

JEREMIAH – GOD’S MESSENGER

In the Mud

Jeremiah 38:1-18

Jeremiah the prophet is thrown into a pit then rescued by a friend.

Teaching Aim

Often people reject God’s message and his messenger.



Response Aim

The children will want to listen to what God says and ask him to help them.

Preparing Yourself

Jeremiah was called in the 13th year of King Josiah’s reign (627 BC). Josiah was the last righteous king of Judah. As Jeremiah continued to serve God through the reign of Zedekiah, the 4th king after Josiah, his ministry lasted over 41 years.

Prophet of doom

He was born into a priestly family, but even before his birth God set him apart as a “prophet to the nations”. He was to prophesy judgment and destruction, but also that God would not abandon his people. God said he would be with him and rescue him, so Jeremiah was not to be afraid.

Many prophets were sent by God during this period to warn of imminent judgment. When Jeremiah began to serve God, Nahum and Zephaniah were already active. Habakkuk, Daniel and Ezekiel came on the scene during the time of his ministry, but we cannot be sure if they knew each another.

Message of “treason”

Judah was corrupt, and its king weak. God and his laws were disregarded and his prophets despised. Idol worship was rife. Jeremiah called on the people to repent of their evil ways and turn to the living God. When the warnings were ignored, he predicted judgement would fall on the nation.

By the time of today’s lesson, it was too late to avert disaster for the nation as a whole and Jerusalem’s capture by the Babylonians was foretold.

However, Jeremiah gave clear directions as to how individuals could escape being killed. They were to offer no resistance to the invading armies. Those who resisted would be killed, or die from starvation or disease. If the king refused to surrender, the city would be burned down. By surrendering to the occupying armies and accepting exile, the people were submitting to the punishment of God.

This message appeared to be treason and that is why court officials tried to silence the prophet. King Zedekiah was too weak to stand up to the demands of his officials. He later called Jeremiah back for a secret meeting to hear the prophecy again for himself, but he still did not obey God’s instructions when the time came.

Unchanging message

The ministry of the prophets is similar to that of the scriptures today. The Bible teaches about God’s greatness and purity and our sinfulness. People are rebellious towards God and even when they know his laws, disobey them.

God has the right to tell people how to live. They must accept his authority. His message is unchanging through the Bible: reject evil and turn to God or face the consequences. God shows mercy by giving repeated warnings.

Like others called to serve God, Jeremiah protested his lack of experience and speaking ability. Perhaps you feel inexperienced and not skilled at speaking. We can trust in the authority of God’s word and ask for wisdom as we do our best to teach it. 6

NOTES

Jeremiah 38

2. *This city* – Jerusalem, capital of Judah. *This is what the Lord says* – Jeremiah was a prophet, one through whom God speaks directly.
3. The king of Babylon (or Chaldea) was Nebuchadnezzar .
6. *Cistern (AV - dungeon)* – a deep pit cut into rock and covered with plaster, used to gather rainwater in the winter.

Resources

- Make a signpost picture: pleasing God/pleasing myself.
- Board for VTL.
- *Visual Aids* - Cut a slit in mud, to put Jeremiah in. You will need string to attach Jeremiah figure to men pulling him out.

Verse to Learn

Psalm 85:8

I will listen to what
God the LORD
will say.



Teaching the Children

To start

What are your favourite words? (Ask for suggestions, e.g. *ice-cream*.) How about "It's bedtime" or "brush your teeth"? They may not be our favourite words, but we need to do these things, because they are good for us.

Alternative: Use index and middle fingers of both hands, walking towards one another across the table. Tim says: "Hey! Be careful you don't fall down the hole in the pavement!" Tom walks on. "I'm not going to take any notice. I won't fall down any h....!" (falls off edge of table). Today we will hear about some people who were told the best thing to do, but did not take any notice.

Speaking for God

God had given Jeremiah a special job to do. Explain role of prophet. (1) He had bad news for the people of Jerusalem. A big army was coming to attack them. Jeremiah told them they could escape being killed if they did not fight. Some servants of the king did not like this message, so they went to the king and reported what Jeremiah had said (2).

