July 20, 1997 **Nehemiah 8-13**
4's, 5's & K **3NEH44PK**
The Israelites Celebrated the Jerusalem Wall!

Materials I Need:

Memory Work:
The Prophet - Nehemiah
The Principle - The Israelites celebrated the Jerusalem wall.
The People - Israelites in Jerusalem
God's Attribute - The God of heaven keeps His promises.

Aim Questions:

1. **Ezra and Nehemiah were not prophets of God. What did they do for God? (Ezra was a teacher of the Law who took a group of exiles back to Israel to rebuild the temple. Nehemiah was governor of Judah who rebuilt the city wall.)**
2. **Who taught the Israelites from the book of the Law? (Ezra read to them.)**
3. **How did the Israelites feel when they found out how God wanted them to be living? (They were crying and sorry for the wrong things they had done.)**
4. **What did God's Word tell them to do in order to celebrate and remember all God had done for them? (Collect branches, build booths and live in them for a week while Ezra read from the Word of God.)**
5. **What happened at the celebration of the dedication of the wall? (The Israelites formed choirs, sang and played instruments, joyfully thanking God for His great strength.)**
6. **What does God want us to do that the Israelites wanted to do? (Read and obey God's Word.)**
7. **Does God give us great joy when we obey Him? (Yes) How can we celebrate God's goodness to us? (Obey Him and sing with thankful hearts.)**

Hook:

❑ **"Building the Jerusalem Wall" Activity Center:** To remember last week's lesson, bring old tree stumps or portable chunks of wood, roofing nails with large heads and small hammers. Show the children how to use the hammer in a safe way. Give each child a small box of nails, a hammer and a piece of wood. Supervise closely. Talk about what Nehemiah was building in our Bible Adventure last week. "How did they get the wall done so quickly? They prayed to God and worked with all their hearts."

❑ **"Build a Booth" Center: (3NEH44ECGF3)** Make a booth by draping blankets over tables. Real branches can be gathered to put on top of the blankets, or green branches can be made from construction paper and taped to the blankets. Before attaching the branches to the blanket, have the children sing the "Praise Today" song while swaying their palm branches over their heads. After the booth has been made, take a few children inside and look at review pictures from former lessons. See if the children can remember the Bible stories. "Today, we will learn about how the Israelites listened to Bible stories for hours in the hot sun."

❑ **Building Blocks Craft Center: (3NEH44ECGF5)** Place a pile of 1 1/2" x 1 1/2" squares of construction paper by each child. Let the children color the picture and glue the squares to their GF5 building. Talk about Nehemiah and the families building the Jerusalem wall. Place a long piece of

butcher paper on the floor and let each child tape his picture on it to make an extended wall. The children who finish quickly can glue more squares to the butcher paper to make an even longer wall.

❑ **Game Center:** Play "Duck, Duck, Goose" using words "Nehemiah, Ezra, Israelites." "In our Bible Adventure today, you will hear about Nehemiah, Ezra and the Israelites. I wonder what they are going to do today?" Begin the game with names of other prophets we have talked about.

❑ **Following the Bible Person:** Divide the children into pairs. Using baseball caps with a Bible sticker on them, give one to each pair of children. The one wearing the cap is the leader, the person to imitate. We are to imitate the Bible! We are to copy the Bible with our actions. Follow the "Bible" person in whatever action they do while standing in one place. Switch and let the other person be the one to copy. The children copy the "Bible Person" and today they will hear about someone who copied or obeyed the words in the Bible.

❑ **"Going to Jerusalem" Activity Center:** "The journey to the Temple in Jerusalem was a long and special trip. In our Bible Adventure today, all the Israelites gather in Jerusalem. Let's play a game about going to Jerusalem." Have the children pretend to pack their bags as they say this verse with you:

I'm going to Jerusalem.
I know that I'll have fun.
I'm going to Jerusalem;
I'll take along some...

Have the child on your right suggest something that might be good to take on a trip, such as toothpaste, pajamas, or snacks. Then repeat the verse together, and have the next child contribute an idea. When everyone has offered a suggestion, end the game with this verse:

I'm going to Jerusalem.
I know that I'll have fun.
I'm going to Jerusalem;
Now our trip is done.

For more fun, pass a small backpack or suitcase around your group as you play. When you finish each verse, have the child holding the backpack suggest an item to take on the journey.

Book:

Presentation Ideas -

❑ Tell the Bible Adventure inside a "booth," as the Israelites did, or sit in front of the booth you made during Hook time. The teacher can pretend to be Ezra reading the Book of the Law.

❑ Show the 3NEH44ECGF1 and 3NEH44ECGF2 pictures as you tell the story.

❑ Begin the Bible Adventure with last week's happy-sad Nehemiah puppet to remember why Nehemiah was sad. There will be several appropriate times to use the puppet in today's Adventure.

Bible Adventure -

Who can help me remember what happened in our Adventure last week? I will give you a clue. Nehemiah was sad because of some news his brother brought from Jerusalem. *(Show last week's sad Nehemiah picture.)* Yes, Nehemiah heard that the wall was all crumbled and broken. He prayed and then got permission from King Artaxerxes to go back to Jerusalem to rebuild the city wall. It was a big job, so Nehemiah prayed and asked families to help build the part of the wall in front of their houses. They finished the hard work in fifty-two days in spite of people trying to discourage them from working. God had kept His promise to settle the people back in their land.

With the wall done and the celebrating over, the people went back to their homes to get settled. Soon they were gathering back in Jerusalem. It was a noisy, excited group of men, women and children that came together near one of the city gates. They remembered hearing Ezra read God's Word and they wanted to hear more of it. "Ezra, please, bring the Book of the Law and read to us," they said. Ezra brought the scrolls, stood up on a high wooden platform and began reading. *(Show the GF1 picture.)* Ezra read the very same words that are in our Bible today. It was early morning and the sun was just rising in the far eastern sky. It was before breakfast time but the people were eager to hear the Word of

God. Nehemiah was there. Men, women and children were there. They all stood up to listen to every word that Ezra said. They stood in the hot sun until noon. That was a long time but they were so happy to be hearing the Word of God that they didn't mind. Ezra praised the God of heaven. The people praised the God of heaven, raising their hands and saying "Amen! Amen!" *(You could sing a little bit from the song "Amen.")* The people bowed down and worshipped the Lord.

