

others outside the team. The leader is often unaware of what is taking place until the insurrection causes some overt difficulty that reveals the spreading poison.

The occasion of the conflict

Ostensibly, Moses' marriage to a Cushite woman was the cause of distorted thinking and acting on the part of Miriam and Aaron.<sup>9</sup> That Miriam was the chief culprit is clear from the feminine form of the verb used in verse 1 and also that she was the one punished. Possibly a rivalry between two women triggered the rebellion.

This was only a surface cause, the root problem is revealed in verse 2 of Numbers 12 where both Miriam and Aaron are credited with the statement: "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses. . . hasn't he also spoken through us?"

God had privileged Moses with face to face communication (verse 8). There is no evidence that anyone else had such an opportunity. In chapter 11, verse 16, the Lord communicated His will to Moses concerning the need to appoint seventy elders over the people. The Lord explained, "They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone." It is probably that Miriam and Aaron felt slighted by the way in which the Lord worked through Moses on this occasion.

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<sup>9</sup>Many commentators mention the connection between Cush and Midian in Hab. 3:7 in support of the idea that the woman was Zipporah. It is likely, however, that this is a reference to a more recent marriage.