



Even though the children of Isarel had died at the place named Kibroth-hataavah, when they moved to Hazeroth, some it seemed had not learned from the experience. Kibroth-hataavah wa so named as it meant graves of lust, where many had died as a result of a great plague which God sent because of the presumptuous sin, uncontrolled lust whereby because of their discontentment, with the manna they had been given – bread from heaven, described by the Psalmist as angel’s food, many flew upon the quail that God sent and consumed without preparing properly, eating with the blood. Compounding their sin, many showed their true hearts and minds – complete disrespect and ignorant churlish behaviour showing complete disregard and lack of gratitude to the privilege and kindness that they had been show. They had become entitled and considered themselves deserving of nothing less, and demanded complaining continually. Through the terrible price they paid in the death of many of their fellow compatriots, it seems that this simmering discontentment continued in the camp. But even at the highest level:

*12:1,2: And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it.*

We see here that it wasn't just in the camp that complaints were common but even among the divinely elected leadership. We can recognise that complaining is a common disease and we must be prepared against it. The Lord spoke suddenly- not through Moses. Moses would not defend himself,

*3 (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)*

We ask the question would Moses write this of himself, as the divinely inspired scribe? Hardly, as it would be almost contradictory. This was inserted later perhaps by Samuel. Jesus said *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.* (Matthew 5:5) Meekness is like the horse described by the Apostle James in 3:3, which has been trained to be controlled by a tiny piece of metal in its mouth called a 'bit'. The horse has huge amount of strength but allows itself to be controlled. Meekness, as Brother Derek reminded us in a recent exhortation is massive strength controlled. Moses had been given great gifts of the Holy Spirit. He was given great stamina, insight, wisdom, physical fitness and endurance. He was given the gift of prophecy, and discernment. Through this, he was able to wield great authority. Only that he didn't. He could have so easily set himself up as a king or a ruler, and enriched himself using the great powers that had been entrusted to him. But he refused to do so. In fact he had already turned away from that temptation when all the riches of Egypt were his for the taking, when he was brought up as an Egyptian prince. Much less would he do so over God's people. Instead he faithfully carried out the role that God had given him as being a representative or ambassador for the nation of Israel. He was particular about this. He was even reluctant at first to lead the

people. But now his own brother and sister after the flesh had turned against him.

Miriam and Aaron (Miriam is named first and so was probably the prime complainer) spoke about Moses together, backbiting and running down a fellow brother in the Ecclesia. If they had an issue with him, why not go and talk to him privately one to one. Instead, it seems they are muttering about it in the form of resentment and letting their feelings be known around the camp. The Lord heard it we read. God knows the hearts of all men – Psalm 44:21. *All things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do* – Hebrews 4:13. Miriam and Aaron were blessed that their secret sin was found out (Numbers 32:23) because unrepented evil thoughts and secret resentment will be judged ...the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God. (1 Corinthians 4:5)

The LORD spoke suddenly to Moses, Aaron and Miriam to advance out from the camp to the congregation. The LORD descended in the pillar of the cloud and stood in the Tabernacle door. God himself dwells in light unapproachable. Heaven and earth cannot contain him much less the house built by man as David and Solomon later acknowledged. In the same way that Moses was God's messenger to the people, so God uses his Elohim, his angels as his messages, as his representatives to man on earth. The LORD descending in the cloud would have been in the form of an angel of one of the Elohim. Spoke to them and referred to how he had given the spirit of prophecy to the elders -Miriam and Aaron were included: Verse 6,7: *And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house,...* because God would not speak to Moses in visions, and not in dark speeches, but apparently, and openly, mouth to mouth – from

an angelic being in the similitude of the Lord. Aaron and Miriam were aware of this so why should they dare to speak against him? They had spoken out accusing Moses or thinking he was in charge; they resented Moses gathering the 70 elders and taking the limelight as it were. Now they also had the spirit of prophecy! They saw it that they were as good as Moses – even better, they thought, because Moses had married an Ethiopian woman – a Cushite. But Zipporah was actually a Midianite, taken by Moses when his own people had not made him welcome. It seems he was still not honoured or held in esteem by those of his own family. How true for Moses the words and experience of the Lord Jesus who said *a prophet is not without honour save in his own country and in his own house*. And how resentful too, were the rulers and elders in the days of the Lord Jesus, when he commanded his disciples to preach to the Gentiles. They were filled with envy, contradicting and blaspheming. The Bride of Christ includes Gentiles as well as Jews, taken from all nations of the world. This Bride has also been the excuse for blasphemy and contradiction by the leaders of the false church throughout centuries. An excuse and not the reason. The reason is but envy.

