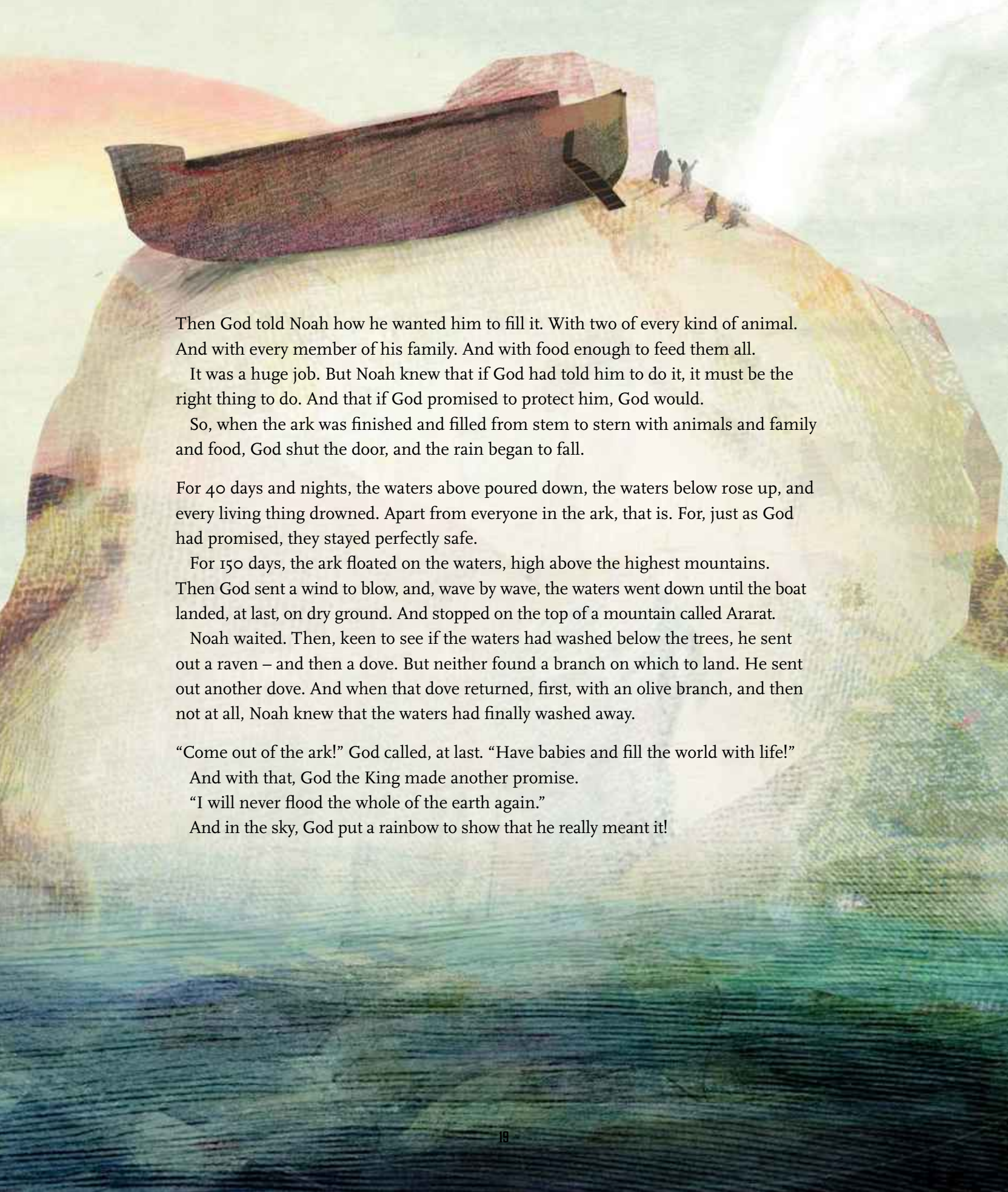
There was a man called Noah.

Noah didn't choose for himself what was good and what was evil. Noah did what God said was good. And he refused to do what God said was evil.

So God told Noah about the flood.

And God told Noah how to build an ark.



A painting of Noah's Ark on a mountain peak. The ark is a large, dark wooden structure with a ramp leading to the top. Several figures are visible on the mountain peak near the ark. The background shows a hazy, mountainous landscape under a pale sky. The water in the foreground is dark and textured.

Then God told Noah how he wanted him to fill it. With two of every kind of animal. And with every member of his family. And with food enough to feed them all.

It was a huge job. But Noah knew that if God had told him to do it, it must be the right thing to do. And that if God promised to protect him, God would.

So, when the ark was finished and filled from stem to stern with animals and family and food, God shut the door, and the rain began to fall.

For 40 days and nights, the waters above poured down, the waters below rose up, and every living thing drowned. Apart from everyone in the ark, that is. For, just as God had promised, they stayed perfectly safe.

