

## Numbers 12 Power and Prayer When Attacked

### Friday, May 31, 2024 ▫ Read Numbers 12

*Questions from the Scripture text: Who spoke against whom in v1? On what grounds? But what are they trying to get (v2)? But how does v3 compare Moses to them (and all men)? What suddenly happens in v4? To whom does He speak? What does He tell them to do? What happens when they come out to the tabernacle (v5)? To whom does He call? What does He say about the ministry of prophets in v6? With whom is it different (v7a)? What does YHWH say about Moses in v7b? How does He relate differently to Moses than to other prophets (v8a-c, cf. Ex 33:19-23)? What effect should this have had upon them (v8d-e)? How does v9 describe the abrupt ending to this interview? But what has happened to Miriam (v10)? Who now sees it? Whom does he now address, in what manner (v11)? What does he ask for? What does he confess? How urgent is the pleading in v12? Whom, then, does Moses address (v13)? For what does he ask? What is YHWH's answer (v14)? What happens (v15)? What does not happen? For how long? Afterward, where do they go (v16)?*

**Why is humility so important?** Numbers 12 prepares us for the evening sermon on the Lord's Day. In these sixteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **humility keeps us from provoking God's anger on the one hand, and also from failing, by trying to vindicate ourselves, to leave room for that anger.**

**Attacking the Lord's servant,** v1-3. Moses is faithful in all God's house (v7b, cf. Heb 3:2, 5). But the Lord's servants (and His Son, ultimately) have always found themselves under attack. This attack has several classic characteristics. ▪ It comes from family. Just as Jesus's own earthly family were among His detractors during His earthly ministry, He has warned us that those who follow Him will often experience the same. In this case, it is spearheaded by Miriam. We can see this both by her name being listed first in v1, and by the implication of her being the one who is struck with leprosy. ▪ Whether women or uncalled men, there is often ministerial jealousy on the part of those who are less prominent in Christ's service. Aaron was high priest, and it was not enough for him! ▪ It is disguised in moral and spiritual terms. Your author once believed that this "Cushite" was an Ethiopian, as the NKJ indicates in its translation. But, apparently, Midian was also identified with Cush (cf. Hab 3:7), and since the Lord tells us nothing of Moses having two wives, it seems that this was Miriam and Aaron's "spin" on Moses's marriage to Zipporah. They pass off their challenge as being on the grounds of ethnic integrity (v1) and spiritual equality (v2). But God's comparison of Moses's humility exposes the pride that is truly behind their challenge.

**The Lord defends His servant,** v4-9. When YHWH commands the three to come out, one wonders if Aaron and Miriam think they are about to "get their share" of Moses's prophetic office. After all, we just heard about the 70 back at ole' "Graves of Craving," and they received their office in a similar way. But once they've stepped forward in v5, things quickly go downhill for them.

The Lord asserts Moses's faithfulness (v7), and singles him out above all other prophets (v8a-c), before rebuking them for speaking against him (v8d-e). It is Moses's knowledge of the God Who is angry with His servants' attackers (v9) that enables Moses to be so meek with respect to himself (v3). For you too, whether in office or otherwise, confidence in God to vindicate you is the path to loving your enemies and being humble under fire.

**The servant intercedes for his attackers,** v10-16. One affliction of leprosy upon Miriam (v10), and Aaron goes from challenging Moses to praying to him for forgiveness (v11-12). But Moses knows his own place and prays for that forgiveness (v13). The Lord's answer (v14) is a reminder that men in leadership must add wisdom and strength to their humility, lest they compromise order, propriety, or justice. But Moses is still heard, for the seven days (v14-16) is half the total time prescribed (cp. Lev 13:1-8 with Lev 14:8-9).

**The Son Who is faithful over all the house.** Heb 3:2, 5 quotes v7 in the context of exalting Christ above Moses. Jesus's exaltation is of an entirely different order than Moses's, even when considering how Moses is exalted above all other prophets! And this comes out in Mt 9:1-8, where Christ does not need to pray to forgive sins. He has that authority in Himself! It must have been encouraging to Aaron and Miriam to hear Moses's prayer in v13, after they had heard the Lord's high commendation of Moses. How much more for us to know that Jesus prays for us (cf. Rom 8:34, Heb 7:25, 1Jn 2:1)!

Whom might you be in danger of speaking against wrongly? Who are speaking against you? How would humility help you in both situations? Why don't you need to try to vindicate yourself for your own sake?

*Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for giving to us Christ as our Great Prophet. Grant unto us humility under Him, so that we do not speak against His officers. And help us to trust You to vindicate our name. Thank You that Jesus prays for us for our forgiveness. For His sake, do forgive our sins, we ask in His Name, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP46 "God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength" or TPH68A "God Shall Arise, and by His Might"**

**(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via [hopewellarp.org](http://hopewellarp.org))**

Numbers 12. These are God's words. Then Miriam and Aaron spoke. Against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married. For, he had married an Ethiopian woman. So they said, as Yahweh, indeed spoken only through Moses Has he not spoken through us? Also, you always heard it. Now, the man Moses was very humble more than all men.

Who are on the face of the Earth. Suddenly, you always said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam. Come out, u3 to the Tabernacle of meeting. So, the three came out. And he always came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the Tabernacle and called Aaron and Marion.

And they both went forward. Then he said here, now my words If there is a prophet among you, Oh, y'all way. Make myself known to him in a vision, right? Speak to him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. I speak to him face to face.

Even plainly not in dark sayings. And he sees the form of Yahweh. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? So the anger of Yahweh was raised against them and he departed When the cloud departed from above the Tabernacle suddenly Miriam became leprous and As white as snow.

Then Aaron turned toward Miriam and there she was a leper. So Aaron said to Moses, Oh my Lord. Please do not lay this sin on us, in which we have done foolishly and in which we have sinned. Please do not let her be as one dead. Whose flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb.

So, Moses cried out to you all by saying, please heal her. Oh God, I pray. Then you always said to Moses if her father had but spit in her face. Would she not be seen seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days? And afterwards, she may be received again.

So Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days. And the people did not Journey till Miriam. Was brought in again. And afterward the people moved from Azeroth. And, In the wilderness of bread. So, for the reading of God's inspired and an errant worked,

The scripture does not tell us specifically, whether or not The name, hazaroth or confined. For the third stop of Israel on. Journey from Sinai to the promised land. Came on

account of this incident. But it is. The third stop and it's the third stop. That is defined. By sin on the part of the people.

And by the Lord. Punishment and response. And in this case, the sin is especially Attacking the Lord's servant. speaking against the Lord's servant, And so we see in the first three verses, the speaking against the Lord's servant, And then we see if reverses four through nine. The Lord's response defending.

His servant. And then we see. In verses 10 through 16. The servant. Interceding, for his attackers. So, the first thing we see is The people attacking the Lord's servant. And there are some things that patterns throughout the history of Attacks on God's servants from within his church. Notice that it's from those who are close to him.

Miriam and Aaron. His family. Moses is. Youngest. And perhaps there's a familiarity that has bred contempt. Just as happens with. The Lord Jesus and his family. And as often happens with the Lord's servants, Throughout the ages.

Notice the arrogance. Of Miriam and Aaron. Is contrasted by God. Is contrasted with Moses humility. Verse 3. Says another man Moses was very humble more than all men. Who are on the face of the Earth. So it comes from family. It's led by a woman that's often the case.

Strong-willed. Women or a perennial problem. in the church. Miriam is listed first. And not, just because she is. the eldest, although that that is the case. But also it is implied. That Miriam is the ringleader by she being the one. Whom the Lord strikes with the leprosy.

So, you know, that's those who are near him. It's not very strong world woman. notice. it's motivated by A false sense of equity. This idea that, all the leaders in the church. should have the The same. Prominence and be given the same. hearing Especially this is the The language of Prophecy as Yahweh.

Indeed spoken only through Moses. Often those who are in office. But not as prominent and don't have the same hearing. There is a temptation to jealousy. Miriam was the one who had led all the women. When the women? sang by the Red Sea. Aaron is the high priest?

but that's not good enough for They want to speak as much as Moses, they want to be heard. As much as Moses. So we must watch our hearts for that jealousy and If the Lord brings you into, A place of prominence, just That there is likely to be that jealousy.

And, Last pattern or classical. Characteristic of this attack on Moses. takes the form of a pseudomoral attack. We know from an interesting passage. Habakkuk 3 verse 7. that Midian and Cush. Or identified with one another. And this is, The Cushite woman. Him. He had married for, he had married a Cushite woman.

Now, the Lord does not tell us here that Moses was married to two women at once. there's no mention of a second marriage. And the Lord doesn't tell us that Zipporah had died. So, it's likely that they're talking about Zipporah the Midianite who being associated or identified with Cushites, they use.

