

General Church Education



Family Lesson: Judges 2

The Judges of Israel

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Family Lesson 7 - A

The Judges of Israel
Judges 2

Family Talk:
ANGELS AND THE BOOK OF JUDGES

The word “angel” is found more in the book of Judges than in almost any other book of the Word. (The exception is the book of Revelation.) And what picture should we have in our minds when we see the word “angel?” That is largely what this talk is about.

The book of Judges tells of a number of different heroes (leaders, or judges) who were raised up by the Lord to lead the people when they had gotten themselves into trouble and difficulty by turning away from Him.

When great trouble came to them they would cry out to the Lord. Indeed, they cried in more ways than one. It is said in the second chapter of Judges that an angel came to tell them that because they did not obey the Lord, the people of the land would be a trouble to them and would be as thorns in their sides. When they heard the angel say that, they wept, and named the place Bochim, or a “place of weeping” (*Judges 2:4, 5*).

The two best known of the leaders called Judges were Gideon and Samson, and it is in their stories that we see the example of angels appearing to men. (See *Heaven and Hell* numbers 76 and 84; also *Apocalypse Explained* 412:16.) Let us see from these stories what an angel was like when appearing to people on earth.

The story of Gideon begins sadly. Because the people of Israel had again done wrong and turned from the Lord, they were being miserably persecuted by the armies of the Midianites. But then one day an angel of the Lord came and sat under a tree until a man named Gideon spoke to him. To Gideon the angel looked just like a man who lives in this world. But this man spoke in such a way that Gideon thought of him as very wise and important, probably a “Surely, I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites” (*Judges 6:16*).

Gideon asked this visitor not to go away until he brought him a present, and when he brought food, the angel put it on a rock and touched it with the end of his staff. Fire then came out of the rock and consumed it, and the angel disappeared. It was only then that Gideon realized that he had seen an angel of the Lord. He wondered if he would die, and he said in prayer, “Alas, O Lord God! For I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face.” But he received the answer that he did not need to be afraid.

After this meeting with an angel, the man Gideon, who had not thought he could do anything, set out and became the deliverer of Israel. With as few as three hundred men, he chased away the Midianite armies.

Years later the children of Israel did evil again, and this time the army that oppressed them was the army of the Philistines. The deliverance from the Philistines is the great story of Samson, which begins with the saying that a man named Manoah and his wife had no child. Then one day Manoah's wife was spoken to by an angel, who told her that she would have a son.

She went to her husband and told him that a man of God had spoken to her—a man with an unforgettable face. Although she did not know that it was an angel, she said that his face was like the face of an angel of God (*Judges 13:6*)! But she said that the man did not tell her his name.

Manoah prayed that the man would come again to tell them how they should bring up the child that would be born. And then when the woman was in the field, the angel appeared again. She went and brought Manoah her husband to see the angel. (They still did not know it was an angel.) He told them how this child, Samson, was to be specially prepared as he grew up. They were so happy that they wanted to give this stranger a present of food to eat. But he answered that they must not give him anything, but make an offering to the Lord. And as they made an offering to the Lord, and the fire blazed high, the Angel of the Lord went up in the flame of fire and did not appear again. When this happened, the two of them fell on their faces to the ground and “knew that he was the Angel of the Lord” (*Judges 13:20, 21*).

At first Manoah was afraid—the way Gideon had been afraid. But his wife said to him that he should not be afraid, because if he were going to die, he would not have been told about the son they would have and how to raise him. And so Samson was born, “and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him” (*Judges 13:24*). And he became a man of great strength who was a leader to Israel, and delivered them from the Philistines.