Teaching: People do not always like it when God tells them to do something. They think they know better or they want to please themselves. It is right to obey God because he always knows best.

Application: We know what God says because it is in the Bible. Sometimes the Bible tells us we are wrong and need to put something right.

Stopped from speaking

The servants said Jeremiah should be killed for saying the soldiers should not fight the enemy. King Zedekiah let the servants take Jeremiah away. They wanted to get rid of Jeremiah, so that no one could listen to his message. They did something very unkind: relate v6. (3) Poor Jeremiah! He might starve to death.

Teaching: People who obey God, by speaking for him or doing something especially for him, will not always be popular with other people.

Application: It's nice to be popular with other people, isn't it? But pleasing God is more important than pleasing other people.

Speaking for God again

There was a servant in the king's palace called Ebed-Melech (4). He told the king what had happened to Jeremiah and the king was unhappy. He did not want Jeremiah to die. The King commanded Ebed-Melech to take 30 men and pull Jeremiah out of the pit. Relate how Jeremiah was pulled out of the hole, vv11-13. (5) Jeremiah was kept in the courtyard of the palace, where he would be safe.

King Zedekiah wanted to hear Jeremiah's message for himself. He called Jeremiah for a secret meeting at the entrance of the temple. He promised he would not kill Jeremiah, even if he did not like what he had to say (vv14-16).

God had made sure Jeremiah was rescued so that he could keep on telling people what God had said.

Teaching: God's message does not change just because it is not what people want to hear. It's important to listen to God's words from the Bible because they are there to help people. VTL If they do not listen, they are making a big mistake and bad things may happen to them as a result. God will help those who obey him.

Application: Show signpost picture.

Sometimes we have a choice to make: to do what God wants VTL or to please ourselves. We can ask God to help us make the right choice.

To finish

Jeremiah kept on giving God's message. Jeremiah's enemies did a nasty thing to him, but God kept him safe and he carried on speaking for God.

Display VTL and draw a speech bubble around it. Ask God to help you to do what God says.

Response Activity: Remember this week to trust God to help you. Ask someone to help you learn the special verse. ©

Lesson Summary

Words we like to hear OR Tom ignoring Tim's warning.

- **Speaking for God** (Jer 38:1-3) Role of prophet. Jeremiah gives people message from God. Right to obey God – he knows best. What God says to us is in the Bible.
- **Stopped from speaking** (vv4-6) Servants report Jeremiah to Zedekiah. Put him in a hole. People obeying God not always popular. More important to please God than other people.
- **Speaking for God again** (vv7-18) King orders Jeremiah's rescue. Secret meeting to hear message for himself. God does not change his messages just because they are unpopular. Choosing to obey God.

