

General Church Education



Micah's Idolatry

Judges 18

Lesson 27

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 4: The Lord Is the Hero

For ages 9-10

Micah's Idolatry

Judges 18

Teacher Background

The period of the Judges was an era of political and moral confusion. The solidarity of Israel was maintained against incredible odds. While worship of Jehovah continued at Shiloh, there was no central government and the laws of Moses were largely forgotten. The Word reminds us that “there was no king in Israel but every one did what was right in his own eyes.”

Micah's mother created idols out of coins Micah stole and later returned to her. Micah built a shrine for the idols and hired a Levite to be his priest. While the commandments forbid idolatry, these idols appear to represent apparent truths in the Word—truths adapted to simple people, which can easily become perverted. With child-like innocence, Micah expected that the Lord would do him good since he had a Levite priest. However, when men from the tribe of Dan stole the idols with the mistaken idea of worshipping Jehovah in their new northern territory, the priest went with them. Micah pictures a state where good is present—but no truth (king) to instruct and lead. This is like the imaginative and impulsive childhood states. Since children do not yet know what is true they must obey parents and teachers.

Key Ideas

- There was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.
- Micah innocently believed the graven images in his shrine could help him.
- The Lord remained with Micah despite his disobedience and the trouble it brought.

From the Writings

People used teraphim as idols to consult God. Since they believed the replies they received were Divine truths, teraphim represent truths, as in Hosea 3:4, ‘The children of Israel sat many days with no king and with no prince and with no sacrifice, nor ephod and teraphim.’ ‘Ephod and teraphim’ stands for Divine truths which they received through the replies given, for when they asked God something they also put on the ephod, (1 Samuel 23:9-12). Because ‘the teraphim’ had this kind of meaning, some also had teraphim in their houses, even though this was forbidden. One such person was Micah, in the Book of Judges. See *Arcana Coelestia* 4111.4-6.

When a gentile spirit who had worshipped an idol heard about Micah's grief for his idol, he grieved. I perceived his grief, and also the innocence in his affections. Christian spirits present were amazed that the worshiper of a graven image could be filled by so strong a feeling of compassion and innocence. Afterwards good spirits told him that idols ought not to be worshipped but that his thoughts should go beyond images to God the Lord, the Ruler of heaven and earth. While they were saying this I perceived the holy feelings within him with which he worshiped. It became clear that gentiles enter heaven more easily than Christians do who are not stirred by these feelings. In that state he was able to receive all things of faith with interior affection, since he had compassion which is the expression of love, and his ignorance had innocence within it. When these are present all things of faith are received with joy. He was after this received among angels. See *Arcana Coelestia* 2598.

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Vocabulary

idol—something a person makes more important than the Lord and worships

confess—admit the truth

consequences—the outcome of something you have done

This lesson is about a man named Micah. His name means “who is like God?” Micah loved the Lord in a simple way but did not always obey the commandments.

When the children of Israel conquered Canaan the Lord instructed them to set up the tabernacle in Shiloh. He told the children of Israel to go to Shiloh three times a year to worship the Lord and offer sacrifices. But the Israelites forgot the Lord. Some simple, good people made idols to worship in their homes instead of worshipping the Lord.

Micah lived in the hills of Ephraim. Look at the map and see if you can find the following:

- the tribe of **Ephraim**
- the tribe of **Dan** (near Ephraim)
- the town of **Laish** (at the far north)



Micah Steals the Silver

Micah stole 1,100 shekels of silver from his mother. His mother did not know her son had stolen the money, and she cursed the thief. A curse was a solemn wish that the worst things might happen to the person. People were very afraid of curses at that time.

Micah Makes a Shrine for Idols

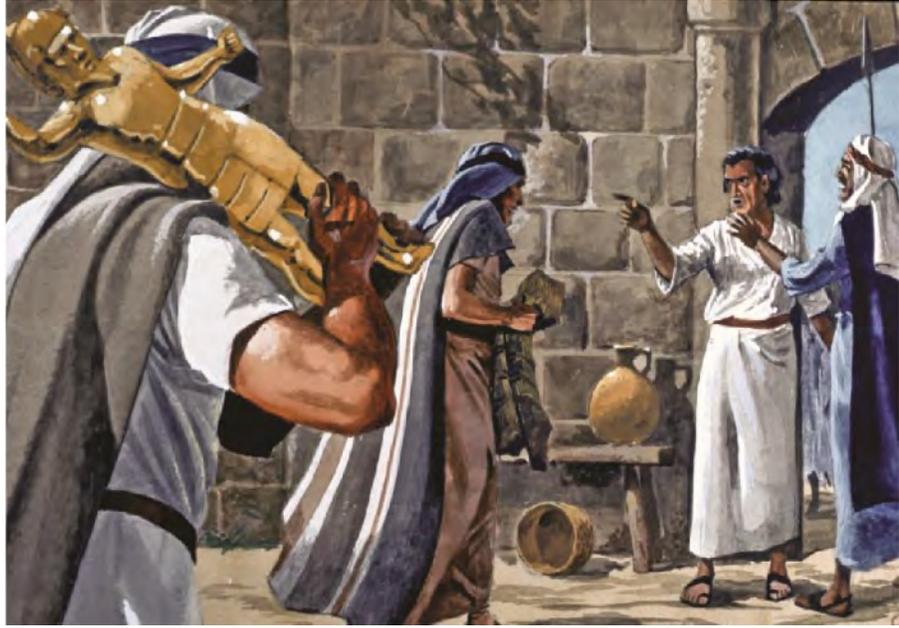
Micah confessed to his mother that he had stolen the silver, and gave it back. Then she asked a silversmith to make images or idols out of some of the silver.

