

**12.30 Water at Meribah (Numbers 20:1–13; 27:14; Deuteronomy 8:15; Psalm 106:32, 33; 78:15, 16, 20; 105:41–43; 114:7, 8; Isaiah 48:21; 1 Corinthians 10:1–4)**

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud. It also indicates answers to questions.

**Visuals and Tools:**

- “Life of Moses” Series 3 Flash-a-Cards from A Beka Book and/or pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional needed materials.
- Any old rock
- Nancy Ganz’s treatment of this story is excellent in *Numbers: A Commentary for Children*, published by Shepherd Press, 2006. Ideas or quotes from this source will be noted by (Ganz).

**Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach:** Tips and terms are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *to hallow*: to make holy
- *holy*: set apart for God
- *Meribah*: place of strife and arguing

**Scripture: (ESV)**

Numbers 20:1 And the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh. And Miriam died there and was buried there.

2 Now there was no water for the congregation. And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. 3 And the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Would that we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord! 4 Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle? 5 And why have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place? It is no place for grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink.” 6 Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them, 7 and the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 8 “Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle.” 9 And Moses took the staff from before the Lord, as he commanded him.

10 Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?” 11 And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock. 12 And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.” 13 These are the waters of Meribah, where the people of Israel quarreled with the Lord, and through them he showed himself holy.

27:14 because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin when the congregation quarreled, failing to uphold me as holy at the waters before their eyes.” (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.)

Deuteronomy 8:15 He led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its . . . thirsty ground where there was no water; He brought water for you out of the rock of flint.

Psalm 106:32 They angered him at the waters of Meribah, and it went ill with Moses on their account, 33

for they made his spirit bitter, and he spoke rashly with his lips.

78:15 He split the rocks in the wilderness And gave them abundant drink like the ocean depths. 16 He brought forth streams also from the rock 20 And caused waters to run down like rivers. Behold, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out, And streams were overflowing;

105:41 He opened the rock and water flowed out; It ran in the dry places like a river. 42 For He remembered His holy word With Abraham His servant; 43 And He brought forth His people with joy, His chosen ones with a joyful shout.

114:7 Tremble, O earth, before the Lord, Before the God of Jacob, 8 Who turned the rock into a pool of water, The flint into a fountain of water.

Isaiah 48:21 They did not thirst when He led them through the deserts. He made the water flow out of the rock for them; He split the rock and the water gushed forth.

1 Corinthians 10:1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 and all ate the same spiritual food; 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.

### **Introduction/Review:**

After Korah, Dathan, and Abiram tried to take over leadership of Israel, God reviewed His instructions regarding Levites, Aaron, and his sons:

1. The only tribe who could serve in matters of the tabernacle was the tribe of Levi—Levites.
2. Only Aaron's sons could be priests.
3. Certain offerings could be eaten by Levites.
4. Tithes from the other tribes were to support Levites.
5. Levites would have no inheritance in the land. God said, "I am your inheritance."

When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were swallowed up by the earth, the people feared for their own lives but not for long.

What have we seen the Israelites do when they have had a problem? [Complain, threaten, and rebel against Moses and Aaron—basically against God.]

If you had been one of the people of Israel out in the desert with only manna for food and thirsty much of the time, what attitude do you hope you would have had? Probably it would have been a desire to live as God wanted you to live.

But we have struggles right here and now. What are our attitude and actions when things don't go our way? Sadly, we are often like the Israelites—we complain. One day when those who know the Lord go to Heaven, they will be done with complaining. Until then, we have to fight against ourselves. "The flesh fights against the spirit" (Galatians 5:17).

### **Story:**

#### ***The problem of complaining***

Now let's imagine that we are part of Israel. There really is no more water; our animals are bawling; our children are whining; our own throats are dry. We are truly thirsty, and there is absolutely no water available. What would be the right thing to do? It would be to approach Moses and to suggest praying to God for water.

One would think the Israelites had learned that God always provides. Surely they would look to Him in prayer after all their experiences of God's care for them. But, no, they didn't look to Him in prayer.

