

Sermon: Interracial Marriage and the Interracial God (Numbers 12:1-10)

Scripture: Numbers 12:1-10

This month here at The Essential Church is called "Educate The Hate Month" because we realize that, despite our constant prayer to the Lord that "thy kingdom come, thy will be done," everything in the world doesn't go God's way. The Lord didn't intend divorce, and yet, the hardness of men's hearts, Jesus says in Matthew 19, has resulted in divorce. The Lord didn't intend for adultery to divide and conquer families because He outlawed it in Exodus 20 with the words "Thou shalt not commit adultery," but adultery and homewrecking continue to this day.

To move things closer to home, we just saw another school mass shooting this week, what many have said is the 18th mass school shooting in the first 45 days of 2018. For those who don't have a calculator handy, that's 1 mass school shooting for every 2.5 days. If we look at a given week, then there should be 2 mass school shootings in 5 days, 12 mass school shootings every 30 days, 144 mass school shootings every year. So Parkland, unfortunately, won't be the only mass school shooting to occur through the end of this month. The perpetrator or shooter, CNN tells us, was a man who hated interracial marriages, despised Jews because, apparently, his mother was Jewish, and he hated blacks. He despised blacks simply because of their color, nothing more. For him, Africans, African-Americans, Blacks, Ethiopians, descendants of Ham and his son, Cush, Cushites, whatever other label you can apply, were hated by him unconditionally. It was nothing they ever did to him; he just hated them because he chose to hate.

It is presumed that his hatred for black people is part of the motivation to shoot up schools and kill those at his old school, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on Wednesday, February 14th, what we know here in America as Valentine's Day, a day of love, a day of affection. On a National Day of Love, the shooter entered into his old high school to inaugurate mass hate. It is senseless to many of us, but make no mistake, the shooter had a motivation. All mass school shooters, serial killers, and terrorists do. Despite how offensive it may seem to our current political administration and Congress, and even some fellow Americans, I'm going to call school shooters a label that they may find offensive because they've tied it up with Al Qaeda: school shooters are what I call "domestic terrorists."

The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooter, or ex-student, I should say (he was expelled last year), was motivated by hate, by prejudice, by evil, to do what he did. Now, there are some Christians in the USA and abroad who'd never kill anyone, but they do despise other races. I went to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as a student over a decade ago, but even then, in a place where public education has been made available to all, I met my share of racism. My first roommate was a dear friend and former high school classmate of mine, but she moved into her own apartment after a bedbug infestation forced me out of our shared dorm room. I then ended up in the next suite on the same floor with a person who was a true racist. I was due to move in with her temporarily, but due to the nature of the infestation in my old dorm room, the move with her was rather permanent in nature. After she couldn't seem to get rid of me either way, she came out and told me, in so many words, that she only wanted to room with white girls, not with me. Though she didn't say it, it was pretty clear that I, though being more fair-skinned than a number of white friends I had, wasn't "white" enough for her.

I decided to fight the idea of me leaving the dorm room and ultimately, she was offered a room on the tenth floor that, though seeming too high off the ground for me, was perfect for her. She had a boyfriend and wanted him to be over and sleep with her, and she didn't want me around to be privy to what was going on. I could tell that she was an unbeliever and wanted nothing to do with my God, and I didn't want to be privy to living with she and her boyfriend. The dorms were arranged by "two girls to a room," not "two girls and a boy to a room."

Well, I stayed in that same room all throughout the remainder of my college career, but it didn't go entirely smooth-sailing after that because, well, I ended up living with yet another racist roommate. She was someone who loved working with children, but always managed to distinguish black children from other children. She'd talk about white children without identifying them as "white," but whenever she mentioned black children, she'd call them "the black kid" or "little black kids," as though she had to mentally place a name on them to distinguish them from other children. She came from a suburban way of life, so I figured that it's highly likely she'd only grown up with white children, went to school where there were white kids, etc. Oh, and to make matters worse, she called herself a Christian who went to church on Sundays. Though God's stance on her racism is clear, she didn't stop to think about how her racism clashed with her so-called faith and the gospel message.

