

A NOTE TO PARENTS

The Hebrew Scriptures are like a drama or a symphony, built around a central theme. That theme is stated when God calls Abraham to leave his people, become a wanderer, and accept the promise of a land and a name. It is then played out as two great acts. The first is the slavery in Egypt, opening out into the Exodus, the giving of the Law, and the entry into the Promised Land. The second is the fall of Jerusalem, the exile and captivity in Babylon, and the joyous return, promised by the prophets, longingly anticipated, and finally realized with amazement, poignant joy, and deep gratitude.

Christians have made the whole sweep of the Hebrew Scriptures into Part One of a larger drama, looking all the way back to the story of Adam and Eve, whose exile from Eden becomes, in the hands of Paul, the key to all the later experience not only of the covenant people but of the whole human family. The Sequel ("Covenant 2"), takes to a new level the theme of slavery and liberation, of exile and return, of loss and restoration. It introduces the voluntary humility of God, his entrance into our slavery, our exile, and our loss, and his victory that sets us free for ever.

The Church has always turned to the Hebrew Scriptures for images to show what God in Christ has done for us. We have used the images of the Exodus—the Paschal Lamb, the Red Sea, the Promised Land—to express our experience of restoration through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Our worship in Lent, Holy Week and Easter abounds in these images. But the desolation of God's people amid the ruins of Jerusalem, or in exile, has been used in the Church primarily as a way of expressing the desperate longing of the world for the coming of the Redeemer. In Advent our Scriptures and our hymns more and more express this longing, this promise, and the joy of its fulfillment. The hymn, "Comfort, comfort ye my people" (Hymnal 1982, #67), wonderfully expresses all these emotions. Try learning it with your children this Advent!

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ADVENT



JOHN WAS A PROPHET. HE TOLD GOD'S PROMISES.

Long ago, God's people were slaves. But God promised to set them free.



God did set them free. He led them through the wilderness to the land he had promised.



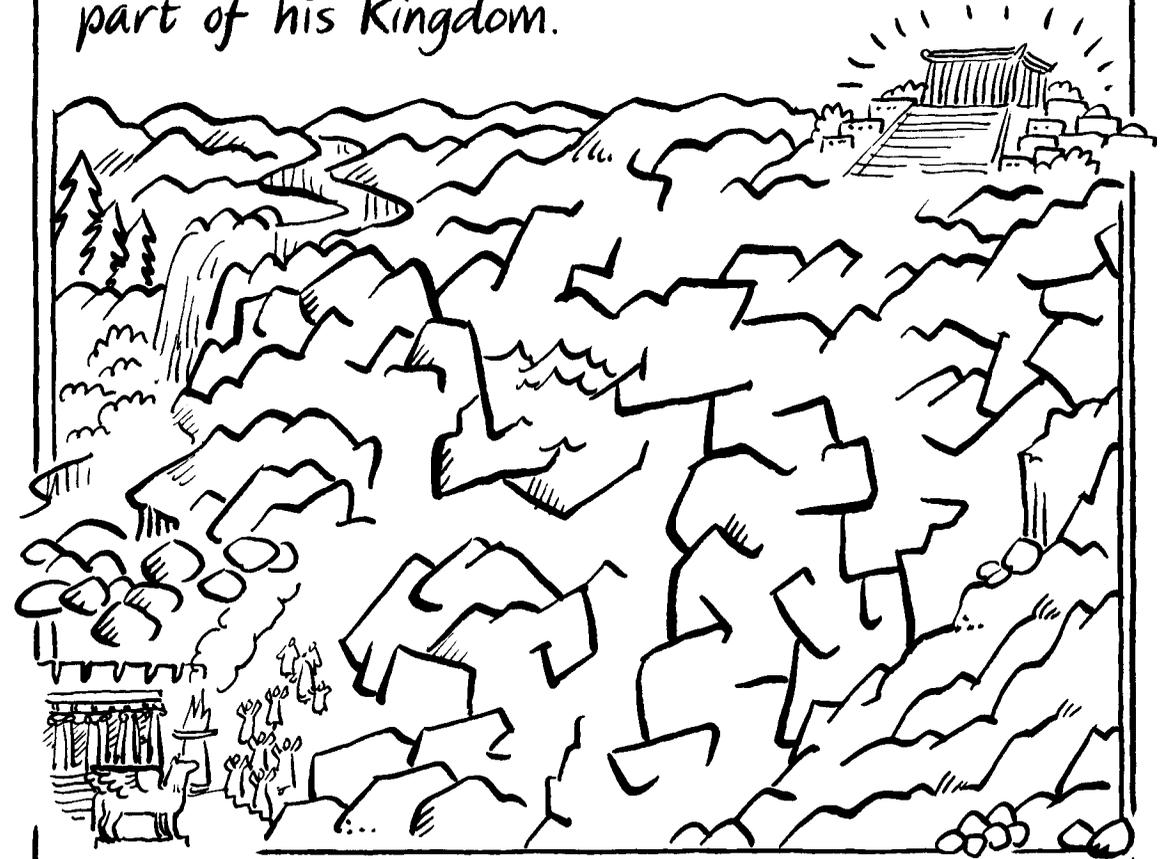
They built a beautiful city, JERUSALEM. But enemies came. The people were taken away as prisoners.



Again and again, God kept his promises, and saved them, and brought them home.



Advent is a time for remembering and hoping. We remember the sad and terrible things that happened to God's people. We remember God's promises: how he set his people free and brought them home. We wait and hope for God to keep his promises to us, and make us part of his Kingdom.



Lead God's people through the wilderness, from slavery to their own land and the Holy City of Jerusalem!