

THE CHURCH IN NEW YORK CITY
CHILDREN'S MEETING LESSON

LESSON #16

DATE: December 29, 2019

SUBJECT: THE TRAVELS OF THE CHOSEN CHILDREN OF ISRAEL: The Molten Calf

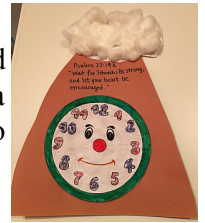
SCRIPTURE: Exodus 24:3, 12-13, 15-18; 32:1-35

AIM: To encourage the children to obey God's word and be bold to stand for the Lord, even if they are the only ones to do so.

MEMORY VERSES: Psalms 27:14a (Wait for Jehovah; Be strong, and let your heart be encouraged.); 1 John 5:21 (Little children, guard yourselves from idols.); Joshua 1:9b (... Be strong and take courage; do not be afraid or dismayed. For Jehovah your God is with you wherever you go.)

SUGGESTED SONGS: 191 (This Little Light of Mine); 192 (We are Different); 1612 (Companions); 146 (I Want the Lord to Have the First Place); 9530 *Bible Story Songs-Vessels Unto Honor Song #10* (Speak Truth); 10 (Inside Me); 9313 *BSS-Daniel Song #13* (Our God is Living); 9316 *BSS-Daniel Song #16* (What Do You Do); 1602 (Choose God); 1302 (Be Strong)

CRAFT IDEAS: To illustrate the idea that the children of Israel were impatient with God and with Moses, make a construction paper cutout of a mountain to represent Mount Sinai. Paste a construction paper cutout of a cloud or paste cotton balls at the top. Add a clock face and hands to the mountain.



BACKGROUND: In the last few lessons, we have learned how the God of Israel made Himself known to His people by giving Moses the Ten Commandments. He also revealed that He wanted a home on earth; He wanted Israel to build a tabernacle for Him to dwell in. God also told Moses He wanted priests to serve Him in His house.

NOTE TO SERVING ONES: Some details in this lesson are more appropriate for older children. Based on your fellowship and prayer, we will need to determine how much detail is appropriate for our specific age group.

CONTENT: After God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and ordinances (specific laws and practices), Moses told all these things to the people of Israel. The people all agreed to follow God's laws, saying "All the words which Jehovah has spoken, we will do, and we will be obedient." (Exo. 24:7). So God called Moses back up to Mount Sinai, where He would give Moses tablets of stone with the commandments written on them with His finger. Moses went up to the top of the mountain, which God covered with a cloud. The children of Israel, from the bottom of the mountain, saw the appearance of the glory of God like a fire. Moses stayed there for a long time with God - forty days and nights!

The children of Israel waited for Moses at the bottom of the mountain. They did not know exactly what Moses was doing there for so long, and did not know what had happened to him. In their impatience, they gathered together and demanded that Aaron, Moses' brother, make them a god (physical idol). How quickly they forgot the real God who did so much for them: saving them from slavery and death in Egypt, opening the Red Sea, miraculously providing food and water in the desert wilderness.

Aaron agreed to the people's demands, and told the people to tear off and give him their gold rings. From these, he made a calf out of molten gold using an engraving tool and told the people, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!" (Exo. 32:4) He went further and made an altar so the Israelites could sacrifice to the molten calf, and planned a feast (celebration) to "Jehovah" - although the calf was not really Jehovah! Exodus 32:6 says "the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." What a terrible perversion they had made! By making and worshipping the golden calf as they did, the Israelites already broke the first 3 commandments: they did not keep the real God as their only God; they worshipped an idol; and they dishonored God's name. We must never allow anything to take the place of God in our hearts!

From the mountain, God saw what Aaron and the Israelites had done, and told Moses that He would consume them. Moses begged God not to destroy them, reminding God of His promise that they would inherit the

promised land. God heard Moses' prayer and did not destroy all the people. However, the people would not go unpunished. When Moses went down the mountain with the two stone tablets bearing the commandments, he heard the people singing and dancing, and saw the golden calf, and he was filled with anger. He threw down the tablets and they shattered, and then he burned the idol, ground it to powder, scattered the powder in the water and made the Israelites drink it.

Moses also confronted Aaron. Instead of confessing fully to his part in this great sin, he tried to skew the truth, first by blaming the people ("Do not let the anger of my lord burn. You know the people, that they are *set* on evil" - Exo. 32:22) and second by lying. He told Moses that he threw the gold into a fire and the calf spontaneously appeared ("...I threw it into the fire, and this calf came out" - Exo. 32:24), although in actuality he had crafted the calf with an engraving tool.

After dealing with Aaron, Moses saw that the people were "without restraint" (Exo 32:25). The phrase "without restraint" has also been translated as "running wild", "out of control", "unbridled", and "naked". How shameful this was! However, he gave the people a chance to repent, calling to them, "Whoever is for Jehovah, *come* to me." (Exo 32:26). The people of his tribe, the Levites, answered Moses' call, and came to Moses. God judged the people through the Levites and about 3000 men were killed that day. This shows how severe God's judgment was on idolatry!

SUGGESTED APPLICATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM: *Please do not try to cover all the applications. Just one or two may be sufficient depending on your particular age group.*

- **We should listen to our conscience.** When Moses asked Aaron what he had done, Aaron answered by lying rather than taking responsibility for his actions. Sometimes we may try to cover up the truth or tell a white lie so that we don't get into trouble. But one lie will often lead to others. Sometimes we may accuse others in order to avoid punishment. But we should learn to follow our conscience. The more we pay attention to our conscience, the more sensitive our conscience will become.
- **We need to learn to be patient.** The children of Israel got into this terrible situation because they became impatient with Moses and with God. We need to realize that we do not always get exactly what we want when we want it. We should learn to wait our turn when getting snacks, playing games, talking to our parents and teachers. We should not run and cut when people are lining up. Sometimes we may have some bigger life situations that we hope would change. We need to wait on God and trust that His timing is always the best.
- **We should stand for the Lord with our companions.** Out of all of the children of Israel, only the tribe of Levi answered Moses' call and stood on the Lord's side. Because of their stand, they were rewarded with the priesthood. When we stand for the Lord, we will be blessed and rewarded by Him. To stand for the Lord when no one else does can seem difficult, but we should remember that God is with us. That is why it is good to have companions in the Lord so that we can stand together for Him.
- **We should give the Lord the first place.** God hates idols. The second commandment is "You shall not make for yourself an idol" (Exo. 20:4). Even after the Lord had done so much for His people, it seemed they so easily turned from Him to worship an idol. We might think that what the children of Israel did was unbelievable, but we also can easily forget the Lord and worship other things. For example, we may value outward possessions like our phone/electronic device, clothes, or other fancy items (maybe that our friends have) over the Lord. Often we choose to play games or watch TV rather than spend time memorizing our verses or preparing for the meeting. In the meeting we may pay more attention to our new clothes or a toy we stuck into our meeting bag than to the lesson. These things may not be bad but whenever they occupy too much of our time and energy, they become idols. We must guard our hearts from things that take the place of the Lord.
- **We should not take God's commandments for granted.** The Lord loves us very much, but He will punish us (through our parents and/or other authorities) whenever we disobey His commandments in order to teach us to be obedient, good and moral citizens in the world. Choices have consequences. We should pray to the Lord before making our choices. Let the word of God be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path (Psalm 119:105).