Surely, after reading about all the examples of care that we have read and studied, we would look to God in

prayer and not complain in our times of trouble. But, no, we do complain.

### ***Miriam's death***

Well, in our story today we will hear about more complaining, but first we have a bit of sad news. We have an obituary, the notice of a death, in the Bible. Miriam, Moses' sister, who had been a faithful woman of Israel (except for one incident), died. ✓She was about 125 years old, about 7 years older than Moses.

### ***No water***

✓It was the spring of the year. Israel had arrived at Kadesh, the same place from which they had sent spies to search out the land. They were so close to the Promised Land! But they had no water. [Sarcastically or with a voice that is obviously lying.] So they went to God in prayer and asked Him to supply for their needs once again? No! They contended with Moses and Aaron again. Listen to what they said this time:

### ***The complaint***

"If only we had died when our brothers died before the Lord!" Oh? They wish they had been swallowed up to suffocate in a big sink hole? Or they wanted to have been burned up by fire from the Lord? Maybe they wanted to have died by the plague that killed the ten unbelieving spies. When God has given life, what a foolish thing is it to wish for death.

The complaint continued: "Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle?" Say there, Israelites. Are you forgetting that you might have had your own farm in the promised land almost forty years ago, but you didn't trust God to fight against the people of the land?

Listen as the Israelites speak again: "And why have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place? It is no place for grain or figs or vines or pomegranates." Did God say the wilderness was a place for grain (what was manna, by the way?) or vines or pomegranates?

"There is no water to drink." Now, that was a problem, but God had remedied the same problem at least two times before. Remember when they first started out from Egypt and had no water? How had God provided for their thirst? [Sweetened the water at Marah; caused water to come out of the rock Moses struck in Rephidim.]

### ***God's instructions***

As this grumbling increased, Moses and Aaron left the congregation and went to the entrance of the tent of meeting. They did what they usually did when the people quarreled with them. They — [wait for students to say, "Fell on their faces."]

This time when the glory of the Lord appeared to them, God answered Moses, not with, "Get out of the way so that I may destroy this people," but with a very gentle instruction: "Take your staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and *tell* the rock before them to yield its water. That's how you will bring water out of the rock for the congregation and their cattle. Just talk to the rock."

What did God say to do? [Speak to the rock—tell the rock to give water.] Yes, you heard correctly. God could do this, of course.

I've brought a little rock here today. I think I will tell it to give me a teaspoon of water. "Please give me a teaspoon of water." What? Nothing happened. Can people ordinarily talk to a rock and get water from it? No, but God can do anything!

### ***The sin of Aaron and Moses***

God was not angry in His response this time, but Aaron and Moses were angry. The Bible doesn't inform us of the conversation Aaron and Moses had as they gathered the congregation and proceeded to the rock. ✓I imagine Aaron was stoking the anger fire under Moses by saying, "This complaining is certainly getting to

me. I am so tired of these people. Will they ever learn?!”

✓Perhaps, Moses, the meekest man on earth—the one who always quietly submitted to the will of God—was also tired to death of bearing with these people.<sup>1</sup> Well, for sure he blew it this time. Oh, he obeyed by gathering the congregation near the rock. He obeyed by taking his staff. But he did *not* obey by speaking to the rock. Instead, he struck it two times, shouting, “Listen, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?”

“We”? Who did Moses think he was to say, “We shall get water out of this rock”?

### ***God’s provision***

Despite Moses’ disobedience, water flowed abundantly from the rock, enough water for all the people and all their animals. Psalm 78:15, 16, and 20 states, “He split the rocks in the wilderness And gave them abundant drink like the *ocean depths*. He brought forth *streams* also from the rock And caused waters to run down like *rivers*. Behold, He struck the rock so that *waters gushed out*, And *streams were overflowing*” [emphasis added]. That is a lot of water! What a good God!

### ***God’s punishment***

But God was displeased with Moses and Aaron. Why? Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses had hit the rock. In fact, he had hit it twice and had claimed he had gotten the water. He had disobeyed God.<sup>2</sup> Although God gave water, He also gave out consequences for this sin: Moses and Aaron would not enter the promised land, the land flowing with milk and honey. They would die before the Israelites entered the land. How disappointing!

