

### 12.33 Serpent of Bronze (Numbers 21:4–9; Deuteronomy 2:4–9; 2 Kings 18:4; John 3:14, 15; 1 Corinthians 10:9–13)

✓ “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.
- Something made of bronze
- 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.

- *bronze*: one of the earliest metals known to man; said to be first used first used around 3500 B.C.; an alloy of copper and tin; it is harder, more expensive, and more corrosion-resistant than brass
- *brass*: first used around 300 B.C.; an alloy of copper and zinc. Why does the KJV use the term *brass* and more modern translations use the term *bronze*? A short answer is that although bronze is an older alloy than brass, the term *brass* is older than the term *bronze*. Thus, the KJV translated the word for bronze and even *copper* into the Middle English *brass* since the word *bronze* was non-existent in English, not appearing until A.D. 1730–40, long after the 1611 KJV translation (<https://brandplucked.webs.com/brassorbronze.htm> and (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronze>).

#### Scripture: (ESV)

Numbers 21:4 From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. 5 And the people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.” 6 Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. 7 And the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. 8 And the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” 9 So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

Deuteronomy 2:4 From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. 5 And the people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.” 6 Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. 7 And the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. 8 And the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” 9 So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

2 Kings 18:4 [Hezekiah] removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it (it was called Nehushtan).

John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that

whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

1 Corinthians 10:9 We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, 10 nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. 12 Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

### **Introduction/Review:**

Although God had said not to enter into conflict with Moab, Ammon, and Edom, ✓it must have been difficult to restrain from fighting against one of those family nations. Edom had been quite rude and unaccommodating to Israel, denying them access to roads and making the Israelites' journey much longer than desired. In fact, Edomites came out in battle array against Israel in case they passed through their land.

However, Israel enjoyed victory over the city of Hormah, their first Canaanite battle in which they defeated and devoted that city to destruction. Many more battles would take place as the Israelites continued their journey toward Canaan.

### **Story:**

#### ***Discouragement***

With Edom's denial of passage through its country, Israel had to turn around and go back the way they had come. ✓They might have thought, "We are so close to Canaan; now we have to go back to where we've already been. This wilderness is terrifying [Deuteronomy 1:19]. It is so discouraging!"

The people got impatient and dismayed "because of the way" (KJV). You how it is: When people get tired and discouraged, they do what? [Complain.] Not pray? No, complain. The Bible states that in this incident the people spoke against *God* and against Moses. Even though earlier complaints were directed against Moses and Aaron, they were also implicitly against God. However, this complaint was actually directed against God as well as against Moses.

#### ***Murmuring***

This is what the Israelites murmured: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in this wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food."

What "worthless food" were they talking about? [Manna.] "Worthless food"? Why, it gave them all the vitamins and nutrients they needed. It was hardly "worthless," but ✓we might agree with Israel that eating manna forty years would have gotten quite tiresome. Yet, it was God's good provision.

#### ***Punishment***

Would God stand for this murmuring? No. This time Moses did not fall on his face and God made no threat to destroy the people, but immediately snakes, poisonous snakes from which God had protected them all these years, came out of their hiding places and bit the people so that many Israelites died.

#### ***Repentance***

That got the people's attention and caused them to reconsider their bad attitude. They came to Moses and confessed, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us." Whether they were truly repentant or just wanting to get out of their trouble isn't told us, but we know that Moses did pray for the people. God answered with this instruction: "Make a snake out of bronze that looks like these poisonous serpents and set it on a pole. If someone is bitten, he shall look to the serpent on the pole and shall live."

#### ***Healing***

Moses made the bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And, as God said, if a serpent bit anyone and that person would look at the bronze serpent, the person would live. Many people survived poisonous snake bites by believing what God said was the cure.\*

### ***Jesus Christ***

God says the cure for our sin today is to look in faith to Jesus Christ, believing that He took our sin on Himself on the cross so that those who trust Him might be saved.

“What happened in the wilderness with the Israelites was written in God’s Word for the whole world’s instruction. God caused all this to happen so that there would be a very clear picture pointing to the only way of salvation. Just as the Israelites were dying as a judgement upon their sins, so all people are dying as a judgement upon their sins. Just as the Israelites were bitten by venomous serpents, so the whole human race has been poisoned by ‘that ancient serpent, called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray’ (Revelation 12:9). Just as God gave the Israelites a bronze snake on a pole to look at in faith to heal them and save them from death, so God gave all people Jesus Christ on the cross to look at in faith to heal them and save them from death. Jesus knew that He would be crucified and He prophesied: ‘Now is the time for judgement on this world; now the prince of this world [the devil] will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.’ Jesus said this to show the kind of death He was going to die’ (John 12:31, 32). But God’s Word promises: ‘EVERYONE WHO LOOKS TO THE SON AND BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE’ (John 6:40) (Ganz).

