

MIRIAM, MOSES' SISTER

Exodus 2:1-10, "A man of the family of Levi went and took for his wife a daughter of Levi, ²who conceived, and bore a son; and seeing that he was beautiful, he hid him three months. ³But not being able to hide any longer, she took a bow of reeds and caulked it with asphalt and pitch, and placed the child in it and put him in a reedbed on the bank of the river.

⁴And his sister stood in the distance, to see what would happen to her. ⁵And Pharaoh's daughter went down to wash in the river, and her maidens were walking along the riverbank, she saw the basket in the reedbed, and sent a maid of hers to take it. ⁶And when she opened it, she saw the child; and behold, the child wept. And having compassion on him, she said, Of the children of the Hebrews is this. ⁷Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I call you a nurse of the Hebrews, that she may nurse the child for you?" ⁸And Pharaoh's daughter answered, Go. Then came the maiden, and called the mother of the child, ⁹to whom Pharaoh's daughter said, Take this child and raise it for me, and I will repay you. And the woman took the child and raised him. ¹⁰And when the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, who became her son, and named him Moses, saying, 'For I brought him out of the waters.'"

Numbers 26:59 "Amram's wife was named Jochebed, daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; she gave birth from Amram to Aaron and Moses, and to Mary their sister."

Mary (or Miriam) first appears in Exodus chapter 2, although she is not mentioned by name. However, it is widely accepted that it was Moses' sister who watched over him on the occasion when his parents could no longer hide him at home.

Exodus 2:4, 7 (literally, "his"; Numbers 26:59, "his sister Miriam") speaks of Moses and "his sister." It does not say "one of his sisters" but "his sister" (singular) and obviously refers to Mary (or Miriam).

At that time, the Pharaoh of Egypt had ordered that the Hebrew children be thrown into the river to die, as the Hebrew people were becoming extraordinarily strong (**Exodus 1:20**).

Miriam's part in the plan to put the infant Moses in the ark and place it in the river to be picked up **required great courage** because it was an act of rebellion against the king. But she, like her parents, her brother Aaron and the midwives, feared God more than the king and **well knew that it is necessary to obey God rather than men.**

When Miriam realized that Pharaoh's daughter was taking the child, she approached her and asked if she wanted her to call a Hebrew woman to raise the

child. **This action of Miriam reflected not only her courage but also her wisdom.**

Miriam did not have to search extensively for some woman who could raise Moses. **She knew exactly where to look to find the perfect nurse for that all-important "job."**

Miriam was a very important character in the process of rescuing the nation of Israel from slavery in Egypt. The Bible presents her as a woman sent by God to lead his people to freedom.

Micah 6:4 says, "For I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage I redeemed you; and I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam before you."

This text indicates that Miriam was part of the leadership of the people of Israel.

Exodus 15:19-21, "9 For Pharaoh rode in the sea with his chariots and his people on horseback, and the Lord turned the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel passed dry through the middle of the sea. ²⁰And Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went after her with tambourines and dances. ²¹And Mary answered them, "Sing to the Lord, for He is exceedingly magnified; He has cast the horse and the rider into the sea. "

Miriam was called a "prophetess." The term was used to refer to Miriam when she led the women of Israel with music, dances, and a poem of praise to God.

This was the occasion of the celebration of the crossing of the Red Sea and the deliverance of the people of Israel from the bondage of Egypt (Exodus 15:20-21). This was the first reference to her name in the Bible and she is in fact called "Mary" (or "Miriam).

The song Miriam sang was a variation of the song of Moses at the Red Sea. The biblical text reports that Miriam said, "Sing to the Lord, who has crowned Himself with triumph by throwing horses and riders into the sea."

AARON AND MIRIAM'S REBELLION. Numbers 12:1, 2, "Mary and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman he had taken; for he had taken a Cushite woman. ²And they said, Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Has He not also spoken through us also? And the Lord heard it."

Numbers 12:8, God says, "Face to face I speak with him, and clearly, and not by figures; and he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

Deuteronomy 9:20, It seems that Aaron no longer remembers that when he made the golden calf and God was enraged against him, **Moses prayed for him.**"

Leprous Miriam. Numbers 12:9, 10 "Then the wrath of the Lord was kindled against them; and He departed. 10 And the cloud departed from the tabernacle, and behold, Mary was leprous as snow; and Aaron looked upon Mary, and behold, she was leprous."

Aaron repents and says "we," speaking for himself and Miriam. Numbers 12:11, 12, "And Aaron said to Moses, Ah! My Lord, do not place this sin upon us now; Because we have acted foolishly, and we have sinned. ¹²Let her not remain now as one who is born dead, who, coming out of his mother's womb, is half consumed."

It seems that Mary was the most guilty, because she alone was punished. **The punishment was severe because it was rebellion against God's authority. Although Aaron and Mary had a part in the leadership of the people of Israel** God had called Moses and given him authority to be the deliverer and official leader of the people of Israel in every aspect of their exodus from Egypt.

The lesson for us is that we must respect the authority not only of Christ (Matthew 28:18) but also the authority of Christ's apostles because they were commissioned by Christ and preached the gospel revealed by the Holy Spirit. They were inspired men, ambassadors of Christ.

Hebrews 13:17, "Obey your shepherds and submit to them."

Ephesians 5:22, "Let married women be subject to their own husbands as to the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is the head of the church."

Romans 13:1-4, "Let every person submit to higher authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist by God have been established."

Moses intercedes for her. Numbers 12:13. "Then Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Please heal her, O God, I pray".

God heard him but Mary had to be isolated outside the camp for seven days. **Numbers 12:14**, "She will be cast out of the camp for seven days, and then she will return to the congregation." God is no respecter of persons.

Although Miriam was a prophetess, she was severely punished when she rebelled against Moses' leadership.

Miriam's death. The Bible says that Miriam died when the children of Israel were in Kadesh Barnea, and was buried there (**Numbers 20:1**). The Bible makes no reference to Miriam's husband or children.

Wayne Partain, May 31, 2023