

## Jealous Powerplays: Chazeroth

*"And they departed from Kibroth Hattaavah, and encamped at Hazereth (Chazereth)," Numbers 33:17*

In the Bible, a remarkable story is told of a centurion with a sick servant. This encounter between Yahshua and the centurion is one of the most dynamic examples of living faith given in the Scriptures. The Roman centurion approached the Saviour seeking healing for his beloved servant. But, rather than allowing the Master to accompany him to the bedside, the centurion said, "I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof... But, say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goeth; and to another, 'Come,' and he cometh; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he doeth it."



Yahshua "...marveled... and said unto the people... I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel," (Luke 7:6-9).

What was so special about this man's understanding of the chain of command which so aptly expressed living faith? Sub-

mission to God-given authority is one of the purest manifestations of faith. To demonstrate this, let us carefully examine what it means to be submitted under God-given authority. In so doing, the underpinnings of faith will be fully revealed.

Yahweh has set up structures of authority in the life of each person. Of course, the highest authority is God Himself, Who is Ruler over all. He is "...the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords," (1 Timothy 6:15). Under Him, Yahweh has established human authorities over us. They are positioned in the spiritual and physical family, the government, and our places of employment. All authorities in our lives are in place because Yahweh has either allowed them to be established there, or has set them up directly, as it says in Romans 13:1-7:

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Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour, Romans 13:1-7.

Yahweh has set up a chain of command over each person for the purpose of shaping our characters. Persons in positions of authority under God are to punish evil and praise righteousness (see 1 Peter 2:13-14). As Bill Gothard notes in his booklet titled *How to Get Under God's Protection: Principle of Authority*, Yahweh has

promised many blessings to His Children if they will submit to Him by humbly remaining under His chain of human authority. The only exception to submission is when the human authority requires us to disobey God, as it says in Acts 5:29. The blessings promised to those who submit under God-given authority are:

- Things will go well for you – Ephesians 6:2-3
- You will be granted a long life – Ephesians 6:1-3
- You will bring delight to Yahweh – Colossians 3:20
- You will avoid fear of condemnation – Romans 13:3
- You will maintain a good conscience – Romans 13:5
- You will obtain a good report – Hebrews 13:17
- You will receive God’s inheritance – Colossians 3:23-24
- You will receive glory from God – 1 Peter 2:18-20
- You will not blaspheme God or His Word – 1 Timothy 6:1
- You will be given clear guidance and direction–Prov. 6:20-22
- You will be protected from evil entrapments – Prov. 6:23-24
- You will gain discernment – Proverbs 15:5
- You will receive Yahweh’s praise – 1 Peter 2:13-14
- You will honor those whom God established–1 Thess 5:12-13
- You will escape the destruction of pride – 1 Timothy 6:2-4

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It is also noteworthy to consider the examples of David and Paul, both of whom faced an unsanctified authority, and yet remained submitted, reverencing the person’s position even when the person himself was unworthy of respect.

David was hunted and persecuted by King Saul, who was nothing short of demon possessed (see 1 Samuel 16:23). Yet, when David had



opportunity one night to creep into Saul's campsite and take his life, David would not harm "the Lord's anointed." He understood that it is in the Hands of Yahweh, and Him

alone, to punish our authorities who are abusing or corrupting their God-given power and position (1 Samuel 24:6-11).

Similarly, the apostle Paul, when brought before the Jewish Sanhedrin to give an account of his teachings, respected the position, even when the person was unworthy.

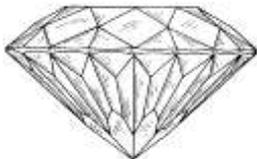
During this encounter, the high priest, whose identity was unknown to Paul at the time, commanded for Paul to be slapped across the face. With the sting of this cruel slap still smarming upon his cheek, Paul verbally rebuked the high priest. Immediately Paul was informed that he was addressing the high priest. Paul quickly apologized and refrained from further reprimanding him, as we read in Acts Chapter Twenty-three.



*And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people, Acts 23:4-5*

Submission is "an attitude of reverence in which a person voluntarily places himself (herself) under God-given authority as an act of faith in

the sovereignty of God” (Bill Gothard, *How to Get Under God’s Protection: Principle of Authority*, page 3).



When we are submitted to those placed in authority over us, -submitting both to the “good” and to the “froward,” as it says in 1 Peter 2:18, we recognize that Yahweh is in charge of our lives. He uses these authority

figures to perfect our characters, like the way a jeweler cuts, polishes, and shapes a precious gemstone. Because God is only good, and is always working to accomplish good in our lives (Romans 8:28), we can know beyond all shadow of doubt that our authorities are being used for good in some way. This is living faith. Rather than looking to the human, we look beyond them to our Heavenly Father, seeking to learn what He is working to teach us through this submission opportunity. So long as something good is being accomplished (whether it be a witness or character development), the authority will be permitted to remain.

