

**May 27**

**Scriptures:** Read Numbers 12

**Key Verse:** “Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.” (Numbers 12:3)

## **Overview**

The sad incident recorded in this chapter took place as the children of Israel were traveling northward to the Promised Land. Moses had come up against many difficulties during the journey (Chapter 11), and this time it came not from the congregation, but from within his own family.

God had put Moses into a very special and unique place, more special than that of any other prophet (12:6-7; cf. Heb.3:3-6), yet he remained humble “more than all men” (12:3) and he did not seek self-glory, nor have the pretence of being humble (e.g. 11:29). Jesus, the perfect example of leadership, was Himself meek and said, “blessed are the meek” (Matt. 11:29; 5:5). Some might wonder how Moses could write this about himself. We believe all that he wrote was directed by the Holy Spirit, so he was like an objective and submissive servant, obeying all that God commanded Him to write. Moses even wrote of the more negative aspects of his own character, like his anger and sin (20:9-13). The fact that nothing is hidden attests to the Scripture’s divine inspiration.

It seems Moses’ older brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, both known to be prophets and leaders among the people (Ex.7:1; 15:20), were unlike their meek brother and desired more glory. They were jealous of Moses and his high and respected position and used the occasion of his marriage to an Ethiopian/Cushite woman to begin whispering against him, but God hears all things. This wife would not have been Zipporah (Ex.3:1; 4:24-26; she may have died), because the event referred to here seems to be recent. The marriage, however, was lawful, for Moses did not receive any rebuke from God, and surely she was a converted, godly woman who may have left with them from Egypt, or a Cushite from Arabia who dwelt in the Sinai region. Only the anointed priests were restricted to marrying an Israelite (Lev.21:14), and no one was to marry a Canaanite (Ex.34:16). Miriam and Aaron complained out of jealousy and their desire to make Moses seem less in other people’s eyes so they would seem better. God will honor only those who are humble and then ourselves and to not speak against those in leadership (Phil.2:3; 1 Thess.5:12-13).

Moses did not have to defend himself; God came to his defense. Because Miriam could not enter into the sanctuary, God, in the pillar of cloud, moved to the outer gate of the Tabernacle where He sternly confronted Miriam and Aaron with their sin. He vindicated Moses and confronted Miriam and Aaron with their sin. He vindicated Moses and reaffirmed the special place and high calling that only he had (12:6-8). How then could they do this evil, not only against Moses, but against the Lord as well, who had put Moses into that place of leadership? God’s justice demanded punishment and since, as the Hebrew text indicates, it was Miriam who had instigated this rebellion (12:1), she was struck with leprosy. Aaron, as the high priest, could not become leprous and continue to perform the holy duties with which God had privileged him. Aaron

immediately repented and called Moses his “Lord”, showing him due respect. Moses was kind and forgiving, and with his intercessory plea, God in His mercy and forgiveness would heal Miriam, but first she was to be punished and made humble by remaining an outcast for seven days (cf. Lev.14:8).

This event served to illustrate that if a leader sinned, he or she was to be rebuked openly (1Tim. 5:20). This would also cause more respect for the authority of one whom God had appointed. Likewise, we need to show great respect for those whom God has appointed as leaders over His Church. Rather than complaining about a weakness they may have (for no one is perfect, except God), we need to lift them up, encourage them, and always emphasize their more positive aspects. When a person gossips against another, it not only causes harm to the one against whom it is directed, but also to the gossiper, the hearer, and the Lord, who feels deeply the hurts of others.

### **Prayer**

Lord God, we praise You for Your gift of leadership. We pray for our leaders in the Church and also in the Government. Cause us to be helpful to those who carry the burdens of leadership.