

General Church Education



The Memorial Stones

Joshua 4

Lesson 6

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 4: The Lord Is the Hero

For ages 9-10

The Memorial Stones

Joshua 4

Teacher Background

As the feet of the priests carrying the ark touched the Jordan, the water ceased flowing. When all the of the children of Israel and their possessions were safely in the Promised Land, Joshua commanded one man from each tribe to lift a stone from the dry riverbed where the priests stood. The men were to shoulder the stones and set them down to create a memorial pillar in Gilgal, the place where they first camped in Canaan. He also commanded the men to set up twelve stones in the riverbed where the priests had stood. These memorials were made so parents could teach their children of the Lord's power and care, and of the amazing miracle He had done by means of the ark.

The “Jordan River” we are to cross on our heavenward journey represents our choice to obey the Lord, not because we ought to, but because we love Him and want to. The twelve memorial stones we are to set up in our minds are true ideas from the Word that can help us know the Lord, worship Him, live a good life, and be introduced into heavenly life. Today, the sacrament of baptism is a “sign and memorial” that parents will teach their children these true ideas that lead to heavenly life. These ideas include that there is one God, that He creates all things, rewards those who do good and punishes those who do evil, that there is eternal life after death where those who love good go to heaven and those who love evil go to hell, that we should pray, keep the Sabbath holy, and obey the commandments. “Shouldering” these ideas means lifting them up in our lives with all our strength. Holding them as a memorial in our minds allows the Lord to keep His way open before us, just as the ark opened the way through the Jordan.

Key Ideas

- The Lord leads us in His Word.
- The Lord wants us to follow His commandments because we know Him and love Him.
- Memorials, such as baptism, help us remember the wonderful things the Lord does for us.

From the Writings

“The Jordan in the Word signifies introduction into the church; the stones carried out of the Jordan, and those [set up] in the midst of the river, signify the truths of the church, by means of which introduction takes place.” *Apocalypse Explained* 430.10

“The shoulder corresponds to all power. By the ‘shoulder’ in the Word is signified all power.” *Arcana Coelestia* 4937

Baptism is holy and a sacrament because it serves for a sign and a memorial that a person can be regenerated by the Lord by means of truths from the Word, a sign for heaven and a memorial for the person. By baptism a person is introduced into the Church, just as the sons of Israel were introduced into the land of Canaan by the crossing of the Jordan. See *Apocalypse Revealed* 776.3.

The Memorial Stones

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Vocabulary

memorial—something designed to remember a person, event, or promise

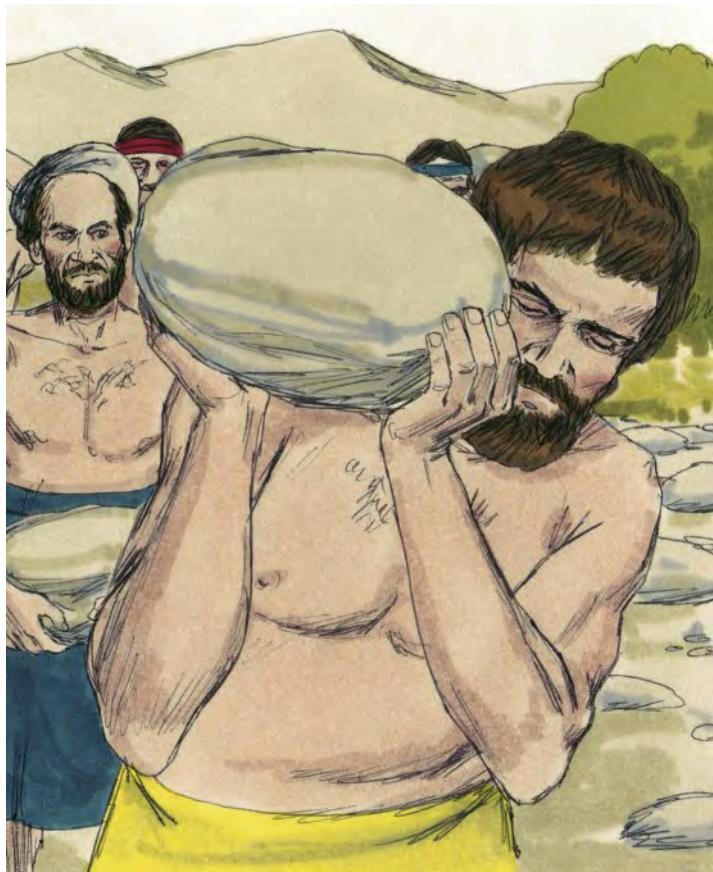
bore—carried

exalt—raise in honor, power, character, etc.

