

# JEREMIAH, GOD'S MESSENGER

## In the Mud

### Teaching Aim

Messengers of God are sometimes treated badly.



### Response Aim

The children will learn to respect God's messengers.

## NOTES

### Jeremiah 38

2. God's message has not changed (cf. 34:2f; 37:8).
6. *Cistern* (AV, *dungeon*) – shaped like a bell with a narrow opening at the top. Used for storing rainwater.
7. *Benjamin Gate* – gates in a walled town provided a covered area where meetings could be held and official matters settled (cf. Gen 19:1; Ruth 4:1). *Ebed-Melech* – means 'king's servant'. *Cushite* – from North Africa.
10. *Thirty men* – probably so officials could not stop Jeremiah's rescue.
- 13,28. Note that Jeremiah was not set free completely.

### Resources

- Some old clothes or pieces of cloth and a rope to act out Jeremiah's rescue.
- *Visual Aids* - Cut a slit in mud, to put Jeremiah in. You will need string to attach Jeremiah figure to men pulling him out.

### Jeremiah 38:1-18

Jeremiah the prophet is thrown into a pit then rescued by Ebed-Melech.

### Preparing Yourself

**J**eremiah's life had been one of persecution from his rulers because of his faithfulness to God's message. During 40 years of ministry, he received no acclaim, no love, no popular following. He was beaten, jailed, threatened and even forced to leave home. The only place where he was respected was in pagan Babylon (39:11-12).

#### Persecution

God's faithful servants are not promised popularity or comfort, but God does promise that he will be with them and will give them strength to persevere (2Cor 1:3-7). As you teach, remember that your work is for God and not for human approval. We look to a future, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Eighteen years had passed since Jehoiakim showed his contempt for God's word by burning the scroll. God's predicted judgement on him had taken place. Now his brother, Zedekiah, was king. At this time the Babylonians withdrew their troops temporarily from around Jerusalem but Jeremiah warned that they would return to destroy the city (37:5,7-10).

#### Imprisonment

Jeremiah tried to go to his home nearby to put his affairs in order before the Babylonians returned, but his enemies misconstrued this and he ended up imprisoned as a traitor (37:16). Jeremiah continued to speak God's message even though the conditions of his

imprisonment must have been very harsh (cf. 37:20).

Weak King Zedekiah wavered between resistance and surrender. He professed a desire to hear the word of God, but was not willing to obey. We need to remind ourselves continually that hearing and obeying belong together (Jas 1:22); it is fatal to be only a hearer.

The king in chapter 38 (Zedekiah) is not the same as the one who burned Jeremiah's scroll in chapter 36 (Jehoiakim). In fact Jehoiakim's son had reigned for three months before Zedekiah was put in his place (see 2Chr 36 for the details).

#### Faithfulness

Against this background, Jeremiah stood firm with God's unchanging and unpopular message. Seen from a military angle, Jeremiah was a traitor (37:13,14), so the official desire to be rid of him was reasonable. However, Jeremiah was a prophet of the Most High God and the message he brought was true; it offered the people their only hope of escape.

Zedekiah allowed his officials to do what they wanted with Jeremiah. They wanted him dead (38:4) but by placing him in the cistern (pit), they avoided killing him with their own hands.

In spite of the risks, Ebed-Melech pleaded for Jeremiah's life and Zedekiah allowed him to be rescued. Ebed-Melech was rewarded by God (39:15-18).<sup>Ⓞ</sup>

### Verse to Learn

#### Hebrews 13:7

Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you.



## Teaching the Children

### To start

Ask the children about rescues they've seen, heard about or been in (e.g. cat up a tree, being locked in the bathroom or lost in a shop). Take in a picture from the news if available or invite someone in to tell the children about rescuing people.

God's messenger, Jeremiah, had to be rescued from a nasty place. Let's find out what happened in today's true story from the Bible.

**Alternative:** Who brings the letters to your house? (*postman*) He did not write them all. He only delivered them. Jeremiah delivered messages from God, not by letter but by speaking to them. He was God's messenger. Let's find out what happened to him.