Why was this act of Moses worthy of so serious a punishment? God answered this question: “Because you did not believe in me, *to uphold me as holy* (set apart) in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them” [emphasis added].<sup>3</sup> Did the people see God’s holiness or did they see God’s wrath when Moses shouted and struck the rock? [His wrath.] God had wanted His holiness to be seen by having Moses merely speak to the rock.

### ***The rock’s type***

That rock was to be a symbol of Jesus Christ, for 1 Corinthians 10:4 states, “[Our fathers] were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.” Jesus, like the first rock Moses struck, was struck at Calvary by dying for our sins. He does not need to be struck again. Now believers honor His holiness by merely speaking to Him as they pray and trust Him. Moses and Aaron had destroyed God’s symbol for Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup>“Moses, fed up with the people, perhaps eager to get into the Promised Land, had just had it. Psalm 106:33 states, ‘[The people] made his spirit bitter, and he spoke rashly with his lips’” (Ganz).

<sup>2</sup>God required exact and complete obedience, especially of His leaders (Numbers 27:14). “This was to be something new, a different miracle, a wonder never seen on the earth. When has a man ever spoken to a rock—and the rock listened to him? . . . But that unique miracle never happened, because of Moses’ and Aaron’s disobedience. It would forever be the miracle missing from the earth, because they had not obeyed God” (Ganz).

<sup>3</sup>“The LORD’s command to speak to the rock that day was a perfect command, issuing from the perfection of His Goodness, His Justice, His Righteousness—and His Holiness! How dare Moses and Aaron tamper with that command, as if they could improve upon that perfection!” (Ganz).

### **Lessons from this lesson:**

- We see Jesus:

Jesus Christ was struck on the cross. He was smitten so that He could give life to His own. Does He need to be struck again? No. He died once; there is no more offering for sin (Hebrews 10:18). He now intercedes for us as we pray.

- Parents expect the older children of a family to be an example to the younger. So, too, the Lord commands his leaders—pastors and teachers—not to be angry. This is difficult but so very important for all Christians.
- God punished the sins of the people; He punished the leaders for their sins as well.

### Activities:

- Play dough: rock; staff
- Snack: Edible rocks. A recipe is found at this site: <https://hungryhappenings.com/my-dad-rocks-edible-fudge-rocks-for/>. At <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nb1SCRHmkI0> a video demonstrates a similar recipe for a smaller batch.
- Sword drill: Theme: The Lord our Rock. For team tokens use rocks cut out of flannel, felt, or flocked scraps to be placed on a flannel board or use real stones to be placed in containers. 2 Samuel 22:2; Psalm 61:2; 89:26; 94:22; 95:1; Isaiah 17:10; Psalm 62:7
- Sing songs about Jesus' being a Rock: "A Shelter in the Time of Storm," "The Solid Rock," "Rock of Ages," *etc.*
- Review questions: (Game: As with the Sword drill, place rocks/stones into a container or place felt rocks on a flannel board for each correct answer.)
  1. In today's story, who died? [Miriam.]
  2. What was the main complaint of the people at Meribah? [No water; also that Moses was not fulfilling God's promise of a good land.]
  3. What did God say to do in order to provide water for the people? [Speak to the rock.]
  4. What did Moses do at the rock? [Hit it twice and said, "Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?"]
  5. Why did God punish Moses and Aaron? ["Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel."]
  6. What was the punishment for Moses and Aaron? [They could not bring the assembly into the land.]
  7. What happened regarding the water? [God gave lots of water.]
  8. List one description of the water found in Psalm 78. The water was like \_\_\_\_\_. [Like ocean depths; like flowing river; like overflowing streams; it gushed out.]
  9. The rock was a symbol or type of whom? [Jesus.]
  10. How was the stricken rock like Christ? How was the spoken-to rock like Christ? [He was stricken by His death on the cross. Now believers speak to God in prayer and show Him to be holy.]

