



TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Beha'aloscha

June 12, 2020

A Taste of Torah Great People, Great Lessons

by Rabbi Dov Holczer

It was a unique event during the journey of Bnai Yisrael in the desert. Throughout their forty year journey, the Bnai Yisrael travelled and camped based upon the directive of Hashem, as communicated by the movement of the *Ananei Hakavod*, the Clouds of Glory. However, teaches the Seforno, at this unique time the Bnai Yisrael did not begin travelling, even though the clouds had departed from upon the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). The Torah teaches that The Jewish People did not travel because they were waiting for Miriam, who was in quarantine at the time due to her contraction of *tzara'as*. Miriam had been afflicted with *tzara'as* as punishment for having spoken *lashon hara* about her brother Moshe.

Why was it necessary for Hashem to create a situation wherein the Jewish People would have to stay for another seven days while they waited for Miriam? Could the cloud have not simply waited another seven days before departing, rather than creating a major spectacle of having to wait seven days due to Miriam's *lashon hara*, thus making her embarrassing situation very public?

Miriam played a major role in the history of the Jewish People in Egypt, during their subsequent redemption, and in the desert. Our Sages teach (Sotah 12a) that Miriam's father, Amram, had separated from his wife, Yocheved, following Pharaoh's decree to cast all newborn males into the Nile River, declaring that it was not a time to have children. As Amram was the leader of the Jewish People at the time, the rest of the nation followed suit. Amram and Yocheved's daughter Miriam protested that separating and not having children was worse than Pharaoh's decree, as Pharaoh's decree was only to destroy the males, while her parents' separation would prevent both males and females from being born. Amram accepted his daughter's

argument, and publicly remarried his wife; once again, the Jewish People followed his lead. Moshe was born following Amram and Yocheved's remarriage.

Following the miracle of the Splitting of the Sea, Miriam led the women in singing the *Shiras Hayam*, the Song of the Sea. The rock that miraculously provided water for the Jewish People in the desert is known as the Well of Miriam, as it gave water in her merit, as evidenced by the cessation of the water following her death. Additionally, Miriam was the wife of Kaleiv, a very great *tzaddik* who was one of the two spies who did not join the other ten in their evil report about the Land of Cana'an; in fact, he attempted to rally the Jewish People to maintain their trust in Moshe and Hashem.

In summary, Miriam was a very great and righteous individual. It is therefore odd that, in addition to making her error quite public by discussing it in the Torah, the Torah adds an additional obligation that we remember what occurred to Miriam when she spoke badly of her brother. The Torah (Devarim 24:9) commands us, "Remember what happened to Miriam." The Ramban (Mitzvos omitted by the Rambam #7) counts this as a positive mitzvah that must be verbally enunciated - merely thinking it over in one's mind does not suffice! Why does the Torah create a mitzvah to verbally recall the mistake of one of the greatest women to ever walk the planet?

Perhaps it is precisely due to Miriam's stature that the Torah seeks to impress this event upon our collective psyche, and, quite the contrary, the lesson learned by the Jewish People for all time serves as a great merit for Miriam. The Ramban, when discussing this mitzvah, points out the importance of watching what comes out of one's mouth. He notes that Miriam did not publicly call out her brother

continued on back

Stories for the Soul

Mock Liver

It is a well-known phenomenon that students often complain about the food served in school.

In a certain yeshiva high school where the young men lived in the dormitory and ate meals in the yeshiva on Shabbos in addition to the rest of the week, one of the major complaints was regarding the quality of the chopped liver served at the Shabbos day meal. The grumbling was enhanced by the fact that there was a local take-out store that offered chopped liver, and some of the boys had their eye on the store-bought liver.

One week, a number of boys decided they'd had enough of the liver offered by the school, and they procured a large amount of chopped liver from the local take-out. That Shabbos, the students enjoyed their purchased liver immensely, taking the opportunity to point out how much better their take-out product was compared to the in-house product.

Word of the purchased liver eventually reached the ears of the yeshiva leadership. One of the members of the school staff went over to the ringleader of the complainers and informed him that, in fact, the chopped liver served by the school was made by the very same takeout from which they had obtained their liver!