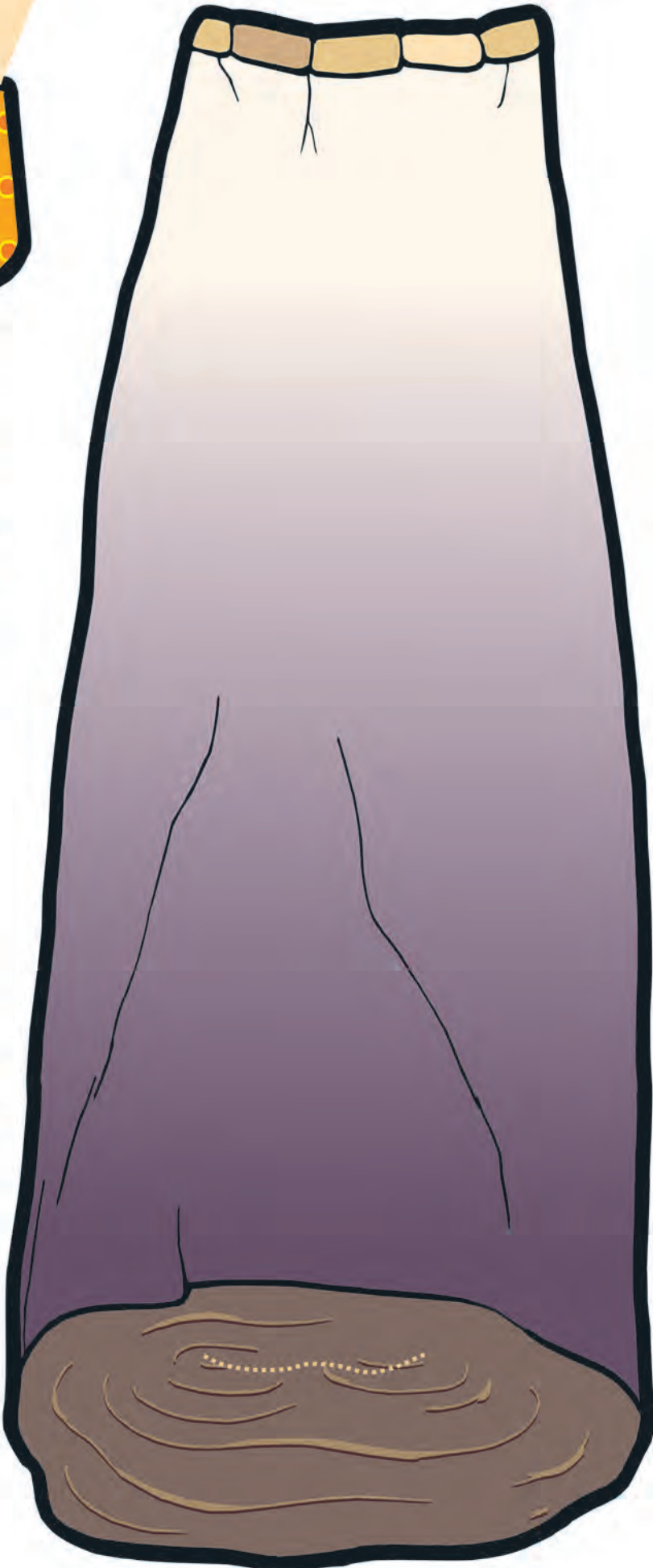
Jeremiah kept on speaking for God. God kept him safe. We can trust God in difficult times. VTL.