For 150 days, the ark floated on the waters, high above the highest mountains. Then God sent a wind to blow, and, wave by wave, the waters went down until the boat landed, at last, on dry ground. And stopped on the top of a mountain called Ararat.

Noah waited. Then, keen to see if the waters had washed below the trees, he sent out a raven – and then a dove. But neither found a branch on which to land. He sent out another dove. And when that dove returned, first, with an olive branch, and then not at all, Noah knew that the waters had finally washed away.

“Come out of the ark!” God called, at last. “Have babies and fill the world with life!”

And with that, God the King made another promise.

“I will never flood the whole of the earth again.”

And in the sky, God put a rainbow to show that he really meant it!

4. THE TOO-TALL TOWER

GENESIS 11 v 1-9

Noah had been a good man.

And the flood had given the world a new start.

But that didn't stop men and women following in the footsteps of Adam and Eve. They still wanted to choose for themselves what was good and what was evil. And they still wanted to be kings of their own lives instead of letting God be their loving King.

And so, some time after the flood, a great group of people travelled west and settled on a flat plain in a place called Shinar.

“Let's build a magnificent city,” they said. “And, in the middle, let's raise a tall tower – one that will reach right up into the heavens. Then everyone will know just how amazing we are!”

They were planning to make a kingdom without the King – a place where *they* would be known as “great” instead of God.

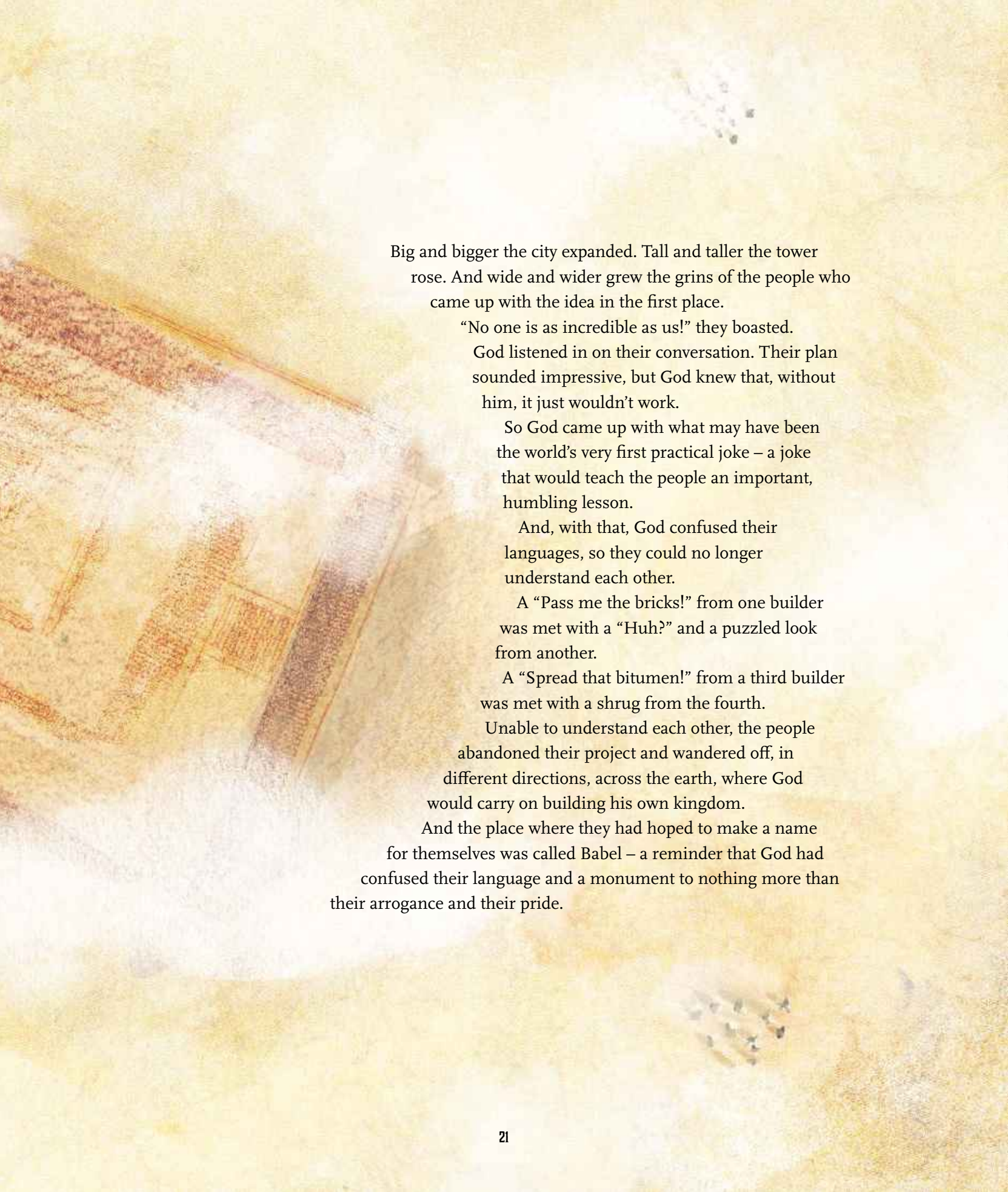
And so they began to build. And because everyone in the world spoke the very same language, it was no problem.