The most foreign sounding name possible for her to try and stretch or press their case. And perhaps they're even thinking about how the plague of quail started with the mixed multitude and maybe Moses was encouraging listening to the mixed multitude because he had married this Midianite this Cushite People twist scripture.

to come up with their own false morality and That can sound very Pious and very righteous. I know a man. Was unanimously recommended. To a congregation for a call by a session. But people who did not like the man for other reasons. Protested. That he was interracial married.

That this goes against God's separation of the peoples at Babylon, doesn't recognize how even in heaven. They're there from every tribe and tongue and family, and Nation, the races aren't mixed. They said, even in heaven, Disgustingly bad theology. But attacks on a faithful servant. cloaked in the Disguise.

Of moral concerns. The cards. Assessment. Of Moses in verse 3 is that he is very humble more than all men who are on the face of the Earth. Notice that? Does not even defend himself. Try to vindicate his name, it is Yahweh. Who heard it? And diverse. And ultimately if you're the Lord's servant.

You don't have to worry about vindicating yourself. There may be times when a Doctrine is under attack. The way it was in Corinth for instance. Where Paul says, I write as a fool or I speak as a fool. In other words, he wasn't saying that it was wrong for him to write what he was writing.

Is saying that under other circumstances. Yeah, it would be wrong. But here for the sake, of the doctrine, for the sake of the truth, That was identified with him. He was Defending himself and his authority. And also doing it under the inspiration of the spirit. But if you're the Lord's servant and this is the Lord's servant at any level, if you belong to the Lord, if you believe in Jesus Christ, you do, Then you know that any attack upon you the Lord hears The Lord receives it.

as an attack upon himself. The Lord will vindicate your name? The Lord will avenge you. You don't need. To worry about, what if all the other people think blah blah blah. You know, so don't spend time like so many do. Obsessing on the internet looking up narcissists and looking up.

any of the other psychological disorder names that have been given to various collections of sins, That are especially found in people. Who attacked the Lord and to attack the Lord's people, and to attack the Lord's servants. You don't need to fret. About those things. Cuz the passage moves from.

The attack upon the Lord's servant of the Lord's own defense. You always heard at verse two. Suddenly he always said Verse 4 and Yahweh came down and called Aaron and Miriam verse 5. Perhaps. even up until this point, Aaron and Miriam are so blinded by their self-righteousness, their certainty.

That. if they were elevated. So that their opinions would be heard by The nation of Israel. in the same way that Moses was, that would be good for the nation. Don't you see how badly things are going with the nation? And perhaps they are. So self-righteous. That even up until this point, at the end of verse 5, they think what they're about to hear.

Or receive is. the Lord giving his Spirit to them. I mean, the last time the Lord had gathered people with Moses at the Tabernacle, remember it was the 70 elders. And he took some of the spirit that was on Moses and he gave them to the 70 Elders, who still turned out to be useless after that.

Because, they were not Moses and it was a reminder that whatever the Lord gives you of his Spirit. Whatever the Lord calls you to it's enough. It's going to be enough because the Lord is enough and he's wise in what he does. Like Paul and last night's passage in Romans.

Telling the Romans that they themselves are full of all goodness and all knowledge they have what is necessary for that to which God has called them? But that Paul is writing, not because of a lack of Of what the Lord had given them in themselves. But because God had given to Paul.

this ministry. And so he was doing that, which he had been caught, So, Aaron and Miriam perhaps right up to the end of verse five are thinking. Yep. This is going to be like the 70 elders, but we're going to do better than those 70 elders did.

After all, look at the month. That followed. what happened with the 70 elders? But they were in for a shock. Although they were convinced in their minds. That they were

doing what was right and what was fair, bringing Moses down a notch. Because all the people listening to him all the time.

and he correcting people. All the time, Etc. This must mean that Moses is arrogant. When actually, Moses was humble. All that to say. That we in our weakness. And we in our sinfulness, we often lack self-awareness. It is important. To be humble before God. And not to assume that you see things the way they are about others, or even about yourself.

But to be ready to receive the chastening and correction of the Lord. This is true even when others speak against you or attack you, That you not immediately become indignant. But that you are able to come before the Lord and and see. Between you and God before his word, by his Spirit helping you if there's some truth to what they've been saying.

And if there's not, well. And trust the Lord to help you and to show you that as well, but you don't assume that Don't assume. Either way. Should not assume that because people attack you, they're right? Now it is what the Lord says. In his word, and with the Lord.