testimony—law or teachings of God

Memorials

Memorials help us remember important events, people, promises or agreements. Nations set up statues to celebrate citizens who make important discoveries, come up with new ideas or compose beautiful music. Sometimes countries set aside “memorial days” to exalt people who have made a great sacrifice, for example brave soldiers who gave their lives to protect their fellow citizens. They may also set aside days to remember historic events, or honor key officials.



Our church celebrates memorial days too. Sunday is a day when we can remember the Lord by worshiping Him. Thanksgiving or harvest festival is a time when we thank the Lord for giving us food. We also remember special events from the Lord's Life on earth at Christmas, Palm Sunday, and Easter. The New Church celebrates New Church Day on the 19th of June to remember the day the Lord sent the disciples into the spiritual world to proclaim the teachings for the New Church. We can remember the great things the Lord does for us on these memorial days.

Birthdays are a special time to celebrate the gift of life the Lord gives each person. Birthday celebrations with family and friends are times when we can think about the special qualities the Lord has given to people we care about. They are opportunities to do something special for people we love.

Baptism, a Sign and a Memorial

Have you seen a baby being baptized? Baptism is a special ceremony in which parents make a sacred promise before the Lord. They promise to teach their child about the Lord and the way to heaven that the Lord teaches in His Word. The Writings say baptism is for “a sign and a memorial” that a person can be prepared for heavenly life, a life of loving the Lord and others. Someone who is not baptized as a baby may be baptized as an adult. Baptism helps us remember the Lord’s promise that He will lead us to heaven if we learn and follow the teachings in His Word. Baptism also introduces a person into the Christian heaven. Angels there take special care of them, and as they grow the angels give them strength to do what the Lord teaches in His Word.



A Great Miracle

When the children of Israel fled Egypt the Lord parted the Red Sea so they could cross on dry ground. The Lord told Moses to hold out his rod—the rod he used to do miracles before Pharaoh in Egypt—and the waters parted. Once the people and animals were safely across, Moses put his rod down and the waters returned, killing the Egyptians.

In order for the children of Israel to leave the wilderness and enter the land of Canaan they had to cross the Jordan River. It was the rainy season. Many people had to cross a fast-flowing river. Families would have moved slowly so children, lambs and young calves could cross safely. Boys and girls may have helped lead the animals over the riverbed. This time the ark, with the tables of the testimony or the Ten Commandments inside it, miraculously held the water back. The miracle was so amazing that the people were told to set up two memorials to remember what had happened.

The Memorial Stones

The first memorial was a heap of twelve stones taken up from the Jordan River. Twelve men carried the stones from the river to their camp in Gilgal and set them up in a heap. The stones must have been large because the men bore them on their shoulders using all their strength. Have you ever lifted something heavy? Did you use your shoulders to help you? Each man carrying a stone was from a different tribe of Israel.

Read the story from Joshua 4:1-20.

Lesson 6 • The Memorial Stones

Can you remember the names of the tribes of Israel? They are similar to the names of the twelve sons of Jacob. The twelve tribes are Judah, Issachar, Zebulon, Reuben, Simeon, Gad, Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin, Dan, Asher and Naphtali (see Numbers 2). Did you notice which names were not the same as the names of the sons of Israel? Ephraim and Manasseh were Joseph's sons. Levi is not mentioned as a tribe because Levi did not have its own land. Levites were priests who would live among the other tribes throughout Canaan.