“Let's make a new kind of brick, hard as stone,” one builder suggested.

“Great idea,” another builder replied.

“And let's stick the bricks together with this new-fangled bitumen stuff,” said a third builder.

And the fourth builder replied with a nod and a “Got it!”



Big and bigger the city expanded. Tall and taller the tower rose. And wide and wider grew the grins of the people who came up with the idea in the first place.

“No one is as incredible as us!” they boasted. God listened in on their conversation. Their plan sounded impressive, but God knew that, without him, it just wouldn’t work.

So God came up with what may have been the world’s very first practical joke – a joke that would teach the people an important, humbling lesson.

And, with that, God confused their languages, so they could no longer understand each other.

A “Pass me the bricks!” from one builder was met with a “Huh?” and a puzzled look from another.

A “Spread that bitumen!” from a third builder was met with a shrug from the fourth.

Unable to understand each other, the people abandoned their project and wandered off, in different directions, across the earth, where God would carry on building his own kingdom.

And the place where they had hoped to make a name for themselves was called Babel – a reminder that God had confused their language and a monument to nothing more than their arrogance and their pride.

5. THE KING MAKES A NATION

GENESIS 12 v 1-9; 15 v 1-6; 17 v 1-16; 18 v 1-15; 21 v 1-7

From Babel, people wandered all across the world.

Some went to a place they called Ur. Then, one day, God spoke to a man who lived there. A man called Abram.

“Follow me!” God said to Abram, “and I will lead you to a new land that you can call your own.

“If you do, I will make a great nation from you and your children. And that nation will be a blessing to the world!”

Blessing? What kind of blessing?

For a start, the world would be able to see what it meant for God to be the loving King of a specific people in a specific place. But there was more. God had made a promise, remember? A child would come to destroy the power of evil. And that child had to come from somewhere. So God chose Abram to be the father of a people that God would call his own – a people from whom that child would one day come.

There was just one slightly awkward problem.

Abram was 75. His wife, Sarai, was 65. And they had no children. Not one!

Still, Abram trusted God.

With his family and his animals and everything he owned, he left his country and followed God to the land of Canaan. And when he arrived, he built an altar and thanked God for his new home.

Abram settled in the land. Years passed, but still he had no children. And the question remained: How could he be the father of a nation, without a child?

So God came to Abram again.

“Step outside your tent,” God told him, “and look up into the sky. Can you count the stars? Of course not. There are far too many.

“One day, Abram, your children and grandchildren and all their children, down through the ages, will outnumber even the stars in the sky!”

Then God made a covenant with Abram. It was a special relationship, a set of promises, that kings often made with their people in those days. A set of promises that said, “I will do ‘this’ for you, and you will do ‘that’ for me”.

In this “kingly covenant promise”, God vowed to give Abram a child who would be the start of a huge nation, and a special land for that nation to live in. And all God wanted was for Abram to trust him.

So Abram did.

And when he was 99 years old and Sarai was 89, God gave them new names. Abram became Abraham, which means “father of many nations”. And Sarai became Sarah, which means “princess”. And he gave them a new promise too – that some of the people from their family would be kings!

Shortly after that, they had three visitors.

Abraham welcomed them and prepared a lovely meal for them – cakes and curds and cooked calf!

“Where is your wife, Sarah?” the visitors asked.

“Right there, in the tent,” Abraham replied.

“We will visit you again next year,” the visitors said, chasing the cake crumbs from their laps. “And by that time, Sarah will have given birth to a child.”

And that was when someone laughed.

Not Abraham. And not the visitors. No, it was Sarah, who had been listening from inside the tent.

“Why did Sarah laugh?” asked the visitors. “Nothing is too hard for God.”

And, sure enough, it wasn’t. For within the year, Sarah did indeed have a son. And they called the boy “laughter”, for that is what his name, Isaac, means!



6. THE NATION GROWS

GENESIS 22 v 1-19; 24; 25 v 19 – 26 v 5; 27 – 33

The boy Isaac. The child called “laughter”. It was a start. A small start. But it was the beginning of a nation where God would be King.

Then God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac. And that was no laughing matter.

Still, Abraham trusted God. So up the mountain they went, father and son. With wood and fire for the altar.

“Where is the sacrifice?” Isaac asked.

And all Abraham could say was that God would provide.

And so God did. For as Abraham raised the knife above his son, he heard a voice from heaven and saw a ram trapped in some thorns. God had provided the ram to be sacrificed instead of Isaac.