Look to Christ, and be saved.

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\*A postscript regarding the bronze serpent is that the people kept this item for many years. Sadly, they also worshiped it. Finally, seven hundred years after this story, King Hezekiah “broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it (it was called Nehushtan)” (2 Kings 18:4).

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

- We see Jesus:  
“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life” (John 3:14, 15).
- “We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction” (1 Corinthians 10:9–11).

### **Activities:**

- Play dough: snakes; the bronze snake on a pole
- Snack: Gummy worms served on crushed Oreo® cookies
- Play-act getting bit by a plastic snake, dying, looking, and living.
- Sing the “Grumbler” song. Lyrics are at <http://www.dudleyscave.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/The-Grumbler-Lyrics.pdf>. The tune is at <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=grumbler+song&&view=detail&mid=912B6455BB7878123779912B6455BB7878123779&&FORM=VRDGAR&ru=%2Fvideos%2Fsearch%3Fq%3Dgrumbler%2Bsong%26FORM%3DHDRSC3>
- Sing “Look and Live.” At [https://hymnary.org/text/live\\_a\\_message\\_from\\_the\\_lord\\_hallelujah](https://hymnary.org/text/live_a_message_from_the_lord_hallelujah) a printable score and audio file of this song are found.

- Review questions: (Game: Print, back with flannel or paper towel, and cut out pictures of snakes found below. Place on a flannel board. For every correct answer, students take a snake off the flannel board.)
  1. Against whom did the Israelites complain in today's story? [Against God and against Moses.]
  2. What was the complaint? ["Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food."]
  3. What was the "worthless food" that the people loathed? [Manna.]
  4. What punishment did God send? [Poisonous snakes that bit and killed many.]
  5. What did the people say to Moses when some people were killed by the poisonous snakes? ["We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us."]
  6. What did God tell Moses to do? [Make a bronze snake and place it high on a pole.]
  7. What good was the bronze snake? [When people were bitten, they could look to the bronze snake and live.]
  8. Who was lifted up so that people who believe might be saved? [Jesus Christ.]
  9. How was Jesus lifted up? [On the cross at Calvary.]
  10. Who is the cure for our sin today? [Jesus Christ.]

### **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 [teachingthebibleto kids.org](http://teachingthebibleto kids.org). "Stop! It's the Law," a song that teaches only the basic Ten Commandments, is found on the same "Songs" page.

### **Handwork:**

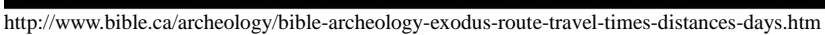
- Go to the following site for a snake door hanger: <https://craftingthewordofgod.com/2014/01/27/snake-door-hanger/>