While the people were standing there, Ezra, Nehemiah and the Levites made sure the people understood what they were hearing. Levites were one of Israel's families that God had set apart to serve in the temple and to make sure the people understood and followed God's words. They asked questions to find out if the people were understanding it right. The people were listening well! They were understanding what God wanted them to know about living right. It made the people very sad to hear some of the words. "We have been doing wrong things and not obeying God's Word," they said. All around the area, you could hear people crying and weeping. They were sad for the bad things they had done. Nehemiah said, "Don't weep anymore. It is the joy of the Lord that gives you strength. This is a day to celebrate God's goodness with joy in our hearts! Eat good food and celebrate with great joy because now you understand God's words." God wanted them to hear His Words and then to do what the words said to do. That is what they did! They had been sorry, but now they felt strong. Now they could do what God told them to do and find joy in doing it.

Maybe you have seen a toy that you really want and all you do at home is whine and talk about this one toy. "Please, can't I have it? Please, I will be really good and do the work you ask me to do. I want it so bad, please, pretty please!" Then you read in the Bible that God doesn't want us to love anything more than we love Him. That is hard to hear but it is true. When we say we are sorry for the wrong things we love more than God, then God will fill us up with His joy. What a great day that is! That is what happened to the Israelites that day.

The next day, Ezra continued reading God's Words to the men who were there. He told them something else that they should be doing. He said, "Go out into the hill country and bring back palm branches and olive branches to make booths, like little houses. You will live in them for seven days. This is called the Feast of Booths. We will live in them while we celebrate all the ways God has helped us in the past. It will remind us of how we lived in the desert before we came to the Promised Land."

The people went out to the hills, gathered branches and came back to build their booths. They built them in their yards. They lived in these little booths for a whole week--seven days. During this time Ezra continued to read the Bible to them. He read about all the good things God had done for them. God had sent manna from heaven to feed the Israelites while they were in the desert. He kept their clothes from wearing out for forty years. He delivered them from their enemies. Ezra said, "Even with all the good things that the God of heaven has done for us, our forefathers (our great, great, grandpas, etc.) worshipped idols and forgot about the living God. That is why we had to go to Babylon for seventy years." The people listened and were very sorry. They promised to keep their daughters and sons from marrying idol worshippers. They all promised not to work on the Sabbath day. They all promised to bring to the Lord the first and best of every crop and animal in their herd, just as the Bible said. If you had been in Jerusalem that day, you would have heard joyful people, celebrating and making noise. They were happy because they wanted to obey the God of heaven.

After you obey your dad or mom and finish something they have asked you to do, like picking up the toys in the family room before company comes, you feel pretty good. You hear your parents say, "Thank you for doing such a good job. Thank you for obeying us." That makes you happy, too. It is the same with God when we obey His Word. We are happy and God is happy!

Nehemiah wanted to have a big celebration party because the wall was completed. He wanted to dedicate the wall to the God of heaven. It was to be the happiest party you could imagine! Nehemiah asked the leaders of Judah to divide into two large choirs to give thanks to the Lord. Ezra was in one group and Nehemiah was in the other. They carried musical instruments, marching to the top of the wall. They sang and played happy music. One choir went around the wall to the right and one walked to the left. Anywhere you might be in Jerusalem that day, you could hear music, praising God. The choirs joined together at the temple and continued praising God and offering sacrifices. This happy celebration could be heard from far away.

After the dedication of the wall, Nehemiah went back to Susa to be King Artaxerxes' cupbearer, as he had promised. He continued doing a good job for the king every day. While working for the king again,

Nehemiah often had thoughts of what it was like in Jerusalem. He thought, “I wonder if the Israelites are keeping their promises to God? I wonder if they are worshipping the one true God of heaven? I wonder if the people are working or worshipping on the Sabbath? I wonder if they are letting their sons and daughters marry idol worshippers?”

After a few years, Nehemiah asked permission to go back to Jerusalem. He wanted to find out if the Israelites were keeping their promises. They had listened to the Word of God. Were they obeying it? What do you think Nehemiah found? Nehemiah found men working on the Sabbath instead of worshipping God. Oh, no! They didn’t keep their promise! Nehemiah found out that a few men and women were marrying idol worshippers again. Oh, no! Another promise broken! Nehemiah was so upset by what he saw that he pulled out some of the men’s hair and made them promise not to do those sins anymore! They listened to Nehemiah because he loved the God of heaven so much.

We can’t forget that God wants us to keep reading His Word and doing what it says. Read and obey. Let’s do it today! Hey, that rhymes. Say it with me. Let’s say it and clap the rhythm. Let’s say it, clapping and marching in place. Nehemiah would have loved to hear you say that. Nehemiah loved God’s word and did what he could to help people love and obey God, too.

Prayer: Most High God of Heaven, You are great and awesome. You keep Your promises to us every day. I want to love and serve You with my whole heart, like Nehemiah. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Look:

❑ **“Feast of Booths” Craft Center: (3NEH44ECGF4)** The Israelites who had returned to Jerusalem celebrated God's faithfulness to them by living in huts, called booths, made out of palm and olive branches. At this center, the children can build their own miniature booths using the craft page and some creativity. Have the Children's Department cut out the page as directed, with one strip for each child. The children can then color the huts with browns and greens to represent the branches. Fold and paste or tape the booth as directed. The teacher can take the children for a nature walk and they can collect twigs, straw, grass blades, etc. to paste onto the outside of the already folded and taped booth. Use this as an opportunity to review the Aim Questions ("Why did the people build booths of tree branches?").

❑ **“Ezra Read God’s Word” Coloring Center: (3NEH44ECGF1)** As the children color the page, talk about the Aim Questions. To make the picture more special, tape or glue it to a piece of construction paper. Then let the children glue or tape popsicle sticks to the platform and gate posts. Let the children draw faces with tears on some of the people listening to God’s Word. Those with tears should have heart stickers to show that they were sorry for the things they had done wrong. They wanted to hear what God said and they wanted to do what He said.

❑ **The Israelites Celebrate the Wall: (3NEH44ECGF2 & 3NEH44ECGF8)** Glue GF8 pictures of musical instruments to the GF2 page to remember how the Israelites celebrated the building of the wall. Give names to some of the people in the picture, like Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel. Let the children retell the story as they work.

❑ **Read and Obey Circle Game:** Holding hands in a circle, ask the circle to move around while singing the following words to the tune “Ring Around a Rosie.” At the end the children can all fall down!
Holding hands with friends, our circle never ends, (child’s name), (child’s name), read and obey!
(Or)
Reading God’s Word, doing what they heard, (child’s name), (child’s name), read and obey.

