

## Numbers 12

Verses 1 - 3

**Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married <sup>2</sup> and they said, “Is it a fact that the Lord has spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?” And the Lord heard *this*. <sup>3</sup> (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any person who was on the face of the earth.)**

**Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married.**

Miriam's name was probably mentioned first because she was the instigator of this rebellion. This conclusion is based on the fact that she received the most severe punishment.

Some people think the Cushite woman refers to Zipporah while others believe that Zipporah may have passed away and Moses remarried.

The following is the case for the Cushite woman being Zipporah

1. Zipporah was a Midianite but she could have also been a Cushite. Any man or woman can be known for their ancestry and their home land.
2. Zipporah came back to be with Moses in Exodus 18 (about 1 year prior to this event) and it's hard to imagine that within a one year period Zipporah died and Moses remarried.
3. This 1 year time frame was during their stay at Sinai. Moses was deeply involved in the giving of the law, overseeing the building of the Tabernacle, and the ordination of the priesthood.

The case for the Cushite woman being someone other than Zipporah

1. Their case seems to hinge on the mistaken idea that Zipporah cannot be a Midianite and a Cushite.

It's not clear exactly why Miriam and Aaron are upset with Moses but like most disagreements between people it's best to address the real issue rather than attacking them about who they chose to marry.

**<sup>2</sup> and they said, “Is it a fact that the Lord has spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?” And the Lord heard *this*.**

What Miriam said may have been true but she was missing the bigger picture.

Miriam was a prophetess and Aaron was God's anointed high priest but Moses was the greatest Prophet of all time except for the Son of God.

**<sup>3</sup> (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any person who was on the face of the earth.)**

Some people believe this verse was added by Joshua or someone else. That seems like a reasonable conclusion. The other possibility is that Moses was singing a few verses of a song by Mac Davis.

*“Oh Lord it's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way”. ☺*

Verses 4 – 8

**<sup>4</sup> And the Lord suddenly said to Moses and to Aaron and Miriam, “You three go out to the tent of meeting.” So the three of them went out. <sup>5</sup> Then the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the tent; and He called Aaron and Miriam. When they had both come forward, <sup>6</sup> He said,**

**“Now hear My words:**

**If there is a prophet among you,**

**I, the Lord, will make Myself known to him in a vision.**

**I will speak with him in a dream.**

**<sup>7</sup> *It is not this way for My servant Moses;***

**He is faithful in all My household;**

**<sup>8</sup> With him I speak mouth to mouth,**

**That is, openly, and not using mysterious language,**

**And he beholds the form of the Lord.**

**So why were you not afraid**

**To speak against My servant, against Moses?”**

**<sup>4</sup> And the Lord suddenly said to Moses and to Aaron and Miriam, “You three go out to the tent of meeting.” So the three of them went out.**

This is a reference to the tent of meeting outside the camp.

**<sup>5</sup> Then the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the tent; and He called Aaron and Miriam.**

That had to put a lump in the throats of Miriam and Aaron.

**<sup>6</sup> He said, “Now hear My words…….**

God's communication with Moses was more intimate than with other prophets and Miriam and Aaron should have picked up on that.

Verses 9 – 16

**<sup>9</sup> And the anger of the Lord burned against them and He departed. <sup>10</sup> But when the cloud had withdrawn from above the tent, behold, Miriam *was* leprous, as *white* as snow. As Aaron turned toward Miriam, behold, she *was* leprous. <sup>11</sup> Then Aaron said to Moses, “Oh, my lord, I beg you, do not hold us responsible for this sin by which we have turned out to be foolish, and by which we have sinned. <sup>12</sup> Oh, do not let her be like a dead person, whose flesh is half eaten away when he comes out of his mother’s womb!” <sup>13</sup> So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, “God, heal her, please!” <sup>14</sup> But the Lord said to Moses, “If her father had only spit in her face, would she not be put to shame for seven days? Have her shut outside the camp for seven days, and afterward she may be received again.” <sup>15</sup> So Miriam was shut outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not move on until Miriam was received again. <sup>16</sup> Afterward, however, the people moved on from Hazeroth and camped in the wilderness of Paran.**

**<sup>9</sup> And the anger of the Lord burned against them and He departed. <sup>10</sup> But when the cloud had withdrawn from above the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, as *white* as snow. As Aaron turned toward Miriam, behold, she *was* leprous. <sup>11</sup> Then Aaron said to Moses, “Oh, my lord, I beg you, do not hold us responsible for this sin by which we have turned out to be foolish, and by which we have sinned. <sup>12</sup> Oh, do not let her be like a dead person, whose flesh is half eaten away when he comes out of his mother’s womb!”**

This was a dreadful penalty. Leprosy excluded her from the whole community. Without God's grace her life was over. Aaron was quick to confess that they had done a foolish thing and asked that they not suffer the consequences of their actions.

<sup>13</sup> **So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, “God, heal her, please!”**

Moses did not hold a grudge against Miriam and quickly asked for her to be healed.

<sup>14</sup> **But the Lord said to Moses, “If her father had only spit in her face, would she not be put to shame for seven days? Have her shut outside the camp for seven days, and afterward she may be received again.”**

God was willing to do what Moses asked but He wasn't about to let this rebellion go unchecked. A son or daughter that treated their father in this way would suffer a public repudiation that would last for 7 days. This was not part of the “written law” from God but it was an unwritten law that the Jewish community followed and God enforced this judgment on Miriam.

<sup>16</sup> **Afterward, however, the people moved on from Hazeroth and camped in the wilderness of Paran.**

In chapter 10 verse 12 the people set out for the wilderness of Paran. In chapter 11 on the way to the wilderness of Paran some complainers in Israel died because of their greediness (desire for meat). Here at the end of chapter 12 Israel comes to the Wilderness of Paran.

See map 1205

