

LESSON 10



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 03 2023

what about me?

Scripture Story: Numbers 11; 12; Leviticus 10:1-11.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 33 and 31.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This lesson focuses on Numbers 12—the story of Aaron and Miriam’s jealousy of Moses, their attack on Moses’ wife, Zipporah, and God’s subsequent defense of Moses and punishment of Miriam. Students are encouraged to think about the role of leaders and how they respond to those in positions of leadership, especially if they have feelings of jealousy or resentment.

The student lesson does not focus directly on the Numbers 11 story of the Israelites’ grumbling over manna and being given quail to eat. However, this story can be brought out in the Sabbath School class as useful background to Numbers 12. It vividly illustrates the pressures Moses faced as a leader and the challenges of his role. Leaders who are doing God’s work need our encouragement and support. A closer look at Miriam’s and Aaron’s roles among the children of Israel reminds us that each of us is called by God to a special work. Rather than envying those who are in “high-profile” positions, we should be trying to find out what role God has for us to play in His work.

A corollary story about leadership can also be referenced in this lesson. Nadab and Abihu were the next closest in command to Moses and Aaron. They had enjoyed special leadership. But jealousy of Moses was not their sin; they fell in Satan’s snare of lack of discipline and reverence—topics that correlate well with Numbers 11.

Although there are way too many topics referenced this week, you, as the teacher, can let the Spirit

guide you to choose among them the emphasis your students most need at this time.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn why Aaron and Miriam complained about Moses, and how God responded. (*Know*)
- Empathize with the characters in the story and relate the characters’ feelings to their own real-life experiences as they deal with feelings of envy and jealousy. (*Feel*)
- Encourage those in leadership and seek their own role in God’s work. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

Christian Behavior, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 22

“We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with biblical principles in all aspects of personal and social life. For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things that will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives. This means that our amusement and entertainment should meet the highest standards of Christian taste and beauty. While recognizing cultural differences, our dress is to be simple, modest, and neat, befitting those whose true beauty does not consist of outward adornment but in the imperishable ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit. It also means that because our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to care for them intelligently. Along with adequate exercise and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain

from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures. Since alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics are harmful to our bodies, we are to abstain from them as well. Instead, we are to engage in whatever brings our thoughts and bodies into the discipline of Christ, who desires our wholesomeness, joy, and goodness” (Gen. 7:2; Exod. 20:15; Lev. 11:1-47; Ps. 106:3; Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; 10:5; Eph. 5:1-21; Phil. 2:4; 4:8; 1 Tim. 2:9, 10; Titus 2:11, 12; 1 Peter 3:1-4; 1 John 2:6; 3 John 2).

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Ask each person to tell about a time when they have been jealous or envious of someone and explain how they dealt with it (if you have a large class, do this activity in small groups). What about the reverse? Has anyone been the target of someone else’s jealousy? How did they handle it?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

There’s a story told of two men who were confined to beds in a hospital room. Each day both lay on their backs with nothing to see except the four walls. One man’s bed was next to the window, and each day he was allowed to sit up for one hour. As he looked out the window, he described for the other man the sights he could see through that window.

At first the man in the other bed enjoyed hearing about the changing colors of leaves in the park below, the parades that passed on the street, the children playing in the playground. But after a while he began to resent his roommate. *Why should he get to look out the window while all I get to do is lie here and stare at the ceiling?* he wondered. Though the other man’s beautiful descriptions of the world outside continued, the man whose bed was away from the window no longer enjoyed listening. Envy and resentment consumed his thoughts.

One night the man by the window awoke cough-

ing and choking. His coughing also woke the man in the next bed. He could see his neighbor vainly trying to reach for the call button to alert the nurse, but he was in such agony he couldn’t reach the button. The bitter, resentful man watched, his own button within easy reach. All he could think was *If he dies, maybe I’ll get his bed.*

Sure enough, the man by the window died before he was able to call for help. The body was removed, and as soon as decently possible, the other man asked if he could be moved to the bed by the window. Finally, he would get that wonderful view of the outside world he’d been denied for so long!

