

Soon God's wrath was poured out upon the people for their lust (33). He gave them their desire to the full, but it was not what they needed. The result was plague and sickness and misery. Sometimes, if we insist, God will give us our own way in life, but in the end we would be far better off if we sought God's will instead of our own. Cf. Ps. cvi.13-15.

The place where this occurred was given the appropriate name, Kibroth-hattaavah, 'graves of lust,' because many died there as a result of their fleshly appetites (34). With verse 35 cf. xii.16, where another stage in the progress of the journey is noted.

d. Rebellion among the leaders (xii.1-16)

Although it is bad for a leader to find disaffection in the rank and file of his followers, it is far worse when his leading subordinates begin to undermine his authority. In view of all that Moses had done for the Israelites he had every reason to expect his subordinates to respect and support him, and certainly he should have been able to count on those who had been elevated to high position on account of close relationship to himself. Yet here he finds his own brother and sister conspiring against him.

The whispering campaign against Moses centered around his marriage, which was used as an excuse to arouse opposition to him. In the succeeding divine intervention God never bothered to make any refutation of this attack. God's powerful intervention condemns all attempts to stir up hatred between races. In Christ there 'is neither Greek nor Jew...Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free' (Col.iii.11).

It seems strange to read of Moses marrying an Ethiopian woman (1) since there has been no mention of the death of Zipporah, whom Jethro had brought to the camp not long before (Ex. xviii.2-6); however, there is no later mention of her death, either. Kushi (used twice in verse 1) is the regular Hebrew word for Ethiopian and is often used in that sense (cf. especially Is.xx.3-5). It has been suggested that in Gn.ii.13 and x.6-8 the word might refer not to Ethiopia, but to the Cassites, a people north-east of Mesopotamia. This interpretation could hardly apply here. The attempt has been made to show that the Kusi mentioned in an inscription of Esarhaddon (about 750 B.C.)