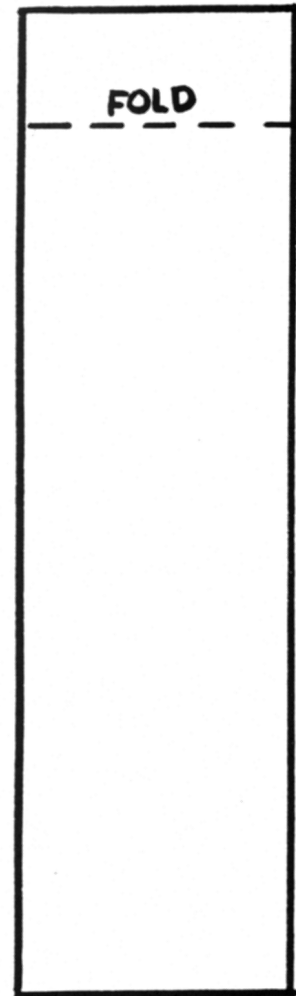
In these stories we see that the spiritual eyes of these people were opened so that they could see an angel and speak with him. And now we have the clear teaching of the Writings about angels. A whole number in the book *Heaven and Hell* teaches us that every angel is in a complete human form. Swedenborg was allowed many, many times to look at angels, and he says, “I have seen nothing whatever in their form different from the human form” (*Heaven and Hell 74*). And we learn that angels are wise and happy and delighted with the work they are given to do.

And finally, we know that each one of us has been born with a purpose—that we may serve the Lord's uses in this world, and eventually do so in the world to come, and become angels.

THE JUDGES OF ISRAEL
JUDGES 2
LEVEL 1

After Joshua died, the Israelites forgot to obey the Lord.
So the Lord gave them leaders called Judges.
These Judges showed the children of Israel how to be good.

Maybe this Judge will remind you to obey the Lord too.