### Speaking to the people

(1) Jeremiah had been telling the people what God said for a long, long time. One day some important men were listening to Jeremiah. They didn't like what God had to say. They didn't like Jeremiah either! They went to the king (2) and said, "What Jeremiah says is not good. We would be better off without him." The king thought they were right and said, "You can do what you want with Jeremiah."

**Teaching & Application:** Sometimes people get cross with people who tell them about God. (Get examples e.g. minister, Sunday School teacher, mum or dad). God wants us to listen to them and not to make fun of them, or say nasty things about them.

### Put in a hole

So the men came and grabbed Jeremiah. They took him to a hole in the ground and put him in – down, down, down, into a pit. (3) It was dirty, with deep, smelly mud at the bottom and very, very dark! Poor Jeremiah! Was he alone? No. Who was with him? God was. He would look after Jeremiah.

In the palace was a man called Ebed-Melech. Can you say that? He worked for the king. He heard what had happened to Jeremiah. Ebed-Melech was worried because he knew Jeremiah would die if he was left in the pit. Ebed-Melech wanted to help. He went to tell the king what the bad men had done. (4)

"Please let me rescue Jeremiah," he said. Wasn't he a good, brave man?

**Teaching & Application:** It is very wrong when people are unkind to God's messengers. Can you remember to be kind? (Talk about how you can do this, e.g. listen, don't call them names or laugh at them). Introduce VTL.

### Pulled out of the hole

The king realised it was wrong to put God's messenger, Jeremiah, in the pit. He told Ebed-Melech, "Take 30 men to pull Jeremiah up before he dies." Ebed-Melech hurried off with the men. They got some ropes and old clothes (*bring yours out*). What do you think they were for? They went to the top of the hole where Jeremiah was. Can you remember what the hole was like? Dirty! Damp! Dark!

Jeremiah could hear voices. Ebed-Melech called out, "Here come some ropes. Put the clothes under your arms before you tie the rope round yourself so it won't hurt. (5) Then we'll pull you up." *Demonstrate with a child.*

When Jeremiah was ready, the men at the top pulled. *Do the actions with the children.* Pull! Pull! Pull! Slowly Jeremiah came up from the dark pit, through the hole in the ground and into the bright sunshine. How do you think Jeremiah felt when he saw Ebed-Melech?

Jeremiah had been put in a horrid, smelly pit for telling people God's message, but God did not forget him. He sent Ebed-Melech to rescue him. After he had been taken out of the pit, he went to tell the king the message from God.

**Teaching & Application:** Remember that it isn't always easy to tell people what God says. We must not be unkind to the people who do.

### To finish

Jeremiah told the people everything God said. Bad men didn't like it and did nasty things to Jeremiah, but God helped Jeremiah and looked after him. God wants us to be kind to God's messengers. They tell us that God loves us so much he sent his Son, Jesus, to die for us, so that we can be forgiven for all the bad things we have done. VTL.

**Response Activity:** Invite the children to draw a picture to give to one of God's messengers as a "thank you" for the work they do. 6

## Lesson Summary

Being rescued – linking in with Jeremiah's rescue.

- **Speaking to the people** (Jer 38:1-5) Some important people don't like what Jeremiah is telling them. So they ask the king if they can get rid of him. People sometimes get cross with people who talk about God.
- **Put in a hole** (vv6-10) The men put Jeremiah in a pit. Ebed-Melech begs the king to let him rescue him.
- **Pulled out of the hole** (vv11-13) Thirty men are sent to pull Jeremiah out of the pit and he is saved.

