

BOOK OF NUMBERS

Lesson 5: Hazeroth

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Hazeroth (Numbers 12)

Hazeroth (Chatseroth) – feminine plural form of the Hebrew word “**chatser**”

- Means **courtyard or enclosure** – something with a fence of sorts around it.
- Most often used in the Old Testament when describing the courtyard of the Tabernacle or the Temple, particularly the place **where trumpets are blown for worship and praise of the Lord.**

Here at this place, trouble is going to break out within the inner court of the Tabernacle, among the leadership of that inner court, and that trouble will come from a feminine quarter.

It will center around one woman bent on lifting herself up and blowing her own horn in a place where she should have been humbling herself and giving glory to someone else.

Read Numbers 12.

Miriam

What do we know about Miriam?

- Moses' older sister (Exodus 2:4) – ever watchful, quick to assess the situation, ready to take initiative and even some risks for her little brother.
- A prophetess endowed with a gift of song (Miriam's song, Exodus 15:20-21) – a worship leader. She led the women with timbrels as they danced and sang to the Lord
- Miriam's place in the camp
 - As an unmarried woman, she has remained in her older brother, Aaron's, household.
 - She sits at the table with the priesthood, eating of the priestly portions of the sacrifices, grain and drink offerings.
 - Her place in the camp is one of great status, if only by blood association with the High Priest, because she is not under a marriage covenant.
- She is intimate family of Aaron and Moses, and yet always in the limelight of her famous brothers.
- She had an early hand in directing Moses' life, but that is no longer her role and now she has withdrawn into the periphery of his life.

The Issue

What is Miriam's issue with Moses (v1)?

He married an Ethiopian woman – a Gentile

Where in the camp are Gentiles supposed to stay?

Outside the camp.

Where in the camp is the Ethiopian woman?

Inside the camp, inside the Levite camp.

- No ban for a Levite against marrying a foreigner
- Foreign wives are given the same provision as the Levite himself, because they fall under the canopy of marriage.
- That means they sit at the Levitical table and partake of the Levitical food - (Numbers 18)

Why does this rankled Miriam and Aaron?

- Moses has given her a preeminence even above the other Israelites and made her equal with Miriam.
- She is out of place.

Giving sin an opening...

- Moses' marriage to the Ethiopian woman is just a surface issue. Miriam's real problem is with Moses, which we see in verse 2.
- The Ethiopian woman is Miriam's **opening** to launch her actual grievance with Moses.
- **Remember, sin in our life seeks an opening.**
- **Given the opportunity, the enemy is going to use that opening to get us off track in this journey.**

Putting People in Their Place

How do you put someone in their place?

- You use your tongue.
- You undermine their standing among their peers.
- You devalue them. You make them seem common, replaceable, or expendable.
- You harp on what you consider to be their bad choices in life.
- You speak of them in a way that puts them in a bad light.

‘Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?’ ...”

- “God may speak through Moses, but God speaks through us as well.”
- If we are equal to Moses in this respect, so why not in every other respect?

The skewed comparison:

- Makes it seem like the only reason for Moses being lifted up is because God speaks through him.
- There is a presumption of equality based on gifts alone and not on the character of the man himself.
- God picked Moses for his humility. (v3)

Humility

Humility in the eyes of the world:

- A weakness, especially in leadership.
- Humility is unworthy of the truly great and powerful.
- If honor is given to you, take that honor and wear it on your sleeve for all the world to see.
- Do not dirty yourself with what is defiled or common. Guard your associations, and
- If you are a Levite of the first waters, definitely do not stoop to marry a Gentile.

Humility in God's eyes:

- Humility is a valuable character trait.
- Humility puts others first, seeks to give glory to others instead of one's self.
- Humility allows God to reveal His glory, and to be the glorious one among His people.
- God glories in lifting up His people. It is one way He reckons His glory.
- God can't lift a person up when they are puffing their own self up. Any honor God would have given Aaron and Miriam at this point would have been credited to their own efforts and devalued God.
- God is a sovereign God. He does not share His glory.
- It wasn't honor from Moses that Miriam and Aaron wanted. They wanted to be honored by God.
- It matters who gets the glory, but it also matters who gives the glory.

Humility

Miriam and Aaron fail to understand:

1. Why God chose Moses in the first place,
2. The depth of loyalty the Lord feels toward this faithful, humble man
3. The particular delight God takes in lifting up those who are downtrodden for His sake.

When you offer criticism of people:

- Never forget that the Lord is listening
- Never underestimate the consequences of tearing down someone who the Lord stands behind.
- Never forget this proverb:

Proverbs 25:6-7 ⁶ “Do not exalt yourself in the presence of the king, and do not stand in the place of the great; ⁷ for it is better that he say to you, ‘Come up here,’ than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince, whom your eyes have seen.”

