

THE CHURCH IN NEW YORK CITY CHILDREN'S MEETING LESSON

DATE: February 8, 2015

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; 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 BSS David ("For the Lord Sees Not as Man Sees"); 9521 BSS Vessels Unto Honor ("V-v-v-vessel!"); 8308 BSS Moses Vol. 2 ("Do all things without murmuring"); 9522 BSS Vessels Unto Honor ("Everything We Do and Say"); 9532 BSS Vessels Unto Honor ("I'll Guard my Tongue")

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

CONTENT:

The Waters at Meribah (Numbers 20:2-13). As the children of Israel were traveling in the wilderness, 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 left the people and went to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and fell upon their faces, and the glory of Jehovah appeared to them. Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, "Take the rod, and gather the assembly, you and Aaron your brother, and **speaking 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." 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?" Then Moses lifted up his hand and **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 that Moses lost the privilege of bringing the children of Israel into Canaan! What a disappointment this must have been to him.

The Result of Aaron’s Failure (Numbers 20:23-29). Then Jehovah spoke to Moses and to Aaron at Mount Hor, on the border of the land of Edom, saying, “Aaron shall be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter into the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you rebelled against My word at the waters of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up Mount Hor; And strip Aaron of his garments and put them upon Eleazar his son; so Aaron will be gathered to his people, and will die there.” So Moses did just as Jehovah had commanded, and they went up Mount Hor as all the people were looking. And when Moses had stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son, Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. And when all the people of Israel saw that Aaron had died, they wept for Aaron thirty days.

SUGGESTED APPLICATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM:

- **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 later on we will regret, like calling others hurtful names, or saying things we don’t mean. We can pray to the Lord to help us control our temper.
- **We should listen carefully to God’s commandments and obey Him.** (Galatians 6:7)
 - From the recent stories that we have heard, we can see that how we behave and how we conduct ourselves before God has consequences.
 - God gave Moses specific instruction to speak to the rock. Instead, Moses struck the rock twice in anger. The end result was that water came out anyway. But what we might consider to be an insignificant difference might matter a great deal to God. How we respond (obey or disobey) to specific instructions given to us by God (or by others in authority) has consequences (sometimes quite severe).
 - If we continually disobey and rebel, the Lord will judge us. On the other hand, when we stand for the Lord, follow His commandments, obey our teachers and our parents, the Lord will bless us.
 - We should always believe the Lord and give Him the glory in everything He commands us to do. This way, we will sanctify Him in the sight/eyes of our friends, neighbors, teachers and parents and can be a proper testimony to those around us.
 - 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, and treat others appropriately.

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