

**LIVING GODS WILL**

**Prophet of God**

**MIRIAM**



**Miriam by Anselm Feuerbach**

**Born:** 1533 BC – Goshen, Egypt

**Died:** 1407 BC – Kadesh (126)

**Miriam** was the **older sister of Moses and Aaron.**

**Miriam** was the **first prophetess of the Bible.**

**Miriam** **intervened with the weaning of infant Moses.**

**Miriam** **was struck with leprosy by God for speaking against Moses.**

**Miriam** in the Bible is **Moses'** older sister. She is called "**Miriam the prophetess**" in **Exodus 15:20**.

She plays an important role in several episodes of Moses' life and in the exodus of Israel from Egypt.

**Miriam** is the sister who watches over her baby brother **Moses** among the bulrushes on the banks of the Nile.

Their mother had hidden Moses in a basket on the river bank to protect him from **Pharaoh's** decree to throw all Hebrew baby boys into the river (**Exodus 1:22–2:4**).

As **Miriam** watches, **Pharaoh's daughter** discovers and pities Moses, and **Miriam** quickly intervenes to ask if the Egyptian princess would like a Hebrew woman to nurse the child for her.

The princess agrees, and **Miriam** quickly gets their mother. Pharaoh's daughter commands Moses' biological mother to nurse him and bring him back to her when he is older.

By the grace of **God**, **Miriam** helps save the infant Moses (**Exodus 2:5–10**).

**Miriam** had another brother, **Aaron**. Their parents, **Amram** and **Jochebed** (**Exodus 6:20**), were both from the Levite tribe of Israel (**Exodus 2:1**).

Together, **God** uses Moses, **Miriam**, and Aaron to lead the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land in Canaan (**Micah 6:4**).

After miraculously **crossing the Red Sea** on dry ground and seeing the Egyptian army overthrown in the sea, **Miriam** leads the women with a tambourine in worshiping **God** with song and dance (**Exodus 15:20–22**).

The words to **Miriam's** song are recorded in **verse 21**: "**Sing to the Lord, / for he is highly exalted. / Both horse and driver / he has hurled into the sea.**"

In this same passage, she is given the title “**prophetess**,” the first of only a handful of women in Scripture identified that way. Others called a “**prophetess**” are

**Deborah** (**Judges 4:4**), **Huldah** (**2 Kings 22:14**), **Isaiah’s wife** (**Isaiah 8:3**), **Anna** (**Luke 2:36**), and **Philip’s four daughters** (**Acts 21:9**).

Unfortunately, **Miriam** later falls into a spirit of complaining. Both **Miriam** and Aaron criticize Moses for marrying a Cushite or Ethiopian woman, but **Miriam** is listed first (**Numbers 12:1**) so it is likely she instigated the complaint.

While the complaint was ostensibly against **Moses’ wife**, the discontent ran deeper:

“**Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?’ they asked. ‘Hasn’t he also spoken through us?’”** (**Numbers 12:2**).

In her criticism, **Miriam** was questioning the **Lord’s** wisdom in choosing Moses as the leader. **God** was angry that **Miriam** and Aaron were so willing to speak against the servant He had chosen.

The **Lord** struck **Miriam** with **leprosy**. Aaron, realizing the foolishness of their words, repented of his sin, and Moses, ever the intercessor, prayed on behalf of his sister:

“**Moses cried out to the Lord, ‘Please, God, heal her!’”** (**Numbers 12:13**).

After a week-long quarantine, **Miriam** was healed and rejoined the camp. As **Miriam’s** leprosy convicted Aaron of the foolish words they had spoken against **God’s** chosen servant.

It should also remind us not to judge those around us or live in jealousy when **God** has given a specific call to someone else

(see **Titus 3:1–15; James 1:26; 4:11–12; Ephesians 4:31; Philippians 4:8**).

**Miriam** had an opportunity to show the people of Israel what it meant to live in love as a servant of **God** without complaining, and, for most of her life, she did; but she failed in the matter of **Moses’ wife**.

We, too, have opportunities to show the grumblers and complainers around us what it is to be a servant of **Jesus**.

Let us draw them to **Jesus** through our love and servanthood and not be drawn away from Him ourselves.

Our next encounter with **Miriam** is at the end of the **40-year** desert wandering.

Because of their grumbling and lack of faith in **God**, the first generation of Israelites to leave captivity was not allowed to enter the Promised Land.

This included the prophetess **Miriam**. Most of the older generation had already died in the wilderness when Israel comes back to **Kadesh**, where they had started their wanderings.

It's here that **Miriam dies at age 126** and is buried (**Numbers 20:1**).

Hers was a life of responsibility and service, of **God's** calling and providence, yet it also reminds us that no one is too important to receive **God's discipline** for personal sin (see **1 Corinthians 10:12**).

### **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE**

**Exodus 15:20** Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them: "Sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"

**Exodus 1:22** So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive."

**Exodus 2:4-6** And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him. Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river. And her maidens walked along the riverside; and when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him, and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

**Exodus 2:7-8** Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?" And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the maiden went and called the child's mother.

**Numbers 12:1-5** 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, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" And the Lord heard it. (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.) Suddenly the Lord said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!" So the three came out. Then the Lord came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward.

**Numbers 12:9-13** So the anger of the Lord was aroused against them, and He departed. And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, 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 the Lord, saying, "Please heal her, O God, I pray!"



**Miriam Dancing by Carlo Maratta**