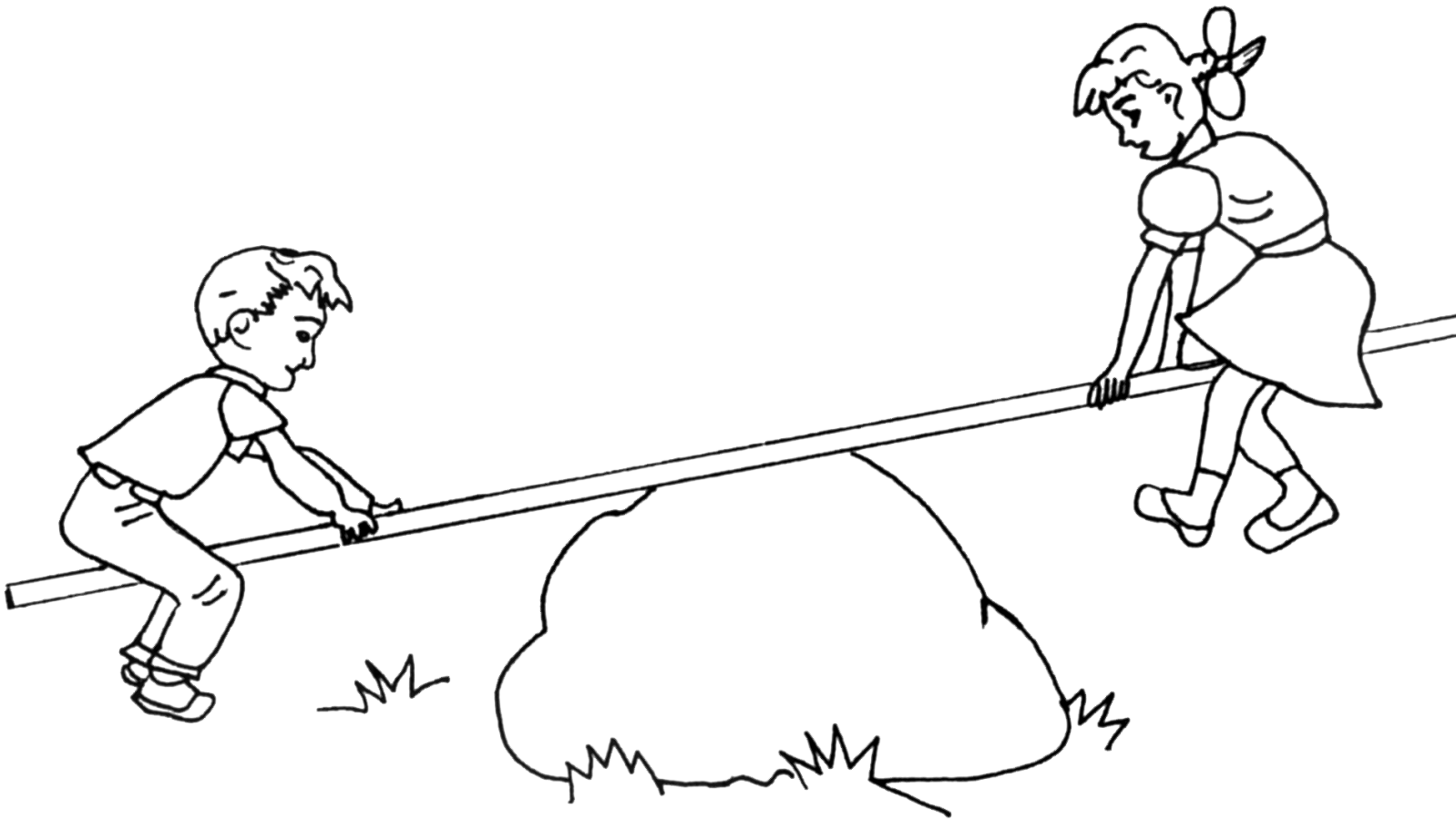


Color the picture of a Judge.
Cut out the card and the hinge.
Fold the top of the hinge and glue to the back of the card.
Display your picture of a Judge.

The Judges of Israel

Judges 2

LEVEL 2 – OVERVIEW OF JUDGES



Sometimes we are happy, and sometimes we are sad.
Sometimes we are up, and sometimes we are down.

When the Children of Israel disobeyed the Lord, a judge was sent to
lead them.

When we have disobeyed and are sad, who is there to lead us?

Hold the picture up to the light and you will see.



The Judges of Israel

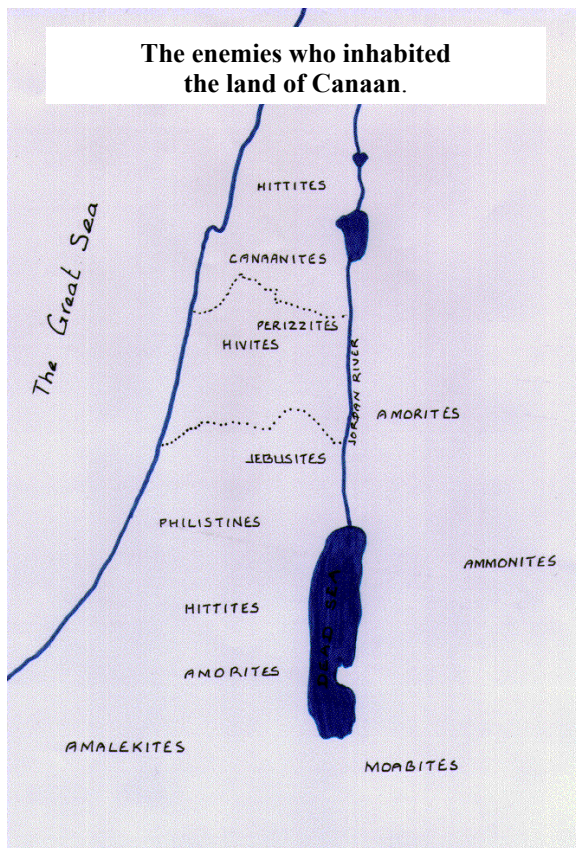
Judges 2

LEVEL 3 – THE JUDGES OF ISRAEL

MATERIALS NEEDED

Scissors
Pen or pencil
The Word or a Bible

THE JUDGES OF ISRAEL



When the Israelites entered Canaan, their Promised Land, it was already inhabited by many different peoples. These people did wicked things, so the Lord commanded the Children of Israel to fight and conquer them. Joshua led them in these victories. Finally, they had conquered the land. Many of the wicked people were still living there, but they were afraid of the Israelites and let them live there, too.

From the time Joshua died until the first king was chosen, the Israelites lived in Canaan with many of their old enemies around them. The Lord promised that they could have the land and be safe if they obeyed and worshiped Him. When they did not, He let an old enemy rise up and attack them. Then He would also give Israel a leader, called a Judge, who would help them begin to obey and worship the Lord again. The Judge also led them to conquer the enemy again. The Book of Judges tells many stories of these times.

