

General Church Education



Jephthah and His Daughter

Judges 11:1-15, 27-40

Lesson 24

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 4: The Lord Is the Hero

For ages 9-10

Jephthah and His Daughter

Judges 11:1-15,27-40

For Parents and Teachers

The story of Jephthah took place outside the land of Canaan, beyond the Jordan River. Land outside Canaan represents external states of life that are natural, not spiritual. Moab and Ammon, descendants of Abraham's brother Lot, represent selfish loves and false thinking in the enjoyment of external pleasure. These enemies attacked tribes living to the east of the Jordan and in the heart of Canaan. They accused the children of Israel of taking their lands unjustly. The Lord raised Jephthah up to help Israel defeat these enemies. Jephthah was from Tob—which means “good”. Jephthah's first approach was to reason with the people of Ammon. He explained the history of the territory. When this failed, he led the children of Israel to war. But first he made a vow—a rash promise—to give the Lord the first thing that came out of his house if He delivered Israel in battle.

As Jephthah returned victorious, his beautiful daughter, his only child, came out of the house joyfully to greet him. Jephthah tore his clothes in distress—but did not try to get out of his vow and neither did his daughter. The Writings explain the ancient custom of human sacrifice (see below) was replaced by animal sacrifice in order to prevent the sacrifice of children. Spiritually, the maiden represents an affection for genuine truth for the sake of living a good life. Jephthah kept his vow, as we should keep the promises we make.

Ideas for Children

- The Lord helped the children of Israel when they cried out to Him. He will also help us.
- It's a good idea to talk about differences instead of fighting about them.
- We should keep the promises we make.

From the Writings

The land of Canaan represented, and thence signifies the church. The region beyond Jordan signified the external church, the region on this side of the Jordan, the internal church, and the river Jordan the limit between them. And truth from good, or faith from charity, makes the church; truth from good in the natural man, the external church. See *Apocalypse Explained* 434.11.

The Lord's coming into the world and His suffering of death were known since ancient times. That may be recognized from the custom among the gentiles of sacrificing their own children, which they did believing that by so doing they made atonement and satisfied God. They would not have made this custom a religious activity unless they had received from the ancients knowledge of a future coming of the Son of God, of whom they believed a sacrifice would be made. The children of Jacob inclined to this abominable practice, as did Abraham, for nobody is tempted except through that to which he has an inclination. The fact that the children of Jacob had those inclinations is clear in the Prophets. But to prevent them plunging into that practice, the introduction of burnt offerings and sacrifices was permitted. See *Arcana Coelestia* 2818.2.

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Vocabulary

harass—make many small attacks
vow—a solemn promise
timbrel—an instrument like a tambourine

The Lord raised up many Judges during this period in the history of Israel. So far we have learned about Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, and Gideon.

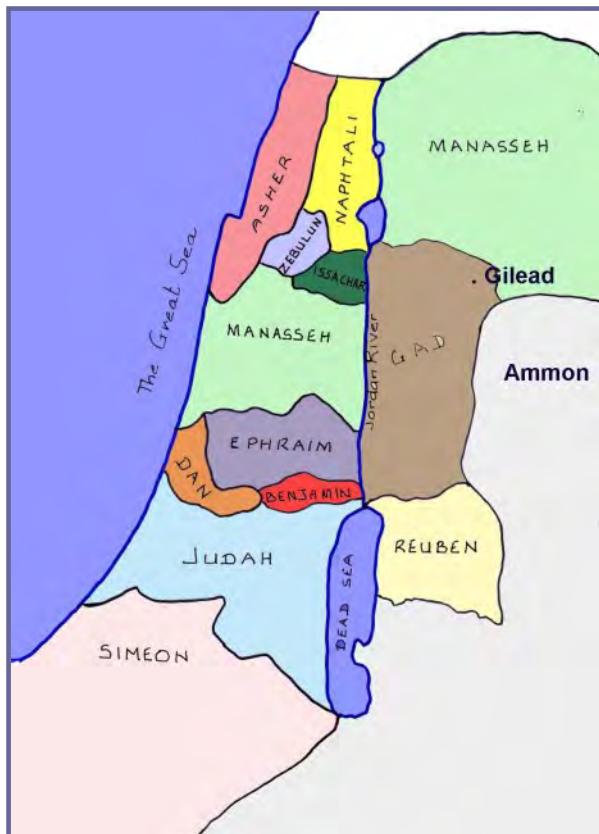
Tola, the Sixth Judge

The next Judge was Tola. The Word tells us only that he came from the tribe of Issachar, and judged Israel for twenty-three years.