God Corrects a Skewed Comparison

“If there is a prophet among you” (v6)

Remember there are now 70 Spirit-filled elders who have prophesied throughout the camp. Miriam and Aaron aren’t so special in that respect.

“I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision. I speak to him in a dream...” (v6)

- I am the one who initiates the relationship and gives the gift for My own purpose.
- The gift is not by your own power or merit. You are nothing apart from Me.
- Just because you are a prophet doesn’t mean you see clearly or understand at all.
- You speak words which you yourself do not understand, whose meaning is hidden from you.

“Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house.” (v7)

Implying that what they have done is an act of unfaithfulness – unfaithfulness to their brother

Camp Rule #2: Unfaithfulness to a **brother** equals unfaithfulness to **God**.

You think Moses’ place is attained by works, when that place is really attained by **faithfulness** apart from **works**.

“I speak with him face to face, even plainly ... he sees the form of the LORD.” (v8)

Moses, by comparison, sees Me correctly.

Moses is faithful to Me. Faithfulness is honored with a **closer** relationship with Me.

God's Response to Miriam and Aaron

1) Turns His back on them and departs.

- **Camp Rule #3:** When God lifts you up, He turns His face toward you. When He rejects you, He turns His face away.
- You cannot deliver the blessing without **loving** the people God has blessed. Aaron's ministry is hindered.

2) Miriam becomes **leprous**.

- Her tongue has revealed a corruption in her.
- It has become contagious – spread to Aaron
- The Lord has made that sickness visible on the outside.
- He has afflicted her with a specific sickness that affects her **place** in the camp.

Where did this conflict begin (v1)?

Miriam's judgment against Moses for bringing an outsider into the family.

She wanted the Ethiopian woman kept in her place outside the camp.

Where is God sending Miriam as a punishment?

Outside the camp. As punishment, God has done to Miriam what she desired in her heart to do to Moses' wife.

Response to judgment

Camp rule #2 – Sin against a brother = unfaithfulness to God. Confess your sin. Seek forgiveness. Intercede for each other.

Aaron's response: follow Camp Rule #1

- The sin was against Moses. It was counted as an act of unfaithfulness to God (v7).
- The sin was a lack of **respect**. Aaron begins by addressing him as “my lord” – Hebrew word “adon” meaning **master of servants**. Aaron humbles himself as a servant to Moses.
- He asks Moses not to lay this sin on them – meaning the **penalty** for this sin. He doesn't ask God to forgive them, but Moses – as if Moses' forgiveness is necessary to lift the Lord's judgment and take away the curse of death on Miriam.

Moses' response: “Please heal her, O God, I pray!”

Miriam's Response:

- Keeps her mouth shut.
- No confession
- No acknowledgement of Moses
- No humbling of self.
- There is still rebellion in Miriam's heart.

God's Response (v14):

- Does not deny Moses' request but neither does he let Miriam off the hook.
- Exiled for 7 days
- Public shaming of Miriam
- Journey is delayed for everyone

Leprosy in the Old Testament

Leprosy as a punishment

Leprosy was understood to be punishment from God (*Leviticus 14:34*) One of the tools God used to deal with a particularly kind of sin in a person.

- Very deep-rooted and pervasive, to the point of being a character flaw.
- Its source is difficult to **detect** and diagnose.
- A sign that you had a corruption inside you that would otherwise go **unchecked** and lead to your **death**.
- God would make your inner corruption evident with an **outward** manifestation of corruption.
- **Living** death - 100% fatal without intervention.

Punishment for stepping out of bounds:

- For overstepping your **place** or presuming an **authority** that you have not been given
 - Numbers 12, Miriam
 - 2 Chronicles 26:19, King Uzziah enters the Temple and offers incense like a priest
 - 2 Kings 5:27, Gehazi who tried to take payment for the healing the Lord gave to Naaman the Syrian when he was cleansed of leprosy
- **Murdering out of personal vengeance**
2 Samuel 3:28-29, David curses the house of Joab with leprosy for Joab's murdering of Abner out of personal vengeance. Joab's motives and actions were misplaced.

Leprosy in the New Testament : Putting off the Old Man Nature

Physical leprosy

- Blindness, weakness
- Disfigurement
- Loss of a sense of pain

Add to these the spiritual elements of:

- Uncleaness
- Being sent out of camp into the camp of the Gentiles and unclean

A picture of our “old man” nature. Read Ephesians 4:17-24.