❑ **“Give Thanks to God” Worksheet: (3NEH44ECGF6)** To find out what the Israelites should have done and what we should do, follow the instructions on the worksheet. When the children have found the words “LISTEN, READ AND OBEY,” sing the song “We Will Not Forget God’s Word.”

❑ **Reading the Bible Puzzle: (3NEH44ECGF7)** Color the picture of the child reading the Bible. Cut on the lines and you have a puzzle. Provide an envelope to decorate and use to take the puzzle home. As the children put their puzzles together, talk about the Aim Questions.

❑ **Snack Time:** It would be fun for the children to eat their "feast" in the booth you made during Hook time. If the weather is good, set it up outside. Talk about how the Israelites celebrated for eight days, eating delicious foods from the harvest. They listened to God's Word each day. For the snack, you'll need crackers, peanut butter, honey, paper plates, plastic bowls, spoons, plastic knives, and an assortment of grains and seeds such as sunflower seeds, rolled oats, bran, puffed rice, popped popcorn, and puffed wheat. Before class, pour grains and seeds in small bowls. Set out bowls containing seeds and grains. Place a spoon in each bowl. Give each child a paper plate with a few crackers and a plastic knife on it. Invite children to spread peanut butter or honey on their crackers. Then let children decorate their crackers by sprinkling them with grains and seeds. Talk about the different grains that are harvested and the foods children eat from these grains, such as corn bread, cereals, oatmeal and muffins. Let children enjoy nibbling their healthful creations. Sing this song about the harvest to the tune of "The Farmer in the Dell."

It's harvest time in fall. (Pretend to pick grain.)
It's harvest time in fall. (Pretend to pick grain.)
Everybody, gather wheat. (Put arms around each other.)
It's harvest time in fall. (Pretend to pick grain.)

Let's grind the grains so fine. (Pretend to grind grain.)
Let's grind the grains so fine. (Pretend to grind grain.)
Mix and knead and bake the bread. (Pretend to mix dough.)
Let's grind the grains so fine. (Pretend to grind grain.)

The Festival of Booths. (Place hands over head as if making a tent.)
The Festival of Booths. (Place hands over head as if making a tent.)
Let's all celebrate. (Raise hands in air.)
The Festival of Booths. (Place hands over head as if making a tent.)

Songs:

❑ **We Will Not Forget God's Word**

We will not forget God's Word
That is how His voice is heard.
If we listen and obey,
We'll be happy every day.

❑ **Give Thanks With a Grateful Heart**

Give thanks with a grateful heart.
Give thanks to the Holy One.
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son. (Repeat first three lines)

❑ **Clap Your Hands, All Ye People**

Clap your hands, all ye people!
Shout unto God with a voice of triumph.
Clap your hands, all ye people!
Shout unto God with a voice of praise.
Hosanna! Hosanna! Shout unto God with a voice of triumph.
Praise Him! Praise Him! Shout unto God with a voice of praise.

❑ **Praise Today** (Tune: "Mary Had a Little Lamb")

We all sing our praise today
Praise today, praise today.
We all sing our praise today
For the God of heaven.

❑ **He Has Made Me Glad**

He has made me glad. (Clap! Clap!)
He has made me glad. (Clap! Clap!)

I will rejoice for He has made me glad. (Repeat first three lines.)

❑ **Praise Him! Praise Him, All Ye Little Children**

Took:

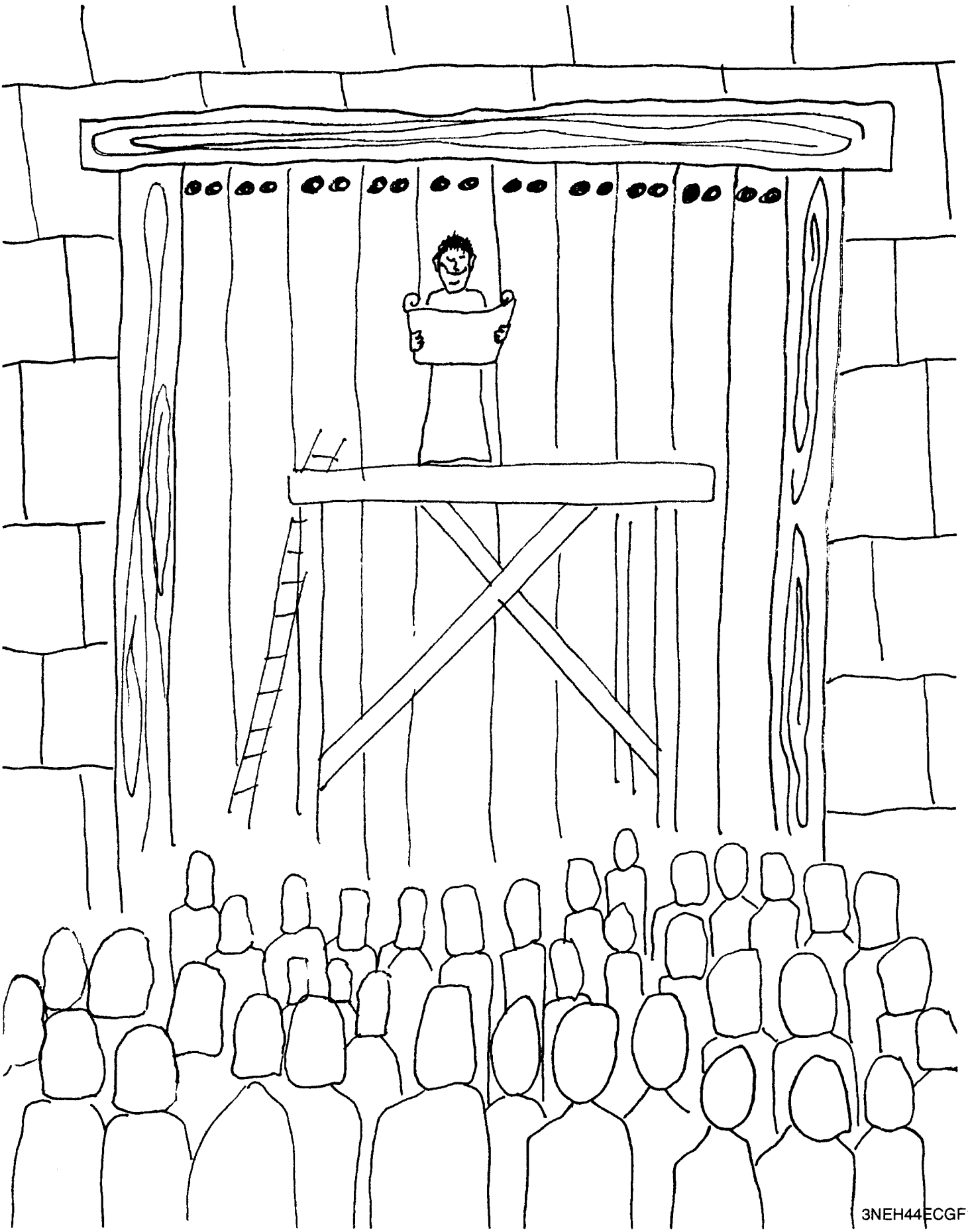
❑ **"Horns for Celebration" Center:** Give each child a cardboard tube and have them choose materials to decorate the outside of it. Cut a piece of contact paper large enough to cover the child's design and overlap the lip of the tube. Fold the contact paper inward over the lip. Cut the wax paper 1" larger than the diameter of the end of the tube. Pull the wax paper tightly over the end of the tube and secure with a thick rubber band. Use scissors to cut slits in the wax paper and then cut one or two finger holes in the tube itself, near the wax paper end of the tube. Have the children practice singing or humming a tune into the open end of their horns. Use the horns to celebrate the building of the Jerusalem wall.