Under Joshua's leadership, the Israelites divided up the land so each of their tribes had a special portion.

MAP PROJECT

Your project is to do a map puzzle showing how the land was divided:

On page 2 is a map showing how the land of Canaan was divided among the tribes of the children of Israel.

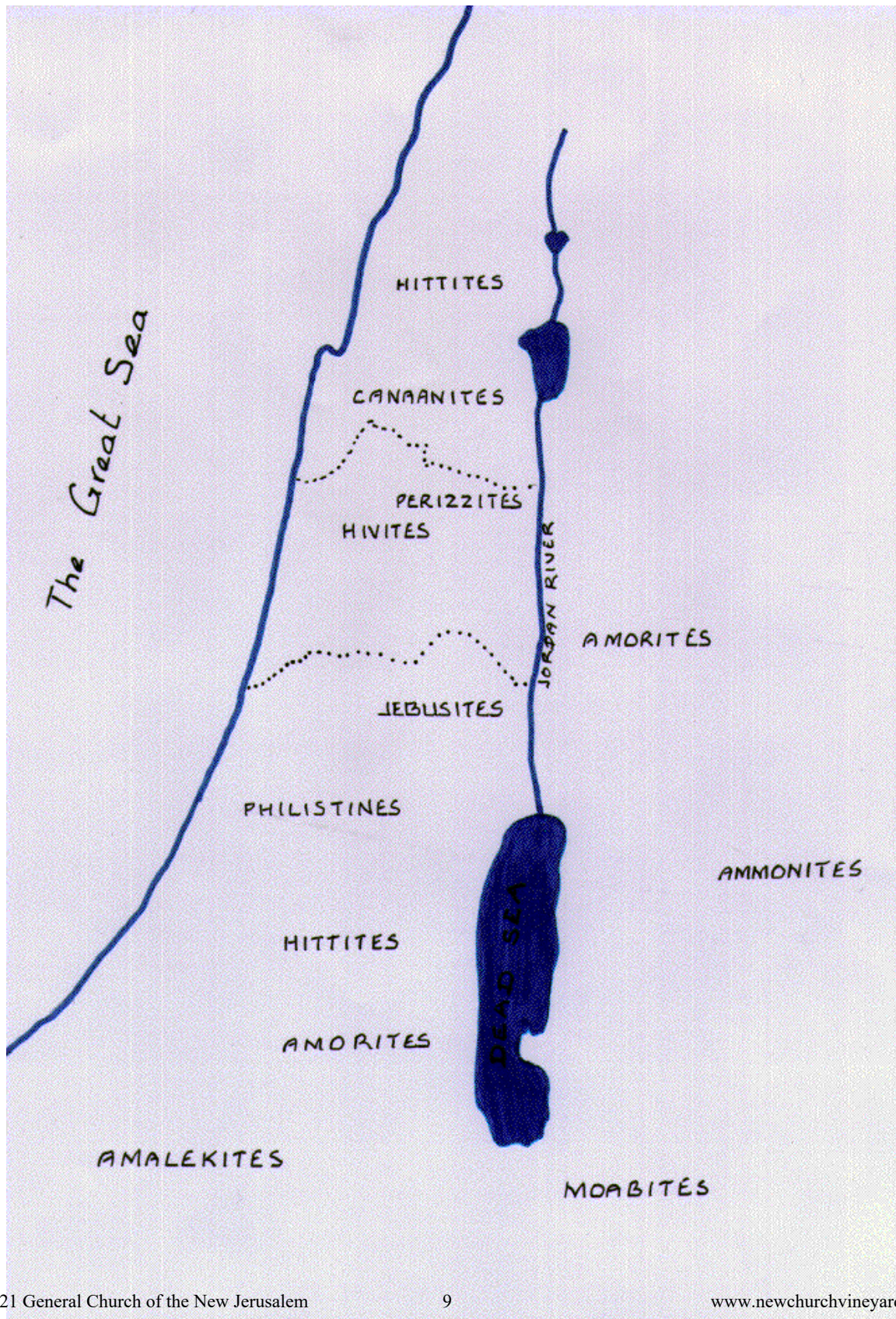
On page 3 are the puzzle pieces for the different tribes.