“God knows your trust is in him alone,” said the voice, “for you were willing to give him your only son”.

And those words were not only a celebration of Abraham’s faith in God’s promise but also a picture of how God himself would one day sacrifice his own Son – that promised child (remember?), bruised by the serpent to crush the serpent’s head.

When the time was right, Abraham sent a servant to find Isaac a wife – back to his homeland and his own people.

Outside the city of Nahor, near a well, the servant met a beautiful woman called Rebekah, who kindly offered to water his camels.

Rebekah and Isaac were married, and she gave birth to twin sons. Esau, the firstborn, was covered with red hair. And smooth-skinned Jacob was born second, hanging onto his brother’s heel.

The boys grew, and as they did, God repeated the kingly covenant promise to Isaac that he had made to his father, Abraham.



“Live in this land, and your children will outnumber the stars in the sky and be a blessing to the world.”

The problem was that the two boys hardly seemed to be a blessing even to their family! And it did not help that Isaac preferred Esau, a great hunter, and that Rebekah preferred Jacob, who stayed in the tent by her side.

That hanging-onto-the-heel rivalry between the twins had already erupted on a day when Esau came into the tent, famished, and Jacob was brewing up a lovely stew.

“Gimme some of that!” Esau demanded.

“I’ll swap you for it,” Jacob replied. “You’re the oldest, so how about you give me the right to run the family when Father dies?”

“Fine!” Esau grunted. “Because *I’ll* die if I don’t get something to eat!”

That “right” had to come with Isaac’s blessing, though. And things between the brothers got much worse when Rebekah helped Jacob to fool his father and steal that blessing for himself.

Esau was furious and vowed to kill his brother.

So Jacob ran for his life. And when he could run no further, he fell to the ground, grabbed a stone for his pillow and dreamed.

He saw a ladder reaching up to heaven, filled with angels. And God himself above it all. And that is when God made the same kingly covenant promise to Jacob that he had made to Abraham and Isaac.

“This land is yours. You will return to it. Your children – more than you can count – will bless the earth. And I will watch over you.”

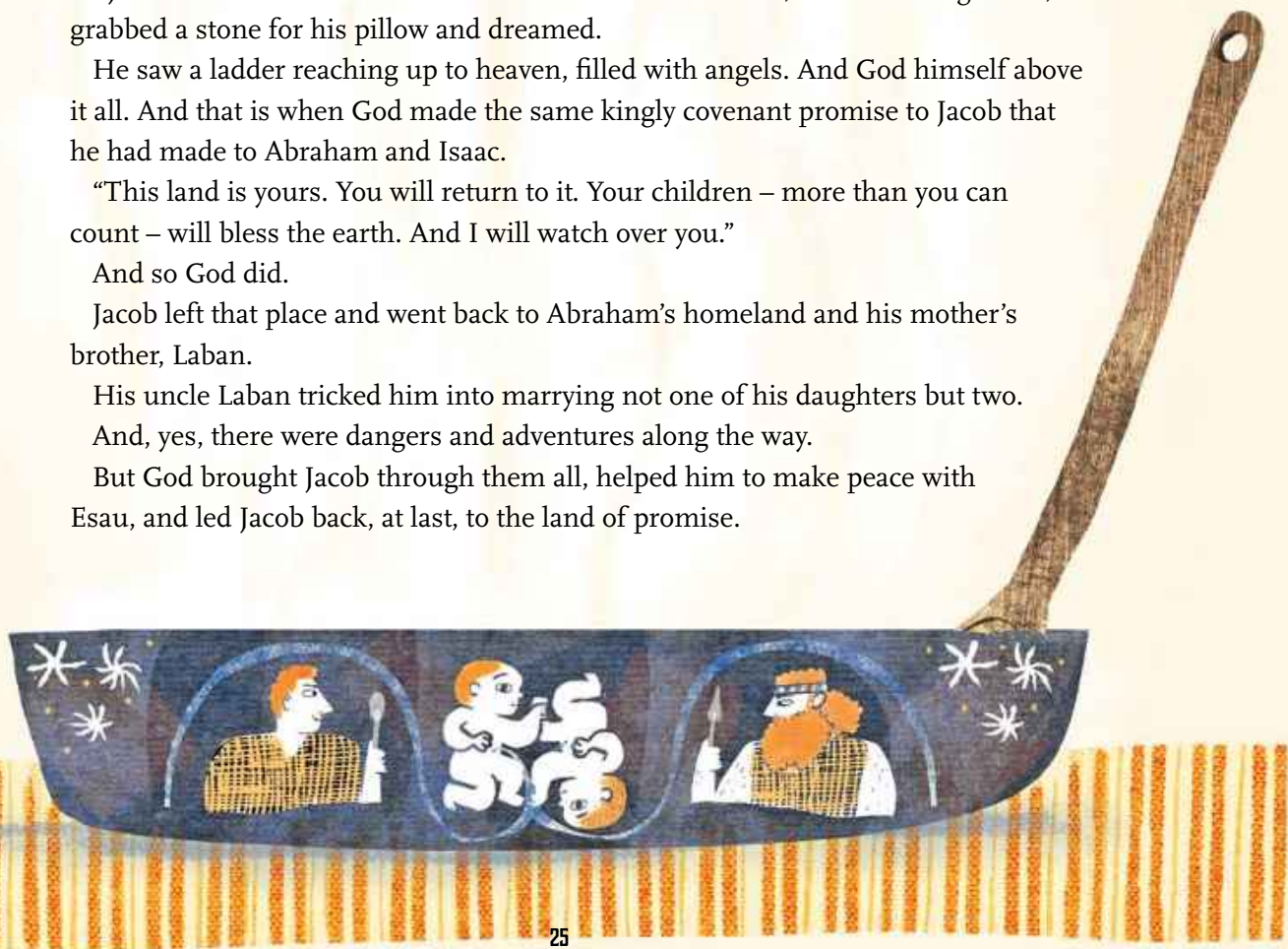
And so God did.