He struggled to sit up and look out at long last—to only to find that the window faced a blank brick wall.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

God’s people, the children of Israel, were wandering in the wilderness. They weren’t an easy bunch to lead. First they complained to their leader, Moses, that they never got anything to eat but the miraculous manna God supplied—and now they were tired of that. God responded by sending quail. And the Israelites ate so much of it they got sick! Moses was hardly finished dealing with that crisis when he faced an even worse problem—criticism and resentment within his own family. His brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, became jealous of Moses’ leadership position, and they made Moses’ wife the victim of their anger.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you have read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

If we look at the story that precedes this one, in Numbers 11, what kind of pressure do you think Moses was under at this point? What challenges did he face in leading the Israelites? How do you think the different characters in the story felt as these events unfolded?

Activity: Assign four students, two male and two female, to represent Moses, Aaron, Miriam, and Zipporah. Interview each of them about how they were affected by these events. What do you think each person learned from the experience?

Use the following as another teachable passage



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Role-Playing

Role-plays, such as the one suggested in this week's *Out of the Story* section, can be threatening for some students. Don't choose anyone for a role-play who's not at least somewhat willing to participate. You can ease students' anxiety about participating in a role-play by reminding them that there are no right or wrong answers: the goal is just to imagine what the Bible character might have been thinking. One good way to prepare students for a role-play such as this is to divide the class into four groups and assign one of the characters you want to role-play to each group. Send the groups off to discuss the story and that character in particular. All group members can give input into what they think about this character's actions in the story, and what the character might have been thinking and feeling. Then have them choose one volunteer from each group to represent their character based the characterizations from the group discussion. That way everyone gets to contribute, and the role-players don't feel they have to come up with everything out of their own heads.

RABBI 101

that deals with different leadership problems other than jealousy—Leviticus 10:1-11; Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 31.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

Since the Israelites had left Egypt, they had been nothing but trouble for Moses. They complained about being hungry and thirsty (Exodus 15; 16), and God responded by bringing water out of a rock and sending manna from heaven. Then they complained about the manna—they wanted a more exotic diet that included meat! God responded by sending quail (Numbers 11).

As soon as Moses' back was turned, when he was up on Mount Sinai talking to God, the Israelites returned to the idolatry they had learned in Egypt, convincing Aaron to make them a golden calf to worship (Exodus 32). On many occasions they actually wished they were back in Egypt as slaves, rather than being free (Exodus 14:11, 12; 16:3; 17:3; Numbers 11:4-6; 14:1-3).

For Moses, a man who hadn't wanted to be Israel's leader in the first place, the stress of dealing with these people must have been intense. The discontent struck really close when it hit his own family. Yet it was at that moment that God chose to affirm Moses' leadership (Numbers 12:5-9). Moses' faithfulness and his ability to be humble and open to God's leading were the qualities that set him apart from the rest of Israel and even from his own siblings. Moses wasn't chosen because he was the smartest, the strongest, or the most articulate. He

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson. Invite students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the Key Text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.

was chosen because he allowed God to lead, and as a result Moses was able to be a leader too.

The Lord sent Moses instructions to teach the people to observe and celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-43). The final harvest of the year occurred in the autumn prior to the onset of the rainy season and marked the beginning of a new agricultural year (fifteenth day of the seventh month). At this time the last of the ripening grain and fruits was gathered and stored. The seven-day event was also known as the Feast of Ingathering (Exodus 23:16) and was symbolized by the construction of booths decorated with greenery for the harvesters. The festival was tied into Israelite tradition as a commemoration of the wilderness wanderings.—From *Bible Background Commentary*.

Whenever the harvesttime came around, the Israelites stopped to commemorate how God had always taken care of them, providing food for them to eat—even when they didn't appreciate it.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Ask students to think again about the four main characters in this story: Moses, Aaron, Miriam, and

Zipporah. Whom do they relate to most? Are they most like Moses—doing what they feel is right and getting attacked for it? Do they relate to Aaron or Miriam—jealous of those who seem to have more gifts and more privileges? Or do they feel like Zipporah—an innocent bystander who gets attacked because of someone else's jealousy and resentment?