In this week's parsha, the Jewish People complain about the *man*, the manna that was their basic food. Rashi points out, based on the wording of the verse, that people were looking for something to complain about, and the *man* was simply a convenient target. Complaints often have more to do with people looking for problems than with actual issues.

Kollel Happenings

KOLLEL CLASSES CONTINUE VIA ZOOM MEETING

The Kollel is continuing many of its classes and offering new classes via Zoom Meeting. You can tune in to live classes online or call in on a phone. For a full schedule and the links and phone numbers to access this treasure trove of Torah, visit www.denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

The Kollel is one of 28 local organizations selected to be part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit www.denverkollel.org, email rmh@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

Parsha Quizzers

The six items below can be found in Rashi's commentary to this week's parsha. Can you figure out where they are? (Answers on bottom)

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1) Don't need the light | 4) Former officers |
| 2) Five-year residency | 5) Lock 'em up! |
| 3) Longest <i>Shemone Esrei</i> of the year | 6) Short prayer |

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Menashe ben Yisrael - Part VIII

Another well-known individual who corresponded with Rabbi Menashe was Hugo Grotius, a Dutch theologian, statesman, philosopher, playwright, and poet who is most well-known for authoring the book *On the Law (and Rights and Wrongs) of War and Peace*, which

put forth the modern theory of what is known as "natural law." Natural law is an approach to law which, simply put, posits that a man-made system of law should be based upon an objective moral foundation of good and evil.

A Taste of Torah

continued from front

Moshe; she only mentioned her thoughts to their brother Aharon. Furthermore, she was not simply gossiping about Moshe, whom she cared greatly about, as evidenced by the fact that she put herself at risk when she watched over him after he had been placed in a basket in the Nile River as an infant. Her intention is criticizing Moshe was to point out what she perceived as a shortcoming in Moshe that needed to be dealt with. (Her perception was mistaken.) Yet, says the Ramban, despite all of these "excuses," Miriam was held accountable for speaking negatively about Moshe. The lesson for us is loud and clear – one must be exceedingly careful with what comes out of one's mouth.

Thus, we are commanded to verbally recall Miriam's error, but not in order to mock or shame her. On the contrary, it is her supreme righteousness that reminds us of how careful we must be with our words.

An additional lesson that can, perhaps, be learned from Miriam is how she responded to this episode. The parsha immediately following this story of Miriam is the story of the Spies and their evil report about the Land of Cana'an. Rashi states that the Torah

places the tale of the Spies right after that of Miriam's *tzara'as* to point out that these spies saw what had happened when Miriam spoke *lashon hara* immediately prior and did not learn from her mistake. However, there were two spies who did learn that lesson, Yehoshua bin Nun and Kaleiv, Miriam's husband. Considering that our Sages teach us that a wife exerts a strong influence over her husband, both for good and bad, it is fair to assume that Miriam made sure that the lessons she learned hit home, and that Kaleiv was well aware of the need to guard one's speech. Kaleiv, who avoided being pulled into the plot to slander the Land, was positively influenced by the lessons impressed upon him by his great wife. A vital lesson to us all is that when one fails, getting back up and growing stronger based upon what one has learned from those errors separates the women from the girls.

In conclusion, when one fulfills the mitzvah of "Remember what Hashem did to Miriam," there are two lessons to bear in mind: The important and overarching lesson of guarding one's tongue with great care, as well as the importance of growing from one's failures.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) Don't need the light 8:1 s.v. ya'atm | 3) Longest <i>Shemone Esrei</i> of the year 9:10 s.v. Ani |
| 2) Five-year residency 8:24 s.v. mibn | 4) Former officers 11:16 s.v. asher |
| 3) Short prayer 12:13 s.v. rifa | 5) Lock 'em up! 11:28 s.v. kil'atim |
| 4) Former officers 11:16 s.v. asher | 6) Short prayer 12:13 s.v. rifa |

Parsha Quizzers - Answers