She gave Micah the images, and the rest of the money. He made a shrine in his house. He put the idols

in the shrine and worshiped. He chose one of his sons to serve as a priest.

A "Priest" for Micah

Later, a young Levite stopped at Micah's house, and Micah asked him to stay and be his priest, promising to pay him with the silver his mother had given him. Do you remember what was special about the Levites? The Lord had set aside the tribe of Levi



to be the priests for the children of Israel. They were to teach the people to worship the Lord. How was it possible that this man, a priest from the tribe of Levi, was willing to become a priest in the house of Micah, where idols were worshiped?

The children of Israel had forgotten all about the Lord's teachings. They no longer learned what was right from the Lord. Everybody did what *they* thought was right, not what the Lord said was right. Even the priests had forgotten the Lord! And so Micah could pay a Levite to lead the worship of his idols.

Micah did not seem to know that he was doing something wrong. He even thought that the Lord would be good to him because he had a Levite as a priest.

Micah's Idols Are Stolen

One day, five men were sent to spy out a new place for the tribe of Dan to live. The tribe of Dan did not feel safe in the land the Lord had given them because it was close to the Philistines. The men stopped at Micah's house and asked his priest if they would find a new place to live on their journey. The priest said the Lord would be with them.

Read Judges 18:1-10.

The spies found a good place to live in the far north of Canaan. They returned to their tribe to tell others. So 600 men and their families from the tribe of Dan took their weapons and marched northwards towards the place they had found for their new home. As they passed Micah's home the spies remembered Micah's idols and his priest. They went into his home and took Micah's idols, and his priest. The priest was willing to go with them. He thought it was more important to be a priest to a whole tribe instead of just one man.

Micah was very upset! His precious idols were gone! He gathered his neighbors and ran after the men of Dan. When he caught up with them, he demanded that they give back his idols. But the Danites were too strong for Micah to fight, so he returned to his home.

Read Judges 18:11-26.

Dan Finds a New Home

The Danites continued to go northwards. They eventually conquered the city of Laish, at the northern tip of Israel, and settled there to begin new lives.

Read Judges 18:27-31.

Follow the Lord's Teaching, or Follow Our Own Ideas?

At each moment the Lord lets us choose whether to follow Him, or to disobey His commandments. To follow Him, we must learn what He teaches in the Word. Micah did what was right in his own eyes. He did not learn from the Lord what was right, and it led to great unhappiness. While he did not understand the wrong he was doing, he still suffered the consequences. The Lord must be our King. Without learning what is right and wrong from the Lord's Word we cannot know what is right and what is wrong.

It is easy to make "idols" for ourselves. Idols are anything we care about more than we care about what is right and good, for example sports, clothes or having others think we are great. The Lord reminds us that these idols cannot help us or bring us the lasting happiness of heaven, only He can.

Discussion Questions

- Can you remember other times when the children of Israel turned away from the Lord and worshiped idols?
- What happened when Israel turned away from worshiping the Lord?
- What does "doing what is right in your own eyes" mean?
- Why was there no king in Israel? Who was the real king?
- The people of Dan laughed at Micah's sadness about his idols. Does being stronger than others make it right to treat them poorly?
- What would be different if everyone followed the teachings of the Word to decide what is right and good?
- What can you do to remind yourself to keep the Lord and His Word at the center of your life?

Activity Overview | Micah's Idolatry

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

You shall have no other gods before Me.

You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;

You shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. Exodus 20:3-6

Projects

Choose one or two activities.

- Order
- Coloring page—The First Commandment (Exodus 20)
- Coloring Page—Micah's Idols (Judges 18)

Additional Activity Ideas

- At the time of the judges many people in Israel had forgotten the Lord. Simple people like Micah did not remember worshiped idols and not the Lord. Review the Ten Commandments by doing a sequencing activity to discover the laws Israel had forgotten. This activity is online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-ten-commandments-sequencing-cards-exodus19.pdf>.