Jair, the Seventh Judge

The seventh Judge was Jair. He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys. They had thirty towns in the land of Gilead. See if you can find Gilead on the map. Jair judged Israel for twenty-

two years. Jephthah, the next judge, was also from Gilead. Gilead is to the east of the Jordan River, just outside the land of Canaan.



Israel Oppressed Again

Once again, the children of Israel forgot the Lord and began to worship the gods of their enemies. Each time they turned from the Lord their enemies became strong. The people of Ammon harassed the tribes living east of the Jordan River and the tribes in the center of Canaan. Israel suffered for eighteen years and then cried to the Lord for help. Warriors from Ammon gathered in Gilead and prepared to fight. When the children of Israel gathered in Mizpah to protect their families, they realized they did not have a leader.

Jephthah

The children of Israel needed a strong leader to defend them against the Ammonites. Jephthah was “a mighty man of valor”. He grew up among

rough fighting men in the town of Tob. Tob means “good”. The Israelites made Jephthah their commander, and the Spirit of the Lord was with him.

Read Judges 11:1-11.

Jephthah’s Vow

Jephthah tried talking to the leader of the Ammonites to find out why they were angry, but they could not agree on what had happened to their lands many years earlier. Since they could not agree Jephthah and his army decided to fight Ammon. As they marched to the battle they passed through Manasseh and the city of Gilead in Gad.

Read Judges 11:12-15, 27-29.

Before the battle, Jephthah made a vow to the Lord. He asked the Lord to give him victory, and promised something in return.

“If you will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.” (Judges 11:30,31)



“Alas, My Daughter!”

Jephthah won the battle against the Ammonites and returned to his home in Gilead. What do you think came out of the house to greet him first?

Read Judges 11:32-40.

Jephthah’s daughter, his only child, came out of his house playing timbrels and dancing for joy at her father’s victory and safe return. Jephthah tore his clothes with grief. Do you think he had ever imagined something so terrible when he made that vow to the Lord?

Keeping his promise to the Lord was more important to Jephthah than the life of his daughter. Jephthah did not try to go back on his word. Though he loved her more than anything else in the world, he loved the Lord still more.

And what about Jephthah’s daughter? Did she beg her father to spare her life? No, she knew that a vow must be kept.

“My father, if you have given your word to the Lord, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth....” (Judges 11:36)

Jephthah's daughter knew that what her father had promised to the Lord must be.

We can admire the sense of duty that Jephthah and his daughter showed in keeping the vow, but it is very sad that people would have thought that the Lord could wish for such a sacrifice. They did not know better. At that time, the custom of sacrificing children was common among nations that did not know the Lord.

Keeping Promises

This story teaches that promises should only be made with careful thought. And once a promise is made, it should be kept. Other people need to be able to trust that we will not let them down.

A Promise to the Lord

During a baptism service, parents promise to teach their children about the Lord and His Word. They hope that their children can become angels in heaven. We can help keep the promise of baptism by learning from them and from our parents and teachers, and by reading the Word. When we grow up, the Lord wants us to make our own promise to Him, to follow the teachings of His Word in our own journey to heaven.

Discussion Questions

- What promise did the children of Israel make to Joshua before he died? (See Joshua 24:24.)
- What happened each time the children of Israel worshiped idols?
- Jephthah tried several ways to settle a disagreement. How have you tried to settle disagreements?
- Why is talking about a problem a good way to settle a disagreement? What other ways might work to settle disagreements?
- Are there any problems that could not be settled by talking about them?
- Was Jephthah's vow a wise vow? What could his vow tell us about making promises?
- Why is keeping promises important? What happens when we make a promise we do not keep?
- Did Jephthah do the right thing in keeping his vow?

Activity Overview | Jephthah and His Daughter

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

What shall I render to the Lord
For all His benefits toward me”
I will take up the cup of salvation,
And call upon the name of the Lord.
I will pay my vows to the Lord
Now in the presence of all His people. Psalm 116:12-14

Projects

Choose one or two activities.

- Journal: Making Promises
- Judges Trading Cards—Jephthah
- Picture to Color—Jephthah’s Daughter (Judges 11)

Additional Activity Ideas

- Most promises are made with words. We promise parents we will brush our teeth. We promise teachers we will do our homework. Like strands of dry spaghetti, promises are easily broken. Experiment with a strand of spaghetti. How easily does it break? What might make it harder to break the spaghetti? (Hint: Try cooking the spaghetti in water. Once the spaghetti is cooked it does not break quite as easily. Water corresponds to truth. How does being truthful when we make promises make a promise stronger or easier to keep?)
- Read Judges 11 and fill in the blanks to review the story of Jephthah. This activity is online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-the-story-of-jephthah-review-judges11.pdf>.

