

# The Book of Numbers

## The Sin of Miriam and Aaron

Text: Numbers 12

- I. The Complaint of Miriam and Aaron (Numbers 12:1-2)
- A. Amram and Jochebed were the parents of three children – Miriam, Aaron, and Moses (born in that order) [cf. Exo. 2:1-10; 6:20; 15:20].
1. Remember that Miriam was old enough to follow after and care for Moses when, as a baby, he was placed in an ark in the bulrushes.
  2. Aaron was three years older than Moses (Exo. 7:7).
- B. On this occasion, Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of his wife.
1. Many assume that this is a different wife from Zipporah.
  2. However, the word translated as ‘Ethiopian’ is actually “Cushite” – referring to the land of Arabia.
  3. There is no indication that Moses had a second wife – due to the death of Zipporah or for any other reason.
- C. It is often wondered what Moses’ siblings had against his wife, but the Bible does not say.
1. It is likely that it relates to the events recorded in chapter 11.
  2. The appointing of the 70 elders of Israel came as a result of the advice of Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro (cf. Exodus 18).
  3. Perhaps Miriam and Aaron were envious that Moses had sought his advice instead of their counsel – and focused their frustration on his wife.
- D. Whatever the complaint was against Zipporah, it was just a front – the real problem with Miriam and Aaron was jealousy.
- E. They sought the position and authority that God had granted to Moses.
1. It should be noted that Miriam’s name is mentioned first in the offense.
  2. This indicates that she took the lead in these accusations and Aaron followed along.
  3. This is why Miriam received the harsher punishment.
- II. The Response of God (Numbers 12:3-9)
- A. Before God responded to the words of these two, He gave an important description of the character of Moses.
1. Moses was the meekest man upon the face of the earth.
  2. He had not sought power or position for himself, but obeyed the commands of God.
  3. He was bold as a lion in defending God and His Word from sin and error.
  4. However, he was gentle as a lamb when attacked personally.
  5. Meekness is not weakness nor cowardice; rather, it is strength under control (cf. Matt. 5:5).
- B. God responded by calling Miriam, Aaron, and Moses to appear before the Tabernacle.
- C. He then called forth Miriam and Aaron and put them in their place.
- D. God reminded them that He decided who would prophesy and who would lead.
1. The usual way of revelation was by vision (when awake) or dream (when asleep).
  2. However, God spoke to Moses mouth to mouth – plainly and openly.

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- E. Who were they to speak against God's chosen spokesman?
- F. Thus, God's wrath was upon them both for their arrogance and rebellion.

## III. The Leprosy of Miriam

(Numbers 12:10-16)

- A. As God departed from their presence, Miriam was struck with leprosy.
- B. Instead of being bold and rebellious, Miriam has become smitten and powerless.
- C. Instead of arrogance, Aaron displayed submission and supplication – seeking Moses' prayers on behalf of their sister, even calling him 'lord.'
- D. When Moses prayed, God healed Miriam of the leprosy.
- E. However, she was to be separated from the camp of Israel for 7 days.
- F. Thus, the people remained in place until Miriam was able to return into the camp.
- G. Then, they travelled to the wilderness of Paran.