Activity 1 | Order

During the time of the judges the Word tells us, “In those days there was no king in Israel; Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” Explore why obeying rules and keeping order frees people to live safe, happy and useful lives. Discuss difficulties that happen when there is no order and then try to sort out a picture that is not in order.

What if there is no order?

Have you ever lost something you treasured or needed because your room was messy? It can be hard to find your favorite clothes hidden when they are at the bottom of a heap or buried in a laundry basket.

Has your homework ever gone missing—only to turn up after it’s due at the bottom of a messy backpack?

What if your teacher gave you this math problem to solve: $9 \ 4 \ 5 \ 10$? Can you do it without + and - signs?

It is especially important to know and obey the rules of the road. Imagine if people could drive on any side of the road! Or if some people decided red traffic lights meant “go” and green lights meant “stop”! If drivers could do anything they wanted walkers would not know when it was safe to cross.

Micah and his mother did not know they should not worship idols. A Levite, one of the Lord’s priests, served Micah and helped him worship the idols he had made instead of worshipping the Lord! Micah and the priest did what was right in their own eyes and did not remember the Lord had said not to worship idols.

What kinds of idols might we worship that the Word tells us not to? How does making something else more important than the Lord and the Word confuse our lives so we do not know what is right and wrong?

Create an orderly picture

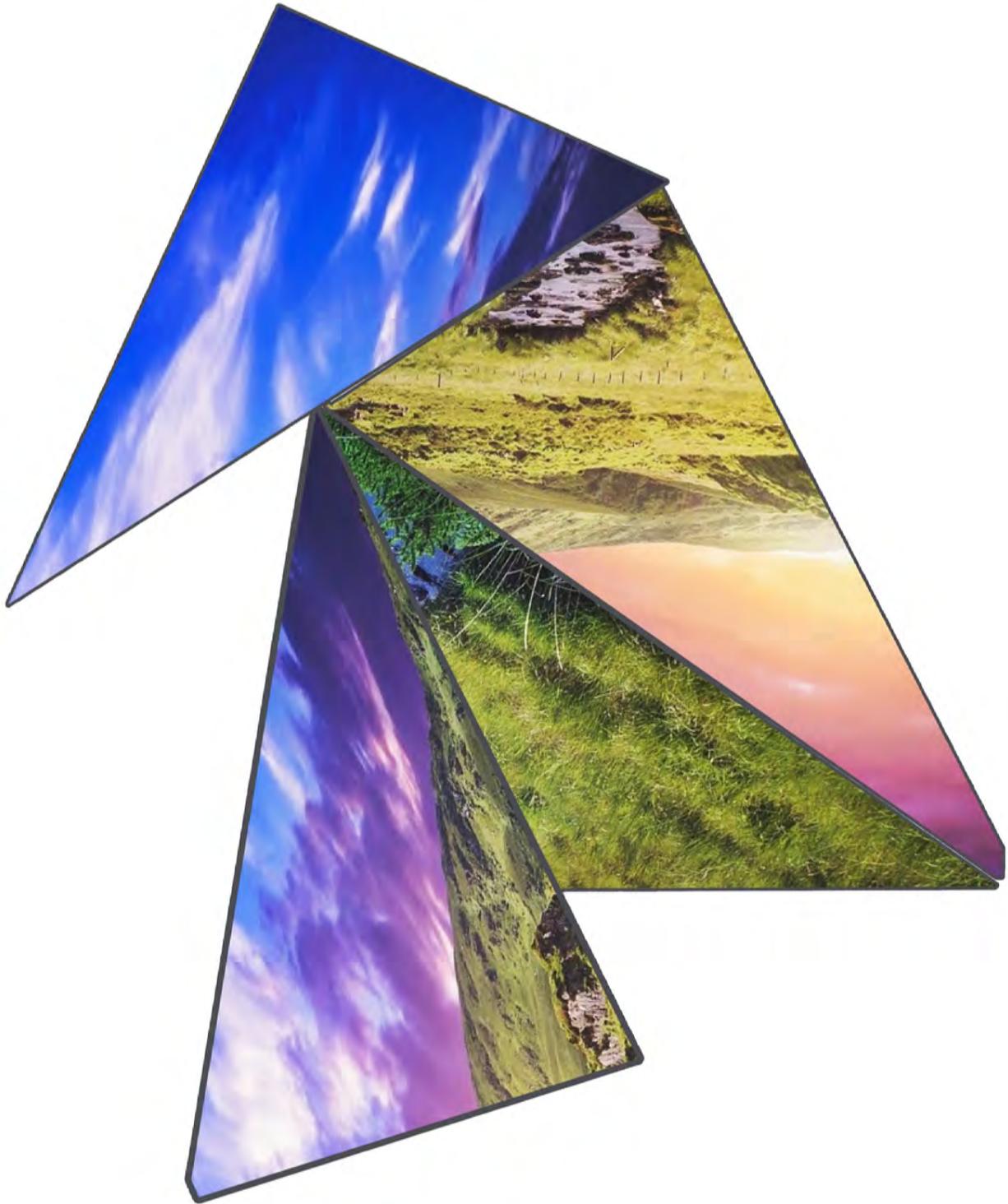
People need order to live happy and useful lives. Create order out of chaos by cutting out and assembling two picture puzzles that are mixed up, *Puzzle 1* and *Puzzle 2*. Cut the pieces of each puzzle apart and put them together in the correct order. Once the puzzles are in order it will be easy to see how the pieces make a beautiful scene. (Puzzle answers are shown above.)