Sees, as true. that is what. What matters and so it's important. To be real. And to be realistic. So, the Lord now. defending his servant He says verse six here. Now my words. If there's a prophet among you, you always Make myself known to him in a vision.

I speak to him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. I speak with him face to face even plainly. And not in dark sayings. And he sees the form of Yahweh. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

Now, the Lord might do this. might well say this not this exact thing, but something similar with any of his people. whom we are inclined to set our heart against or to speak against. Would he not say did I not create them in my image? Did I not give them Life by my spirit?

And send my spirit to dwell in them. Giving them faith in Jesus Christ. Are they not United to my son? Members of his bride. Members of his own body, bone of his bone and Flesh of his flesh. Have I not adopted them as my children? Do they not have the ability to call me Abba?

Do they not come before my face? Do they don't have angels who are assigned to them. Who see the glory of God. Are they not filled? With my spirit. Are they not marked for Glory? Are they not elect from all eternity? Why then were you not afraid? To be hostile towards.

Or to be bitter against. Or to be unforgiving with. Or to neglect and not care and be heartless. With their physical or emotional or relational, or even spiritual plight Why then did you not? Love them. As Christ has loved you, as I have loved you in Christ.

And if you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, Does he not say? Does the logic not hold? With anyone who attacks you. Do not. Be anxious or overwhelmed or dismayed or discouraged. By others attacks upon you. If you belong to the Lord, Not only has he told you described what those attacks look like in advance and said, you know, brother will be against brother and parent against child and so forth.

And And warned you that you may well have to Endure such things for his sake. But he's also shown us. That he takes up our cause he vindicates our name. You could be like, Whitfield. Although with Whitfield there were doctrines under attack that he probably should have defended himself.

But the principle upon which he refused to. Is a good one. Let the name of it field perish. Let Name of Jesus be exalted forever. And the certainty and the knowledge. That God will vindicate, all who are his

And the certainty and the knowledge. That God will vindicate. All, who are his, he will clear your name. He will come to your defense. And it's that humility that we heard about in verse 3 and confidence and what the Lord would do that. We see in versus Four through eight really four through nine.

The anger of Yahweh was roused against them and he departed. That frees Moses to even intercede. For these who have attacked him. Now there's be, maybe something in when you were attacked that you are especially called to do. Pray for those who persecute you. Bless those who spitefully use you.

These are commands in scripture. So these are General commands, so this is not just for

Abraham with abimelech, or Moses with Aaron and Miriam or job with his three friends. This is for all believers. That there is a special circumstance when we are being attacked. Special assignment from God. To be intercessors. For the ones who are attacking us. So it's very important that we maintain humility that we maintain this hope in the Lord that doesn't allow us to get caught up in the mental maze.

Of bitterness and obsessing. In a way that keeps us from actually praying for them. So verse 10, when the cloud departs, From above the Tabernacle door, we assume it resumes its position above the arc, above the holy of holies, When the cloud departs from above the Tabernacle, suddenly Miriam was Lapras.

As. Aaron turned toward Miriam there. She was a leper. So Aaron said to Moses. Oh my Lord, please do not lay this sin on. In which we have done foolishly in which we have sinned. Please do not let her be as one dead. Whose flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb.

A few words from the Lord, and one striking of Miriam with leprosy, And Aaron goes from complaining against Moses. That he isn't as prominently listened to as Moses is. To praying to Moses for the Forgiveness of sin. Now note, that Moses cannot forgive sin. This is in God's sweet.

Providence to us. One of the main points in our Matthew chapter 9. Passage in your memory verse that, you may know that the son of man has authority on Earth to forgive sin. So, neither should we speak against the Lord's servants? Nor should we put them in a place?

That belongs only to the Lord himself. And Moses, of course. Does not irrigate to himself, does not? Take for himself a place or A prerogative privilege that is higher than belongs to him. Verse 13. So Moses cried out to Yahweh saying please heal her. Oh God, I pray. And we, in order not to Think too highly of ourselves which is often one of the Consequences of bitterness when you're attacked.

As you overly reassure yourself. Rather than having your confidence and hope in God. But here. by God maintaining to him. His humility Moses is enabled to. Recognize and realize his place. That he is merely a man. He cannot forgive sin. Is that what Aaron and Miriam need is not Moses's.

Forgiveness. It's the Lord's forgiveness. And when you and I sin against others, let us remember that. So what we need the most is not their forgiveness, but the Lord's forgiveness. And when others sin against us, let us remember that. That what they need? The most is not our forgiveness.

