#### Lesson 5:

#### Moses Strikes the Rock/Bronze Serpent

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE:

Numbers 20; 21:4-9; 27:14

MEMORY WORK:

Joshua 1:9

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

I am responsible for every choice I make, whether good or bad. I must accept the consequences of bad choices.

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| **LESSON STARTS HERE** |

INTRODUCTION:

Do you know what it means to complain or gripe? Do you complain or whine when things don’t go your way? God’s people, the Israelites, complained a lot to Moses and about Moses. Today we’re going to talk about one of those times, and what Moses did about it.

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. As the Israelites moved from one place to another in the wilderness, it was sometimes very hard to find enough water for so many people. [Remember that there were probably **two to three million** Israelites traveling together.] Whenever things didn’t go just right, the Israelites grumbled and complained, and told Moses they wanted to go back to Egypt. At a place in the wilderness called Meribah, they grumbled because they didn’t have enough water. They had complained about no water at a different place named Meribah before (Exodus 17; see also Deuteronomy 32:51 and Numbers 27:14).
2. Every time the people complained, Moses and Aaron (the High Priest) went to the Tabernacle and prayed, asking God to help them handle the problem. God always told them what they should do. This time, He told Moses to hold his staff over a certain rock and speak to the rock. He promised that water would again come from the rock.
3. The first time that God had brought water from a rock, He told Moses to hit the rock, but not

this time.

1. So Moses and Aaron gathered all the people together around the rock and told them that God would provide water for them, even though they complained all the time and were so ungrateful. But when Moses lifted the staff over the rock, he was so angry with the people that he hit the rock instead of speaking to it. Seemingly in his anger, Moses does not direct the people’s attention to the power of God, but instead says, “Must **we** bring water for you out of this rock?” as though the power was their’s rather than God’s.
2. God caused water to come from the rock, just as He said He would—more than enough water for all the people and their animals. But God was not happy with Moses because Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to it. Moses disobeyed God in what may seem like a small way, but he was showing disrespect to God in front of all the Israelites. Moses did not have the right to disobey God’s instruction, no matter what the people did or how mad he was at the time.
3. God said that Moses would have to pay the consequences for his bad choice. As punishment, Moses would not be allowed to go into Canaan, the Promised Land, after all the years he had worked with the troublesome people of Israel. God said that Aaron would not be allowed to go into Canaan either because he also had showed a lack of faith.
4. God told Moses to take Aaron and his son Eleazar to the top of Mount Hor, along the border of the land of Edom. The three men went to the top of the mountain; Moses took Aaron’s high priest clothes from him and gave them to Eleazar. This showed all the Israelites that Eleazar was now their High Priest in Aaron’s place. Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain, but Aaron died there.
5. The Israelites were at Mount Hor for over a month and then started moving northward. But the Israelites complained again, saying they were tired of the food God provided every day, and tired of not having enough water. To punish them for complaining, God sent poisonous, venomous snakes all through the camp. Many people died from snakebites.
6. The people were terrified and asked Moses to talk to God for them, to beg Him to take away the snakes. God told Moses to make a snake out of bronze and put it on a pole; if the people looked at the snake on the pole, they would live, even after they had been bitten. There was nothing magical about this bronze snake; the people lived if they **believed** God’s words and **obeyed** Him.

**NOTE:** Some translations mistakenly translate the word “bronze” as “brass,” but brass was not known at that time in history. A better rendering would be “bronze” or perhaps, “copper.”

**HISTORICAL NOTE:** In later years, the Israelites worshipped the metal snake on the pole as an idol, and King Hezekiah had it broken in pieces (2 Kings 18:4).

1. Moses may not have intended to lose his temper or disobey God at the rock, but he did. He had to bear the consequences of his actions and accept the punishment. The Israelites made a bad choice by complaining continually, and they also had to accept the consequences of their actions and words when the snakes came into the camp and bit them. Whether I make wrong choices on purpose or not, I will also have to take full responsibility for what I choose to do, and bear the consequences for my bad choices.

YOUNGER CHILDREN: You may want to save the portion of the lesson about the bronze snake until Wednesday night.

RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL VISUALS (note disclaimers):

##### Betty Lukens’ felt pieces. Lessons 44 and 45 in the Betty Lukens manual.

* ABeka Flash-a-Card Series (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, not the lesson book;)
* Free Bible Images – Saved on flash drive. Can be presented on classroom tv. Script included in lesson file. File will be labeled “05” in the Visuals folder.
* A spray painted rubber snake on a pole can be made.
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SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS:

### SUNDAY

LEARNING CENTERS AND ACTIVITIES:

* Help children make small Play-doh snakes and wrap them around circular craft sticks. If you would like to do a take home craft, use Crayola Air-Dray clay instead of play-doh.

### WEDNESDAY NIGHT

INTRODUCTION:

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. Review Sunday’s lesson. briefly (See [Review Questions](http://www.apcurriculum.com/dcirfol/4-24-32RQ.pdf) for example questions.)

LEARNING CENTERS AND ACTIVITIES:

* Hide die-cut or small plastic snakes around the classroom. Let the children go on a “snake hunt.” You might want to ask them review questions about this and/or previous lessons before allowing them to look for a snake.
* Use laminated die-cut shapes of relevant objects, such as a grape cluster, stone tablets, a snake, a rock, etc. Put the shapes in a basket or bag; let kids draw out one shape and tell the significance of that object to recent Bible stories.
* Moses & the Bronze Snake Review Sheet – Master copy is in lesson file

### Review Questions

1. What did Moses call the place where the Israelites were when they started complaining about not having enough water?
   1. Meribah
2. What did God tell Moses to do to a certain rock?
   1. Speak to it
3. What did Moses do to the rock?
   1. He struck the rock instead of talking to it.
4. Did water still flow from the rock?
   1. Yes
5. What was Moses’ punishment for disobeying God?
   1. He would not be allowed to go into the Promised Land.
6. Was Aaron allowed to go into the Promised Land?
   1. No
7. Who became the High Priest?
   1. Aaron’s son, Eleazar
8. When the Israelites complained, again, about not having enough water, what did God send?
   1. Poisonous snakes
9. What did God have Moses set up in the camp?
   1. A bronze serpent
10. What would happen if the Israelites looked at the snake?
    1. They would be healed if they has been bitten by the snakes.

Additional Notes / Activities Performed & Curriculum Feed Back

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