

Into the Promised Land -Joshua's Story
Lesson #12 – “The Trouble at Hazerath”
•HANDOUT•

► We begin this current study as Israel arrives at Hazerath. As the study opens, we find that a new controversy had broken out. This new trouble comes from a surprising and a most unlikely source.

Numbers 12:1-2 • While they were at Hazerath, Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses because he had married a Cushite woman. They said, "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Hasn't he spoken through us, too?" But the Lord heard them.

Q: This scripture says that Moses' brother and sister were criticizing him because he had married a Cushite woman. But from Exodus 2, we learn that Moses killed an Egyptian and fled from Egypt to Midian, where he lived for the next 40 years. He worked as a shepherd for Jethro, a Midianite Priest and married Zipporah, one of Jethro's daughters. So, who is this Cushite woman married to Moses?

Q: Is it significant that Miriam's name is listed first as the “complainer” in this passage?

Q: Who are the Cushites and why is there such disapproval from Miriam and Aaron regarding Moses' Wife? There are the **two main opinions** from scholars on the subject:

- 1.
- 2.

Q: After criticizing Moses for having a Cushite wife, what do they next verbalize as their complaint?

Q: So ... what do you think? Is their complaint really about Moses having a Cushite wife; if not, what is this really about?

Q: How much truth is there in their complaints?

► **Scriptural Note:** The Prophet Micah spoke words from the Lord about the value of the leadership from both Miriam and Aaron: ► *Micah 6: 4 • I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam.*

Q: What is significant about verse 2, which ends with “And the LORD heard this?”

Numbers 12:3-5 [NLT]• (Now Moses was very humble -- more humble than any other person on earth.) So immediately the LORD called to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam and said, “Go out to the Tabernacle, all three of you!” So the three of them went to the Tabernacle. Then the LORD descended in the pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the Tabernacle. “Aaron and Miriam!” He called, and they stepped forward.

Q: Why is the statement about Moses' humility included with brackets and inserted at this point in the scripture?

Q: What is significant about the statement “So immediately the LORD...?”

Q: What does this tell us about God?

Number 12:6-9• And the Lord said to them, "Now listen to what I say: "If there were prophets among you, I, the Lord, would reveal myself in visions. I would speak to them in dreams. But not with my servant Moses. Of all my house, he is the one I trust. I speak to him face to face, clearly, and not in riddles! He sees the Lord as he is. So why were you not afraid to criticize my servant Moses?"

Q: How does the Lord say he revealed Himself to Moses?

Q: To what does the “form” of the Lord refer? Doesn't scripture teach that no one has ever seen God, nor can they and live? How do we reconcile this?

•Isaiah 6:1:

•John 12:41:

•John 1:17-18:

Q: What do scholars conclude about the “form of the Lord” from the above referenced scriptures?

Q: What do we know, with certainty from scripture, about Moses' relationship with God?

► The following passage from Deuteronomy supports the scholar's conclusion regarding what Moses saw:

Deuteronomy 34:10-12 • Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt--to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

The Lord's Response to Miriam and Aaron verbal attack toward Moses ...

Number 12:10 • The Lord was very angry with them, and He departed. When the cloud lifted from above the Tent, there stood Miriam – leprous, like snow.

Q: Why is Miriam punished and not Aaron?

Number 12:11-13 • Aaron turned toward her and saw that she had leprosy; and he said to Moses, "Please, my lord, do not 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."

Q: What is astonishing about Aaron's response to his sister's punishment?

Moses responds to Aaron's cry for help ...

Number 12:14-15 • So Moses cried out to the LORD, "O God, please heal her!"
The LORD replied to Moses, "If her father had done nothing more than spit in her face, wouldn't she be defiled 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.

Q: What do we learn about Moses in this narrative?

Q: God graciously responded to Moses by granting Miriam's healing, but He also demands she serve a period of public shaming. What cultural tradition behind God's demand for a 7-day shaming period?

Q: What is the cultural understanding about a father spitting in the face of his daughter?

Q: How would Miriam's 7-day shame impact Israel?

Q: What does this teach us about God?

Number 12:16 • After that, the people left Hazeroth and encamped in the Desert of Paran.

▶ **The Desert of Paran will serve as the grand staging area before entering the Promised Land of Canaan. This is where we will pick up the story next time.**



Next Time • Lesson #13
“Decision & Consequences – Part I”