❑ **Choir Celebration Center: (3NEH44ECGF9)** Make instruments and streamers and have a joyful, singing and thanking God parade. Divide the class into two choirs. Give each person a musical instrument to play at the proper time. Have the children walk along a masking tape line on the floor and pretend it is the Jerusalem wall. The choirs walk (march, tiptoe, slide, one foot in front of the other, etc.) in opposite directions and then meet in the temple. Celebrate with great joy because God keeps His promises.

❑ **Team Cheers:** Divide children into 2 teams, the "Read Team" and the "Obey Team." The teams can meet together with a teacher and make up actions for their cheer and present it to the other team. The cheers could be "Read, read, that's our way. We love (obey) God every day." "Obey, obey, that's our way! We love God every day."

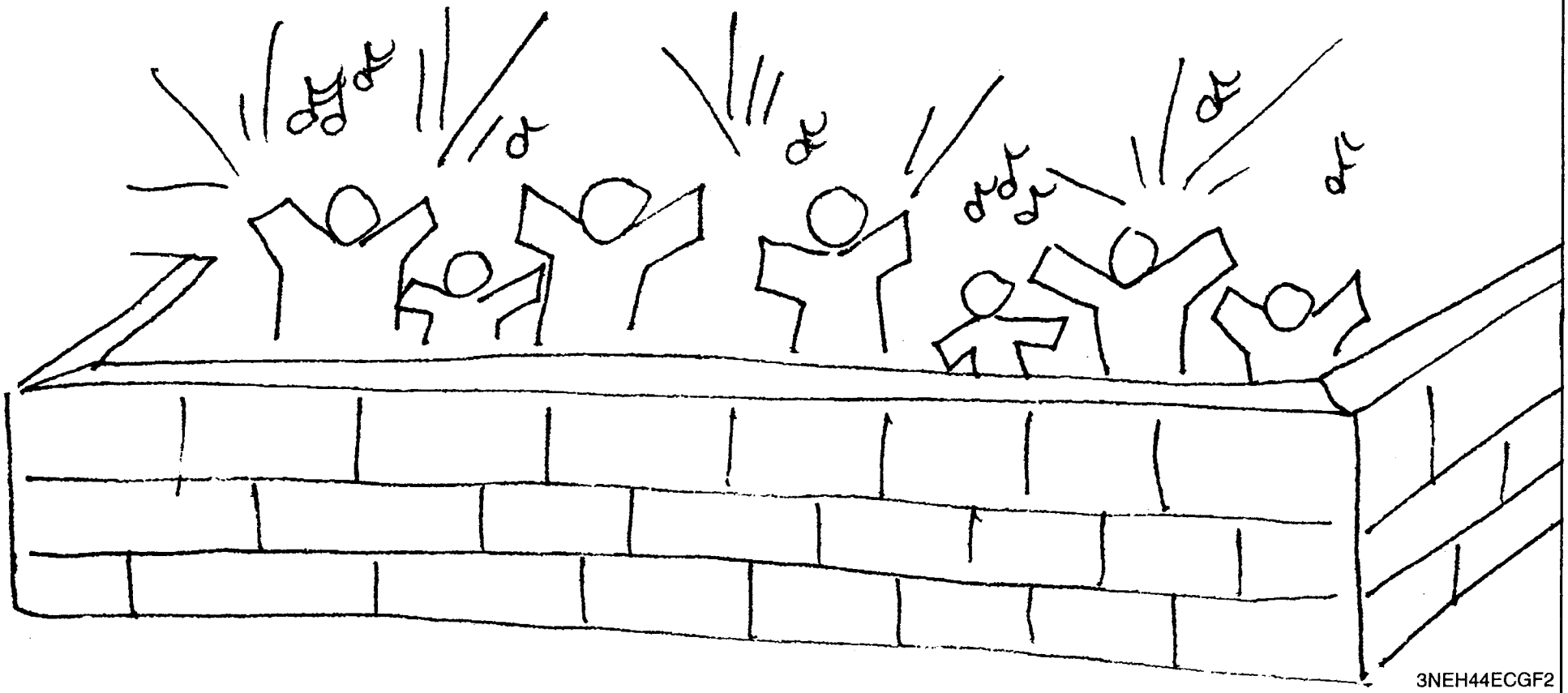
❑ **"Children Celebrate" Coloring Page: (3NEH44ECGF10)** Color the GF10 page before class. Show it to the children as you are getting them ready for their celebration parade. This may also be used as a coloring page for the children if you have extra time.

Everyone listened as Ezra read from God's Book of the Law.



