

# Beha'alotcha 5772

## BS"D Parashat Beha'alotcha 5772

Rashi on the first verse in next week's parasha Shelach comments:



*Why did the Torah sequence the episode of the miraglim (the scouts or spies at the beginning of Shelach) with the episode of Miriam (at the end of parashat Beha'alotcha)? Because Miriam was punished for speaking irreverently about her brother (Moshe) and these evil people (miraglim) did not take heed (when they criticized Eretz Yisrael).*

Rashi connects the final episode of our parasha – Miriam's criticism of Moshe, with the opening episode of next week's parasha – the miraglims' criticism of Eretz Yisrael, whereby both were severely punished. Miriam with the debilitating tuma of tzara'at and the miraglim with horrible death.

However, at first glance, it would appear that the severity of what Miriam did by criticizing her brother for leaving his wife is far from the evil of the miraglim who convinced 600,000 men to refuse to enter Eretz Yisrael. So wherein does Rashi see a parallel in their sins?

The answer is in the words of the blessing one recites when called to the Torah. "Blessed are You HaShem, King of the universe, who has chosen us from all the nations and has given (revealed) to us His Torah. Blessed are You who gives (us) the Torah".

Herein lies the very essence of our relationship with the Creator and indeed the reason for the world's existence; to be God's chosen nation and to abide by His Torah. There is no more to creation than this, but it is sufficient to fulfill

the existence of a Jew for all eternity.

Moshe is the personification of Torah, and Eretz Yisrael is the cradle and eternal center of Jewish nationhood. To be a Jew without halacha is an oxymoron – indeed a negation of the Torah that Moshe received at Mount Sinai for the Jewish people. To willingly live outside the Holy Land is an abrogation of one's commitment to Jewish nationhood.

The Jewish communities in the galut are no more than communities, because they have their respective communal issues and experiences, which are far, far different than the collective experiences of Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael.

The Hebrew word for nation is "AM" (rhymes with mom) but the same letters produce the word "eem" (rhymes with the word team) meaning together. If one is not physically, spiritually, militarily, politically together with his people he cannot be considered a member of that nation.

I know expatriates of the United States. They are US citizens, but have not touched American soil in decades, haven't paid taxes, never served in its armed forces, and haven't voted in a US election for over 50 years. Indeed, they are technically US citizens, but their contribution to the advancement of the American nation is meaningless.

So too, it is with those born into the Jewish nation, but who voluntarily choose to live with the gentiles in galut, rather than with their brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisrael. They are Jews halachically but are peripheral and indeed "chutz la'macheneh" (a halachic term for one who is cast out of the Jewish camp).

This applies even to observant people in the galut who consider themselves to be loyal Jews in the spirit of Moshe Rabbeinu, but in truth put their personal considerations before their commitment to God's chosen nation.

Rashi equates the sin of Miriam with that of the miraglim. Because, despite the different quantitative effect (on one person vs. many) of their sins, they were on an equally qualitatively destructive level.

Miriam and the miraglim both erred or sinned in a similar way. Miriam judged Moshe, as a sister might justifiably do towards a brother, whom she believed acted wrongly. The miraglim judged Eretz Yisrael according to the accepted criteria of land, agricultural produce and demographic alignment.

But both Miriam and the miraglim erred similarly. Miriam did not see that Moshe, although a human being, was different from all other mortals in the world, just as the miraglim did not see that Eretz Yisrael is intrinsically different than any other place on the planet.

HaShem blessed Moshe with the gift of prophecy and intellectual prowess to understand the Torah and the ability to transmit that understanding to others. HaShem blessed the Land of Israel with the gift of prophecy (which was nonexistent outside of the land after we entered, except for Yechezkel who began to prophesize there and was subsequently sent into galut), and the gift of Torah learning and its propagation.

One can only pray that Hashem opens the eyes, hearts and minds of our brothers and sisters in the galut to learn the lessons that the miraglim did not learn from Miriam. And worse: the act of staying away from the Holy Land speaks ever louder than the irreverent words of the miraglim.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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