

Numbers 12

Verses 1 - 3

Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married ² 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*. ³ (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

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.

Because of the Cushite woman whom he had married

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

Neither position can be confirmed with certainty.

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

Is it a fact that the Lord has spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?

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.

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

⁴ 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. ⁵ 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, ⁶ 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.**

⁷ It is not this way for My servant Moses;

He is faithful in all My household;

⁸ 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?”

And the Lord suddenly said to Moses and to Aaron and Miriam, “You three go out to the tent of meeting”

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

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 their throats.

**If there is a prophet among you,
I, the Lord, will make Myself known to him in a vision.
It is not this way for My servant Moses;
With him I speak mouth to mouth,**

God's communication with Moses was more intimate than with other prophets

Miriam and Aaron should have picked up on that.

Verses 9 – 16

⁹ And the anger of the Lord burned against them and He departed. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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!” ¹³ So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, “God, heal her, please!” ¹⁴ 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.” ¹⁵ So Miriam was shut outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not move on until Miriam was received again. ¹⁶ Afterward, however, the people moved on from Hazeroth and camped in the wilderness of Paran.

But when the cloud had withdrawn from above the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, as *white as snow*

This was a dreadful penalty.

Leprosy excluded her from the whole community.

Without God’s grace her life was over.

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

Aaron was quick to confess his sin.

His penalty for this sin was looking foolish

So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, “God, heal her, please

Moses did not hold any grudge against Miriam but quickly asked for her to be healed

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 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.

And this was the judgment that God enforced on Miriam.

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.