- 1) Carefully cut out the puzzle pieces
- 2) Practice fitting them together to make the map of the land of Canaan.
 - At first you will need to look at the map on page 2 to help you.
 - Keep practicing until you can make the puzzle without looking at the map.

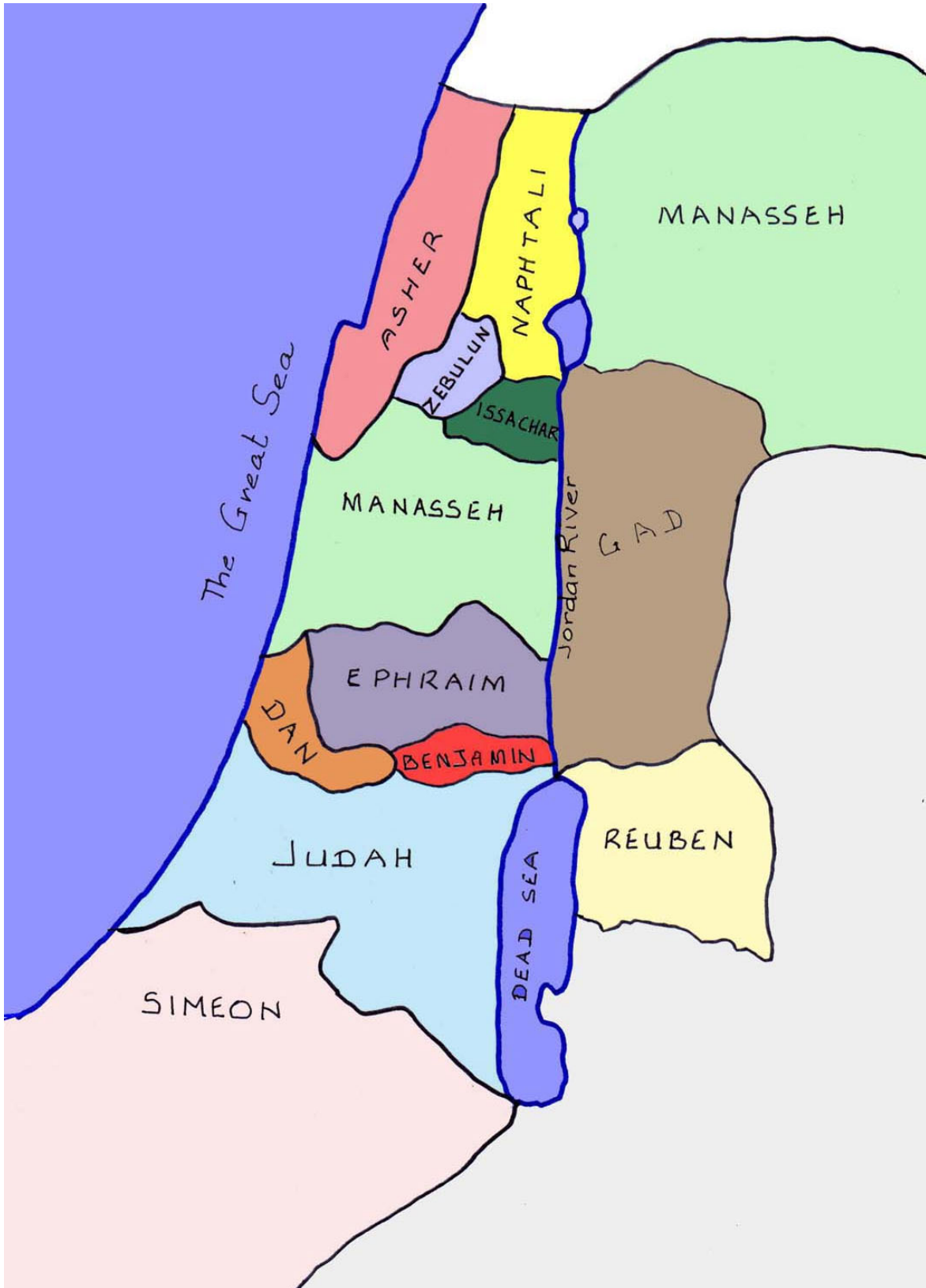
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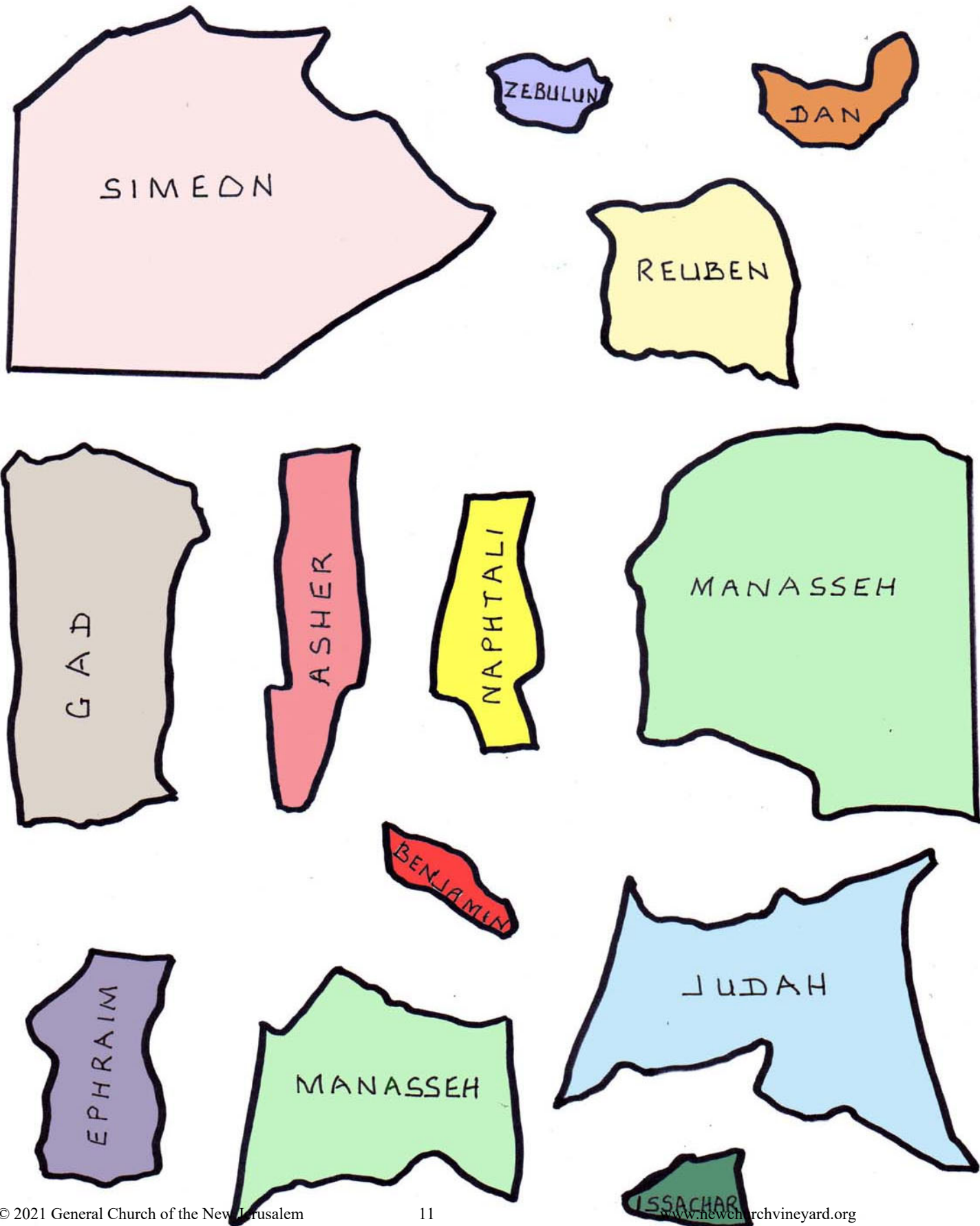
- a) *one tribe had 2 separate pieces of land? Which tribe was it? _____*
- b) *Levi was the tribe of priests. They were to serve all the people. They were not given land for their inheritance. (Levi's portion went to the two sons of Joseph—Manasseh and Ephraim). Instead they were given 48 cities scattered throughout the land.*

THE ENEMY TRIBES TRIBES LIVING IN THE LAND OF CANAAN



The Inheritance of the Tribes





The Judges of Israel
Judges 2
LEVEL 4 - ANGELS

ANGELS



There are many places in the Old and New Testaments where angels are mentioned. You may remember the times angels appear in the Christmas story, the Easter story, and in other stories in the Word you have heard or read.