Activity 1 | Journal: Making Promises

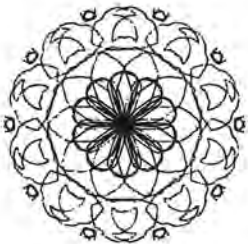
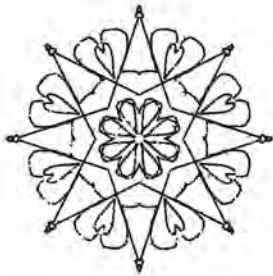
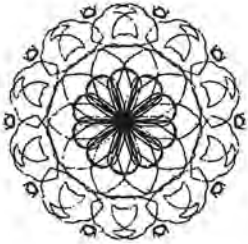
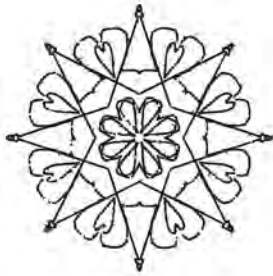
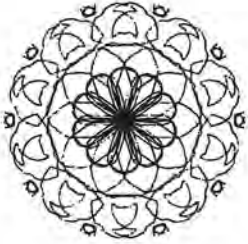
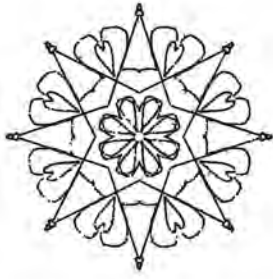
Choose a *Making Promises* journal page to write about making promises. Think about the importance of meaning what you promise, keeping promises, not making foolish promises and not letting people down. Use one of the writing prompts below, or write what comes to mind.

Writing Prompts

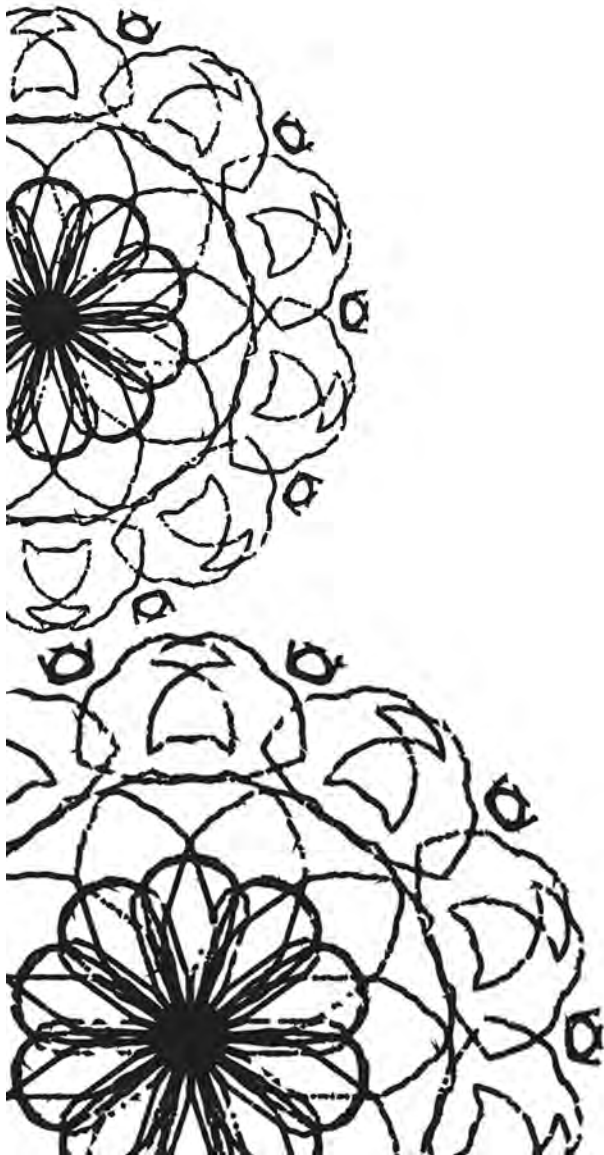
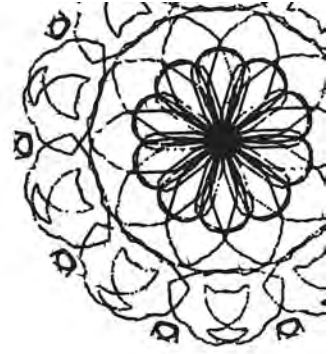
Choose a prompt to help you start writing.