Jacob left that place and went back to Abraham’s homeland and his mother’s brother, Laban.

His uncle Laban tricked him into marrying not one of his daughters but two.

And, yes, there were dangers and adventures along the way.

But God brought Jacob through them all, helped him to make peace with Esau, and led Jacob back, at last, to the land of promise.





7. THE NATION MOVES!

GENESIS 37; 39 – 47

When God the King made his kingly covenant promise with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he promised to take care of the nation that would come from them. And he did that in some surprising ways!

Jacob had twelve sons, but Joseph was the child of his favourite wife, Rachael. Jacob made Joseph a beautiful many-coloured coat, and that made his brothers jealous. Well, that and Joseph's dreams.

In one dream, his brother's sheaves of wheat bowed down to Joseph's sheaf. In another dream, they were stars, bowing before him.

The dreams came from God, but all that Joseph's brothers could see was a puffed-up boy who needed to be taught a lesson.

So one day, when they were all in the fields together, they grabbed Joseph, tore off his coat and dumped him in a pit. They wanted to kill him, but when a caravan of Ishmaelite traders came camel-ing by, they sold him, instead, for 20 silver coins. Then they dipped his coat in blood and took it to their father, claiming that an animal had eaten him.

Jacob was devastated. But God had promised to watch out for Jacob's children, hadn't he? And so God did, as step by step, he made Joseph's dreams come true.

The Ishmaelites carried Joseph to Egypt and sold him as a slave to Potiphar, captain of the guard in Pharaoh's palace. God blessed everything Joseph did, and Potiphar put Joseph in charge of his household.

Sadly, however, Potiphar's wife told lies about Joseph, and Potiphar had him thrown in prison.

Things looked bad. But there was God's kingly covenant promise, remember?

Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker also found themselves in prison. And when they each had a puzzling dream, God told Joseph exactly what those dreams meant – and they came true!



So, when Pharaoh himself had a puzzling dream, the cupbearer remembered Joseph, and Joseph was brought before the king of all Egypt.

Joseph, of course, was under the protection of an even greater King. So, when Pharaoh told Joseph his dream about seven skinny cows eating seven fat cows and seven skinny ears of corn eating seven fat ears, God the King told Joseph exactly what that dream meant: seven years of good crops followed by seven years of famine.

Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph's answer that he put him in charge of storing up the crops in the seven good years so there would be plenty to eat later. And God blessed that work too.

After seven years, the famine struck, reaching even to the land of Canaan, where Joseph's family lived. And it wasn't long before his brothers were sent to buy food in Egypt and found themselves face to face with the brother they had sold into slavery.

Because of the passing years and his fine Egyptian clothes, they did not recognise Joseph. But he recognised them. So he tested them. And when he was sure that they had changed, he showed them who he really was.

They were terrified, but Joseph made it clear that God had used all that had happened to save the family. So down to Egypt came God's people, with plenty to eat and room to grow into the nation God had planned.

And God the loving King kept his promise to watch over his people.





8. A BULRUSH BASKET AND A BURNING BUSH

EXODUS 1 v 1 – 4 v 16

Seventy. That's how many members of Joseph's family were saved from the famine and went to live in Egypt. For God the King had made a kingly covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to watch over the nation he had created.

It still wasn't much of a "nation", though, was it? Just 70 people.

But time passed. And year after year, and child by child, those 70 people grew into the huge nation that God had promised. And it looked as if there just might be more children of Abraham than stars in the sky or dust on the earth.

That's how it seemed to a new pharaoh, anyway: one who had forgotten about what Joseph had done and could only worry that the descendants of Joseph's family – the Hebrews, as they were called – might threaten his kingdom.