*brass*

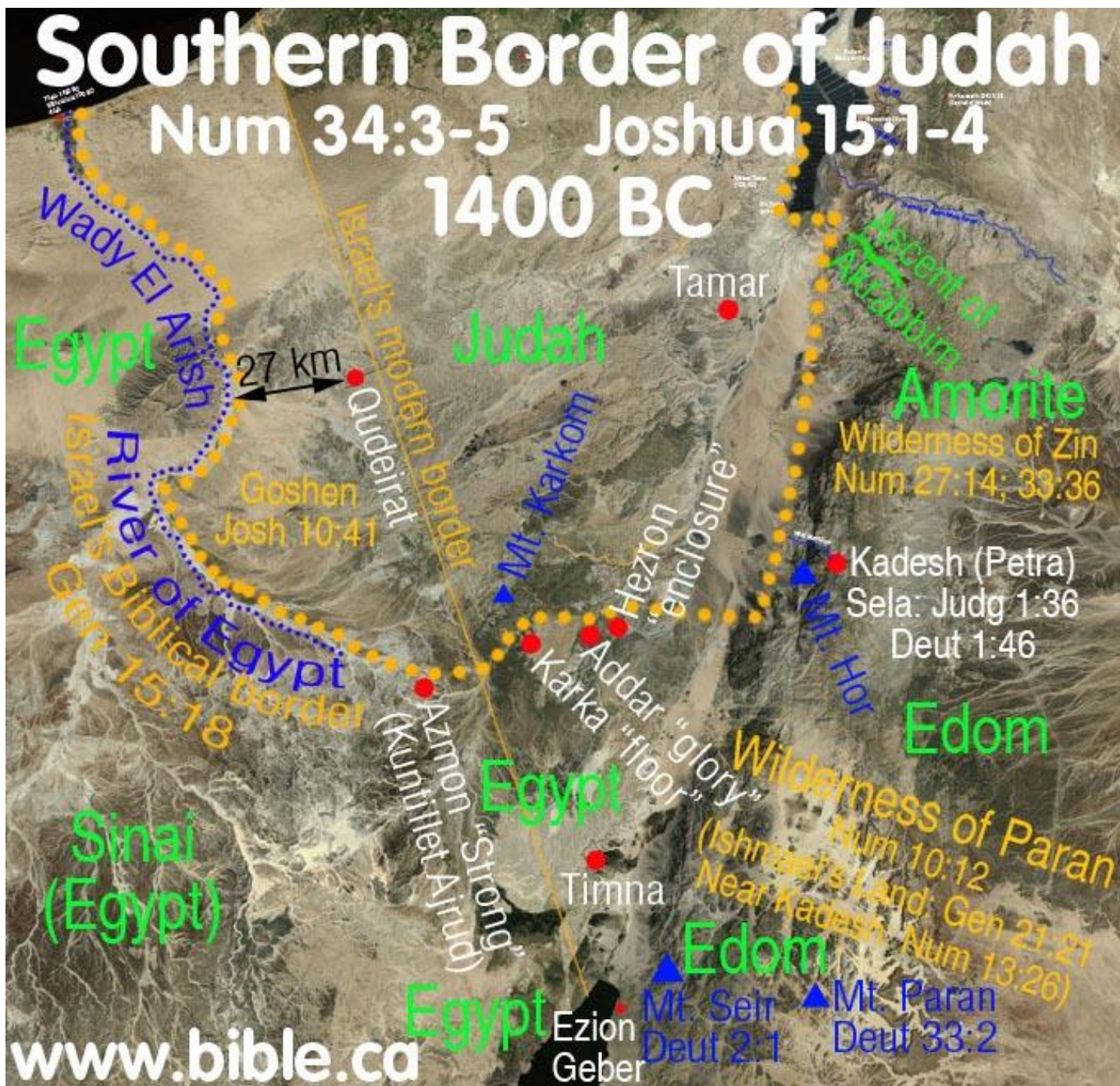
*bronze*

## Mediterranean Sea

March 11, 2007

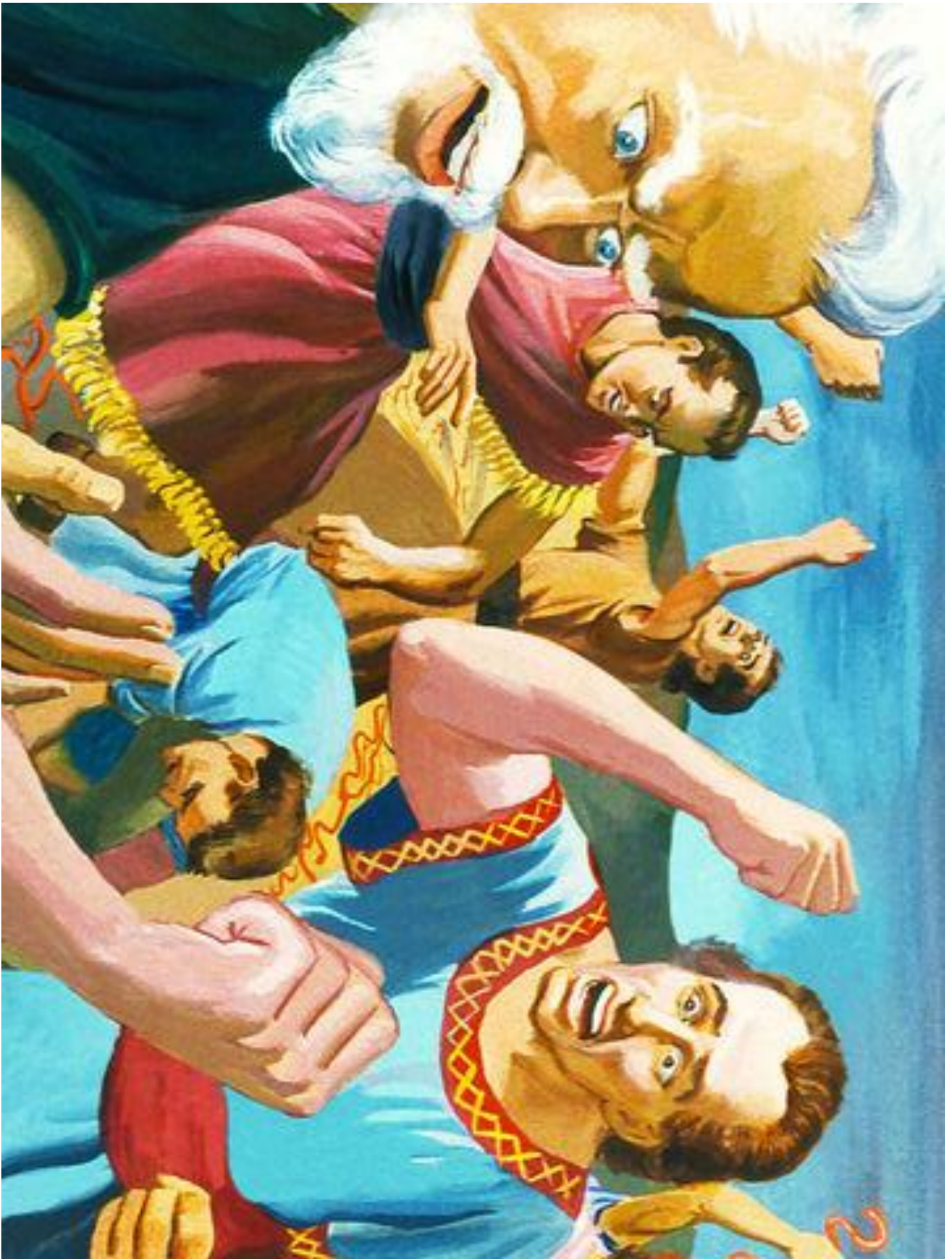






Both maps may be found at <http://www.bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-exodus-route-travel-times-distances-days.htm>.