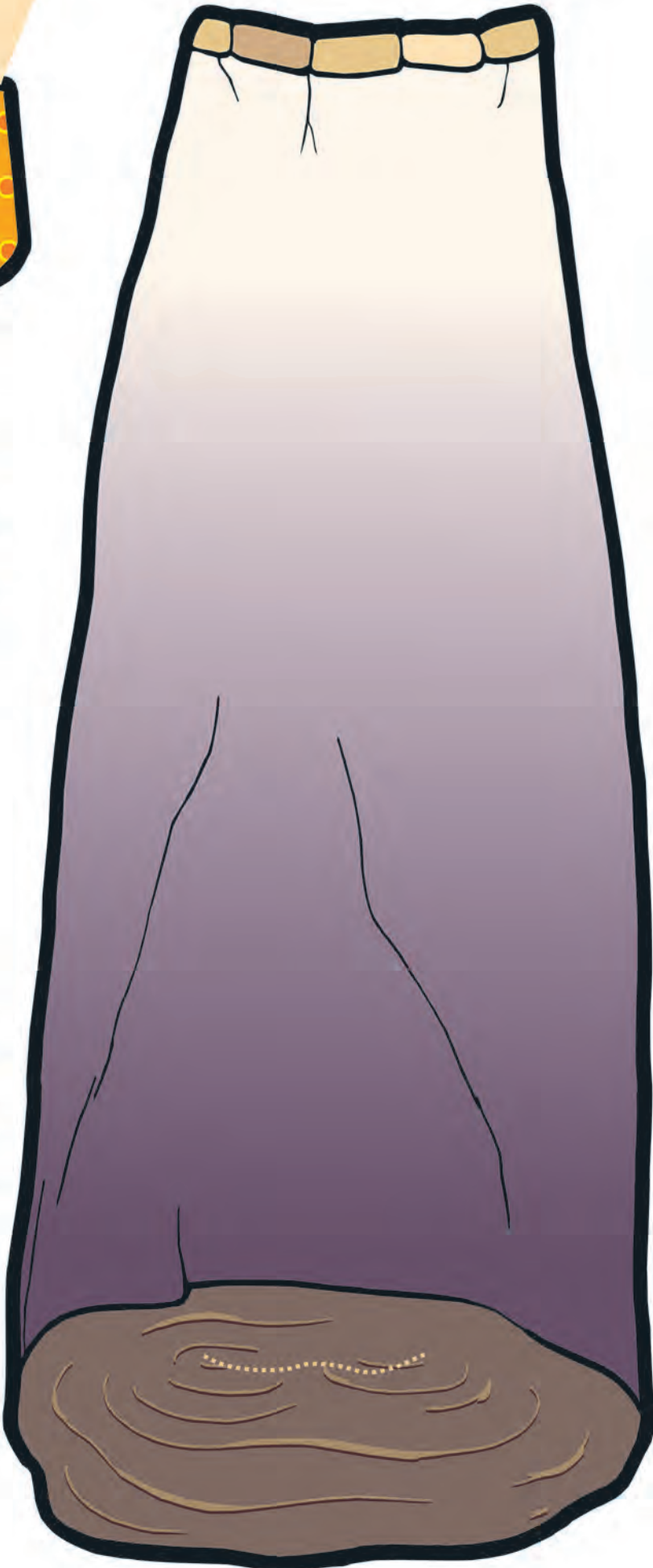
People can be very mean to people who talk about God. But God wants us to be kind to people who work for him.