3NEH44ECGF1

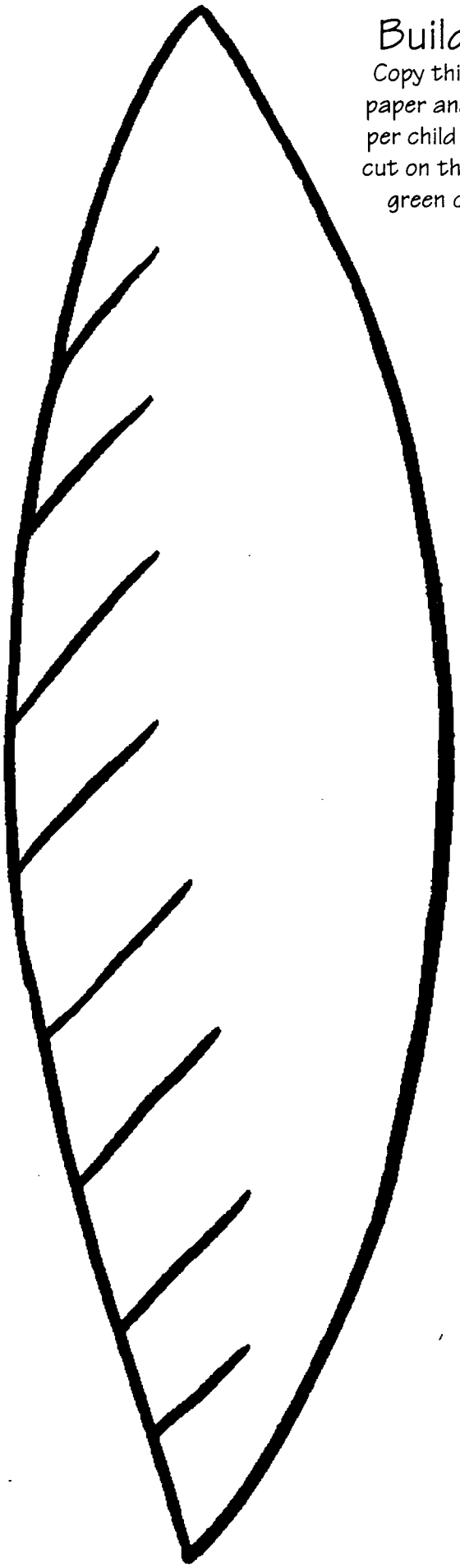
All the Israelites celebrated when Nehemiah finished the Jerusalem wall.



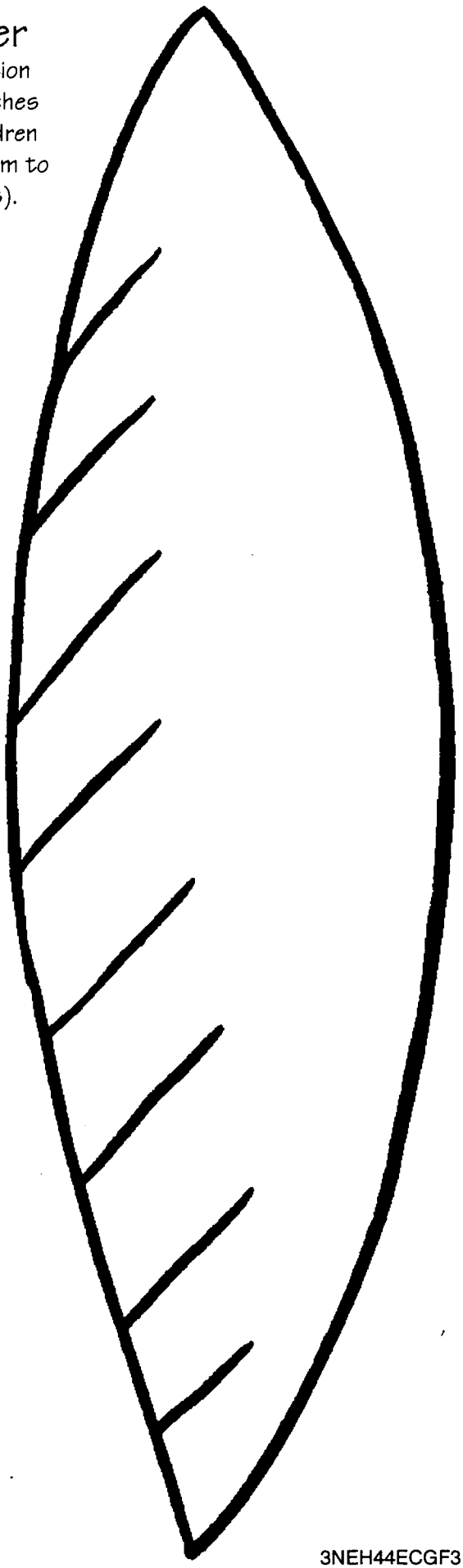
3NEH44ECGF2

Build a Booth Center

Copy this page on green construction paper and cut out one or two branches per child in the class. Let the children cut on the inside lines and tape them to green chenille wires (pipe cleaners). See sample below.