pulling out from pit



cistern



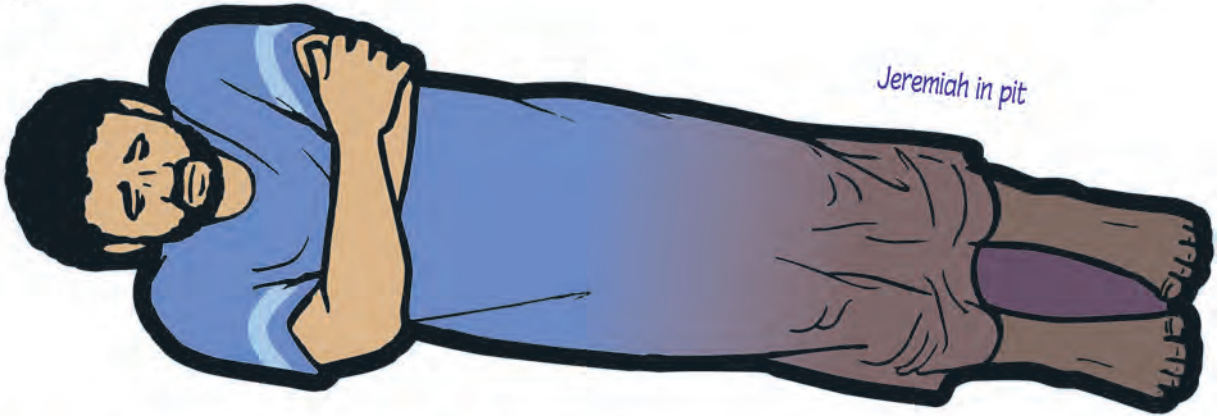
officials



Ebed Melech



Jeremiah in pit

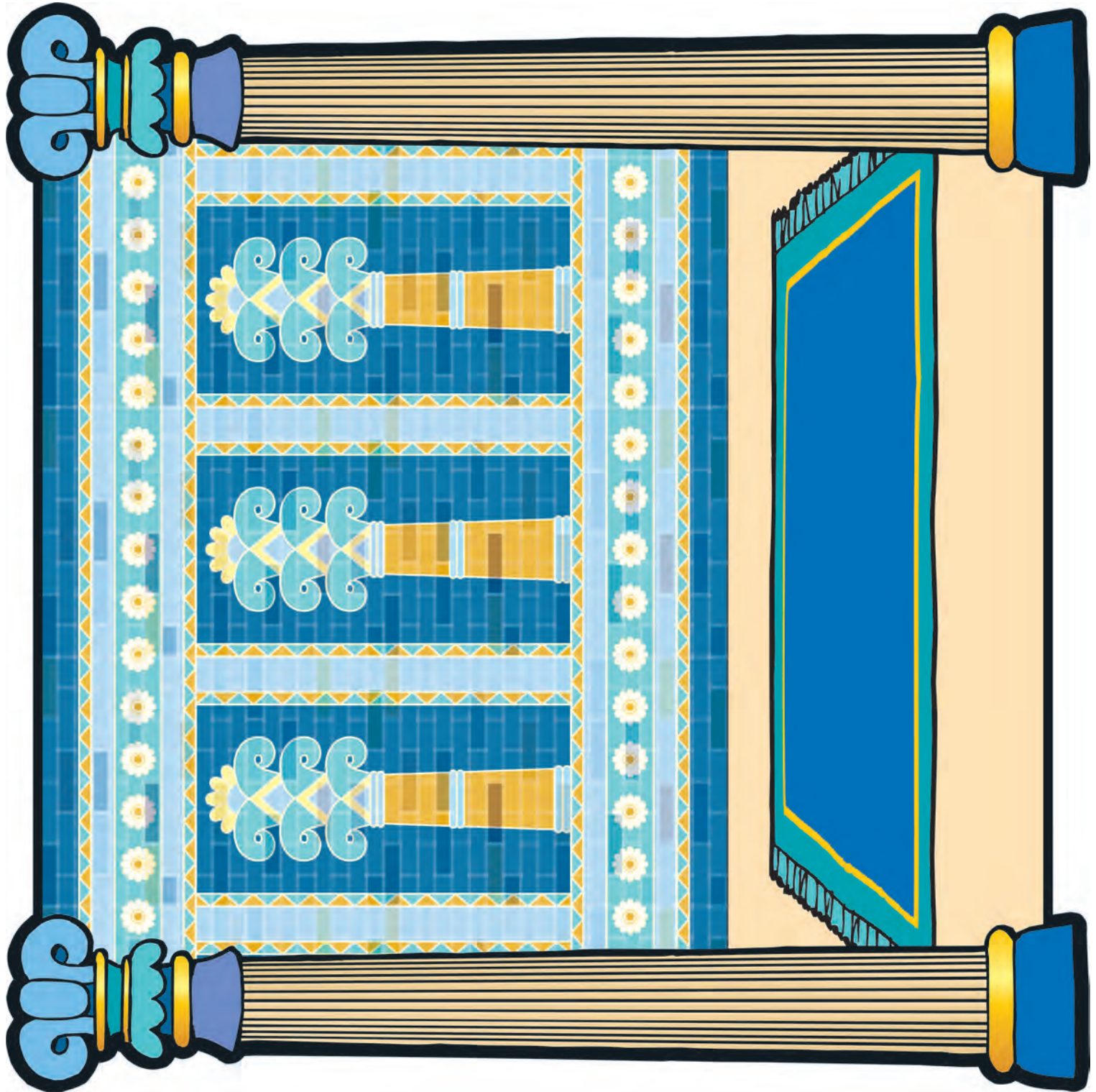


King Zedekiah

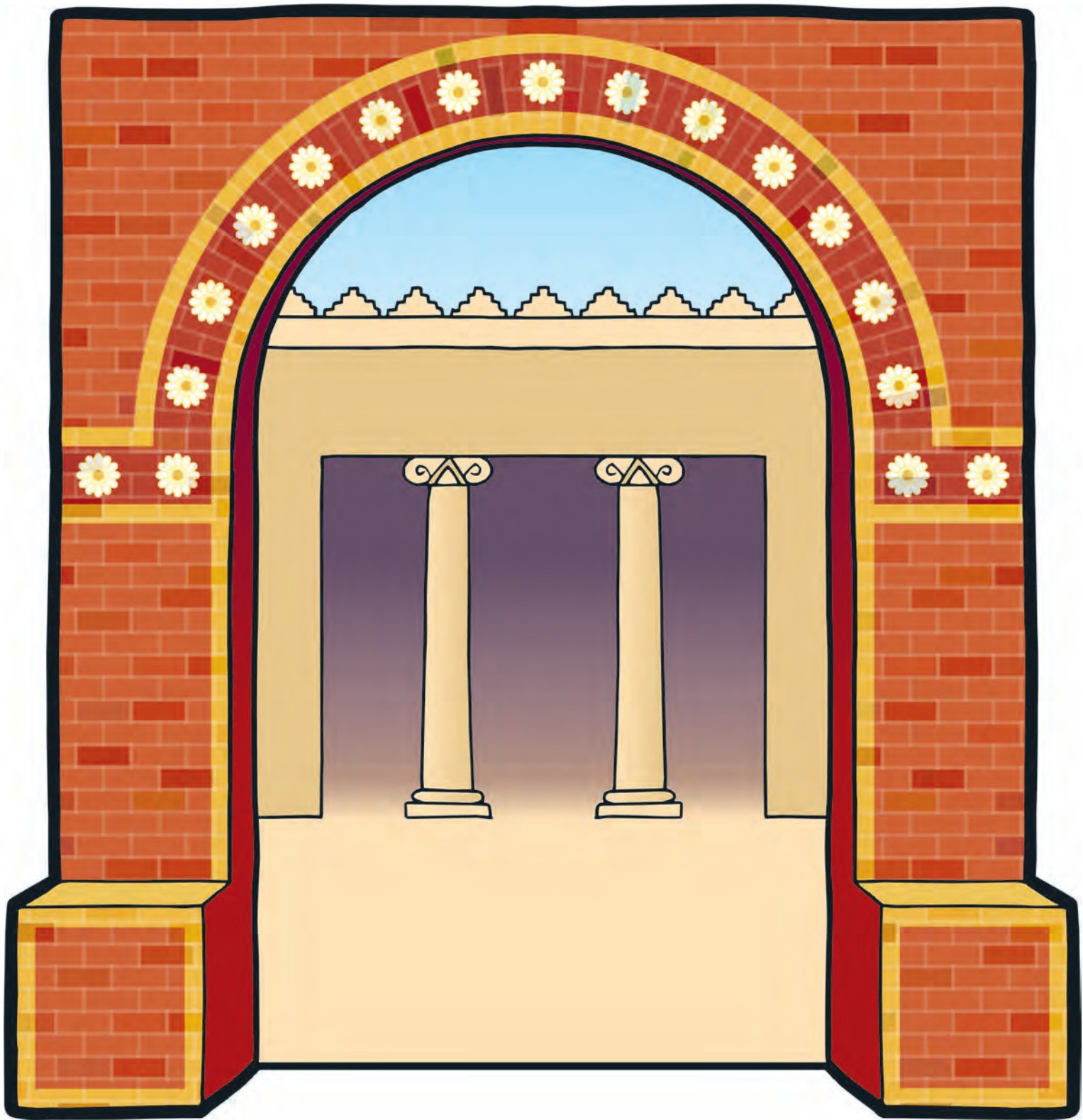


Jeremiah





Palace

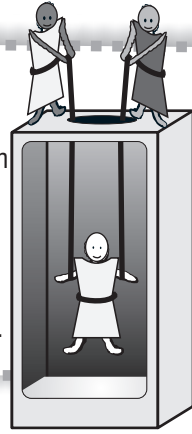


Gateway & courtyard

I will listen to what God, the Lord will say

In the Mud

- Verse to Learn cards cut out in the shape of an ear (See below). Help the children write or stick a written out version of the VTL on it.
- Learn the VTL together. Give each child a word. Get them to stand when you say their word. Stand in a circle, each child saying their word to make the whole verse. See if anyone can say the whole verse.



- Make a model of Jeremiah being lowered/raised on ropes. Cut holes in the top and one side of a box as shown. Make pipe cleaner figures (see below) and use string to pull Jeremiah out.