A Sign for Children

Have you ever been curious about a statue or historic marker? Perhaps you have wondered why a person was important enough for a statue to be made? Or what happened where a marker stands? The Word tells us that the memorial stones were set up in Gilgal so children could ask their parents what happened there. And when they asked, their parents could then tell them about the amazing power of the ark and the miracle of the ark holding back the waters.

Read Joshua 4:21-23.

When the first memorial was finished, a second memorial was made in the riverbed where the priests carrying the ark had stood. When the river flowed back these stones would be covered by water. The memorial was put there so that, “all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever” (Joshua 4:24).

Discussion Questions

- What is your favorite “memorial” day? What do people celebrate that day? What makes it your favorite memorial day?
- Do you look forward to your birthday? Or Christmas? How would your life be different if there were no special celebrations to look forward to?
- What promise do parents make when a baby is baptized?
- Why is baptism a “sign and memorial”?
- How can angels help a baby or adult who has been baptized?
- Compare bending over to lift something up with carrying it on your shoulder. How do shoulders help us lift heavy things? When else might you use your shoulder to do something difficult? (Hint: how might you push something that is too heavy to lift?)
- Think of a way you could remember the Lord each day. Can you think of a “memorial”—such as a book, picture, stone, etc.—that could help you do this?

Activity Overview | The Memorial Stones

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, “What are these stones?” then you shall let your children know, saying, “Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land”; for the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. Joshua 4:21-23

Projects

Choose one or two activities.

- Memorial Stone Torn Paper Collage
- Using the Strength of Your Shoulders
- Picture to color—Picking up Stones to Make a Memorial (Joshua 4)

Additional Activity Ideas

- Discuss the sacrament of baptism, which is “a sign that a person is of the Church, and a memorial that he is to be regenerated”. (See *Liturgy for the Use of the General Church of the New Jerusalem* (2005), #126ff.) Spark interest by showing a gown worn for an infant baptism, or having a child dress a doll for baptism. Describe how a minister marks the sign of the cross on the baby’s head and heart with water as a sign that true ideas from the Word can clean our thoughts and our hearts. Encourage the sharing of memories from baptisms children have witnessed.

Activity 1 | Memorial Stone Torn Paper Collage

Create a memorial mound by shaping “stones” and arranging them into a mound. Mount on a background page.