So he made them his slaves, building his great cities. But the harder he treated them, the more their numbers grew. Finally, he gave the awful command that every newborn Hebrew boy should be drowned in the River Nile.

Pharaoh thought he was the most powerful king of all. What he did not know was that an even more powerful King was watching over the Hebrew people. And one of those people was a very clever woman with a little baby boy.

She built him a basket boat out of bulrushes, tarred it all over to keep out the water, set it afloat among the Nile river reeds, and sent her daughter to watch over it.

When Pharaoh's daughter discovered the basket, and the baby inside it, all seemed lost. But she felt sorry for the child and decided to keep him. Thinking quickly, the baby's sister called out, "I know a woman who could feed him for you!"

And so the child's own mother cared for him until he was old enough to be adopted by the princess – who named him Moses.

Moses grew up in Pharaoh's palace, but he was always a Hebrew at heart. One day, when he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, Moses killed the Egyptian. Fearful that news of his deed would reach Pharaoh's ears, Moses fled to the land of Midian and lived there, as a shepherd, for 40 years.

And that is when he stumbled across a bush. A special bush. A bush that burned but did not burn up. And from that bush came these words...

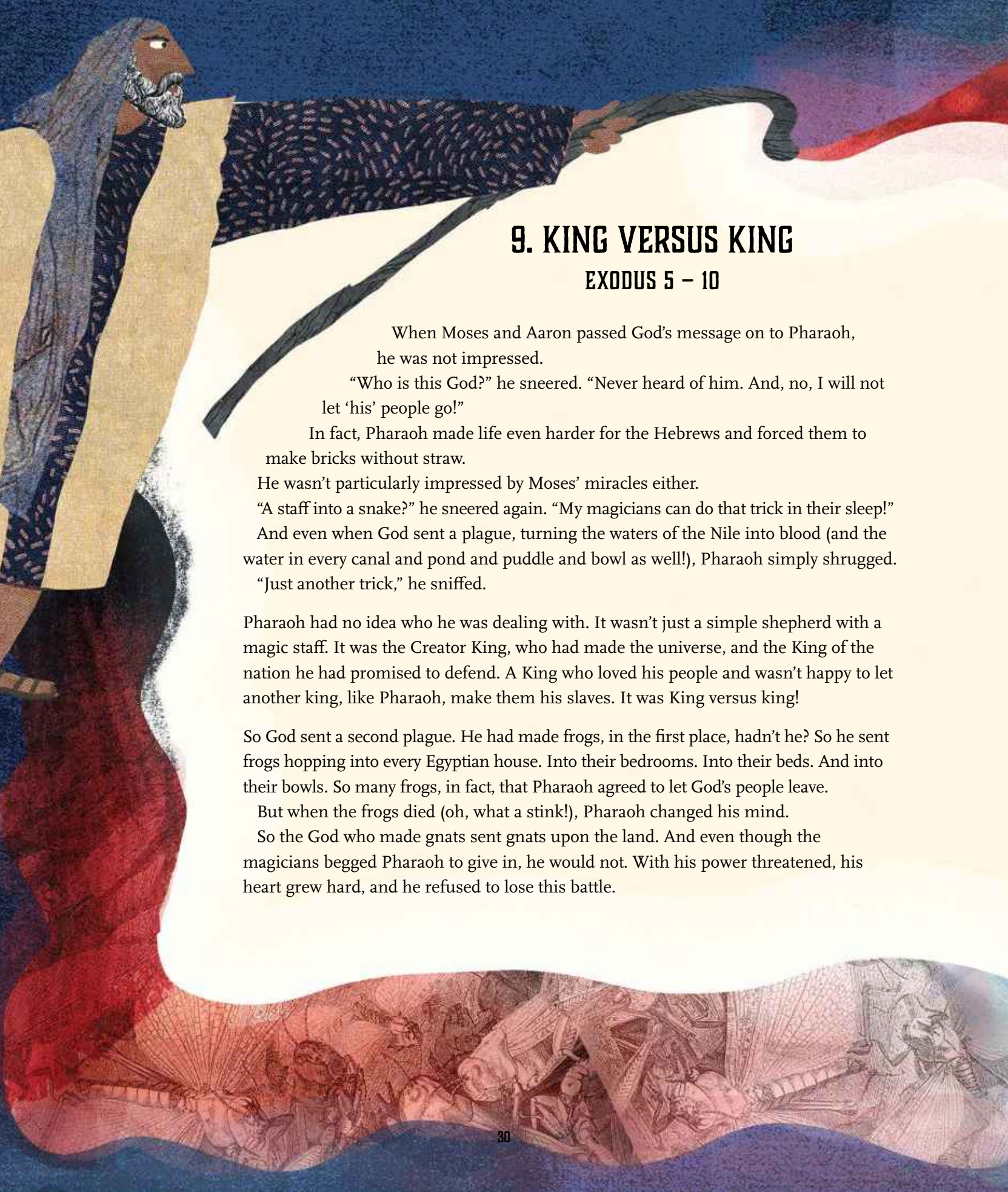
"I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I have heard the sad cries of my suffering people. I have come to help them. And you, Moses, must go to Pharaoh and tell him to set my people free."

