

# Church of God Sunday School

## MIRIAM AND AARON MURMUR AGAINST MOSES

Numbers 12:1-16

As the children of Israel followed Moses and the pillar of cloud to the Promised Land, more problems arose. Moses had a brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, who were traveling with him and the Israelites.

Both Aaron and Miriam had been used of God. Aaron had been God's spokesperson when Moses felt unable to speak (Exodus 4:30). Miriam had led the people in a song of rejoicing after the Lord brought Israel across the Red Sea on dry land (Exodus 15:21). Miriam was called a prophetess (Exodus 15:20) and Aaron a priest (Exodus 28:1).

Perhaps, because they were used of God, Miriam and Aaron felt important—as important as Moses. They spoke against Moses, criticizing him because of his Ethiopian wife. They said, "Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?" In other words, "What's so special about Moses? God uses us as well." (Now we can see the real reason for their murmuring: they were envious.)

How hurtful this must have been to Moses! It is hurtful when people speak against you and mistreat you, but it is so much worse when it comes from your own family. Moses was a meek man, "above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." He did not

defend himself to his brother and sister—but God did!

"And the LORD heard it." God heard every word that Miriam and Aaron spoke! The Lord told Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to come out "unto the tabernacle of the congregation." Then God "came down in the pil-



lar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle." God called for Aaron and Miriam, and they came forward. God had something to say to them. He was very angry!

God told them that He made Himself known to His prophets by dreams and visions, but not so with faithful Moses. With Moses, God spoke "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exodus 33:11). God then asked why Aaron and Miriam were not afraid to speak against His "servant Moses." (They should have been very afraid to do such a thing!)

Then God departed, and the cloud moved off of the tabernacle. When God left, punishment came. "Miriam became leprous, white as snow." Leprosy was a cursed disease in Bible times. Sometimes leprosy was a punishment for sin (as it was with Miriam).

In God's laws there were careful instructions given concerning how to recognize leprosy and what to do if someone had leprosy. Some of the symptoms of leprosy were swelling, reddish rash, white spots on the skin, and hair turning white (Leviticus 13:2-3). Once it was determined that someone had leprosy, he was considered unclean. He was a leper.

What did it mean to be a leper in the Bible? God's law said this concerning a leper: "his clothes shall be rent [torn], and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. . . he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be" (Leviticus 13:45-46).

God's penalty for Miriam's sin was so severe that Aaron cried to Moses, ". . . we have done foolishly, and . . . we have sinned." Aaron



begged for mercy on Miriam's behalf. Then Moses cried out to God, asking Him to heal his sister. (What a forgiving spirit Moses had!)

God told Moses to put Miriam outside of the camp for seven days. Miriam's punishment was known to all. No doubt, God wanted the people of Israel to see the great danger of speaking against His leader, Moses. While Miriam was outside of the camp, Israel's progress stopped. They did not move forward "till Miriam was brought in again." Her sin affected all the people.

When Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses,

they also spoke against God. How careful we must be that we do not allow wrong feelings to grow in our hearts. Look at how much trouble just a few words spoken by Miriam and Aaron caused! All because they allowed a feeling of envy to work in their hearts.

~~~~~  
**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"Remember what the LORD thy God did unto Miriam by the way, after that ye were come forth out of Egypt."*

—Deuteronomy 24:9  
~~~~~