pulling out from pit



cistern



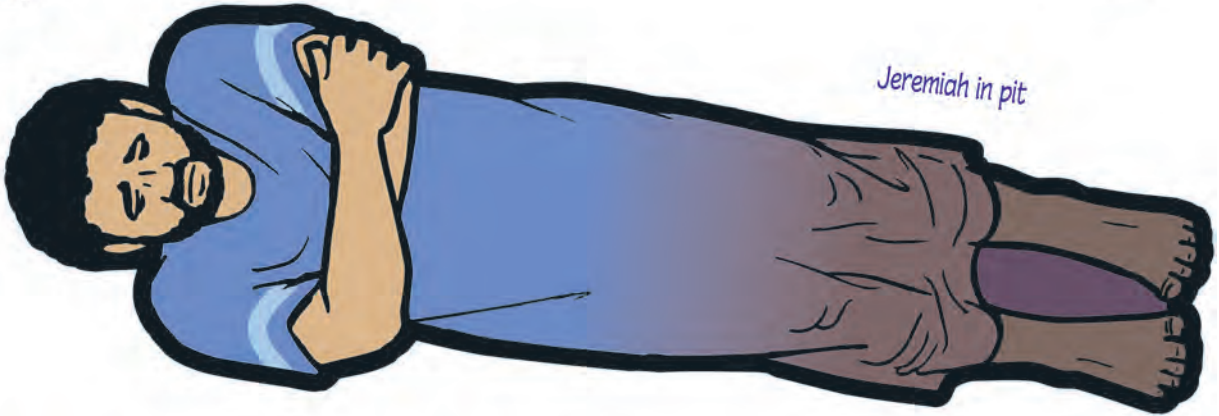
officials



Ebed Melech



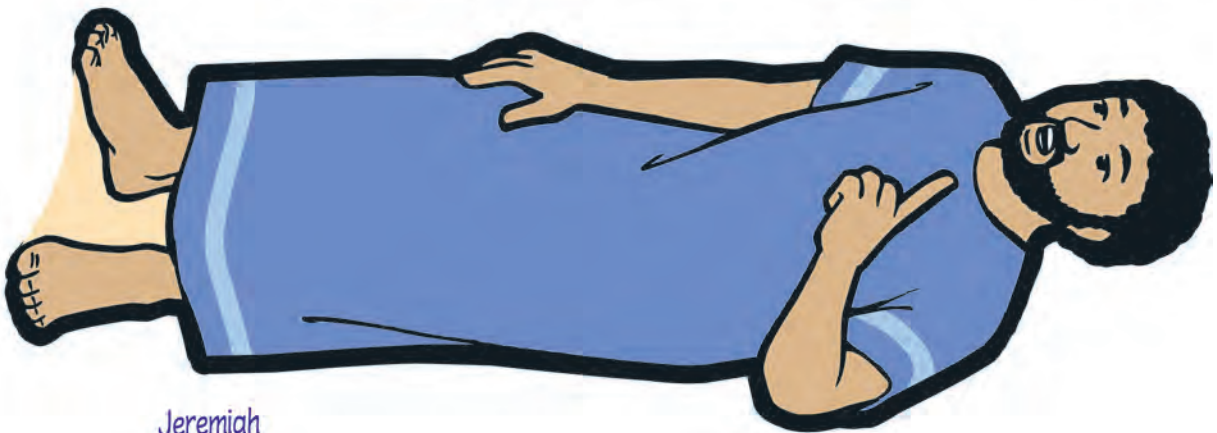
Jeremiah in pit

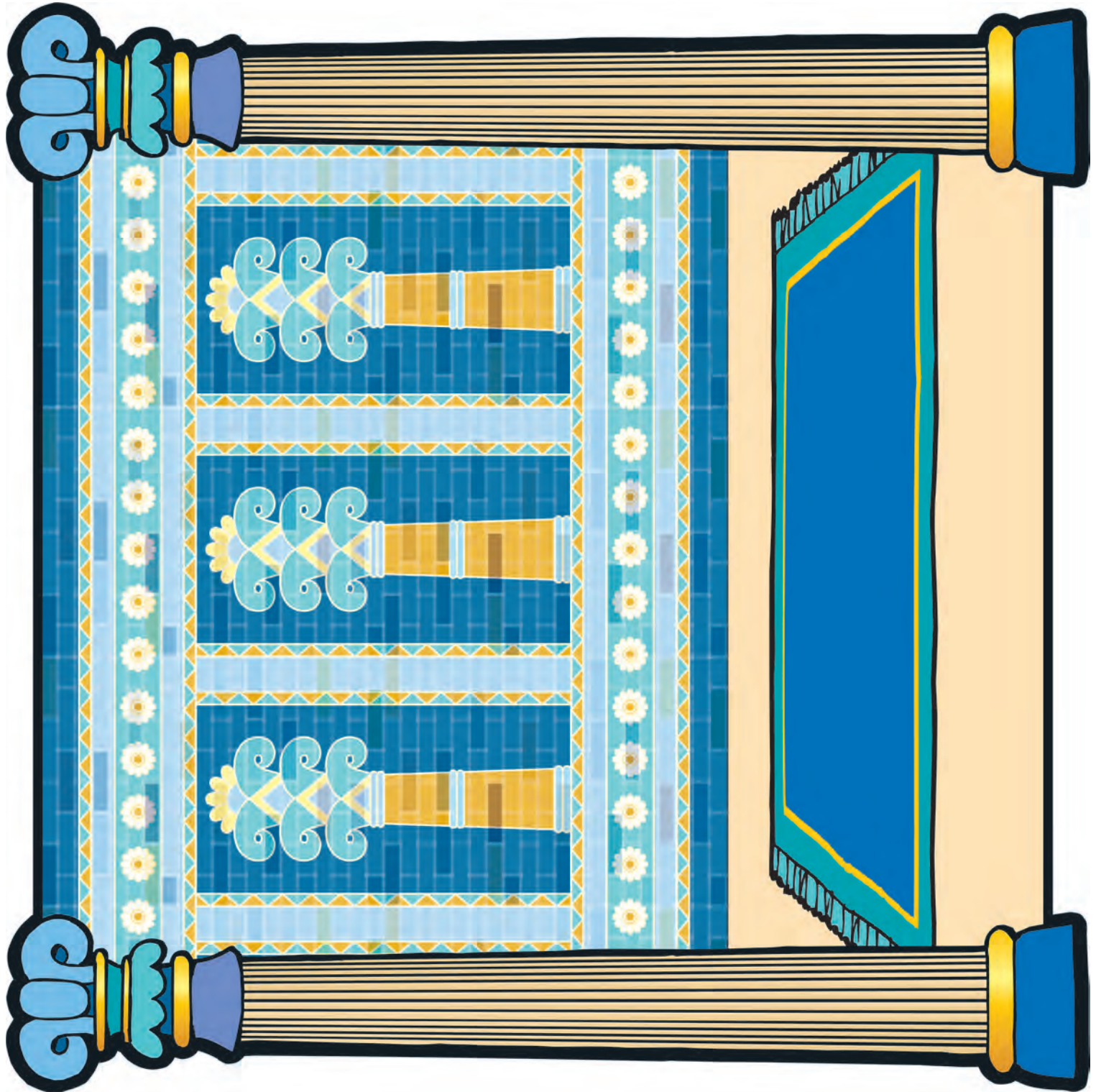


King Zedekiah

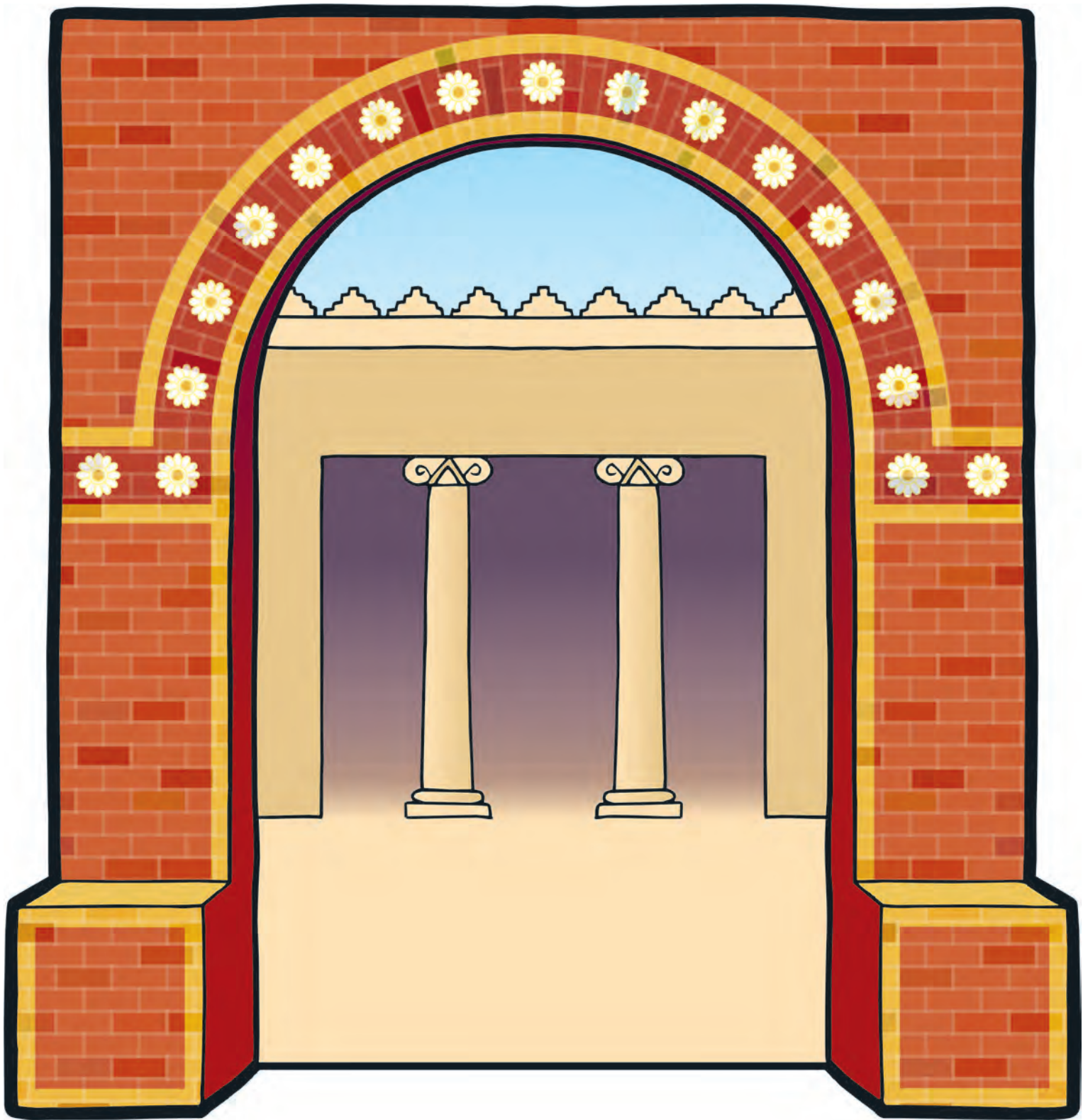


Jeremiah





Palace

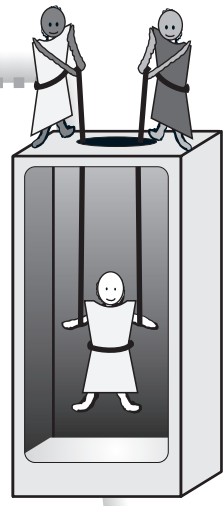


Gateway & courtyard

**Song**  
**Sing Jeremiah's Song**  
 (Below)

**In the Mud**

- **Make** cisterns (pits) made from bottles or boxes (ideally cube-shaped tissue boxes). Make a hole in the top as shown. Provide pipe