Materials Needed

3 pages of *Memorial Stone Paper* showing the names of the twelve tribes

Memorial Background Page

glue

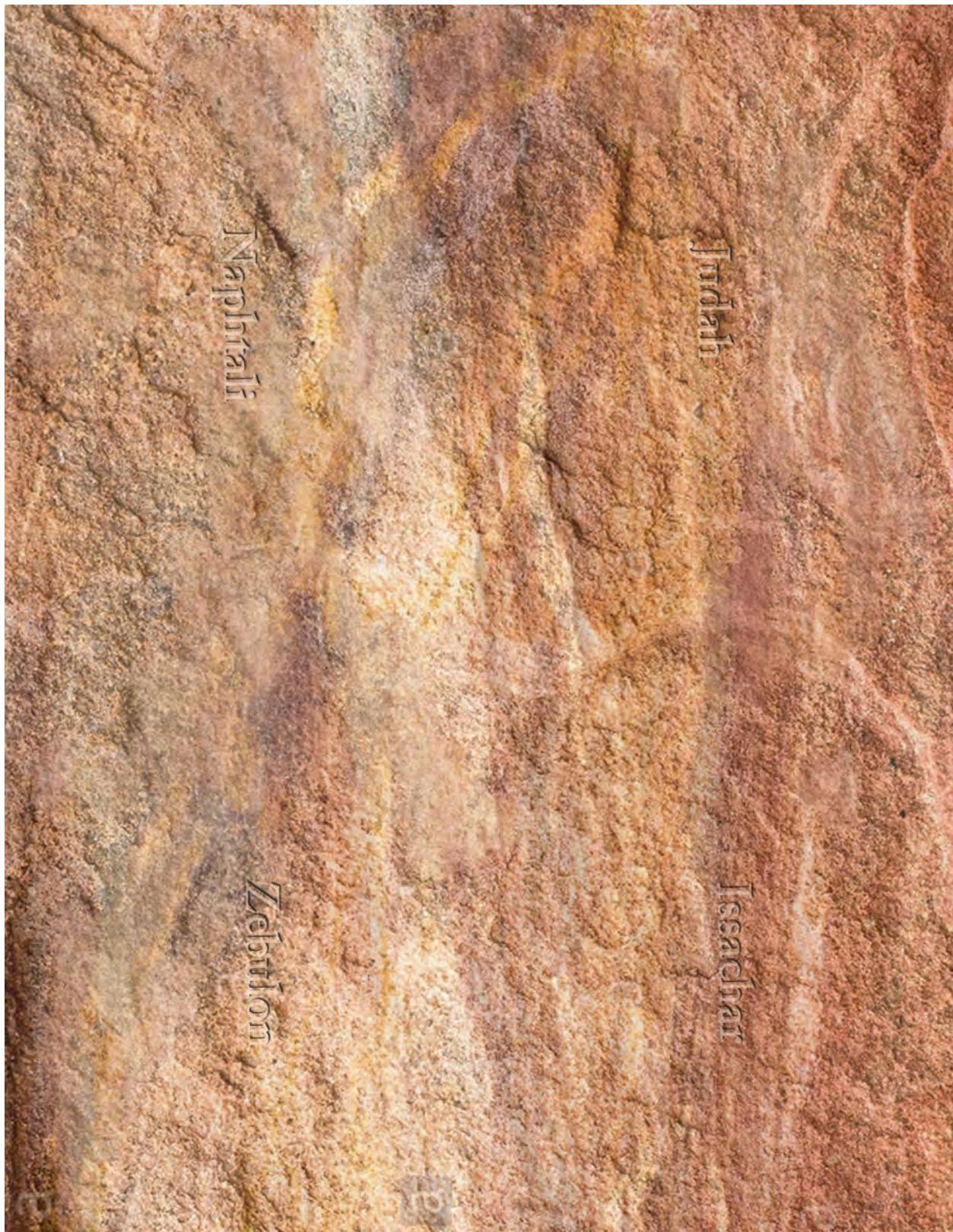
scissors

Directions

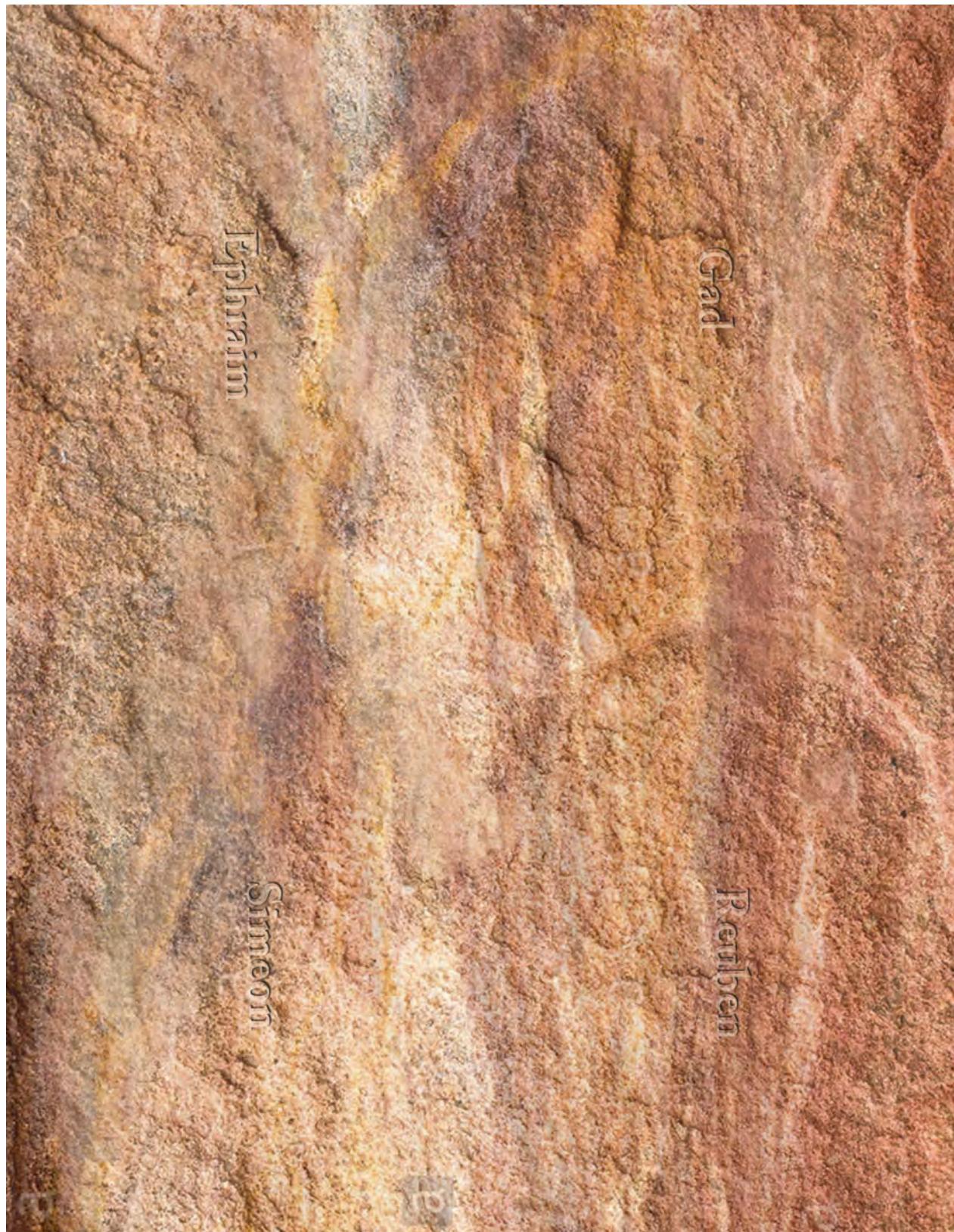
1. Crumple the *Memorial Stone Paper* pages to give them rock-like texture. Flatten the paper.
2. Fold the Memorial Stone Paper pages into quarters. Each quarter will show the name of one of the tribes of Israel.
3. Cut the paper into four pieces following the fold lines.
4. Tear around the edges of the quarter pages, shaping them into smoothed river stones. *Optional:* Make some stones larger than others (see example).
5. Glue the stones to the *Memorial Background Page*, creating a mound.
6. The mound was created so that in future children could ask their parents what happened at the river. Explain the story of the children of Israel crossing the river into the land of Canaan.