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When this ceases to be true, if we continue to remain submitted to Yahweh even patiently enduring the trial of an unjust authority, our Heavenly Father will discipline our authority figures Himself. This will either bring a hard “master” to repentance, or God will remove him entirely, as He did with the Pharaoh of Egypt in delivering the Children of Israel.

Thus, learning to remain submitted under God-established authority is a vital part of living by faith. And when we rebel against the authorities Heaven has established in our lives, we are actually rebelling against God, as Satan did in instigating sin so long ago. Because rebellion opens us up to the control of the enemy (the father of rebellion), it is likened to witchcraft (1 Samuel 15:23). And this

ungodly influence was exactly what was spreading in the camp of Israel as they pitched at *Chazeroth*.

## REBELLION IN THE RANKS



At this thirteenth encampment, Moses' sister Miriam began to be resentful against those placed in authority over her. With the anointing of the seventy at the previous camp and the attention

given to the "foreign" wife of Moses, jealousy began to sprout and flourish. Having taken her "eyes" off the "Divine "Presence" working through her authority figures and leading her, Miriam's attention had turned to prideful self-promotion.

At first, Miriam's lack of submission filled her heart with a seething resentment against those who were being promoted ahead of her. But, she did not keep this internal poison to herself, she voiced her dissatisfaction to her brother, so that the unsubmitted spirit quickly spread to Aaron also.

*'And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian (a Cushite) woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. <sup>2</sup>And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath He not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it, Num. 12:1-2.*

The name and number of this thirteenth campsite, which was named *Chazeroth*, reveals a great deal about what took place in Israel's ranks. *Chazeroth* has several meanings. It signifies "the courtyard," or "settlement,"<sup>162</sup> or "springs of the enclosure."<sup>163</sup> William Harsha says the name signifies "a division."<sup>164</sup> Certainly, the experience here included all those shades of meaning. This was their thirteenth camp, a number that means "rebellion," and "apostasy."

Ever since the last station, when the anointing of the Lord was placed on two in the camp, without the “authorization” of Moses, thoughts and attitudes seem to have been building to a crisis point. “Why are these individuals elevated to leadership. Why am I not more exalted than I am? Why shouldn’t greater homage and importance be given to ME?”

Part of a powerful family, Miriam was included in important conference sessions, when Moses and Aaron, and other family members discussed Israel’s problems. In fact, she was considered a “mother in Israel,” a respected term for a prophetess. For one in this position and the oldest member of the family, her opinion was no doubt valued. She was accustomed to being approached for counsel and was respected as a first lady of Israel.<sup>165</sup> But now she was unsatisfied with her own station and began pridefully coveting the greater honor Yahweh had bestowed upon others.

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While submission to God-given authority walks hand-in-hand with faith and meekness, pride is partnered with insubordination and rebellion. Yet this prideful uprising against God-given leaders was exactly the opposite of the qualities Yahweh looks for in the people

He chooses to advance. Yahshua said, "Except you become like little children," -eager to please, and easy to lead, -"you will not enter the Kingdom" (Matt. 18:3). Therein is a rebuke and warning for “wannabe” leaders.

In that same chapter, Yahshua outlines how to respond when one thinks someone has done them wrong: Go to that person personally, quietly, humbly (Matt. 18:15, 16). This is the rule for how to approach rifts in relationships. But in this case, with the top leaders being next to Moses, Yahweh had a different perspective. He did not encourage Moses to go to Aaron and Miriam, inquiring about their complaints; instead He made an example of them for all time.

To accuse a brother is the work of "the serpent," "the devil," who still sponsors "railing accusations" (Jude 1:9, 10) against Moses, as "king" to the multitude. In this case, Moses was not only a literal and spiritual brother, he was also their divinely appointed leader. In speaking evil of him, a lack of submission to Yahweh's ordained chain of command was plainly revealed. Miriam and Aaron were speaking "evil of those things of which they knew not."<sup>166</sup> And because rebellion is likened to witchcraft, these two had allowed them-selves to become mouthpieces for Satan. In desiring a more exalted position for themselves, Miriam and Aaron were acting just like the enemy of souls, who had aspired to become like the Most High, to be exalted above the clouds, and sit as leader of the nations. Con-sequently, the Lord God Almighty made an example of them.

