



## *Miriam – The Ultimate Big Sister – Exodus and Numbers*

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### **Big Sisters**

Do you have an older sister? Or maybe you know one or are married to one, like I am? If so, you are truly blessed, even if it doesn't always feel like it. Big sisters can be described as protective and supportive, encouraging and cheerleading, and sometimes bossy. In short, a big sister can be a lot like a second mother – a guide, protector, and part-time nag.

These adjectives describe Moses' older sister, Miriam, to a tee. Miriam's story is woven throughout Exodus and Numbers, extending from Moses' birth to the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea to their time of wandering in the wilderness. Let's see what we can learn about faithfulness and leadership from this remarkable woman.

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### **Miriam's Courage**

We first meet Miriam in Egypt at Moses' birth in Exodus 2. The Egyptians had become so fearful of how fast the enslaved Israelites were growing that Pharaoh decreed that every newborn Hebrew boy be thrown into the Nile River to drown. Moses' mother defied this edict and put Moses into a protective basket in the river. But Miriam's quick thinking saved him.

When Pharaoh's daughter found the floating baby, Miriam was watching and suggested that she find the baby's mother. Pharaoh's daughter readily agreed not only to save the baby but to pay the mother to tend him for her. Three years later, after he had been weaned, Moses was returned to the palace to be raised by Pharaoh's daughter.

Think about the courage it took for Moses' mother to defy Pharaoh's orders, and for his big sister, Miriam, to guard and rescue her little brother. Miraculously, not only was Moses' life spared, but he was raised by his Hebrew mother long enough to learn some of his people's ways before growing up in the Pharaoh's palace.

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### **Miriam's Leadership**

We don't see Miriam again until nearly eighty years later. God had called Moses back to rescue His people from Egyptian bondage. After God led them out and across the Red Sea in the miraculous crossing, Miriam took center stage. This time, Moses' big sister became the worship leader. Taking a tambourine, she led the women in praise and celebration.

Miriam had clearly become a leader among the Hebrew people. They gladly followed her in a joyful celebration that turned their fear into hope. This kind of leadership did not happen overnight or simply because she was Moses' sister. It had grown over time as she faithfully led and encouraged her people.

In fact, Micah 6:4 says that God sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to lead His people. That means Miriam, a woman, was called by the Lord to be a leader, not just a background figure. Leadership in God's Kingdom is not about gender, position, or title. It is about faithfully using the gifts the Father has given us to serve Him by serving others.

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## Miriam's Failure and Discipline

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Numbers 12:1-16 tells us that bossy big sister Miriam and her brother Aaron criticized Moses' authority. They had grown tired and jealous of their little brother always being in charge. But this was more than a family squabble. It was a direct challenge to God and His choice of calling Moses into a special leadership role.

They were envious of Moses's clear anointing from God. However, God burned with anger. He confronted them directly and made it clear that He had set Moses apart in a special way. To make His point, God struck Miriam with leprosy for seven days. The fact that Aaron was not punished implies that Miriam was likely the ringleader of the revolt.

But she was healed when Moses appealed to God. Notice that God never treated Miriam as anything other than a leader who made a mistake. Through this ordeal, Miriam showed her people and us that even great leaders can be wrong and still be restored to leadership through God's mercy.

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## Using Miriam's Legacy Lessons

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Miriam's story reminds us that God uses imperfect people like you and me to accomplish extraordinary things. Here are three lessons from Miriam's remarkable life that we can learn and apply in our faith journey.

- **Be courageous in small things.** You never know how God will use your obedience.
- **Use your influence wisely.** Leadership is both a gift and a responsibility.
- **Guard against pride.** Stay humble and remember, even when we fail, God offers restoration.



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