So when I speak about racism today, which is the topic of this sermon, though interracial marriage is the more full issue at play here, I speak from some manner of personal experience about just how racism still exists in the world. There once was a time when I'd never experienced it, but my mother told me that I

would --- and I did. And it changed me forever. I grew up being taught to love people for who they are and accept them as they are, but not all were taught like me. Not all came from Christian households, and even then, not every Christian applied the love of God in salvation to action with regard to loving their neighbor. To our surprise, there are some Christians in the world who love the Lord their God but who fail to love their neighbor as themselves.

Today's text, Numbers 12, puts us in a situation that few have ever preached about. I've been in church some few decades of life myself and I've never heard a sermon preached on the issue of racism. And yet, within our Educate The Hate Month, such a sermon is a fitting one because we can't hope to see racism crucified for the ungodly mindset it is without informing racists and those with racist tendencies about the love of God and how, whether black, white, Hispanic, Latino, or other, God still loves everyone equally.

I haven't heard a sermon on racism, and I doubt you have, either. Instead, it's something we talk about. We say that we're to love everyone regardless of the color of their skin, and businesses are taught to not discriminate on the basis of skin color, but few have ever gone to a church setting where believers are gathered in local worship and heard a sermon on racism. We're quick to talk about it, but yet, have rarely (if ever) looked in the Word of God to see what the Bible has to say. We call ourselves the church, and we say we believe in Jesus, we hold up the Bible as the unadulterated Word of God that is the authority on all matters (a statement we hold dear), but if all this is true, why is it that we don't point out God's hatred of racism in the Scriptures? I just don't understand how God's love has overcome racism in the Word, but all these years later, we're still talking about it and have yet to show our children in Scripture where it says that God loves all people, including black people.

Our text today in Numbers 12 finds us dealing with a few people: first, Moses, the main character in the situation who is marrying for the second time; Aaron, the priest of the Israelite nation and the brother of Moses; Miriam, the sister of Moses who saw that he traveled safely on the water as a baby and helped her mother get a job weaning her son by way of Pharaoh's daughter who found Moses on the water in Exodus 1. Moses was raised by Pharaoh's daughter, grew up in the finest education that money could buy, but comes to realize that he is Jewish, that his people are the ones that Egyptians have held in bondage some 430 years. He kills an Egyptian because he sees him beating a Hebrew slave, and then flees because of his murder. God calls Moses while he's in Midian, though it would be some 40 years later when the Lord would call Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. At the point of this text, Moses is leading the Israelites in the wilderness, as God has given he and the Israelites victory over the Egyptians. God has parted the Red Sea and let the nation walk through on dry land. He has given them gold and silver from the Egyptians and has let the Egyptians drown at the Red Sea after they continued to pursue the people of God.

We find in Numbers 12:1 that "Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman." We are told that these three siblings had a situation that divided them, an issue that pitted Miriam and Aaron against Moses. Though they were God's people, though they were the leaders of the nation and God had His hand on each of them, they didn't always get along. If you're a sibling and have brothers and sisters, you can understand what it's like to live with siblings. Though some would think that all is well with siblings, those who are siblings know differently. Though you love those with whom you share life, you don't always agree with them. Every conversation is not always lovely, every discussion is not always kind, and every word is not always "seasoned with grace," as Scripture says our words are to be.

Here we find that Moses had married an Ethiopian woman, an African woman, a Black woman, as we'd know her to be today. If she were alive, she'd have to select "Black" as her race on governmental forms when she applied for a driver's license, registered to vote, registered to attend college or graduate school classes, and so on. The text calls her "Ethiopian" by way of two Greek words from the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament: the first adjective is "Αἰθιοπίσσης" or "Aithiopisses," a word that refers to Ethiopia. The second adjective is "Αἰθιοπίσσαν" or "Aithiopissan." Both words are similar with some slight difference, but both are the only adjectives and information we're given by the woman Moses took to be his wife. She was "Ethiopian," African, and that's all we know about her.

Though the text doesn't say it, remember that Moses had already married Zipporah, a Midianite woman and daughter of Jethro, a priest of Midian, back in Exodus 2:21 after Moses fled to Midian to avoid being killed by Pharaoh for his murdering an Egyptian in Egypt. A measure of some years passed between the events of Exodus, when Moses married Zipporah, and Numbers 12, so I doubt that Zipporah is the Ethiopian woman, as some would claim. Next, Zipporah was a Midianite, a close kinship cousin of the Israelites; Ethiopians were not kin to the Jews in the same way that Midianites were. And, if Zipporah was the woman in question, why is it that the text doesn't mention her name in Numbers 12 but did in Exodus 2? It appears to me that, at face value, Zipporah isn't the Ethiopian woman. No, this is another woman, a second wife, which tells us that Zipporah had died by this time. Why would Moses have married a second wife when God's law forbid polygamy or bigamy?

