THE CHURCH IN NEW YORK CITY

**CHILDREN’S MEETING LESSON**

**LESSON #20**

**DATE:** February 2, 2020

**SUBJECT: THE TRAVELS OF THE CHOSEN CHILDREN OF ISRAEL: The Waters of Meribah and the Death of Aaron**

**SCRIPTURE:** Numbers 20:1-13, 22-29; Deuteronomy 1:37, 6:16, 32:50-52; Exodus 17:7

**AIM:** To see the importance of listening carefully to the Lord’s commandments and controlling our temper and to see the consequences of disobeying and losing self-control.

**MEMORY VERSES TO CHOOSE FROM:** 2 Timothy 2:24a (But a slave of the Lord ought not to contend but be gentle toward all …); Ephesians 4:31 (Let all bitterness and anger and wrath and clamor and evil speaking be removed from you, with all malice.); Galatians 6:7 (Do not be deceived: God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.); Ephesians 4:26 (Be angry, yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your indignation,); Proverbs 29:11 (A fool utters all his anger, But a wise man holds it back.)

**SUGGESTED SONGS:** 146 (I Want the Lord to Have the First Place in My Heart); 9213 *Bible Story Songs David Song #13* (For the Lord Sees Not as Man Sees); 9521 *BSS Vessels Unto Honor Song #1* (Vessel, I am a Vessel!); 8308 *BSS-Moses Vol.2 Song #8* (Do all things without murmuring); 9522 *BSS Vessels Unto Honor Song #2* (Everything We Do and Say); 9532 *BSS Vessels Unto Honor Song #12* (I’ll Guard my Tongue); 52 (God is Always Near Me); 54 (God Knows Everything); 2810 (God Hears and Answers); 65 (God’s Word); 4605 *BSS Matthew Vol.1 Song #26* (Mom Told Me to Clean My Room)

**CRAFT IDEAS:** (1) God wants us to hear and obey him. To reinforce this idea, we can make a string phone by connecting two paper cups or clean aluminum cans with several feet of string. The children can decorate the cups with tape, stickers, etc. (2) Decorate a small rock using paint, glitter glue, googly eyes etc. 

**APPROACH:** Ask the children: Have you ever gotten very angry? What did you do when you got angry? Some children may shout, kick the table, or slam the door. We need to be careful when we disagree with other people and when we feel angry.

**BACKGROUND:** In the prior lesson, we heard about two separate rebellions, one by Moses’ older siblings, Miriam and Aaron, and another by a group led by Korah. God severely judged those who rebelled. In today’s lesson, the children of Israel have now come to Zin, a wilderness south of Canaan.

**CONTENT:** The children of Israel were traveling in the wilderness and came to a place called Meribah. In that place, there was a shortage of water. This was a big problem for the children of Israel and their livestock. So they gathered together against Moses and Aaron and contended [argued strongly] with Moses saying, “If only we had expired [died] when our brothers expired before Jehovah! Why then have you brought the congregation of Jehovah into this wilderness for us and our livestock to die there? Why then did you bring us up out of Egypt, to bring us to this wretched place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, and there is not even water to drink.”

Moses and Aaron were in a difficult situation. They prayed to God, and God spoke to Moses, saying, “Take the rod, and gather the assembly, you and Aaron your brother, and **speak to the rock** before their eyes, so that it yields its water. Thus you shall bring forth water for them out of the rock and give the assembly and their livestock a drink.” You may remember from an earlier lesson that once previously (Exodus 17:1-7) when the children of Israel need water, God told Moses to strike the rock, and water flowed out. However, this time, God did not tell Moses to strike the rock, but to speak to it!

Moses took the rod as Jehovah had commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the people together before the rock, and he said to them, “Listen now, you rebels: Shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?” From his words and attitude, it is clear that Moses was speaking to the children of Israel out of his impatience and anger. Then Moses **struck the rock with his rod twice**; and abundant water came forth, and the assembly and their livestock drank. Jehovah provided for the children of Israel!

However, Jehovah was not happy with Moses’ words and actions. God had instructed Moses to speak to the rock. But in his anger, Moses called the children of Israel “rebels” and instead of speaking to the rock, he struck the rock twice with a rod. So Jehovah said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe in Me, to sanctify Me in the sight of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.” The waters were called the waters of Meribah, which means *contention*. Jehovah was so unhappy with Moses and Aaron that they both lost the privilege of bringing the children of Israel into Canaan! What a disappointment this must have been to them.

**The Death of Aaron (Num. 20:23-29)** The Bible tells us that Aaron died a short time later on Mount Hor, and that Eleazar his son became the high priest in his place. The children of Israel wept (mourned) for Aaron for thirty days. Although Moses lived longer, and continued to lead the children of Israel through the wilderness for many years, he also died without entering the promised land (Deut. 32:50-52).

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

* **We should not be contentious persons.** (2 Timothy 2:24a). The children of Israel argued strongly with Moses and Aaron. A contentious person is one who tends to argue and quarrel with others. When we disagree with others, or if others have offended us, we must learn to talk to them calmly, without arguing or fighting.
* **We should learn to exercise self-control over our temper.** (Ephesians 4:31) Even though Moses was in a difficult situation, he should not have called the children of Israel “rebels” nor struck the rock out of anger. His outburst of anger had severe consequences for him and his brother, Aaron. We should learn to control our anger. When we get angry with others or throw tantrums, we may say or do things that we will regret later, like calling others hurtful names, or saying things we don’t mean. We can pray to the Lord to help us control our temper and behavior.
* **We should listen carefully to God’s commandments and obey Him.** From the recent stories we have heard, we can see that how we behave and how we conduct ourselves before God has consequences (Galatians 6:7). God gave Moses specific instruction to speak to the rock. Instead, Moses struck the rock twice in anger. God in His mercy still allowed the water to come out. However, what we consider to be a small thing might actually matter a great deal to God. Our obedience or disobedience to specific instructions given to us by God (or by others in authority) has consequences (sometimes quite severe).
* **If we are put in charge, we need to be careful how we treat others.** Perhaps our parents put us in charge of our younger siblings while they are in another room taking a phone call, or our teachers put us as line leader to lead the class in the hallway. We need to be careful how we act and behave, follow the instructions carefully, and treat others appropriately.
* **We should be exact.** Jehovah gave specific instructions to Moses and Aaron to speak to the rock, which were different instructions than the previous time when He instructed them to strike the rock. Our God is exact in His words and instructions. We should be exact in carrying out instructions for our homework, projects, chores, assignments and responsibilities. Sometimes we think we have a better way, or more creative way, but we need to follow instructions carefully and thoroughly.

Adapted from the Church in New York City Children’s Meeting lessons: 12/04/88; 2/11/96; 2/8/04; 2/14/2010; 2/8/15