Say: Whomever you relate to in this story, God cares about you. He has a special place for you in His work, and He will help you to find it.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Miriam and Aaron were jealous of the special gifts and position God had given Moses. In their envy and resentment, they lashed out not just at Moses himself but at his wife, Zipporah, criticizing her on the basis of her race. Neither Moses nor Zipporah responded; instead, God Himself told Aaron and Miriam that He had chosen Moses for a special task.

While we may not hear audible voices from heaven defending us, if we are Jesus' followers, then we can know that He has chosen us and we are special to Him. We don't need to defend ourselves against anyone else's jealousy and resentment; nor do we need to be jealous of those who seem to have a better or more special role to play. Each of us is unique in God's eyes, and He loves us each infinitely.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 33 and 31.



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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Numbers 11; 12; Leviticus 10:1-11.

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what about me?



Photo by Terrill Thomas

flashlight

"Moses felt the importance of the great work committed to him as no other man had ever felt it. He realized his own weakness, and he made God his counselor. . . . Miriam and Aaron, blinded by jealousy and ambition, lost sight of this. . . . Regarding themselves as equally favored by God, they felt that they were entitled to the same position and authority" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 383).

keytext

"When there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face."

(Numbers 12:6-8, NIV)

what do you think?

Have you ever been jealous of someone else? Check off the situations that might make you jealous.

- A classmate beats you in an election for student council president.
- Your parents praise your sibling for an accomplishment while making no mention of anything you've done lately.
- Your closest friend starts hanging around with a new friend and doesn't seem to have time for you anymore.
- You work with other students on a group project, but one person in the group gets all the credit and praise from the teacher, while the rest of you are ignored.
- Your best friend is better-looking and more popular than you are.

did you know?

Moses' wife, Zipporah, was a Midianite. She may have been very dark-skinned. She was, however, a descendant of Abraham by his wife Keturah, and a worshipper of the true God. Ellen White calls her timid and retiring in nature, gentle and affectionate, and greatly grieved at the sight of suffering.

When Zipporah's father, Jethro, brought her to rejoin Moses in the wilderness, she could tell just how tired and overworked Moses was. She told her father she was worried about him, and Jethro advised Moses on a plan for the administration of the approximately 2 million unhappy campers.

INTO THE STORY

“Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. ‘Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?’ they asked. ‘Hasn’t he also spoken through us?’ And the LORD heard this.

“(Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.)

“At once the LORD said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, ‘Come out to the tent of meeting, all three of you.’ So the three of them went out. Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance to the tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When the two of them stepped forward, he said, ‘Listen to my words: When there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, reveal myself to them in

visions, I speak to them in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?’ ”

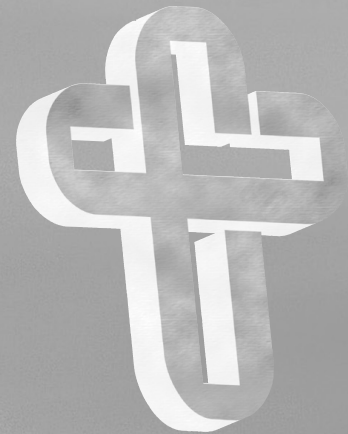
“The anger of the LORD burned against them, and he left them.

“When the cloud lifted from above the tent, Miriam’s skin was leprous—it became as white as snow. Aaron turned toward her and saw that she had a defiling skin disease, and he said to Moses, ‘Please, my lord, I ask you not to hold against us the sin we have so foolishly committed. Do not let her be like a stillborn infant coming from its mother’s womb with its flesh half eaten away.’

“So Moses cried out to the LORD, ‘Please God, heal her!’

“The LORD replied to Moses, ‘If her father had spit in her face, would she not have been in disgrace for seven days? Confine her outside the camp for seven days; after that she can be brought back.’ So Miriam was confined outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not move on till she was brought back.”

(Numbers 12:1-15, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Who are the main characters in this story?