Well, whoever this Ethiopian woman was, a Nubian queen, no doubt, was of little importance to Miriam and Aaron. The text says that they "spoke against Moses...for he had married an Ethiopian woman." All that mattered to Miriam and Aaron was her African heritage, her dark skin. They didn't care that she was a

God-fearer of the God of Israel, or that she made Moses happy, that she was a devoted wife to him, that she comforted him when the job of shepherding God's people became too demanding, etc. What mattered to Miriam and Aaron was her skin color, her ethnicity, that she was a Black woman. And they had an issue with her ethnicity, which is why they argued against Moses. This is another reason why the Ethiopian woman couldn't have been Zipporah: Zipporah was kin to the Israelites, so she would've been the same pigmentation and shared Jewish blood with the Israelites. On the other hand, this Ethiopian woman was likely of a darker pigmentation than Moses as well as Miriam and Aaron, and she likely stood out in the nation of people. There were some Egyptians that had come out of Egypt with the Israelites, and this woman could've been one of them, but she couldn't hide among the people. Her being Ethiopian was noticeable, otherwise, Miriam and Aaron wouldn't have made such a big deal out of it. Chances are, Miriam and Moses had also seen the Ethiopian woman in person; after all, Moses was married to her, so how could they avoid the sight of her?

And, though the text doesn't tell us, I have a feeling that this wasn't the first argument between the trio. As with all families, something starts in one discussion and carries over to many others before one person blows up in the discussion. So, perhaps this was the 5th, 12th, or 20th conversation about the Ethiopian woman Moses had married, and Miriam and Aaron really wanted to know what possessed Moses to do such a thing. "Moses, why have you married this Ethiopian woman?" "Well, God has confirmed for me that she's the one," I imagine Moses saying. "Well, and what makes you think that, exactly?" Moses says, "The Lord has shown it to me. Zipporah is gone, and I want to be married again, I miss the married life, and the Lord has granted this woman to be my second wife." And then, we read the words of verse 2: So they said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" These words tell us another part of the discussion between the trio. Moses says, "The Lord has revealed to me that this is the woman for me," to which Miriam and Aaron (Miriam leading the debate, no doubt) respond with the words, "Are you the only one the Lord speaks to? Does He not speak to us, too? And since He also speaks to us, you can't claim God revealed this to you because you have no advantage in the prophetic than we do. We're prophets too, Moses, not merely you." "Has He not spoken through us also?" They said to Moses.

In other words, Moses had to find some reason that justified his marriage to an Ethiopian that would convince them because claiming he was a prophet wasn't good enough for them. Moses didn't need to claim that he was a prophet; he could've merely said that God revealed to Moses what he wanted Moses to know, that God didn't need to reveal to Miriam and Aaron what He would do in the life of Moses. But, the prophetic managed to come up in the discussion, and Miriam and Aaron were quick to remind Moses that he wasn't the only prophet among God's people; they were, too. In other words, they were just as called by God, used by God, and special for God as Moses was. He had no advantage over them in the prophetic or the calling of God.

But as democratic as they made the call of God out to be, they were wrong --- about not only the divine calling and the prophetic but also their opposition of Moses' interracial marriage to the Ethiopian woman. This is why we're told at the end of verse 2 that "And the Lord heard it." Make no mistake, God was among His people: He had been a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, and had sent the Angel of His Presence among them to guide them in their journey, so God was with them. And God, in the presence of His People, heard Miriam and Aaron speaking this way against Moses.

Verse 3 tells us that "now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth," a statement in parentheses to remind us that this haughty nature from Miriam and Aaron was not from Moses. Moses was a humble man, but Miriam and Aaron, in their prophetic callings, had become haughty --- so much so that they believed God needed their approval of Moses' second marriage before it could happen. Perhaps that was also a problem between them: Moses hadn't revealed his desire to remarry before an official announcement that likely caught them off guard. They believed that Moses had to reveal it to them before revealing it to the people, but perhaps he didn't tell them until a public announcement. Perhaps he didn't tell them at all but went and married her first. Perhaps they didn't know it until after it had happened, and they were upset with their brother because he didn't reveal it to them before it happened so they could stop him.