cleaners for figures and wool or string to pull Jeremiah out. This could be used as an alternative for telling the story.
- **Make** a class collage.



Cut a piece of material or kitchen towel as shown.  
 Use a piece of wool as a belt.  
 Add a circle of card for a face.



**Jeremiah's Song**  
**Words: Fiona Arnold**  
**Tune: Frere Jacques**  
**Every line is sung twice.**

1. Jeremiah,  
 Hear God's word,  
 (*hands to ears*)  
 God gives him a message,  
 Hear God's word.
2. Good friend Baruch,  
 Writes God's word  
 (*pretend to write*)  
 It is true for ever,  
 Thank you, God.
3. King of Judah,  
 He was cross  
 (*stamp and look cross*)  
 He refused to listen,  
 To God's word.
4. We must listen,  
 To God's word,  
 (*point to self, hand to ear*)  
 Listen and obey-ey,  
 Every day.
5. Jeremiah,  
 In a pit, (*point down*)  
 Dark 'n' damp 'n' muddy,  
 On his own.
6. Ebed-Melech,  
 Was his friend  
 Pulled him out of danger,  
 (*pull up Jeremiah*)  
 Good, kind friend.
7. Boys and girls, (*point*)  
 Be good friends, (*big hugs*)  
 Love and help each other,  
 As God says.