### Memory Verse[s]:

- Exodus 20:1–17. An enlarged copy of the words, the "Exodus 20:1–17" song sheet, and motions are in Lesson 12.15 or on the "Lessons" and "Songs" pages at [teachingthebibletochildren.org](http://teachingthebibletochildren.org). "Stop! It's the Law," a song that teaches only the basic Ten Commandments, is found on the same "Songs" page.

### Handwork:

- Color the coloring page found at the end of this lesson.
- Or color the line drawing that does not have Moses' arm, and color the separate arm with Moses' rod. Cut out the arm with the rod and attach to the drawing at the shoulder dots with a sewing snap so that the rod can hit the rock.

to hallow

holy

Meribah





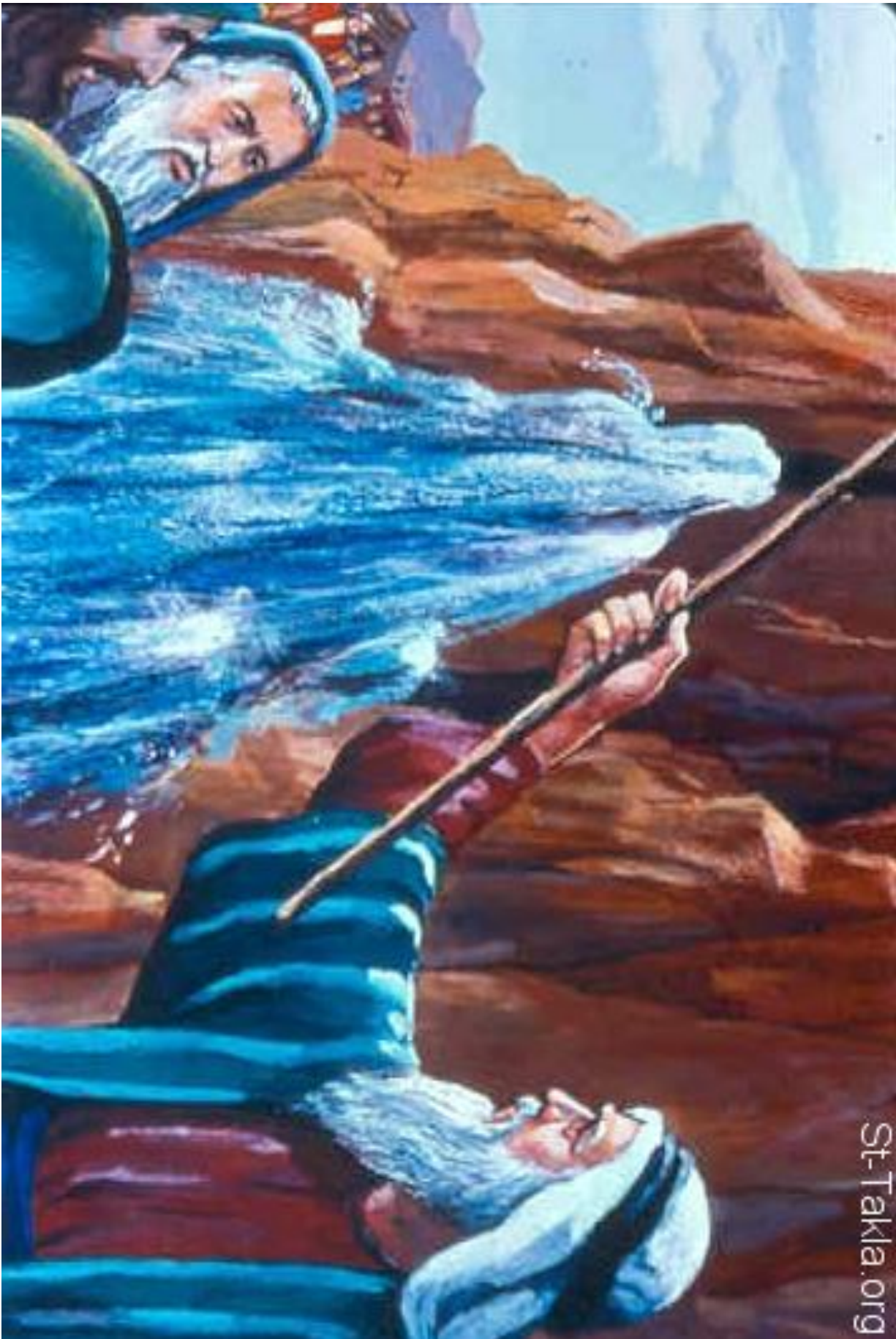




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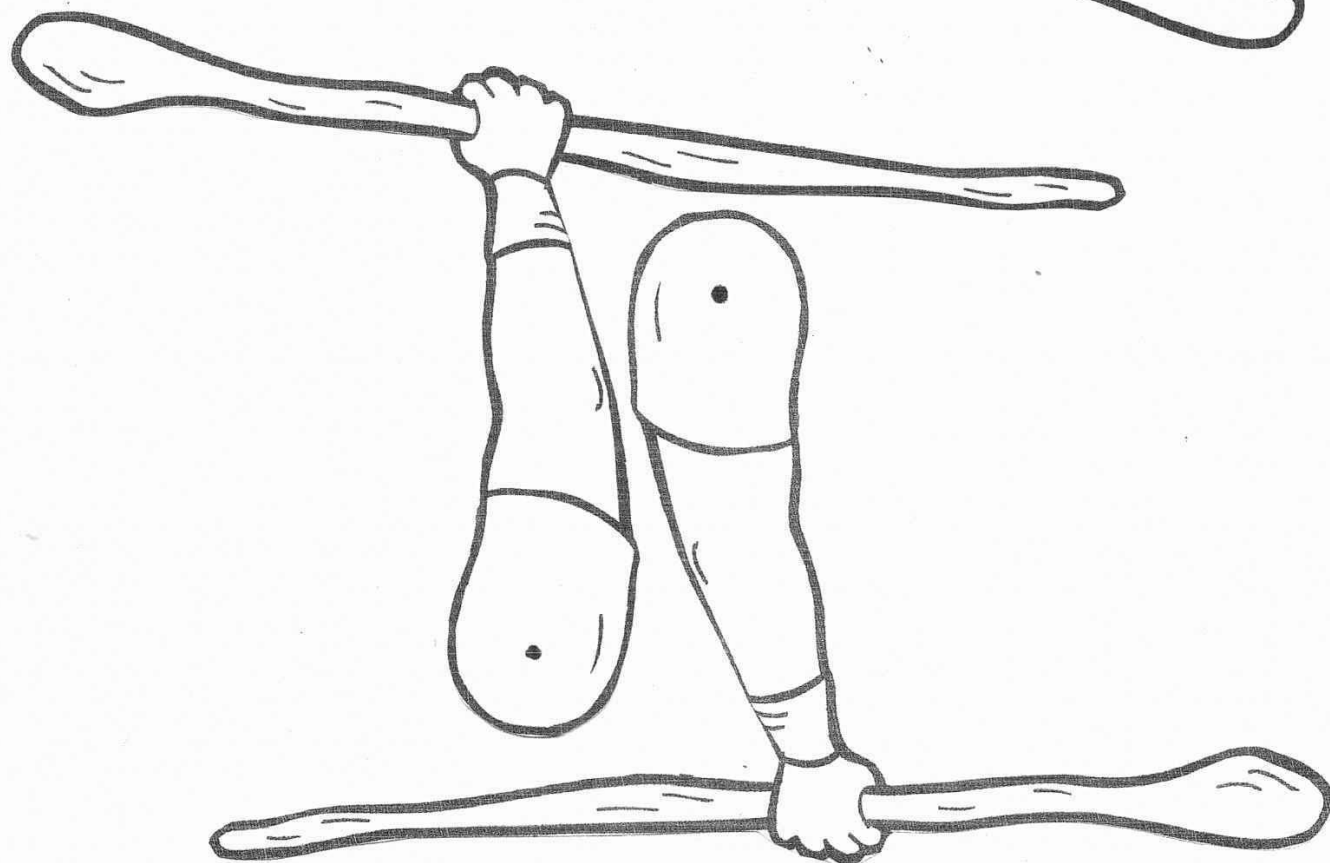
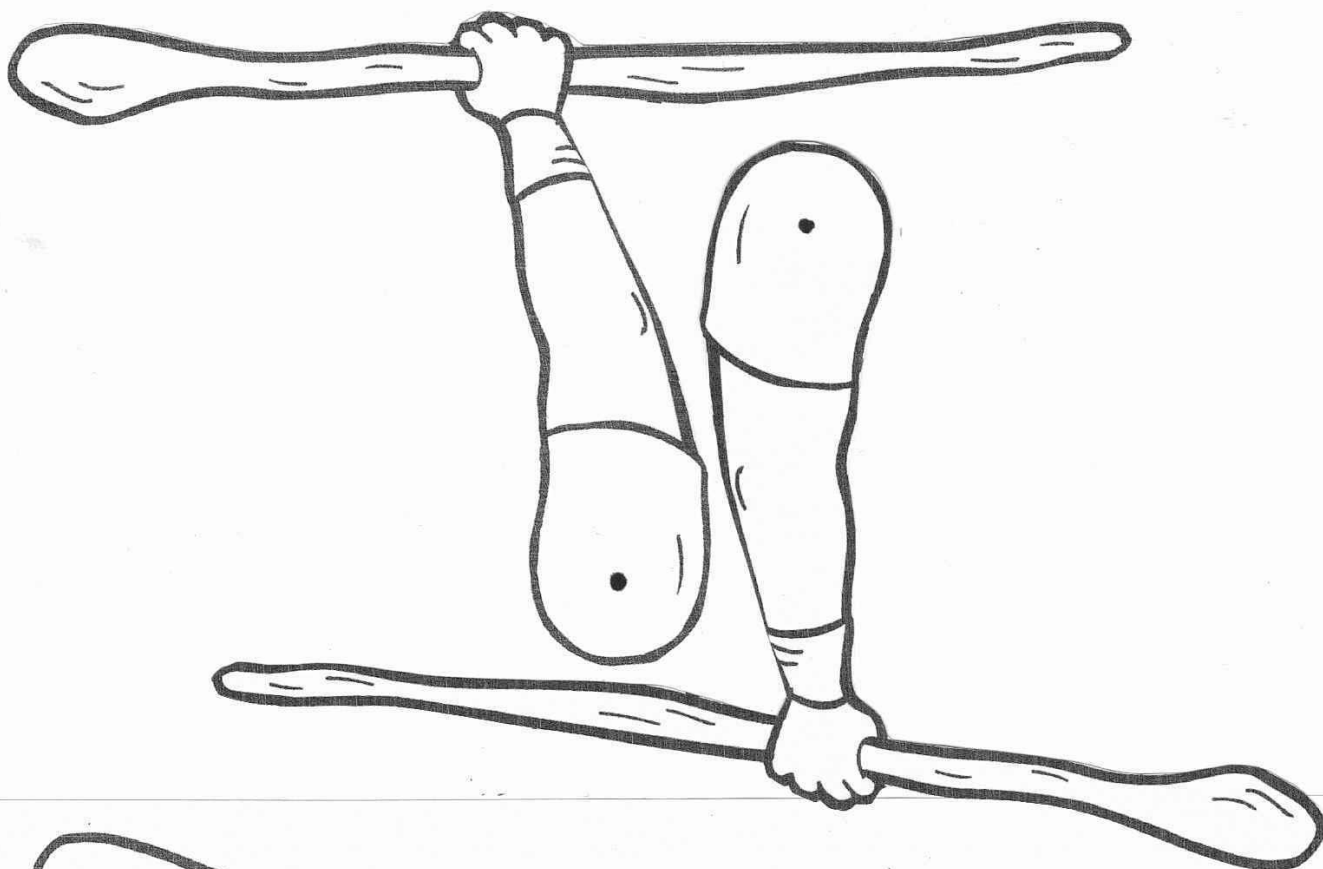




**God provides water from a rock.**

Numbers 20:1-13





**God provides water from a rock.**

Numbers 20:1-13