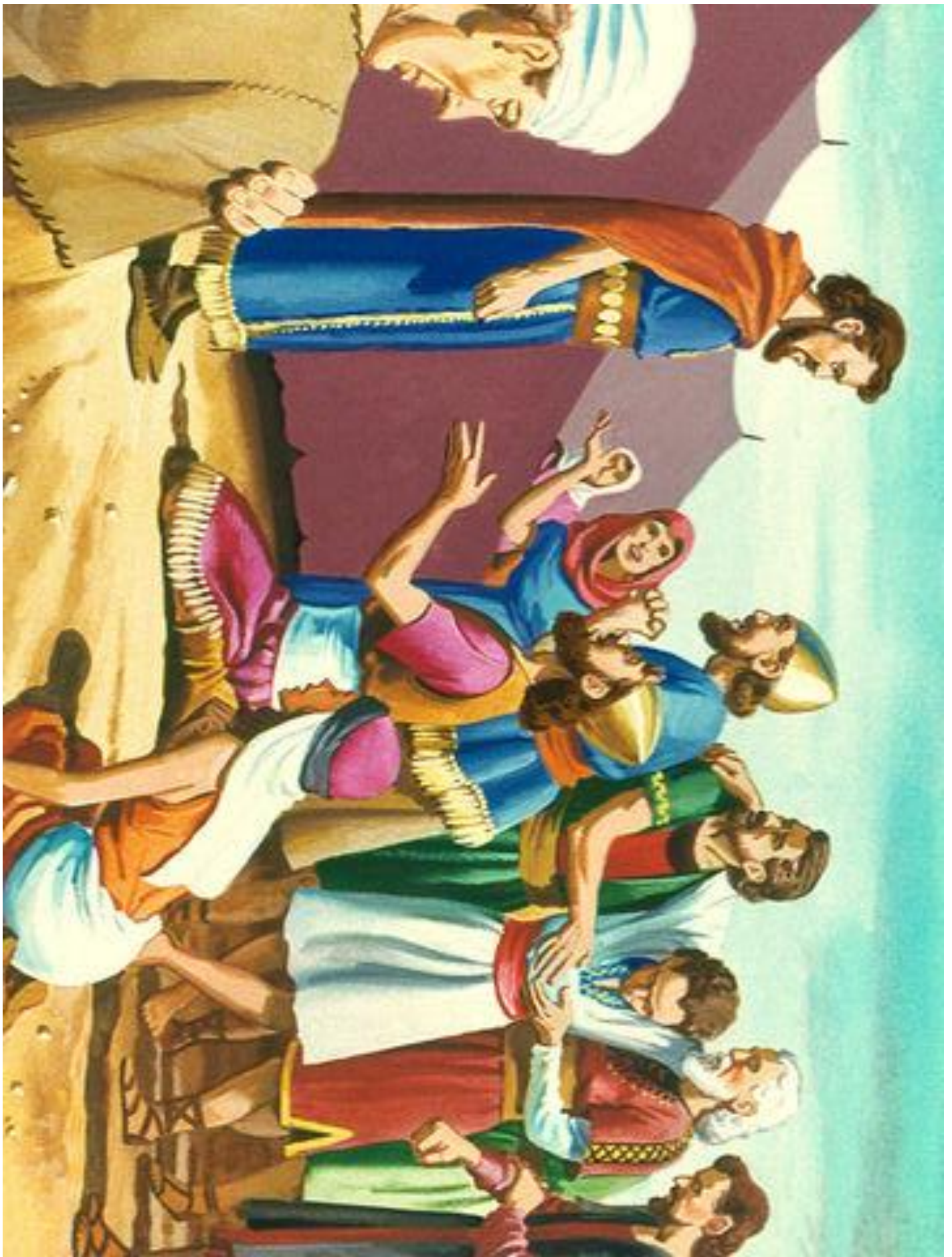




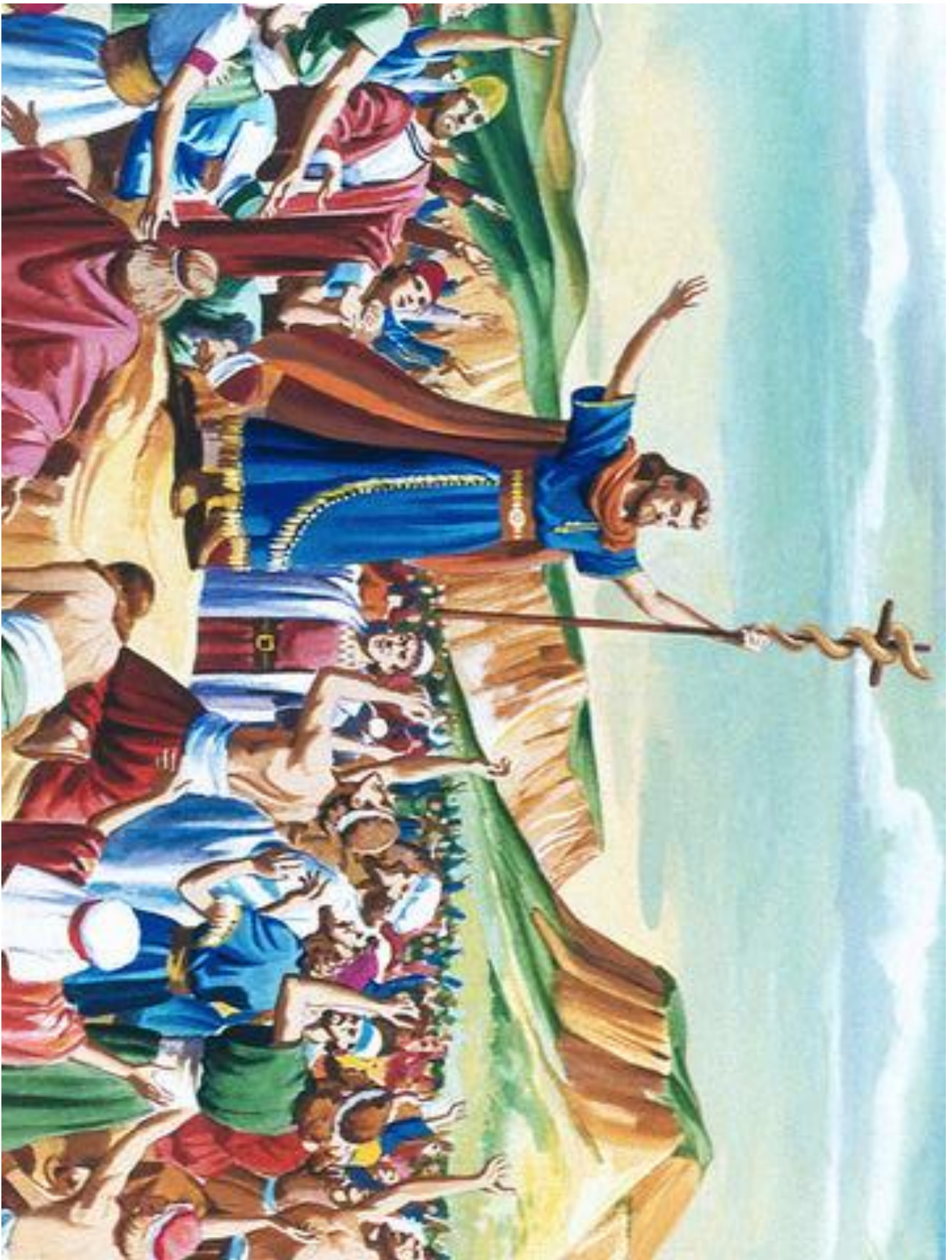






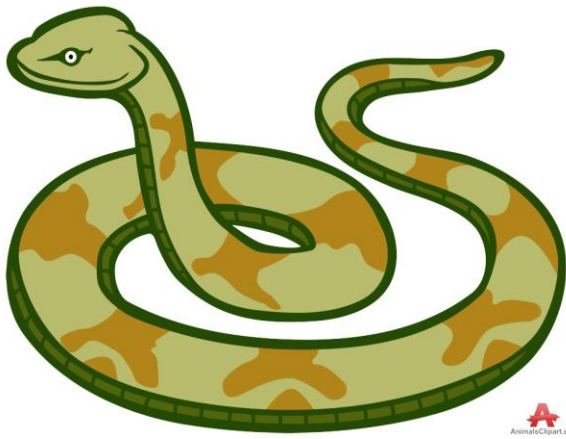




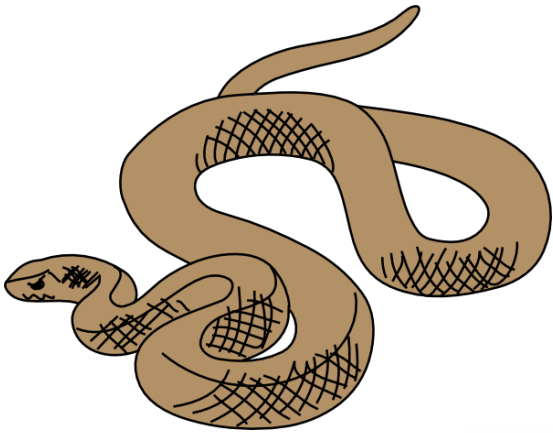