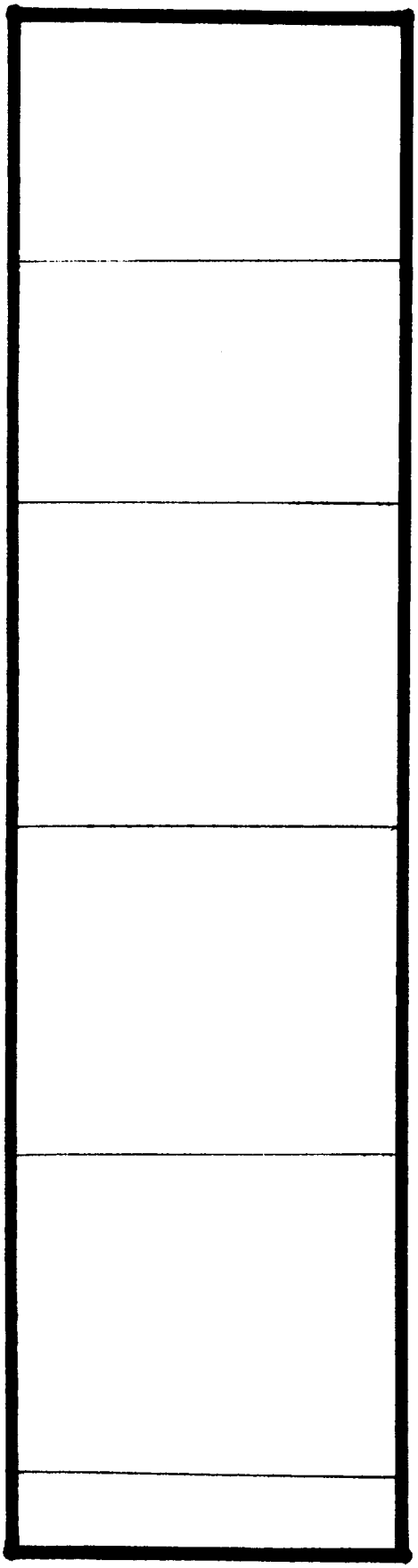


Palm Leaf
Sample



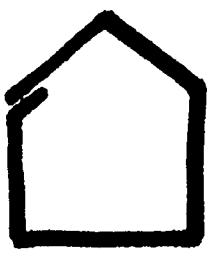
3NEH44ECGF3

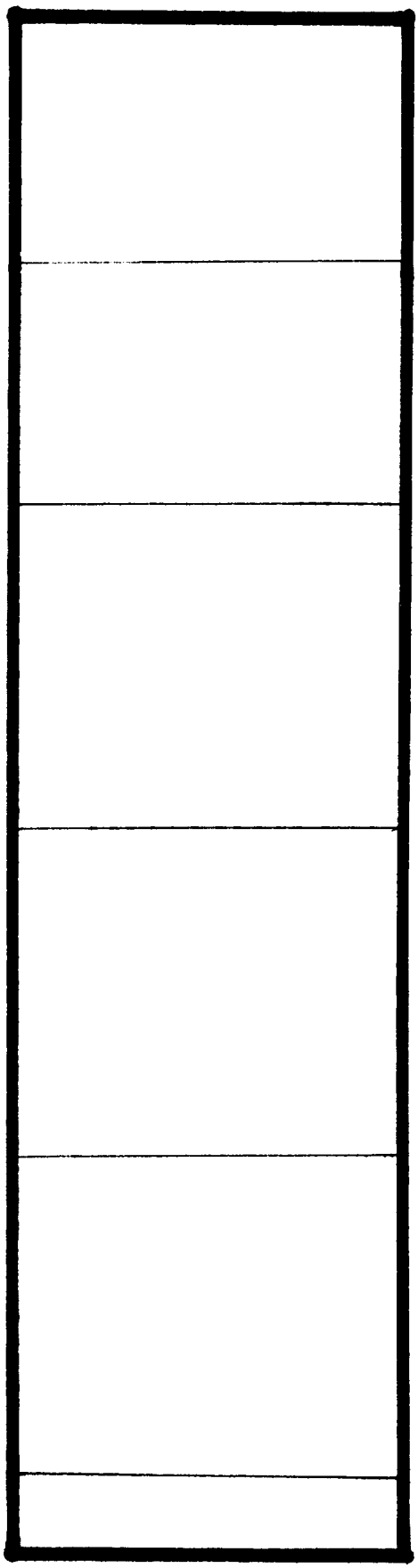
CELEBRATION OF BOOTHS!



This strip can be folded and taped or pasted to resemble a hut, or "booth", like the Israelites built. Begin by cutting along the bold line. If you want the children to color the booth, have them do so before you fold and paste it. Otherwise, fold along the slender lines and paste or tape the smallest flap underneath the roof flap as shown in the diagram. Then, the children can paste their nature walk finds to the outside of the booth.