Moses had plenty of excuses: "I'm a nobody! What if they ask who sent me? Why should they believe me? I'm no good at speaking!"

And God had plenty of answers: "You're my servant. Tell them that 'I Am' sent you. They'll believe you when they see the miracles you do. And your brother Aaron is a great speaker, so he can help you!"

"Now, no more excuses!" said God. "Go! Go and tell Pharaoh to set my people free!"





9. KING VERSUS KING

EXODUS 5 – 10

When Moses and Aaron passed God's message on to Pharaoh, he was not impressed.

"Who is this God?" he sneered. "Never heard of him. And, no, I will not let 'his' people go!"

In fact, Pharaoh made life even harder for the Hebrews and forced them to make bricks without straw.

He wasn't particularly impressed by Moses' miracles either.


"A staff into a snake?" he sneered again. "My magicians can do that trick in their sleep!" And even when God sent a plague, turning the waters of the Nile into blood (and the water in every canal and pond and puddle and bowl as well!), Pharaoh simply shrugged. "Just another trick," he sniffed.

Pharaoh had no idea who he was dealing with. It wasn't just a simple shepherd with a magic staff. It was the Creator King, who had made the universe, and the King of the nation he had promised to defend. A King who loved his people and wasn't happy to let another king, like Pharaoh, make them his slaves. It was King versus king!

So God sent a second plague. He had made frogs, in the first place, hadn't he? So he sent frogs hopping into every Egyptian house. Into their bedrooms. Into their beds. And into their bowls. So many frogs, in fact, that Pharaoh agreed to let God's people leave.

But when the frogs died (oh, what a stink!), Pharaoh changed his mind.

So the God who made gnats sent gnats upon the land. And even though the magicians begged Pharaoh to give in, he would not. With his power threatened, his heart grew hard, and he refused to lose this battle.



So the God who made flies sent flies upon the land. And swarms of them flew into the houses of the Egyptians. But the Hebrew houses were spared.

“All right, go!” Pharaoh agreed. “Just take away these flies!”

But when the flies had gone, again he changed his mind.

So the God who made horses and camels and cows made the animals of Egypt die. But the Hebrew animals were spared. And Pharaoh’s heart grew harder still.

So the God who made dust told Moses to throw dust in the air. And when it landed on the Egyptians, it made painful sores appear on their bodies. The magicians were all in pain, and they begged Pharaoh to admit defeat. But he would not.

So the God who made rain and snow sent lightning and thunder and hail upon the land, crushing the crops of the Egyptians. But sparing the Hebrews’ barley and flax.

“Make it stop!” pleaded Pharaoh. “And your people can go.”

But as soon as the sun shone, he changed his mind again.

The hail had crushed the barley and flax, but the wheat had only just begun to sprout. So the God who made locusts sent locusts to devour the wheat and the trees and every other green growing thing that remained.

“Go!” Pharaoh cried.

But when God sent a wind to blow the locusts into the sea, again Pharaoh changed his mind.

So the God who made light removed the light from the land and plunged Egypt into darkness.

“Leave!” Pharaoh cried, only to change his mind once more.

So God the King, the God who gave the breath of life, told Moses what he would do next...

10. THE REDEEMER KING

EXODUS 11 – 12

Pharaoh the king would not budge. He was determined to keep hold of his slaves, even in the face of the plagues that God the King had sent.

But God wasn't just the King of the nation he loved. He was also the Creator King. So, in order to rescue his people, the God who had given the breath of life in the first place decided to take that life away.

"At midnight," he told Moses, "I will visit the Egyptians, and every one of their firstborn children, from the palace down to the humblest dwelling, will die. And every firstborn animal too. But I will spare my own people. This is what they must do.

"Every household must choose a lamb – a perfect lamb.

"At twilight, everyone must kill their lamb.

"Then they must take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood of the lamb and spread the blood on the doorposts and the lintels of their houses.

"Next, they must eat the lamb. No bones broken. Roasted. Not boiled or raw.