*"All these things happened unto them (Israel) for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition... "who live in the last days.*

*All these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come, 1 Corinthians 10:11.*

The Lord God Almighty brought this rebellious blight swiftly to judgment. He, as the Master, took responsibility, recognizing the criticism was ultimately against His authority and appointed leader. He spoke "suddenly" (*Strong's* says "instantly, straightway");<sup>167</sup> in other words, He came to the point directly. Calling Miriam and Aaron to the door of the Tabernacle, He rebuked them sharply. Addressing Aaron and Miriam in the presence of Moses, He said, in effect, "Now listen up! If there is a prophet among you, I will speak to that person in a dream or vision, but Moses is My Servant. I speak directly Face-to-face! How dare you murmur against him!"

Of all leaders, Yahweh had chosen to exalt Moses to a position of highest favor and trust. Yahweh spoke with Moses, exactly as He said, Face-to-face. Yet, Miriam and Aaron did not demonstrate the same courtesy and respect for his position of authority that David would render to the demonic king Saul or that Paul later showed to the ungodly high priest!

## THE JUDGMENT OF LEPROSY

The anger of the Lord was strong against these two insubordinates, and the Cloud was lifted up from the Tabernacle as Yahweh's Presence departed. In the wake of this terrible loss, Aaron was profoundly shaken and Miriam was leprous. This judgment meted out against Miriam revealed the seriousness of her crime. It is no light thing to be unsubmitted to Yahweh's established chain of command. For a lack of submission to God-given authority is nothing short of prideful rebellion against the government and Leadership of Yahweh. Now, in judgment for her mutiny, Miriam's skin was as white as snow, revealing that she had instantly contracted an advanced stage of leprosy.



In Bible times, leprosy was a living death. *Lepromatous leprosy* is the most severe form of the disease. From the Bible description of Miriam's condition, this form of leprosy is most likely what she contracted. As the above picture of a leprous hand shows, *Lepromatous leprosy* is very disfiguring. Rash like bumps manifest on the face, extremities, joints, and nether regions. There is usually a thinning of facial hair counter-balanced by a thickening of the affected skin. Laryngitis and nasal stuffiness, or even a bloody nose are not uncommon. Ultimately the nose collapses and the hands and body become increasingly crippled.<sup>168</sup>

It all sounds very painful, yet strangely, as the disease advances, the individual's perception of pain grows less and less. At first this may sound like a blessing, but pain is actually vital to our physical

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well-being in a planet filled with physical dangers. When the hand touches a hot stove, the instant perception of pain causes us to quickly retract it from the searing heat. Without the ability to perceive pain, lepers are unable to protect their extremities from harm. As Dr. Brand, a physician specializing in the treatment of leprosy, said, “I cannot think of a greater gift that I could give my leprosy patients than pain.”<sup>169</sup>

In addition to being disfiguring, biblical leprosy was dreaded for its social and spiritual implications. Once diagnosed with leprosy, the afflicted one was shunned, existing in a state of living death outside society, apart from his loved ones. Therefore, leprosy is also a powerful symbol reminding us of sin’s spread and horrible consequences. Like leprosy, sin starts out small but can then spread, leading to other sins and causing great damage to our relationship with God and others.

So why did Yahweh judge Miriam’s rebellion with leprosy? Considering its physical symptoms, the spiritual implications are quite appropriate. Through a growing insubordination and rebellion, Miriam had dimmed her spiritual perceptions. Convicting guilt, which is like spiritual pain indicating our need to turn from sin and repent, had been rejected. And with each resistance to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, Miriam’s ability to perceive her true spiritual danger lessened. Thus, her spiritual condition was much like physical leprosy. It was cancerous, destructive, and yet left her increasingly insensitive to the depths of her need.

Leprosy was a living death. Prior to the discovery of antibiotics, there was no cure for leprosy, outside of Divine intervention. It was regarded, indeed, as a curse of the gods. The Children of Israel viewed it as a curse for sin. Unless Yahweh intervened for Miriam, she would be an outcast from Israel, without a share in the inheritance of Jacob, without a hope of gaining Canaan.

No longer tempted with pride and with the seeds of rebellion now crushed, both Aaron and Miriam were deeply grieved. “Let her not be as one dead,” interceded her brother, Aaron (Num. 12:12). The whole camp was soon in mourning. Moses cried unto the Lord, “Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee.” But God responded firmly to Moses,

saying in essence, “Had she resisted the authority of an earthly father she would be punished for a week. It is righteous that her offense be disciplined for at least this long. But, because of her repentance and your intercessory request, I will lift her punishment after one week.” So Miriam was confined for seven days outside the camp (Num. 12:14).

### TAMING THE TONGUE

One of the most vital lessons to be gained through Israel’s experience at *Chazereth* is the necessity of taming the tongue. In spite of its being such a small organ of the body, the tongue wields great power to encourage wisdom or woe. So powerful is the tongue, that its use or misuse can determine our eternal destination. James compared the tongue to the helm of a ship.



*Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell, James 3:4-6.*

Indeed, it was for Miriam as she articulated her prideful resentments to Aaron. Ungodly use of the tongue is still a big problem among those who claim to be Canaan-bound. Christians find fault with one another, spreading gossip and innuendo like a poisonous undercurrent. One church slanders a sister church. This evangelist warns against the message of that leader, causing prejudice and a hindrance to Yahweh’s work. And it is often all carried on in the most sanctimonious fashion. “We need to pray for so-and-so because...” All the while, genuine intercessory prayer is the farthest thing from the backbiters’ minds. This is a sin that equates with leprosy. It is a curse to the cause of God when a spirit of jealousy arises to weaken

the influence of God-appointed leadership, even when it appears the leader is making inferior choices to our own "good judgment."

Such spiritual leprosy is dangerous and contagious. We must not allow ourselves to fall into prideful and embittered speech which undermines God-given authority, lest we be judged by Yahweh.

*The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things: Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?  
Psalm 12:3-4*

*"Like the leper, who could not remain within Israel's camp, the unrepentant backbiter is cut off from grace."*

As so often happens among the "saints" today, Miriam and Aaron had begun to undermine the leadership of Moses by whispering derogatory tales about his wife (Num. 12:1, 2). Just what was the basis for the tales they bore about her? Was this an oft-repeated familial squabble over an "unsuitable" second marriage? Was it another instance of racial prejudice? Exodus 2:16-22 indicates that Moses' wife, Zipporah, was the daughter of a man from Midian. But the Bible indicates that Moses wife, at *Chazeroth* was a dark-

complexioned lady from Ethiopia. Some think perhaps Zipporah had died, and this "Ethiopian" woman was Moses' second wife. Moses had a remarkably long life, and was more than eighty-one at this time, so it is entirely possible that he out-lived several wives.<sup>170</sup>

Others suggest that Jethro, Zipporah's father, was actually from Ethiopia and had moved to Midian, making Zipporah an Ethiopian by descent. It may even be possible that "Ethiopian" here was a derogatory term used to criticize Zipporah because of a dark complexion.<sup>171</sup> How often are these very same petty "issues" the basis for backbiting among "Christians" today? Yet the Bible warns us most plainly that an ungodly tongue is an unsaved tongue. Like the leper, who could not remain within Israel's camp, the unrepentant backbiter is cut off from grace.

*"... Who shall abide in Thy Tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy Hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor," Psalm 15:1-3.*

Clearly, if we would enter the pure realm of ultimate Canaan, we must ask the Saviour to sanctify our tongues. This is one of the most vital lessons to be gained in our *Chazeroth tikkun* (lesson/test).

### **The Tongue**

*"The boneless tongue, so small and weak,  
Can crush and kill," declared the Greeks.  
"The tongue destroys a greater horde,"  
The Turks assert, "Than does the sword."  
A Persian proverb wisely saith,  
"A lengthy tongue - an early death;"  
Or sometimes takes this form instead,  
"Don't let your tongue cut off your head."  
"The tongue can speak a word whose speed,"  
Says the Chinese, "Outstrips the steed;"  
While the Arabs sages this impart,  
"The tongue's great storehouse is the heart."  
From Hebrew with the maxim sprung,  
"Though feet should slip, ne'er let the tongue."  
The sacred writer crowns the whole;  
"Who keeps the tongue doth keep his soul."<sup>172</sup>*

Rather than allowing our tongues to continue unsanctified and unbridled, let us join in David's prayer:

*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer, Psalm 19:14.*



## SUMMARY OF CHAPTER THIRTEEN:

- *Chazereth*, the thirteenth encampment of Israel, offers a warning about “division, and apostasy” in rebelling against God-given authority.
- All human authorities over us are established by God. Yahweh uses our submission to these authorities to shape our characters and to witness.
- Living faith is demonstrated by choosing to submit to God through the human authorities He has placed in our lives. When the authority fails to be useful for good, the Heavenly Father will convert or remove them, in answer to our submitted prayers.
- Submission to God-given authority is not rendered only to the saintly “masters.” Unless commanded to disobey a Divine statute, we are to render humble submission to difficult and gracious authorities alike. Godly submission demonstrates respect for the **position** of authority, whether the **person** is worthy or not.
- The opposite of submission to God-given authority is prideful rebellion. This is likened to the sin of witchcraft and is similar to the disease of leprosy.
- When Miriam rebelled against the God-ordained leadership of Israel, her insubordination and backbiting were punished with leprosy and ostracism from the camp. This is a shadow picture revealing how rebellion gradually deadens our spiritual senses until we become cut off from grace.
- Through genuine repentance and intercession, Miriam was restored to the camp. In the same way, we may repent of this spiritual leprosy and be made clean. Henceforth we are to remain submitted to godly authority and speak with a Spirit-controlled tongue.