Puzzle 1



Puzzle 1

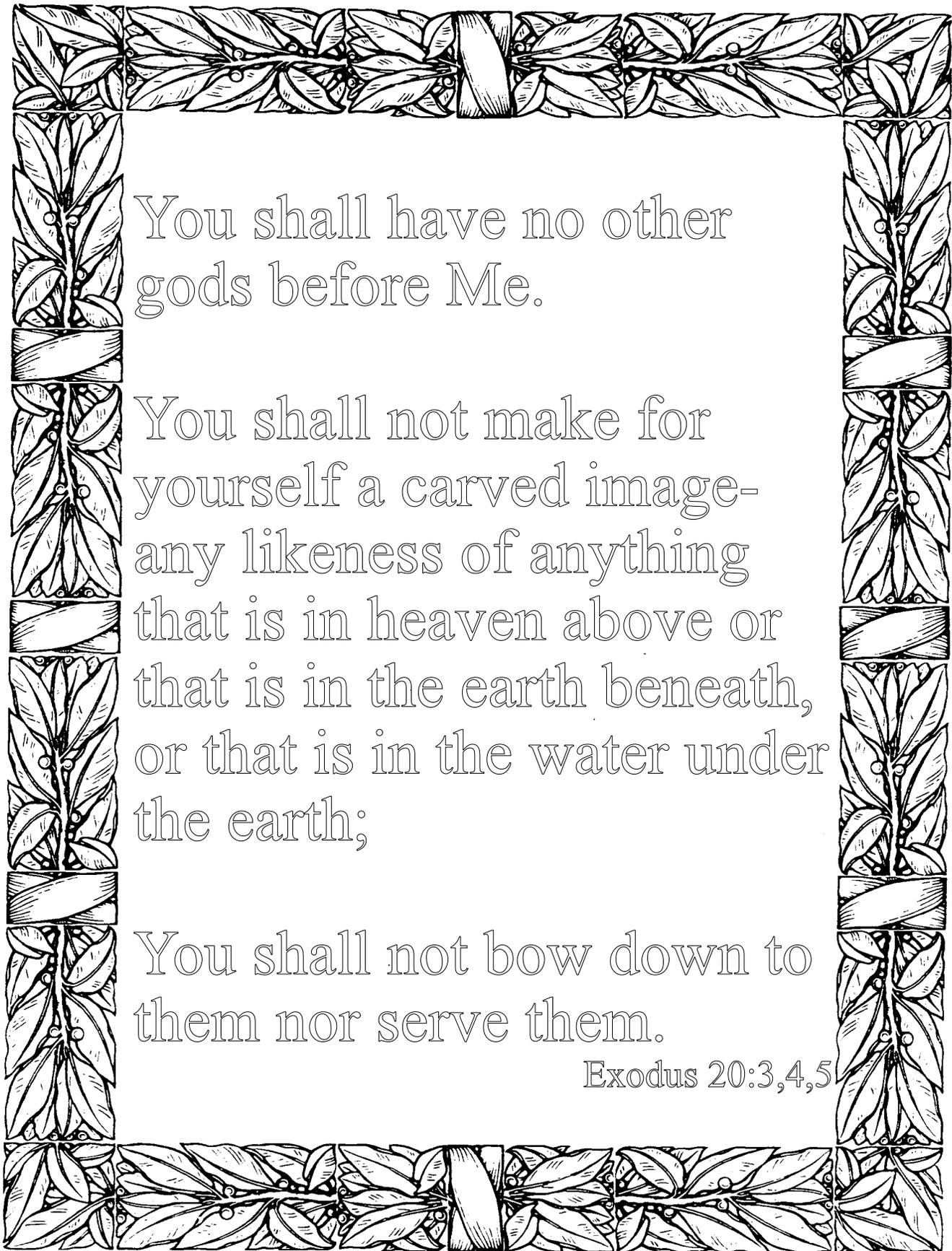


Puzzle 2



Puzzle 2





You shall have no other gods before Me.

You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;

You shall not bow down to them nor serve them.

Exodus 20:3,4,5