The problem with Miriam and Aaron is that they believed God needed to share with them Moses' upcoming marriage with the Ethiopian woman before it happened. And if Moses had told them, it's a true conviction that they would've done everything to convince Moses to not marry this woman, to not go through with it. Moses knew how they felt and likely didn't alert them, and they were mad...and they wanted their brother to know how they felt about the situation. Who was he, to marry the Ethiopian woman, a woman outside of his race, who wasn't Jewish, who wasn't kin, a woman who was a "foreigner" in their eyes? Sure, she was a God-fearer; okay, they could live with that. And true, she had followed God's people and worshipped their God. That was okay, too, as a number of Egyptians had come out of Egypt and followed the Israelites. But, worshipping the Israelite God and living by His Law was one thing; marrying into the Israelite nation was another --- and this was the boundary that Miriam and Aaron couldn't accept. Ethiopians were good enough to convert to the Israelite faith, they were good enough to be servants in the Israelite nation, but marrying Israelites was the cut-off.

Before we throw Miriam and Aaron under the bus, though, let's remember that some Christians are also racist. Though the Civil Rights Movement has come and gone, and despite our celebration of Martin Luther King Holiday in mid-January and National Black History Month in February, we're still racist in our hearts. Here's an example: our churches are integrated, as a number of city churches have black, white, Hispanic, and non-Caucasian members. There are white Christians in these churches that will shake hands with these members, hug them, ask about their families, sit on planes, trains, buses, and cars with them, but don't want their children to marry them. These non-whites are good enough for church pews, but they're not good enough to marry into the white Pastor's family or the white deacon's family. White Christians will raise their children to be friends with Black Christians and their children, as long as the children don't get older and choose to marry interracially.

Native Americans will take the white man's money, and rage about how the white man has taken their property (and I say this as both an African and Native American descendant), but the white man is a no-no for their daughters and female relatives.

Blacks, Native Americans, and other ethnic groups are like the Jews: we've been enslaved, we've been exploited, and yet, we're just as racist, if not more, than the world's Caucasian population. Christians in these non-white ethnic groups believe that Jesus loves us all, that the Lord doesn't discriminate on the basis of race, and He doesn't --- but we sure do. We discriminate in that we want our children to "marry within the race." I've seen a number of shows that discuss the ethnic and racial divide in the US, where a Black woman and White man can't marry because their families disapprove of interracial marriage. "The children won't know their racial identity," some say. "How will you two fare in the world, as people stop and stare at you because of who you are?" Others ask. "And the children will go to school and be picked on by other kids," is another statement surrounding race --- as if to say that interracial marriage is nothing but a punishment on children born into the marriage union. Sure, there are obstacles with interracial marriage; as I said above, we live in a world where God's will isn't always done.

And yet, there are obstacles to being a Christian; how are we going to stop being Christians, too, because of the persecution we'll receive? These statements used to deter people from interracial marriage are nothing more than pointless guilt trips that distract from the true discussion. If two people are in Christ, believers, love each other, and are willing to raise their children in a loving home with lots of love, discipline, and the fear of God, what's the problem? What could be so cruel about that, to such an extent that they could be blamed for not loving their children? How cruel is it to have children raised in a home with two loving parents who have a real relationship with God and Jesus, love each other, and value their children and family unit? Just how bad can that be, really? It isn't cruel, or terrible in my opinion, to marry someone of another ethnicity or race and love them and raise a family together in the sight of God. In fact, it's exactly what those who wish to marry should do.

Miriam and Aaron had their reservations against Moses' marriage (which, really, should've been left alone because it didn't concern them), but the point of it all is that God heard it. God heard their racist statements shrouded in God-fearing language and terminology to sound like something other than the evil that it was. What is the message behind this? Christians, and those with racist tendencies, please understand that when you utter things in private, God hears them. Though those you're talking about may never know you said it, God does. There's nothing said, whether in secret or public, that God doesn't hear. As Jesus says in Luke 12:2-3, "2 For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. 3 Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops." Every word uttered will be heard by God, no matter the circumstances in which it is said. This is why we should always be careful what's in our hearts and what we say. And, when something is said against those on whom the Lord has a special anointing, the Lord hears it and will take action.

