

A Good Shepherd
Sacred Story

The Land Becomes Israel's

Adapted by:
Brenda J. Stobbe

**Illustrations by:
Jennifer Schoeneberg**

2nd Edition
"Good Shepherd, Inc. 199 J, 1992
Good Shepherd, a registered trademark of Good Shepherd, Inc.
All Rights Reserved
Printed in U.S.A.

THE LAND BECOMES ISRAEL'S MATERIALS

- medium wicker basket to hold:
 - wooden Joshua figure
 - 3 wooden people of God soldier figures
 - 3 wooden enemy soldier figures



Joshua



People of God Soldiers



Enemy Soldiers

THE LAND BECOMES ISRAEL'S ••• JOSHUA 10, 11, 12

ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the story from it's shelf. Return to the circle and sit down, placing the story next to you.

In silence, gently stroke one or more of the figures as you center yourself and the children.

Place Joshua and the people of God soldiers in the center of the storytelling area.

Hold up five fingers as you speak of the five kings.

Shake your head as you speak, then touch the people of God soldiers as you speak of victory.

Place the enemy soldiers to one side. Move the people of God soldiers near them.

Drop imaginary hailstones from the sky, knocking over two of the enemy soldiers as you do.

Put the two enemy soldiers back in the story basket.

With an open palm lift one hand and trace a large circle in the sky to one side. Quietly put the last enemy soldier back into the story basket.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

All of the words to this story are inside of me. If you make silence with me I will find all the words to share this story of God's people with you.

After Joshua and the people of God had captured the city of Jericho all the people in the land around Jericho became afraid.

Five kings of five different cities joined together to fight against the people of God to keep their land.

Yahweh told Joshua not to be afraid of the five kings, because Yahweh would give the people of God the victory.

When the soldiers of the five kings came to fight against the people of God, God made the people very strong.

As they chased their enemies away huge hailstones came from the sky.

More enemies were killed by the hailstones than were killed by the swords of God's people.

Then, as Joshua and his people were fighting, the sun stood still in the sky until the people of God had won the battle.

Hold up five fingers and speak sadly and slowly.

With hand motions, indicate the bottom half of the storytelling area.

With hand motions, indicate the upper half of the storytelling area.

Take the enemy soldiers from the story basket and place them next to the people of God soldiers.

Lay down the enemy soldiers.

Nod your head and speak very sadly, gently touching the "dead" enemy soldiers.

"Outline" the whole storytelling area using your hand in a drawing motion.

Joshua captured the five kings who had fought against them and he killed them.

Soon Yahweh had given Joshua and the people of God all of the southern land of Canaan.

The kings of the northern land tried to do battle with Joshua.

But each time a king from Canaan led his army against the people of God, Yahweh would be with the people of God.

And each time the people of God would win the battle.

They killed many, many people as they fought for the land.

Finally all of the land of Canaan, to the north and south, east and west, belonged to the people of God.

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder how big the hailstones were?

I wonder how the sun could stand still?

I wonder if God really wanted the people of God to kill ALL those other people?

I wonder how many of the people of God died in the battle?

I wonder if God ever wants people killed today?

Carefully place each of the wooden figures in the basket, one at a time.

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to handle them if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

After speaking, stand and carry the basket back to its shelf. Return to the circle and sit down.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

Be certain all the children have had a chance to choose their work before dismissing them as a group.

I wonder what you will choose for your work today? Let's go around the circle and decide what each of us will do.

THE LAND BECOMES ISRAEL'S TEACHER HELPS

This account of history tells of an apparent lightning conquest of the land of Canaan by the people of God under Joshua's leadership. Scholars agree that this has little basis in fact and is probably a condensation of several years of activity by the people of God. There is another account of the conquest of the land of Canaan in the book of Judges, where it tells first of the conquests that the people of God did not complete. Then the rest of the book of Judges focuses on a cycle where the people of God forget Yahweh and are given into the hands of other people. They then cry to Yahweh. Yahweh hears their cry and sends a judge to help them. The judge leads the people of God into battle. They conquer the enemy and the land has rest for forty years, or about one generation.

Though the Judges account is probably much closer to the facts of the story, the Joshua account is given to teach us a theological truth. God had made a promise generations before that the ancestors of Abraham would have this land to be their own. The message is that God does not break God's promises. If an entire population must be wiped out, then that is how it will be. There is no doubt in the Joshua account whose side God is on. This is a dangerous statement for us to translate into our lives today. In a world where nuclear weapons are becoming more and more available to tyrannical rulers the last understanding we want someone to have is that God is on the side of those who want total destruction.

Again, in this story, we face the fact that many people were killed. The text is not written to be told to the children complete with all the gory details. But the children are very aware as the story is told that there were hundreds and even thousands of people killed so that the people of God could occupy the land. I have left out the public hangings of the five kings and the repetitious slaying of each and every king (almost) who came up against Joshua. Children are already exposed to an amazing amount of violence on television and in videos. While we don't pretend for a minute that the conquest of Canaan was bloodless, we do not have to dwell over and over on the details of the killings.

The attitude of the teacher is very important as the story is told. I have written the actions to help us speak sadly and slowly when we talk about the death and destruction of life. I just can't believe that the destruction of all the people of the land of Canaan pleased God. If we believe that God created the whole world, we cannot teach that God then, joyfully, chooses to kill some of God's creation, while holding out God's hand to the rest of it. The people of Canaan suffered the consequences for their actions against the people of God -- they were destroyed. You will be the vehicle that translates to the children the importance and sanctity of human life by the way you speak of the loss of human life. If you cheer the death of the five kings, the children will believe killing people can be something to cheer about. If you express regret and sadness that so many people had to die, you will help the children to understand that life is very important.

The wondering questions begin with one about the size of the hailstones. I've always wondered how big a hailstone had to be to kill a grown man. The answers from the children should be interesting since some of them will respond with a very large size, while others will say it could even be a small hailstone as long as it was God's hailstone.

The second question deals with the sun standing still. Again we don't have an answer, but the children may help us reach one as they engage their sanctified imaginations to help understand on their levels what has happened in this story. Don't feel a need to explain this away by speaking of an eclipse or the sun and moon both in the sky at dawn. Be in wonder with the children.

The third question asks us to wonder if God really wanted the people of God to kill ALL those people. Since we don't know the mind of God, we don't have an answer. However, this is an important theological question that young people will deal with now and throughout the rest of their lives. With this question, allow time to wander as well as wonder, for it may take you in important directions.

The fourth question talks about how many of the people of God may have died in the battles. According to the Bible, none seem to have died. Even young children know there cannot be a war without casualties to both sides. Part of the reason for this question is to encourage the older children, especially, to consider carefully all the things they read and try to push at the limits of current understanding to see if there is more they can learn.

The final question is one we would all like answered for us. Does God ever want people killed today? I can't imagine that would be true, but there may be people out there who believe very differently from me. I would just ask that all of us try not to impose our thoughts onto the children. They may not give what we would consider the "right" answer as they struggle to understand the story, but they will give us their answer. And that answer is to be respected and honored as a very real effort to deal with the wonderment they each have about God and about the story.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

In this story we are told that God wanted the people of God to take all the lands and cities away from the people who lived there. Why would God send God's people to take land that belonged to other people?

During this time the people were to destroy everything so they would not be tempted to be like the people who had lived there before them. How would using the dishes or cattle or clothing of another people make the people of God be like the people of Canaan? How do you become like other people when you dress like them or do what they do? Does it ever make it harder to live like one of God's people if you do everything else like other people?

Is there ever a time when you believe that God would choose to have God's people be at war? Is there a way that war could ever be avoided completely in our world today?