Why do you think Aaron and Miriam were jealous of Moses?

Why do you think Aaron and Miriam focused on Moses' wife as a target when they felt angry?

What qualities did Moses have that made him a good leader for Israel at this time?

Does God's punishment seem a little harsh? Why was it directed at Miriam and not at Aaron?

Why do you think God needed Moses to "talk Him out of" punishing Miriam with leprosy?

What do you think Miriam and Aaron learned from this experience? What do you think Moses might have learned as a result?

punch lines

"Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?" (Proverbs 27:4, NIV).

"Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way" (Psalm 25:8, 9, NIV).

"A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones" (Proverbs 14:30, NIV).

"Resentment kills a fool, and envy slays the simple" (Job 5:2, NIV).

"Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy" (Romans 13:13, NIV).

further insight

"The children of God are called to be representatives of Christ, showing forth the goodness and mercy of the Lord. . . .

". . . Make it a rule never to utter one word of doubt or discouragement. You can do much to brighten the life of others and strengthen their efforts, by words of hope and holy cheer."—Ellen G.

White, *Steps to Christ*, pp. 115, 119.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Hebrews 3:12, 13.

In the *What Do You Think?* section, you were asked to think about your own experience with jealousy and envy. In our reading today Aaron and Miriam wondered why God spoke only to Moses, not to them.

We don't always understand why other people get privileges and opportunities we don't get. But if a person is chosen by God to be a leader, at least part of the reason has to be that they leave themselves open to letting God lead in their lives. At this point in Aaron's and Miriam's lives, they were focused on their own feelings—feeling hurt, offended, and left out—and not on how they could serve the Lord.

Think about your own life right now. Are you open to letting God use you? If not, what's standing in the way?

Sunday

Read Numbers 12, then read through and answer the *Out of the Story* study questions given in your lesson. Why do you think this story is in the Bible? As you read it, how do you feel about Moses? about Aaron and Miriam? How does this story make you feel about God?

Monday

Read Psalm 25:8, 9.

In the *Key Text* for this week, God explains to Aaron and Miriam why He has chosen Moses for a special role. It's because Moses has a special relationship with God—he is faithful and reliable, and God is able to speak to him more directly than He can to others. It's kind of like God's reference letter for Moses!

If God were writing a reference letter for you, or describing to others what He sees in you, what do you think God might say? Write it here:

Tuesday

Read Psalm 25:9.

In the *Flashlight* section Ellen White says that God was able to use Moses because Moses recognized his own weakness. How can recognizing your weakness make you a good leader?

Think about people you know of in different leadership roles. What kinds of weaknesses would they need to be aware of? For example, a teacher might tend to favor one student over another. She would need to be aware of that weakness so that she could be careful to treat everyone equally.

- Pastor _____
- Parent _____
- Business owner _____
- Politician _____
- Church administrator _____

Wednesday

The Bible verses in this week's *Punch Lines* section talk about how destructive envy and jealousy can be. As you read through these verses, think about who is getting hurt. When you're jealous of someone, is that feeling most destructive to them or to you?

Now read Numbers 12 again and think about what happened to Miriam. How could her punishment be seen as an illustration of the destructive power of jealousy?

Thursday

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11-13.

People in leadership positions are usually under a lot of stress, as Moses was. In that situation, they don't need friends and family reacting like Aaron and Miriam did—with

jealousy and resentment. Good leaders need our encouragement and support.

Think about a leader you admire—a teacher or pastor, one of your parents, or a friend your own age who is in a position of responsibility in school, at church, or on a sports team. Take a moment to call, email, or write a note to that person telling them that you think they're doing a good job!

Friday

Read Exodus 15:19-21, Exodus 4:13-15, Exodus 28:1, 2.

One thing that Aaron and Miriam didn't pause to think about when they criticized Moses was that they had special roles to play in God's work too. What was Miriam's role in Israel?

What special jobs was Aaron given?

What about you? Maybe you've been envious of other people's gifts without recognizing your own. What special role do you think God might want you to play in your church, your school, or your community?

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapters 33 and 31.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URLhF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.