

Numbers 12:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again.

Analysis

God's response establishes that even Moses' intercession could not eliminate consequences: 'let her be shut out from the camp seven days.' The Hebrew tisager (let her be shut out) indicates quarantine for purification. Divine mercy reduced the penalty (she was healed), but discipline remained necessary. This teaches that forgiveness does not always eliminate consequences. God's character requires both mercy and justice. The seven-day period fulfilled the law's requirement for cleansing (Leviticus 13:14), showing that even grace operates within holy standards.

Historical Context

The seven-day quarantine period was standard for assessing and cleansing skin diseases (Leviticus 13:4-5). Miriam received no harsher treatment than any Israelite with similar symptoms, demonstrating equality before the law despite her prophetic status. Her public discipline served as warning to others about challenging God's appointed leadership (Jude 11).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How do we reconcile divine forgiveness with remaining consequences of sin?
2. What purposes do church discipline serve even for repentant offenders?
3. How does God's justice within mercy shape our understanding of His character?

Interlinear Text

יְהִי אָמֵר	And the LORD	אֶל	יְהִי הַ	מֵשֶׁה	אָבִיכֶם	יְהִי בְּ	יְהִי בְּ
said	And the LORD	H413	unto Moses	If her father	had but	had but	
H559	H3068		H4872	H1	H3417		H3417
בְּפָנָי	should she not be ashamed	תַּכְלֵל	תַּכְלֵל	שְׁבַע	רַ	תַּסְפִּג	רַ
in her face		H3808	H3637	seven	days	let her be shut	
H6440				H7651	H3117	H5462	
שְׁבַע	מִן	מִן	לְפָנָי	וְאַתָּה	וְאַתָּה	תַּאֲסִף:	
seven	days	out	from the camp	and after	that let her be received		
H7651	H3117	H2351	H4264	H310	H622		

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 25:9 (Parallel theme): Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house.

Job 30:10 (Parallel theme): They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face.

Isaiah 50:6 (Parallel theme): I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