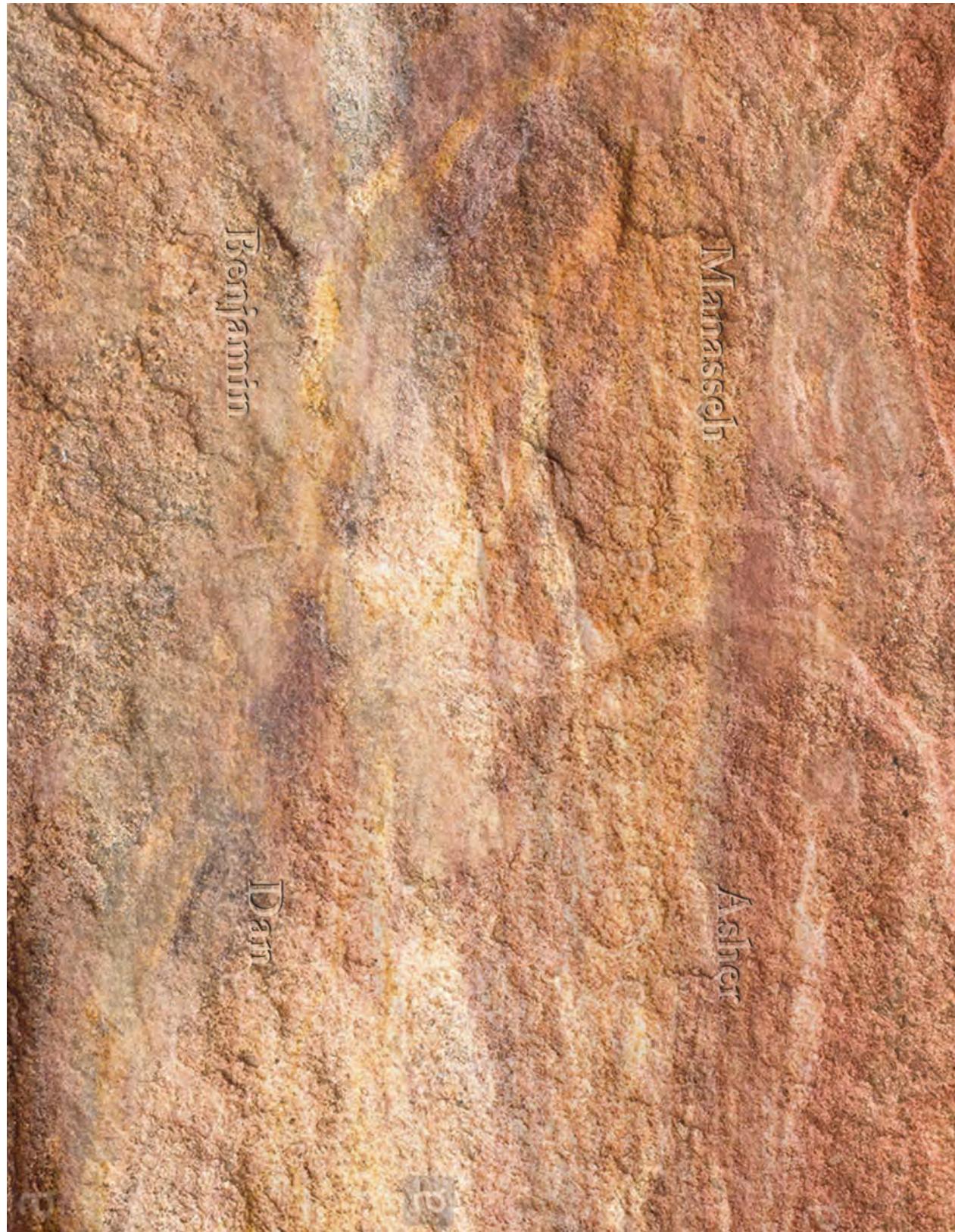
Memorial Stone Paper



Memorial Stone Paper



Memorial Stone Paper





Activity 2 | Using the Strength of Your Shoulders

By the "shoulder," in the Word is signified all power. *Arcana Coelestia 4937*

One man from each tribe was to lift a stone from the riverbed, to carry it to the bank, and to set up a memorial pillar, which would be used to tell the story of the great miracle the Lord had done. The men were to *shoulder* the stones, showing how heavy they must have been. Shoulders bear all weight we lift. When something is heavy, the shoulder can be especially helpful for lifting. Experiment with lifting various weights. Discover how your shoulders can help you lift.

Materials Needed

items of varying weights that are safe to lift, e.g. bags of flour, sugar, food cans, or (light to moderate weight) athletic weights

plastic wrap

tape

Directions

1. If you will be lifting bags of food, protect the bags against splitting and spilling if dropped by encasing them securely in plastic wrap. Tape the edges to secure if needed.
2. Place objects to be lifted on the floor.
3. Invite students to choose an object to lift.
4. While lifting, try to be aware of which muscles you are using. Is your hand, arm, or shoulder holding the weight?
5. Try “shouldering” a weight. Does shouldering a weight change how heavy it feels? Is it easier to lift a weight on top of your shoulder, rather than with your hand? Does a shoulder make a difference to lifting a light weight, or only to a heavy weight?
6. Discuss the importance of good posture when lifting. It can be easy to hurt a back, neck, or arm if you lift heavy weight improperly, without preparation.
7. When else might you rely on the strength of your shoulder? Imagine throwing a ball. Which uses your shoulder more—an overhand or an underhand throw? Which kind of throw is more powerful? What about paddling a canoe? Or doing a pull-up or push-up?
8. The big stones lifted by the men from each tribe correspond to true ideas from the Word. How do we lift up powerful ideas in our lives? How might “shouldering” these ideas give them even greater power in our lives?