1. **Slip Up:** Write about a time when you forgot to keep a promise you made.
2. **Book Inspired:** Write about a book that included a promise. Would you recommend the book to a friend?
3. **Adjectives:** Think of five adjectives that describe Jephthah's promise.
4. **The Promise:** Write about a promise you made to someone. Did you keep the promise?
5. **Failure:** Write about a time you failed to keep a promise. Did you try again, or give up completely?
6. **Silver Lining:** Write about something good that can come from a bad situation.
7. **Changing Places:** Imagine living the day as Jephthah or his daughter.
8. **Empathy:** Write about your feelings of compassion for Jephthah or his daughter..
9. **Timer:** Set a timer for just five minutes and write. Don't worry about it being perfect.
10. **Describe:** Describe a time when someone kept a promise that made you happy.

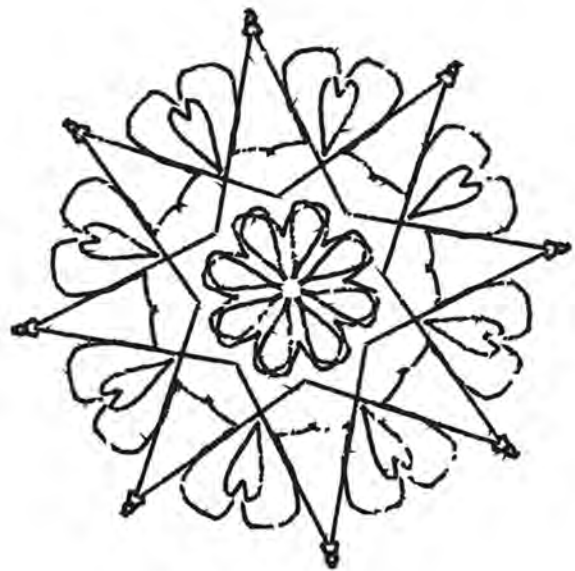
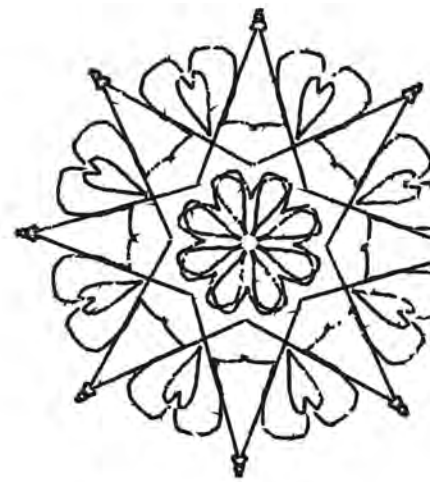
Making Promises



Making Promises



Making Promises



Activity 2 | Judges Trading Cards Tola, Jair, Jephthah

Learn about the Judges by making a trading card for each one. Collect the trading cards and use them to review or sequence the stories of the judges. This activity is repeated in future stories.

Do the following on the front of each card:

1. Write the name of the judge in the space at the top of the card.
2. Write the number of years of peace Israel had after this judge conquered Israel's enemy.
3. Draw a picture of the judge.

Fill in any of the following details given in the story on the back of each card:

1. Write the name of the region(s) or city in Israel being attacked.
2. Write the name of the judge's tribe.
3. Write the name of the enemy attacking Israel.
4. Write the kind of weapon used to fight the enemy.
5. Fill in the "other" box with any details from the story that interest you, e.g. how a judge escaped, the number of years he or she judged Israel, other things he or she did.

When you have completed the card, cut it out. Fold the card in half and tape the edges together.

Activity 2 | Judges Trading Card: Tola

JUDGES FROM THE WORD		YEARS OF PEACE <input type="text"/>		
OTHER <input type="text"/>	WEAPON <input type="text"/>	ENEMY <input type="text"/>	TRIBE <input type="text"/>	PLACE OR CITY <input type="text"/>

Activity 2 | Judges Trading Card: Jair

JUDGES FROM THE WORD		YEARS OF PEACE <input type="text"/>		
OTHER <input type="text"/>	WEAPON <input type="text"/>	ENEMY <input type="text"/>	TRIBE <input type="text"/>	PLACE OR CITY <input type="text"/>

Activity 2 | Judges Trading Card: Jephthah

JUDGES FROM THE WORD		YEARS OF PEACE		
OTHER	WEAPON	ENEMY	TRIBE	PLACE OR CITY