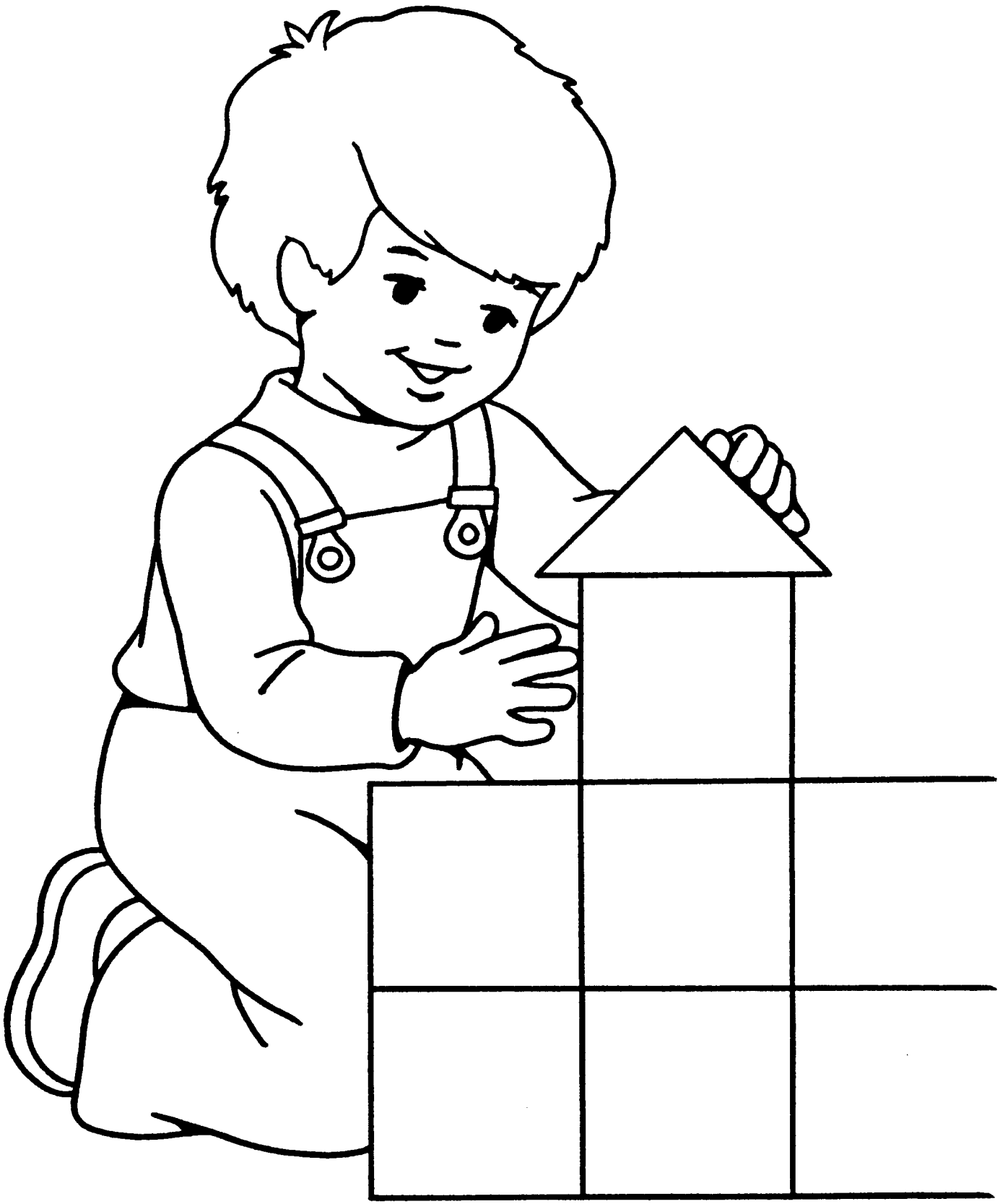
EXAMPLE





3NEH44ECGF4

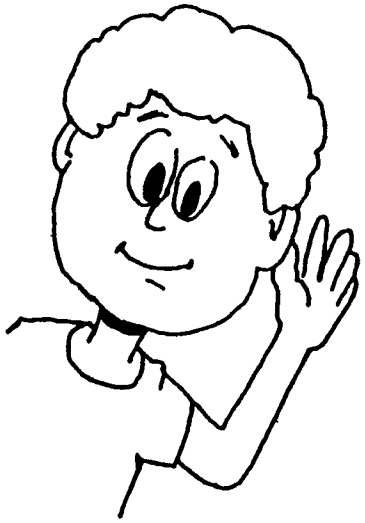
I want to do my best, like Nehemiah.



3NEH44ECGF5

What did the Israelites do?

What should I do?



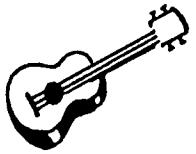
Cross out these letters in the boxes below.

CMX

C	L	I	S	T	E	N	M
M	C	R	E	A	D	C	X
X	C	O	B	E	Y	M	C

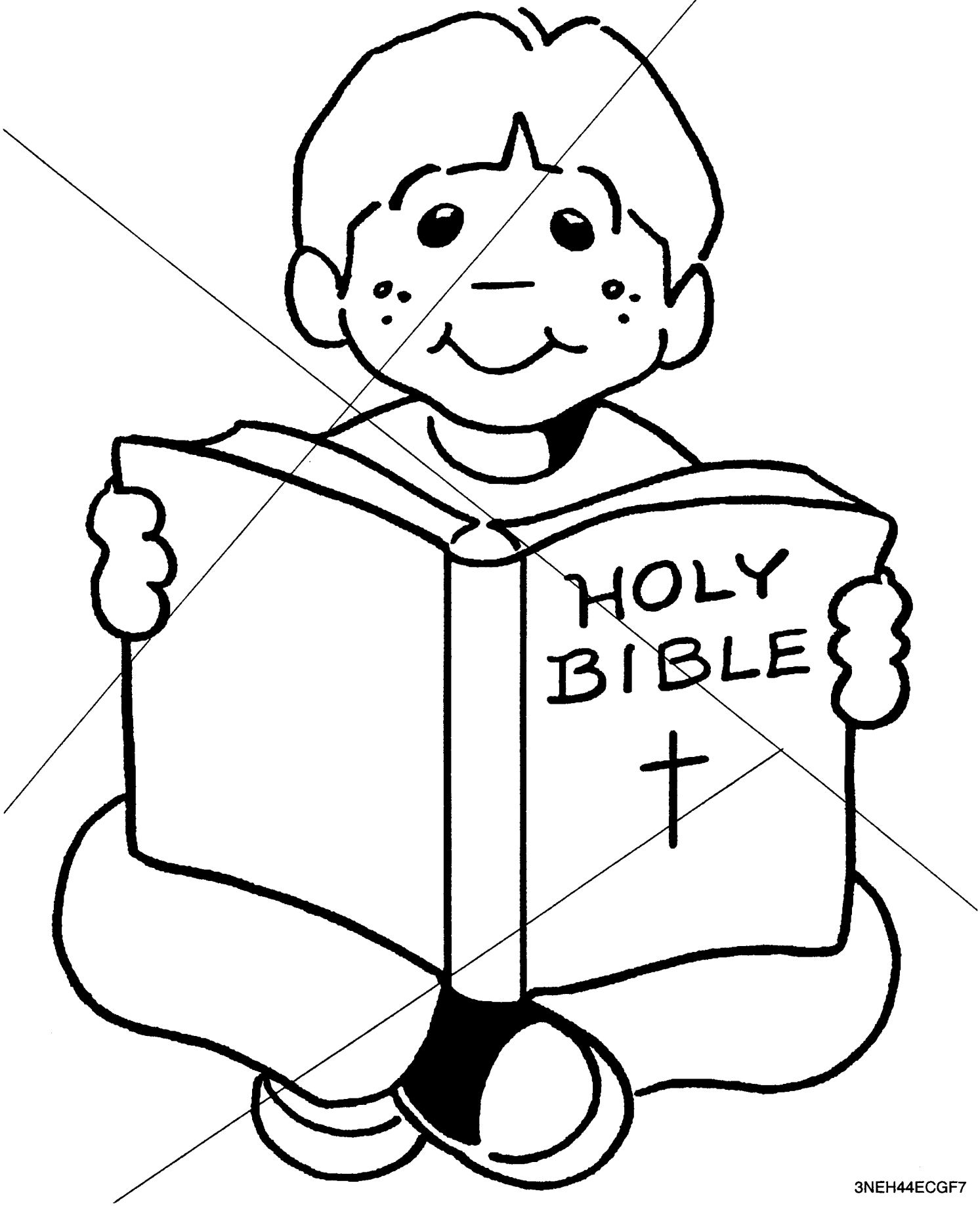
Give thanks to God who keeps His promises!

We can praise God with music. Draw a line to match each child with his or her instrument.



