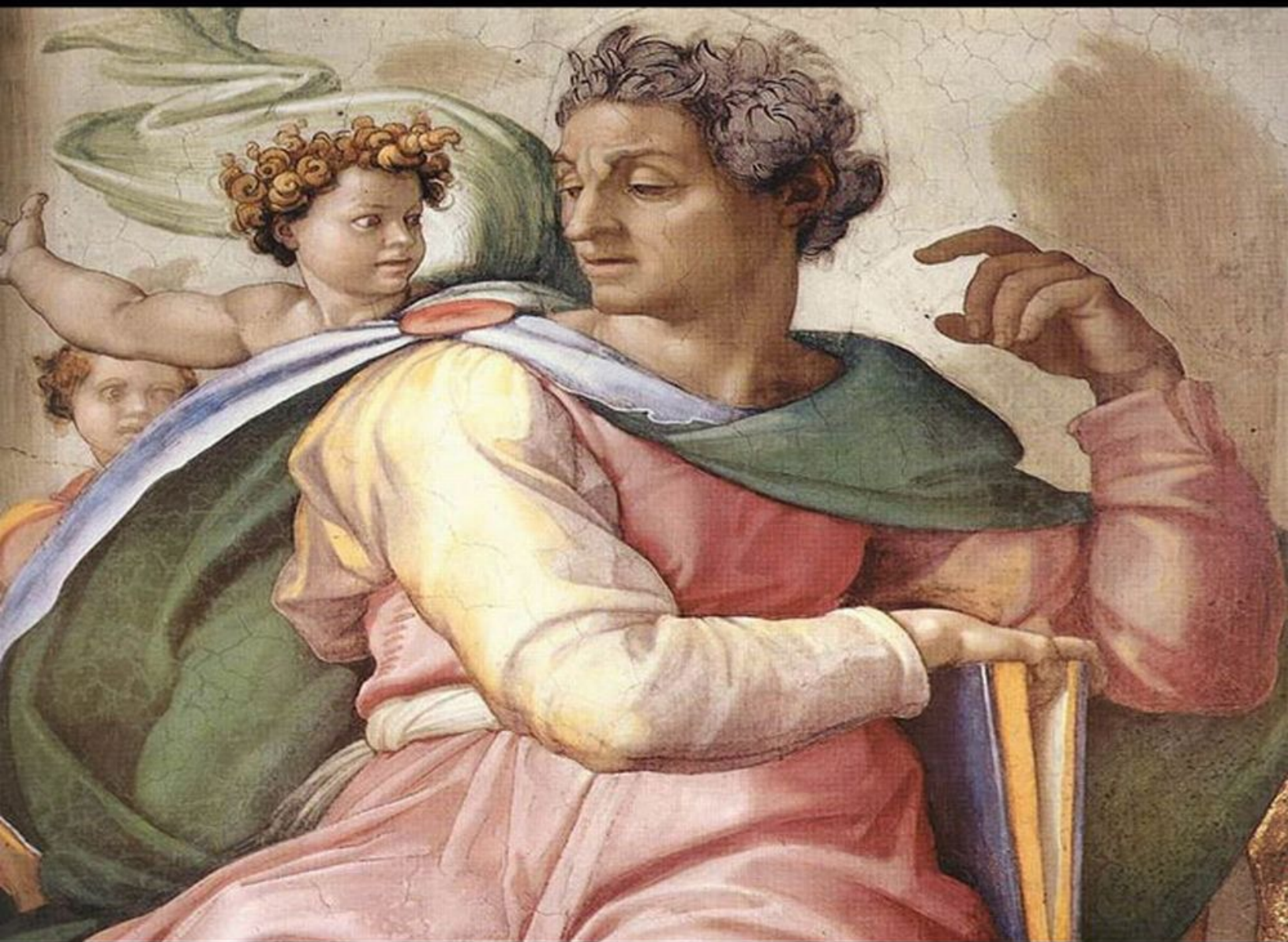


CHILDREN'S GREAT BIBLE TEXTS

VOLUME XIV



THE BOOK OF
ISAIAH

CHILDREN'S GREAT BIBLE TEXTS

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

JAMES HASTINGS

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A GARDEN WITHOUT WATER.

A garden that hath no water. — Isa. i. 30.

Have you ever looked at your garden after a long spell of hot, dry weather? The ground is baked and parched and seamed with cracks, and the poor little flowers droop their weary heads. Of course you go round with a watering-can and do your best to revive them, but if you happen to live in a town where the water supply is limited, sometimes you receive an order to stop watering the garden. Then you know that if the rain doesn't come soon the flowers will shrivel up and die.

Away in the East they are much more dependent on water for their gardens than we are. For the sun shines much more hotly, and there are long periods when rain does not fall at all. And in these lands you can imagine what a terribly dreary thing a garden would be that had no means of getting water. Everything would be shrivelled and burnt up. It wouldn't be a garden at all.

I want to speak to you about two kinds of parched gardens.

1. The first is the garden of our own soul.

It is a very beautiful garden, for God has made it, and there are many fair flowers in it — the flowers of purity, and love, and gentleness, and kindness. But unless our garden is well

watered these flowers cannot grow; they will droop and wither away. Now the strange thing about these flowers is that though they are ours we cannot make them grow. We cannot bring the refreshing showers to water them. Then what are we to do?

What do they do in those hot Eastern countries? In some parts of Persia the rain falls for only a few hours in each year and yet there are gardens there. How do you think they keep them flourishing? Well, they bring the water in pipes from the mountains many miles away. These mountains are so high that their peaks are covered with the everlasting snows, and so the supply of water never fails.

And if we want our soul-garden to flourish we must get our supply of water from an everlasting source. We must ask God to water it with the pure water of His Spirit. And when they are refreshed with that stream the fair flowers of character will blossom and abide.

2. But there is another kind of parched garden you may find in the world. It is the thirsty garden of other people's lives.

Some people have their hearts dried up for want of a kind word or for lack of somebody to love them; and so they become hard, and bitter, and disagreeable. There are very few fair flowers blossoming in their garden. Other people have become withered by some great trouble, or by a great many little cares, or by love of money.

Now God wants you to be raindrops to water these parched gardens. Perhaps you don't think it is very pleasant work; perhaps you think you would rather water gardens that are fresher and more beautiful; but don't you think it would be splendid to help to make the flowers grow in these dry,

barren places? I believe that children can do this work much better than grown-ups.

Away in the Orange River Colony there is a wonderfully fruitful farm. Half of it lies on the side of one hill, the other half on a hill opposite, and between lies a valley. On one hill grow acres of wheat, on the other there is a splendid fruit orchard. That farm has a history. Once the land was dry and bare and unfruitful, because there was great scarcity of water. But one hot day the farmer climbed one of the hills and lay down near the top to rest. As he lay there his attention was attracted to a low gurgling sound beneath the surface of the ground. There was no water to be seen, but he felt sure there must be a hidden spring beneath the rock. In great haste he descended the hill and rode off to the nearest town for an engineer. Very cautiously they opened the rock, and out rushed a stream of clear refreshing water.

That stream was the making of the farm. They led it down the hill and up the opposite slope, and now the farm is one of the most fruitful in the State.

What that stream was to the parched land you can be to the parched lives around you: you can refresh them with a kind word, with a loving deed. And then some day, perhaps, the flowers will bloom, and the fruits will ripen in these dry, dreary places, and what before was a barren desert will become a beautiful garden.

PAPER BOATS.

Vessels of papyrus. — Isa. xviii. 2.