It was sad seeing Aaron and Miriam fail in this way. They had shown great support and faith in the background and behind the scenes for Moses. For example they are both spoken of in equal terms in Micah 6:4 *For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam*. Both Aaron and Miriam had also been chosen as leaders - Aaron as God's high priest. Miriam is described as the prophetess (Exodus 15:20) who took a timbrel and who led the people in rejoicing in thanksgiving for their great salvation from Egypt. It was Miriam who was instrumental in the very salvation of her brother, and she looked and watched over him as he lay in the ark among the bulrushes. Moses was the meekest man. He learnt humility caring for the sheep in the backside of the desert of Midian. Aaron too, had

also been humbled, knowing the danger of self-promotion, as he knew from the death of his own sons. God knew his heart. He is referred to as *the saint of the Lord* in Psalm 106: 16. It seems from the punishment that God delivered that Miriam had yet to learn the characteristic of humility, as we recall that a contrite and a broken spirit is the character that God desires. Not someone who is pushy and loud but someone who is ready to defer to others. Miriam then, was struck with leprosy - a similar method had been used to teach Naaman the Syrian a lesson. 9 -10: *And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous.*

The word *White* is not in the original. So she was as leprous as snow. This means her skin was all wet, raw and ulcerous, flaky in parts and would have looked and even smelt revolting. She was unclean and had to be put out of the camp. Whereas if the leprosy had turned white it meant it was healing and no longer unclean see Leviticus 13:17. The disease of complaining is even more contagious than leprosy. Yet it can often go undetected. Hopefully accounts like this can assist us to observe the symptoms, make the correct diagnosis, and seek the best treatment. An additional corruption is that which issues from the tongue. The apostle James seriously warns about the dangers of the tongue, which can be full of *deadly poison*. With our tongue we bless God, and with it we also curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God (James 3: 8-9). The punishment of Miriam was just as it appears she was the chief instigator. Aaron once again shows his character flaw of deferring to pressure, instead of making a stand.

It is a mark of true humility when we seek to avoid self-promotion. Moses was far from trying to lord it over others; neither did he think that he was the only one who could do anything properly; nor was he boastful, thinking that he was the only one who could talk to God:

instead, Moses did the very opposite of what Miriam and Aaron were accusing him of. He tried his hardest to share his duty with others. Few though took the work of God as seriously as he did. Few shared his sense of duty, responsibility and privilege, instead seeing leadership as a status symbol rather than a Holy calling. As Moses had said: *would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets*. It is strange how wrong impressions and assumptions can lead to false conclusions and can warp our judgment of others how easily is it possible for us to be guilty of being judgemental in this way.

In Hebrews 3:2 we can read that *Moses was faithful in all his house*. He was faithful in his dealings with the whole House of Israel, but he was also faithful in his personal affairs. Zipporah proved herself a righteous woman, a worthy and supportive help-meet for him. If Moses was faithful in all God's house how much more the prophet like unto Moses - with him God also spoke to apparently and not in dark speeches. Of him we can read in Hebrews 3: 5-8: *And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:*

Aaron, although foolish and weak at this time did not have a hard heart as we see him pleading for his sister's sake, and saw himself as equally guilty: 11,12: *And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb*. This is true of all the people of the Lord who allow envy to be as the rottenness of the bones, (Proverbs 14:30) they become spiritually dead, though they have a name that they live. (Revelation

3:1) The punishment of Miriam was instant and was in front of everybody it was before all. The Apostle Paul writing to Timothy, 1 Timothy 5:19-20: *Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.* So Paul put into practise this teaching by standing against and rebuking Peter before all. (Galatians 2:11) So we see that leadership carries responsibilities and as leading should be by example - so also is punishment by example.

Moses was not offended by the accusation from his brother and sister, but on the contrary he willingly cried unto the Lord *heal her now O God I beseech thee*: verse 14: *And the Lord said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again.*

This sign of contempt revealed the need for a Redeemer and yet there was none except for the mercy of God. Because of Aaron's and Miriam's petty envy and jealousy, the whole congregation was delayed in their journeyings *for the people journeyed not until Miriam was brought back again*. How much does our petty issues and grievances delay and affect other people – our own slow development even delay the return of the Lord Jesus Christ? Something to think about. Let us therefore put away the lustings to envy and negative thoughts and rejoice in the spirit of the Lord who descended from above.

Brother Terry