But what *are* “angels”?

Your job this lesson is to find out, so begin with a dictionary, encyclopedia or both. What ideas do you find in these books? Write a short description in the space below.

Now - find the book of the Writings, *Heaven and Hell*. Look at the Table of Contents. Look through these until you find chapters describing what an angel’s body is like (in chapter 10), also an angel’s garments, homes, speech, and much more. Read some parts especially appealing to you, and then answer these questions:

1. Are angels like the dictionary definition?

2. Why not? What are they really like?

3. Where do they live, and what do they do?

4. Are they married? What are their marriages like?

5. When you, yourself, become an angel, what would you love most to do?

6. Why do you think there is there such a difference between the encyclopedia description of angels and Swedenborg's descriptions?

The Judges of Israel
Judges 2
LEVEL 5 - BACKSLIDING

BACKSLIDING

When the Lord had delivered the Children of Israel from Egypt, He made a covenant with them. A covenant is not just a promise made by one person. It is a two-way agreement. Both sides agree to behave in some way, and in return receive something from the other. Here is the Lord's covenant in His words from *Exodus* 19:5:

**“If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant,
then you will be a special treasure to Me above all people.”**

This was spoken at Mount Sinai before the giving of the Ten Commandments. The agreement was that the people would obey the Lord and keep His laws, which were about to be given, and the Lord would protect and treasure them.

This covenant is your covenant, too, if you choose to accept it. If you will obey the Lord and follow Him, He will protect and treasure you. Can you respond to His invitation to this covenant as the Israelites did?

“All that the Lord has spoken, we will do.” (*Exodus* 19:8)

THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL'S COVENANT TO FOLLOW THE LORD

The lesson we read from the Word is further along in the story of the Israelite nation. They had spent forty years wandering in the wilderness, and had conquered the land of Canaan under Joshua's leadership.

When Joshua died, they were established in the land, although many of the people who had been there before the Israelites were still there.

The next period of their history involved repeated testing of their willingness to follow the covenant. Over and over they fell away from their part of the bargain, and stopped obeying the Lord. Each time this happened, they lost the Lord's special protection.

To fight this evil and the evil of their turning away from the Lord, He sent them a “judge.” Each judge was a man or woman who exhorted them to return to the Lord, and led them into victorious battle against the enemy nation, once they had returned to Him.

YOUR COVENANT TO FOLLOW THE LORD

The message for *you* from the story of Judges is this:

Your choice to accept the Lord's covenant is not a one-time thing. The Lord knows that everyone who follows Him will be like the Israelites, and will turn away repeatedly at the temptations of the world.

The Lord promises to call up for you "judges." Your "judges" will be the power of His Word in your mind, which will help you when you turn away from Him.

Read through the book of Judges, and you will begin to think that the Israelites were very foolish to keep turning away. All they had to do to stay prosperous and in control of the land was to keep following the Lord.

Sometimes you will look back on your own life and think, "How foolish I was to do that wrong thing. All I had to do to avoid all this grief was do what was right at the beginning." Then you can remember the judges. Just turn back to the Lord. He is still there, offering the protection of His covenant.

"If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you will be a special treasure to Me above all people."

Activities

- 1) Write a story that illustrates the thoughts in the last two paragraphs above.
- 2) Write about (or discuss) something in your life/in the life of someone you know/in the life of an historical figure that illustrates those thoughts.
- 3) The quotation on the next page is for you to display in your room as a reminder that the Lord is always there for you. You may wish to frame it.



*“If you will
indeed obey My
voice and keep
My covenant,*