



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

Transcendent Love

Presented by Rabbi Zacharia Schwartz, Kollel Adjunct

"...and the nation did not travel until Miriam was brought back in." (12:15)

Parshas Behaaloscha concludes with the story of Miriam and Aaron's unintended negative speech against Moshe, culminating in Miriam's *tzara'as* affliction and her need to remain outside of the camp for seven days. The Torah tells us that as a result of Miriam's temporary exile, the Jews could not travel forward until she was permitted to rejoin them. Chazal point out that the Torah pays homage to Miriam by relating how the entire nation was made to delay their travels solely to wait for her. This begs the question: why did the Torah demonstrate Miriam's great stature in the context of her sin and ensuing punishment?

Rav Moshe Feinstein explains that this is the perfect place to teach about Miriam's greatness because it takes place during her punishment for a sin. The Torah is demonstrating that Hashem's love for Miriam was so great that even when she was being punished for a sin, Hashem accorded her the honor of making the entire nation wait for her.

We all make mistakes, and unfortunately, we all sin. When that happens, we may think to ourselves, "What does Hashem think of me now?" If we are around to ponder the question, it is because Hashem wants us to continue to exist. And that, in and of itself, is a sign that Hashem still loves us and that we have His vote of confidence to forge ahead and continue to improve, imperfect as we may be.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Moshe said... "Or if all the fish of the sea will be gathered for them, would it suffice for them (B'nei Yisrael)?" (11, 22)

There are millions of fish swimming in the seas. Why would Moshe think that all these fish would not be sufficient for B'nei Yisrael?

Parsha Riddle

Where is the source that fish do not require Shechita?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

On average, how many marital conflicts did Aharon HaKohen resolve daily?

Answer: At least 5. After Aharon died, 80,000 boys with the name Aharon escorted his coffin. These boys were named by their parents in honor of Aharon who had mediated conflicts in their marriage. (Kala Rabasi 3). B'nei Yisrael camped in the desert for approximately 14,300 days before Aharon's death. $80,000/14,300 = 5.6$. (Rav Moshe Aharon Stern zt'l)

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

At the end of parashas Beha'aloscha (12:1-16), Miriam and Aharon "spoke against Moshe," and Miriam was punished for this by *tzara'as*. While the text is remarkably obscure about what, exactly, Miriam and Aharon said about Moshe, it is clear that it was something negative. Indeed, Ramban explains that the commandment to "Remember what Hashem, your G-d, did to Miriam" (Devarim 24:9) "contains a great admonition to refrain from [slander – lashon ha-ra] both in public and in private, whether with intent to hurt and to shame or with no intent to harm at all" and is one of the 613 commandments (although he acknowledges that none of his predecessors count it as such).

It is evident, then, that the prohibition of slander applies even to public figures such as Moshe, the quintessential public figure, and the classic halachic literature on slander indeed contains no distinction between public and non-public figures. Modern democratic societies, however, assert a fundamental right to criticize public officials - as Justice Hugo Black wrote in *Bridges v. State of California*,

[I]t is a prized American privilege to speak one's mind, although not always with perfect good taste, on all public institutions.

Contemporary halachic authors have proposed various doctrines and theories to justify the criticism of public figures and their actions, at least in some circumstances, including the following:

- Slander is permitted for a constructive purpose (*le-toeles*), provided certain other conditions are met. Criticism of public figures may often serve a constructive purpose (R. Azriel Ariel, *Lashon ha-Ra be-Ma'arechet Tziburit Democratit*, *Tzohar* 5 and 6).
- Some argue that slander that "everyone knows" already may be repeated, and so published news reports may be disseminated further and discussed. The permissibility of repeating slander that "everyone knows," however, is not entirely clear, and in any event, this argument would not justify investigative reporting and the publishing of journalistic "scoops" and exclusives (see R. Gil Student, *Lashon Ha-Ra and Political Campaigns*).
- R. Meir Bareli makes the radical suggestion that since modern (Israeli) society condones journalistic discussion and criticism of public figures, the choice to accept a public societal role constitutes the tacit waiver of the right to not be criticized and slandered (*Techumin* 33 pp. 136-50). As R. Bareli himself acknowledges, however, this idea entails a number of debatable assumptions, an analysis of which is beyond the scope of this discussion.

**PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH**

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I ?

1. I am twice a year.
2. I was first in Mitzrayim.
3. I am not for the non-circumcised.
4. I am for the designated.

#2 WHO AM I ?

1. I was from one.
2. I was G-d made.
3. I was flowery.
4. I was a bright idea.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Nesium/Princes (We were lazy, We were the first, We were the police force, We're mentioned separately.)

#2 176 (I am like Bava Basra, Compare me to Chapter 119, My hint is Nachshon's father, I am for Nasso.)

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