- Like the rest of the Gentiles; alienated from God
- Blind of heart
- Past feeling ... The old man is desensitized to his own condition to the point where his conscience doesn't trouble him about the sin in his life, if he sees it at all.

Where on the journey timeline does this take place?

What character faults were part of Miriam's “old man”?

God gave that Ethiopian woman a place at the family table to challenge Miriam's idea of who is clean and who isn't, who is an outsider and who isn't.

Miriam was a prophetess, yet she had closed her eyes to the possibility that a Gentile might be counted among God's priestly family based on a covenant relationship

Miriam had to step into those Gentile shoes before she could judge her rightly.

Regardless of who we are physically, we all have the same spiritual old man to put off.

Symptoms of the Old Man

Symptom #1) Criticism that devalues or tears down one another's place in the body

- God's purpose can only be carried out by a camp body working in unity with one another.
- God has placed each of us within the body to build one another up, edify and strengthen the whole.
- It is not enough to identify with God. To keep **unity** in the body, we have to identify with one another as well.
- Building unity includes acknowledging the value of each person in the place God has given them in the body.

Read Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-13

- Not all roles in the body come with titles.
- Sometimes God puts you out of place to be a catalyst in someone's life.
- **Criticism reveals our old man value system still at work**
 - We communicate our value system through our criticism.
 - Our "old man" identity will often be anchored in our sense of place or status.
 - The old man glories in titles and positions of prominence.
 - Leadership positions become an ambition and a measure of personal worth.

Read Ephesians 4:25-27, 29, 31-32 and Ephesians 5:19-21

Symptoms of the Old Man

#2 Symptom: Disunity in leadership that trickles down to congregation

We don't always see what goes on inside the hazeroth, but we feel the disunity and it communicates itself to the body

If the old man isn't dealt with in these place by the people within these places, the repercussions quickly become public.

The people's response to Miriam exiting camp

How do we react when we see someone being put out of a congregation because of sin?

What if it is someone who has been attacking you unfairly, who you might consider an enemy?

“Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; lest the LORD see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him.” Proverbs 24:17-18 (NKJV)

Your reaction in this moment is going to affect your relationship with this person in the event that, by God's grace, they are restored to the fellowship.

God's Grace: God has everyone wait for Miriam's return. Progress in the journey is delayed for the whole body while God sorts out leadership's issues.

Warning against false leaders

Read 1 Timothy 4:1-5

- “...*having their own conscience seared with a hot iron*” Those with seared consciences that no longer feels pain.
- “*Speak lies in hypocrisy*”
 - They have an “old man” value system: **Covet** worldly pleasures, titles and positions of prominence
 - They skew the truth to fit their own value system, so that the truth becomes a lie.
- Apostate leaders are rooted in the **physical** aspects of this journey
 - They focus on physical requirements instead of the spiritual relationship
 - They teach that our physical conditions – who we marry, what we eat – are what define and rule our spiritual relationship
 - Their positions stem from the idea that the spiritual relationship depends on the keeping physical separation or cleanness.

Apostate leaders must be put out of camp.

- If allowed free rein, they will lead the people in the wrong direction and will defile the camp body
- To prevent the further spread of corruption in the church body.
- Whether they can be reconciled and remain in the church body is a decision to be approached with much prayer and evaluation.

A prophetic picture

A Gentile who has come into the family circle and becomes a partaker of the food from the altar as a result of a covenant relationship.

A Levite without a covenant relationship, who previously had a right to eat of altar but now that right has been taken away.

- Contrast between a spiritual covenant relationship vs. a physical blood relationship
- The covenant relationship allows the Gentile to cross boundaries.
- The picture of Gentile believers who would be brought into God's family in the future as a result of the New Covenant.
- Those who had the right to eat of the physical altar, like Miriam, had that right only by blood relationship to that physical High Priest and not by covenant.
- Those who could partake from the future spiritual altar would be allowed only by reason of the covenant relationship with our spiritual High Priest, Christ.

Read Hebrews 13:10-15.

Self-reflection

- In our day to day life, do we forget that our place at the Lord's glorious table was purchased at a cost?

We wouldn't be there without the sin sacrifice being burned outside the camp. Remember we all began outside the camp on account of our old man nature, and that old man nature can still crop up in life once we are inside the camp. This is why we need the constant cleansing and renewing in Christ.

- How good are we at identifying the signs of our old man nature asserting itself in our lives?
Are there symptoms we are not recognizing?
- How should we react when the Lord reveals a blind spot or insensitivity in us?
- How do we react when the Lord puts one of us "outside the camp" for sin?
Do we glory in their being put down?
- Be careful when you seek to put someone in their place. Put yourself in their shoes and consider your own place before passing judgment.

"Let he who stands take heed lest he fall."