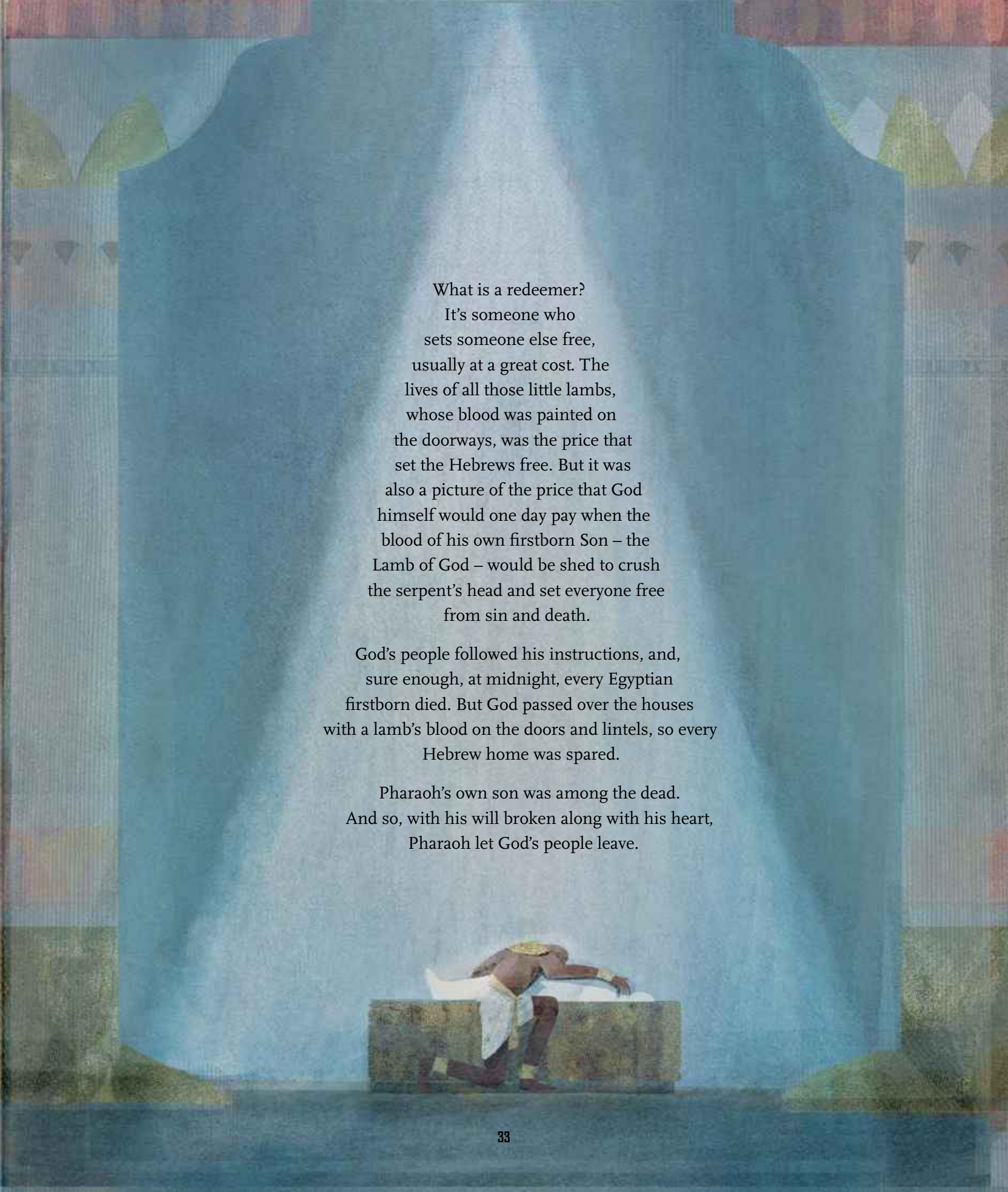
"Bread without yeast and bitter herbs must also be a part of the meal.

"And they must eat it in a hurry, with their belts fastened, their sandals on and their staffs in their hands.

"Then, at midnight, when I visit the land, I will *pass over* the houses with the blood of the lamb on their doors and lintels, and the firstborn in those houses will not die."

God told Moses that his people should eat that Passover meal every year so they would never forget what he had done for them. And so they would always remember that he was not only the Creator King and the King of their nation but also their Redeemer King.



The background of the page is a stylized illustration. It features a large, light blue archway that frames the text. The archway is set against a backdrop of vertical stripes in shades of blue, green, and brown. At the bottom center, a figure with dark skin, wearing a white garment and a yellow headband, is kneeling in a prayerful or reverent pose on a brown rectangular base. The overall style is reminiscent of a tapestry or a traditional painting.

What is a redeemer?
It's someone who
sets someone else free,
usually at a great cost. The
lives of all those little lambs,
whose blood was painted on
the doorways, was the price that
set the Hebrews free. But it was
also a picture of the price that God
himself would one day pay when the
blood of his own firstborn Son – the
Lamb of God – would be shed to crush
the serpent's head and set everyone free
from sin and death.

God's people followed his instructions, and,
sure enough, at midnight, every Egyptian
firstborn died. But God passed over the houses
with a lamb's blood on the doors and lintels, so every
Hebrew home was spared.

Pharaoh's own son was among the dead.
And so, with his will broken along with his heart,
Pharaoh let God's people leave.