In verses 4-8, the Lord decides to act in light of what He's heard. He tells all three siblings, Moses, Miriam, and Aaron to come out to the tabernacle of meeting. The tabernacle of meeting is the place where God would meet with His people. In Exodus 29:42 and Exodus 30:36, the Lord tells Moses that He would meet with Moses there to talk with him. This time, though, Moses is accompanied to the tabernacle of meeting with Miriam and Aaron because the Lord wants to talk with the two co-conspirators against Moses' decision to marry the Ethiopian woman. In verse 5, God calls Miriam and Aaron out to chastise them for complaining against Moses. In verses 6-8, God corrects Miriam and Aaron about their view of Moses, the prophetic, and his decision to marry the Ethiopian woman:

"Hear now My words:

If there is a prophet among you,

I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision;

I speak to him in a dream.

7 Not so with My servant Moses;

He is faithful in all My house.

8 I speak with him face to face,

Even plainly, and not in dark sayings;

And he sees the form of the Lord.

Why then were you not afraid

To speak against My servant Moses?" (Numbers 12:6-8)

The Lord tells Miriam and Aaron how He speaks to prophets: "I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream." This is the normal way God speaks to the prophets. And yet, Moses is singled out. God speaks to him in a unique manner: "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 the Lord," God says in verses 7 and 8. Moses was a prophet, true, but the Lord's relationship and interaction with Moses wasn't the same as most prophets. Moses wasn't just any other prophet, contrary to the view of Miriam and Aaron. Up until now, they believed that Moses was like them: he was just another prophet, and they were prophets too, so surely, Moses had nothing over them with God. His calling was no greater than theirs, they believed, but God corrects their thinking here and says that their view of Moses' calling as "standard" simply wasn't true. Moses wasn't your typical prophet; he was a special prophet with a greater calling and greater relationship with the Lord than Miriam and Aaron. God tells Miriam and Aaron to stop presuming that they are equal to Moses in His eyesight because they're not.

This divine correction reminds us of the tendency to place all prophets, pastors, teachers, and preachers on the same level. True, when it comes to the races, Miriam and Aaron were no more special in God's sight

than the Ethiopian woman Moses married. However, when it comes to God's grace, and His talents and spiritual gifts, He is free to distribute them on an unequal level. In the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25, we learned that some get "one" talent while other servants get "five" talents or more. In spiritual gifts, we learn that some are called to be apostles, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and prophets, while others are called to be greeters in the house of the Lord, or musicians, etc. Not everyone gets the same gifts, but there is a hierarchy of gifts. Yes, in the church at Corinth, Paul had to remind them that there are a diversity of gifts but one body. The eye may not be the hand or the foot, but the eye is useful too. And yet, there is still a diversity of gifts; not all get the same gifts, and the Lord gives the spiritual gifts as He pleases in 1 Corinthians 12. The diversity of gifts, and the greater callings of some over others is a display of divine grace and divine sovereignty, God's prerogative to give grace as He sees fit. Remember, we don't all get the same measure of grace --- but we get grace. The Lord gives us all grace, but what measure of grace He gives to someone else, and whether or not it is greater than the measure He gives to us, is up to Him. And He doesn't have to answer to you and I, nor will He, about how He distributes grace. We are not God's equals, let's remember that.

The Lord was sending something of the same message to Miriam and Aaron: they couldn't presume they were on the same level prophetically as Moses because God had a relationship with Moses He didn't have with them. God spoke to Moses directly, and Moses got to see God's form, the Lord says. The Lord told them that, contrary to other prophets, the Lord didn't appear to Moses in dreams and visions but instead, spoke to him directly. The Lord didn't speak to Moses in "dark sayings," statements that were shrouded in mystery, but He spoke directly to Moses in clear, plain language so that Moses could understand it. The Lord spoke to Moses face to face, something He didn't do with other prophets, so no, Miriam and Aaron didn't have an equal relationship with the Lord that Moses had. The Lord revealed the differences between His relationship with them and other prophets and His relationship and calling with Moses. It was different, unique, set apart, special, distinct, not the standard prophetic calling. Miriam and Aaron erroneously believed that all prophets had an equal calling and relationship with God, but that wasn't true. It wasn't true in their day and it isn't true in ours. There are some pastors, for example, whose congregations will reach into the thousands and millions of people. Mine will likely never reach that high, but I'm still called to be faithful to God's flock (whatever flock it is God sends to me). The greater the calling of God, the greater the responsibility, and God knows that most of us can't handle greater calling and greater responsibilities. Not all of us can handle having five talents instead of one; some of us make it to Heaven with just that one talent, and that one talent takes all our energy and effort.