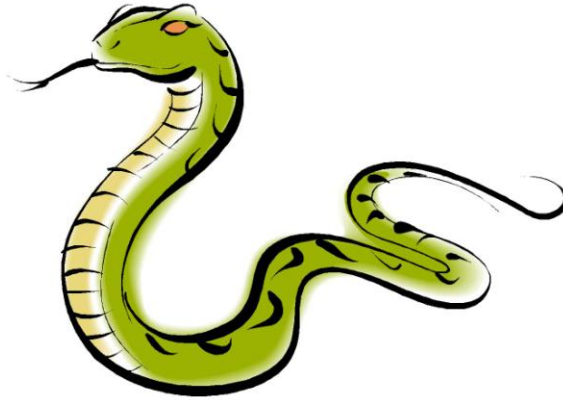
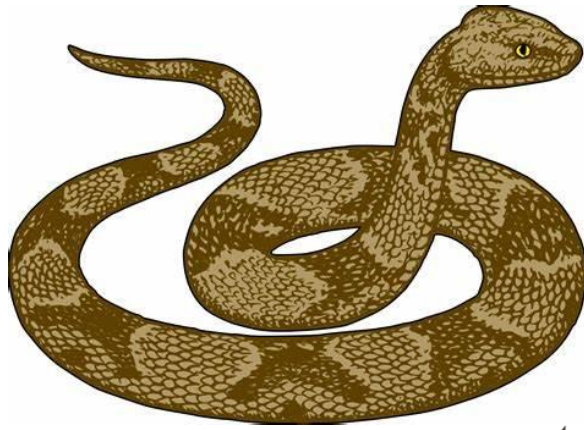








  
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