Not wrecked the restoration of relationship with us and Reconciliation with us. But when others have sinned against us, What they need. The most is restoration of relationship with the Lord reconciliation, with the Lord forgiveness, from the Lord. And bearing this in mind, we shall more be able to pity.

Those who have attacked us. And we shall be more prepared to pray. For those who have attacked us.

The Lord answers. Moses. That she does. To be punished. And, he gives her the seven days outside the camp. Which remember, just a month ago. When the people complained, At the place now called it burns. This place outside the camp. Where the lepers were? Where Miriam now? Was the place where the Lord's fire had broken out and consumed many.

So this is more than just being disgraced and shunned. by men and being Excluded from the camp or confined as the name of the place, hazaroth means To the outskirts of the camp. But, This is the place where the Judgment of God. Has just recently burned. Relative to the camp.

And so those who Know that they are not in a place to forgive sin. let them remember. That in addition to our humility, We sometimes must add strength and wisdom. And not just let things go. That there need to be real consequences for saying, especially when there are consequences.

The Lord has commanded If you follow Matthew 18, And you get to the third step. And there still isn't repentance. You have to excommunicate. You can't say, oh well, I think we should be patient. You can't say, oh well, I think we should really try to be gentle here.

Really. Should you be more patient than God? Should you be more gentle than God? Do you see how that's not humility? That's arrogance. And so Moses is humbled further by the Lord here in verse 14. You always said to Moses if her father had put spit in her face, Would she not be shamed?

Seven days. And the Lord. The Lord answers his servants. Intercession he does hear him. Not only does he heal her after the seven days but the cloud remains above the ark. Above the holy of holies for those seven days. Well, she she has not made to travel.

With the lepers with the those who are unclean. on the outskirts. he waits until Until her time has been served. Before he moves them. And that brings us to the end of the chapter and afterward the people moved from hazaroth and camped, in the wilderness of paren.

But praise God. We have one who is greater than Moses. What the Lord describes. Verses six through eight, about Moses. Exalts Moses as a prophet above any other Prophet, even. And yet it is. From verse 7. My servant Moses is faithful in all my house. That Hebrews chapter 3 in verse 2 and verse 5 of that chapter Compares, Moses unfavorably.

With the Lord Jesus. Saying that Moses was a servant. Who is faithful in all the house? But that makes him. But that makes him greatly lower. Then Jesus, who is a son? Who is faithful over? All the house. And not only is the Lord Jesus. So highly, exalted. By this passage which highly exalts Moses and then is used to highly exalt Jesus over the highly exalted Moses.

But the Lord Jesus prays for us. The Lord Jesus says to us the example of humility. Moses was the meekest man in all the Earth but Jesus was meaker. Still. He was in the very form of God, having the very substance of God. And yet. Did not grasp at his equality with God, but added to himself.

The form of a man or the form of a slave. Being found in appearance as a man. So, he took on The creaturely substance the slave substance. The man's substance. It wasn't just an appearance. There was substance. So greatly did our God. Humble himself. In order to save us.

And he intercedes for us. And he intercedes for us with perfect wisdom. He prays for us. He who is God and has authority to forgive us, and he forgives us in his own authority. He has also man taken from among men. So that he may pray for us as a man.

His intercession is different, even the in than the intercession of the spirit.

So, How Gloria says the Lord Jesus and how wonderful are his humility. And his intercession for us. These things. To are intentionally cold to our attention. By this chapter. Let's pray.

Our Father in Heaven. We thank you and praise you.

Reminding us that We belong to you in an everlasting love, and Because you have loved us and adopted us, knighted us to Christ. And dwelt us by your spirit. We pray that you would, Give us confidence in all of these things confidence. That you defend us that you hear what?

Spoken against us and you see what is done against us. We pray that you would also sober us with the knowledge that this applies also to, The sin that we commit. Particularly the sin that we commit against others, Protect us Lord from doing that. Help us, Lord. Take the opportunities when we are sinned against.

as these golden opportunities for interceding, for others. We pray that for Each one of us, specifically, That in the specific cases and specific people. Who are attacking us. You would make us to take off. Providential assignment of Praying for them. Have mercy. O God and forgive. We pray.

And thank you, most of all that you've given your son, our Lord Jesus. To be our great and final Prophet. And our great high priest to intercedes for us. And our King who humbled himself. For which he has been highly exalted. And before him every knee bows and every tongue confesses Glorify Christ.

In our lives, we ask For his glory. And in his name, Amen.