At the end of verse 8, we see the Lord ask a question to Miriam and Aaron: "Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" This question shows us that God was on Moses' side and against Miriam and Aaron, that God approved of Moses AND his decision to marry the Ethiopian woman and disapproved of Miriam and Aaron. What God said to them in so many words is this: "If I want to tell Moses

something, I don't need to tell you and Aaron first. I'll talk to Moses myself. And, since he married this Ethiopian woman, it goes to show you that I approve of his interracial marriage. If I didn't approve, I would've told Moses myself." In response to Miriam and Aaron, the Lord answers their most burning thoughts about Moses: that is, that their callings were equal and on the same plane as his. "Not so," the Lord said. Moses married an Ethiopian, but we know she must have been a God-fearer because the Lord forbade marriage to pagan worshippers. She was an earlier "Ruth," if you will, someone from another nation (she was from Ethiopia, Ruth was from Moab) who converted to the God of the Jews. And if she converted to the Jewish God, the one true God, then the Lord Himself was delighted to see Moses remarry.

There are many believers in this day and time that act like Miriam and Aaron: they presume that, because you're a believer as they are, and that God is "no respecter of persons," that they must approve of everything you do in order for God to approve of it. But Numbers 12 shows us that God doesn't need others to speak to us, that, if He disapproves of something, He'll speak to each of us individually. If God doesn't like something you're doing, He's already spoken to you in His Word and He'll speak to you in your heart and mind about it. Sure, God often sends confirmations of what He's revealed to us through teachers, preachers, pastors, and prophets, but what they say will only confirm God's revelation to us, not supplant it or add to it. God doesn't need a mediator between us and Himself. As 1 Timothy 2:5 says, "there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." God didn't need to talk to Miriam and Aaron regarding what He was doing in the life of Moses, and He doesn't need others to tell you about your life. Oftentimes, we pay attention to what others are saying about what God is doing in us because we're not listening to the Lord ourselves and He has to get our attention somehow --- but God still beckons us to come before Him and let Him speak to our hearts and minds and give us direction. He is capable of doing His work all by Himself; He doesn't need anyone else to do His job. If they could do His job better than He, then God wouldn't be God.

God's cloud departs from the tabernacle of meeting, and God's anger was directed toward Miriam and Aaron, and Miriam becomes leprous, white as snow. The word "leprous" in the Greek is "lepros," minus the English "u," that is. She has a condition known by its scaly nature, but she has leprosy all over. Remember the miracle where God told Moses to put his hand in his bosom and take it out to reveal it was leprous; then, he was to put his hand back in his bosom and it would become normal again? Well, Miriam had leprosy, but she had it all over. It wasn't just on her hands, or feet, or arms, or legs, but all over her.

What happens in the end is that Aaron turns to Moses and admits that they've sinned, and Moses prays to God to heal his sister. Why the Lord only punishes Miriam and not Aaron is something that we don't know the answer to. Presumably, Miriam led the way in the opposition to Moses, but we don't know the answer to

that. What we know is that both spoke against Moses, but Miriam is punished. Perhaps Aaron wasn't as vocal against Moses as she was. Perhaps it was that the presumption of equal prophetic calling was propagated by Miriam.

God tells Miriam and Aaron here not to speak against Moses, who was His servant, because He spoke to Moses directly and would tell Moses all he needed to know. And by rebuking Miriam and Aaron and striking Miriam with leprosy, God demonstrated His approval over Moses and Moses' interracial marriage. And the same interracial God that rebuked Miriam and Aaron today rebukes all those who, like Miriam and Aaron, would rebuke other believers for their interracial marriages. He's the same God yesterday, today, and forever.