

## Cave of Treasure (Part 1)

**A**h, but a shepherd's life is hard, wasting all his time seeking one miserable, lost goat," grumbled Muhammad Adh-Dhib.

Muhammad hooked his bare toes around footholds safe only for a goat or a hill country boy as he clambered up a cliff wall. Then he peered into another of the hundreds of limestone caves scattered throughout the rocky region.

He belonged to the Ta'amireh tribe of Bedouins. His tribe roamed the wilderness between Bethlehem and the Dead Sea in the land that is Israel today. His family earned money mostly by selling goat's milk and cheese at the marketplace in Bethlehem or by selling things they stole from passing caravans.

Muhammad climbed higher along the cliff, then complained again. "Kaaah! Who knows where that goat is?" Except for his father's wrath, he would have given up long ago.

An overhanging rock formed inviting shade. Panting, the boy flopped onto the rock ledge under it and clasped his hands under his head. He looked around, thinking, dreaming, grumbling. "Work, work, work. A boy like me should be playing among these caves and looking for treasure."

Often, as the tribe's elders squatted around evening campfires, Muhammad and other boys gathered nearby and listened to tales of treasure. "Who knows? Some of Solomon's riches might be hidden in one of those caves!"

Now Muhammad lay dreaming on the ledge. What would he do if he discovered treasure? Well, he would no longer herd goats. He would live in town like a fellaheen (gentleman), or maybe run a general store, like the merchant Kando.

He picked up a stone and tossed it at a hole below a jutting rock. "That must be a cave, but what a small opening," he thought. When the stone fell inside that cave, instead of the usual thud of a stone falling on a sandy floor, Muhammad heard a sharp clack! He sprang toward the opening.

"Too high," he muttered. He dug his bare feet into a narrow ridge, grasped the cave's edge, and slowly pulled himself up. When his eyes were used to the darkness, he could see two rows of tall jars.

But he dropped back to the ground quickly and ran for his life. "Ayeee!" he screamed. "That cave is the

home of a jinn (spirit), for who but a desert spirit could crawl into a hole too small for a man?"

That night Muhammad went to the tent of his friend.

"I had a scare today," Muhammad said.

"What about?"

Muhammad described the cave.

Scoffing at ghosts, the friend asked, "You saw jars?"

"Yes, seven or eight."

"I'll bet they contain treasure!" his friend exclaimed.

Early the next morning the boys hurried to the cave. "See the hole up there?" said Muhammad. "I'm not sure I want to go inside."

"Ha! You're a child. Let a man go!" The older boy raced to the cave.

"Grab my feet and give me a shove." He clamped his elbows over the edge of the cave. "I'm skinny enough to squeeze through." From inside the cave, he leaned out and pulled up the reluctant Muhammad.

When curiosity grew bigger than fear, they looked first into one jar then another. "Empty," both said with disappointment.

But in the third jar they found some folds of ancient, crumbling linen; then a black, tarry substance; and beneath that, something solid. Treasure!

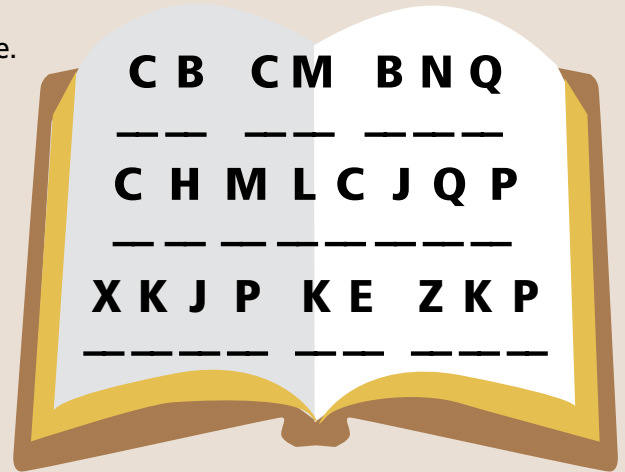
*Continued next week.*



# A Special Book

What makes the Bible the most important Book of all time? Discover the answer by following the directions for changing each letter to a new one.

1. Change **B** to a letter that sounds like a drink from China.
2. Change **L** to a letter that sounds like a small green vegetable.
3. Change **H** to a letter that sounds like the opposite of out.
4. Change **M** to **S**; **J** to **R**; **Q** to **E**.
5. Change **C** to a letter that sounds like a part of the face.
6. Change **N** to the eighth letter of the alphabet.
7. Change **K** to a well-rounded letter.
8. Change **X** to **W**; **E** to **F**; **Z** to **G**.
9. If you have followed the directions carefully, there should be three remaining **Ps**. Make them all **Ds**.

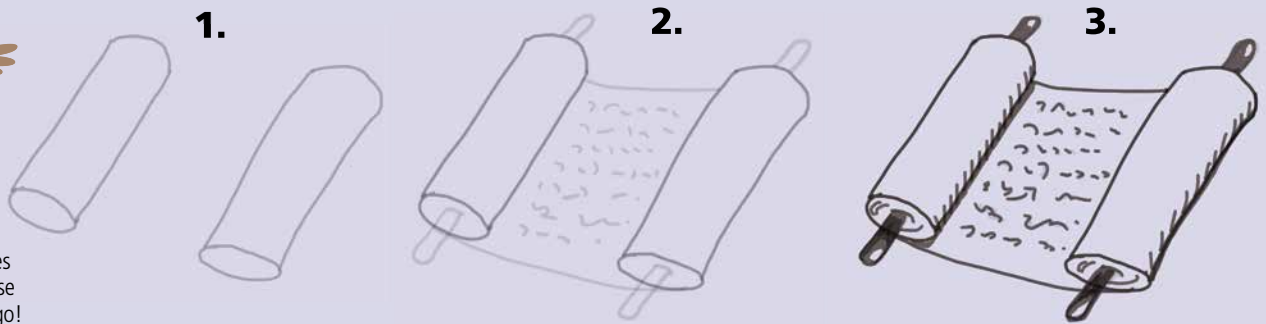


ANSWER: It is the inspired Word of God.

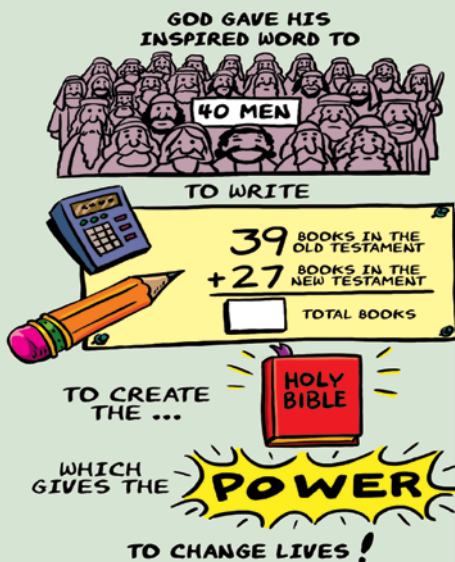
## How to Draw a Scroll



Draw basic shapes lightly at first. Erase guidelines as you go!



## Bible by the Numbers



## Measuring Growth

The Middler lesson for this week presented the Bible as God's inspired Word. The Bible is more than a book your child grabs on Sunday morning or an app he or she opens in class. The Bible communicates God's direction for everyday life. Encourage your child to open the Bible throughout the week. Spend time with your child talking about the spiritual growth measurables for this week.

### Measurables

Look for the following clues that your child responds to the Bible as God's inspired Word.

1. My child respects his or her Bible.
2. My child takes advantage of opportunities to interact with God's Word.
3. My child shows desire to know the Bible's story and teachings.