3NEH44ECGF6

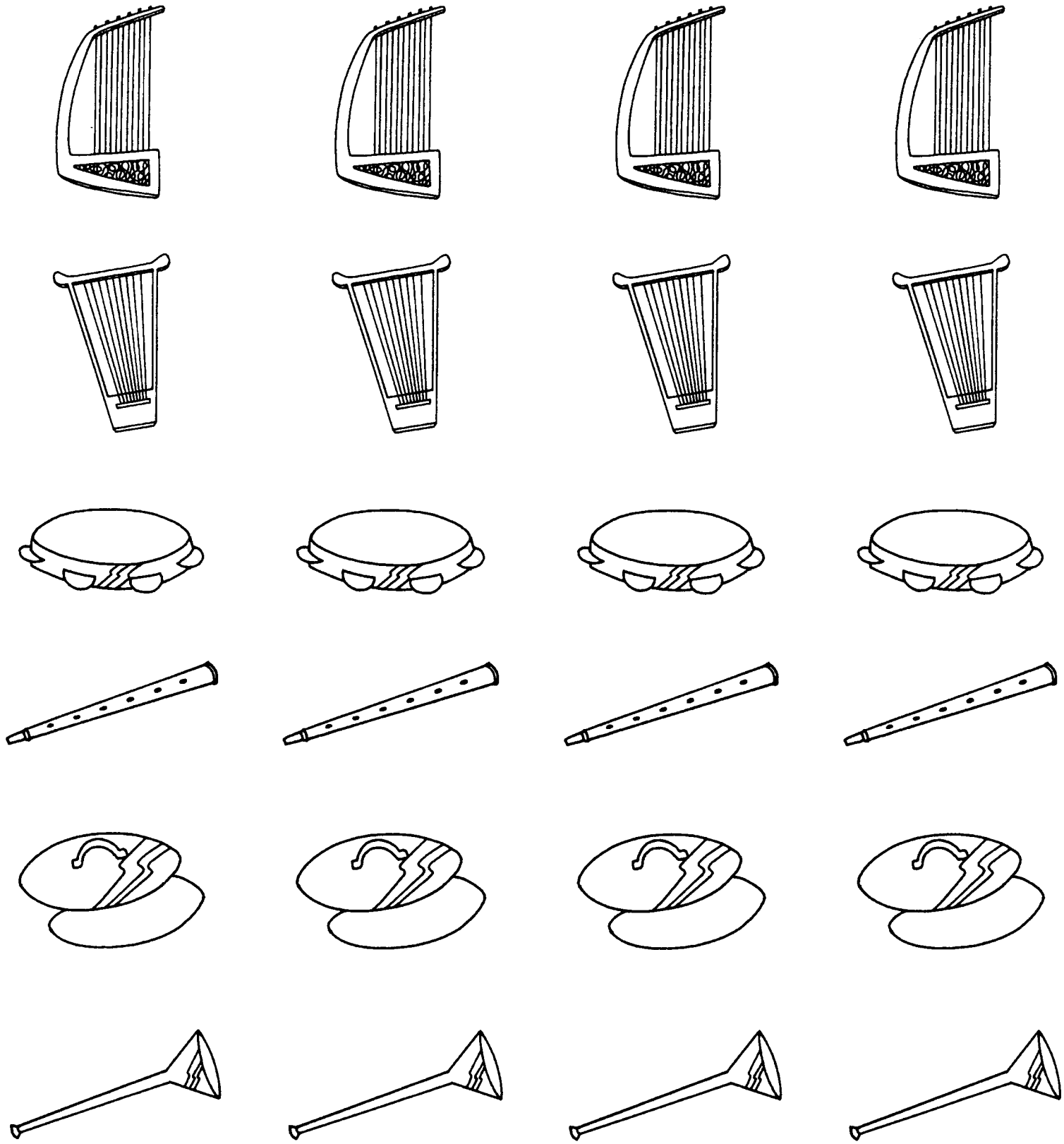
Read and obey! Let's do it today!



3NEH44ECGF7

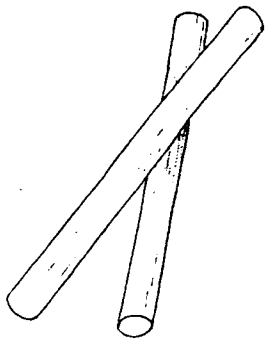
Musical Instruments

Cut and glue to the GF2 celebration page.

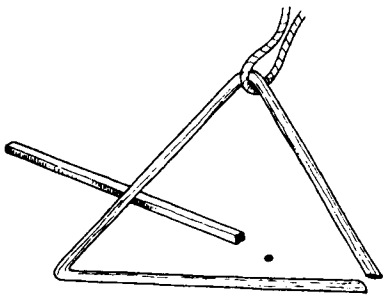


3NEH44ECGF8

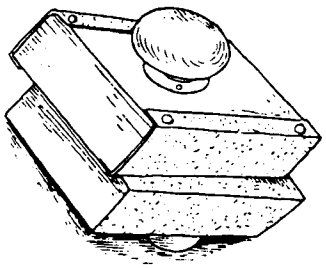
RHYTHM BAND INSTRUMENTS



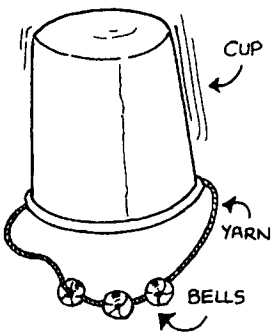
Rhythm Sticks: Cut 1/2" dowels into 8" lengths and sand the rough edges. Use in pairs to beat rhythm.



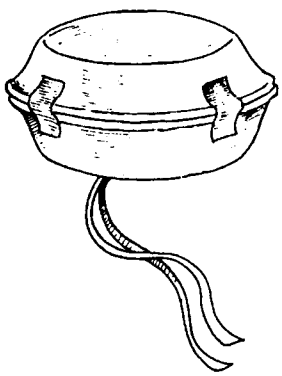
Triangle: Bend a round solid curtain rod into a triangle, leaving the open ends a bit apart. Use a piece of curtain rod or other metal object such as a spoon for the striker.



Sandpaper Blocks
Using a piece of wood about 4" x 5", place coarse sandpaper on one side, securing it with thumbtacks. Fasten a small knob on the other side. Make two for a set.

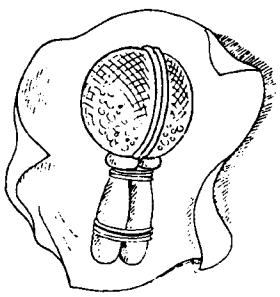


Jinglers: Each child should have a styrofoam cup, a piece of yarn and some jingle bells. Make a hole in the opposite sides of the cup lip. Children may string the bells onto the yarn, then tie the yarn to the cup, making a noisemaker that can be held upside down and shaken to make a jingling sound.



Tambourine: Help the children tape together two foil pie pans, leaving a small opening so the pebbles or buttons can be put inside. Complete the taping. Fabric streamers are optional.

Drum: Use round containers such as oatmeal boxes or large potato chip cans for drums. Glue the lids on securely and glue pretty wrapping paper, wallpaper, Contac or fabric scraps around the box to decorate it.



Shaker: Using two small sieves (strainers), place beans in one of them and cover it with the other one. Tie these together securely, and then cover with paper. (Colored tissue paper and Elmer's glue make a good covering; use about five coats of paper.)

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The God of heaven keeps His promises!

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