

Parasha Meditation Beha'alotcha

Bamidbar 8:1-12:16

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Prayer for Miriam's Healing and for the Longing of our Soul

Introduction:

Remembering Miriam

There are six things every Jew is charged to remember every day.¹ One of them occurs in this week's *parasha*:

"Remember what Hashem your G-d did to Miriam on the way from going out of Egypt."²

זְכוֹר אֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְמִרְיָם בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם: (דברים כד:ט).

Miriam was afflicted with *tzara'at* (צרעת)³ because she tried to correct her younger brother, Moshe, and help set his relationship with his wife straight. "Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moshe..."⁴ Rashi explains that Miriam opened the conversation. As the initiator, she had more responsibility for the act.⁵ Although she had the best of intentions: to alleviate the injustice inflicted upon Moshe's wife, nevertheless, her words of sisterly advice were considered *lashon hara* (evil speech) and she was punished with the plague of *tzara'at*.⁶ If Miriam who only had good intentions to save Moshe and Tziporah's marriage, and who only spoke privately with her brothers was punished so severely, how much more so must we be careful to avoid evil speech. Therefore, the fate of Miriam is included in the six remembrances, which we are supposed to recall every day, to strengthen our resolve to abstain from negative speech.

The Shortest Prayer in the Torah

As soon as Miriam began breaking out in *tzara'at*, Moshe poured out his heartfelt prayer to Hashem for her healing: "Moshe cried to Hashem, saying, O G*d please heal her." – "אֵל נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ".⁷ Moshe's prayer for Miriam is the shortest prayer in the Torah, so that the children of Israel could not claim that Moshe lengthened in prayer because she was his own sister.⁸ Sometimes the shortest is the most powerful. I've always cherished short books. An eloquent writer knows to express much with few words. Likewise, the Hebrew language is condensed and layered with meaning. Whenever you have a Torah book with Hebrew and English on facing pages, you will

¹ 1. The Exodus, 2. The Revelation at Sinai, 3. Destroying the memory of Amalek,

4. How our forefather's tested Hashem in the wilderness, 5. What Hashem did to Miriam

6. Sanctifying the Shabbat, סידור אשכנז, ספרד ועוד

² *Devarim* 24:9.

³ A spiritual skin disease usually mistranslated as leprosy.

⁴ *Bamidbar* 12:1.

⁵ *Rashi, Bamidbar* 12:1.

⁶ *Bamidbar* 12:10.

⁷ *Bamidbar* 12:13.

⁸ The Gaon of Vilna, *Kol Eliyahu, Bamidbar* 23:23.



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notice that the Hebrew is much shorter. The power of Moshe’s condensed prayer cannot be overestimated. The name of Hashem that he invokes: “ל-א/”K-El” is the shortest of names, yet refers to highest *chesed* – kindness, as in the verse: “The kindness of ל-א/”K-El” – G*d the entire day.”⁹ The word נָא/*na* – “please” or “now” is repeated, the first mention means please, whereas the second mention means now, “Please G*d heal her now!” – prayed Moshe, so that it wouldn’t be necessary to embarrass Miriam by making her leave the camp.¹⁰

The Yedid Nefesh Hymn

The words of Moshe’s Prayer for Miriam have been woven into the soulful *piyut* – (liturgical poem) called נְדִיד נֶפֶשׁ/*Yedid Nefesh – Beloved of My Soul*. This *piyut* was composed by Rabbi Elazar Azkari, who was among the mystics of the 16th century, Tzfat. The poet defined this song as “a supplication for union and the desire of love.” In this prayerful song, the words of Moshe’s prayer for Miriam become the expression of the longing of our *neshamah* for Hashem, and the prayer for her healing by cleaving to Hashem:

הַדּוֹר נֶאֱדָה זֵיו הָעוֹלָם. נַפְשִׁי חוֹלֵת אֶהְבֶּתְךָ. אֶנָּה אֵל נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ. בְּהִרְאוֹת לָהּ נוֹעַם זִינְךָ. אִזּוּ תִתְחַנֵּק וְתִתְרַפָּא. וְהִיְתֵה לָּהּ שְׂמֵחַת עוֹלָם

“Exalted Glorious Beautiful Light of the World my soul is love-sick for You Please, My G*d, please heal her by showing her the beauty of Your radiance, then she will be strengthened and healed and be Your maidservant forever.”¹¹

The *Yedid Nefesh* hymn imbued with love, longing and emotion is sung at times of great emotional and spiritual awakenings, such as the dawn hour, the welcoming of the Shabbat or the third meal of Shabbat.

The Healing Power of Hashem’s name: “I will be”

Moshe’s short prayer for Miriam is easy to learn by heart and use for healing. It consists of only five words with a total of eleven letters. These eleven letters correspond to the name G*d revealed to Moshe at the burning bush: “I will be what I will be.”¹² (שְׁמוֹת פָּרָק גִּיד) “אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה” This sentence of reassurance asserts that Hashem will always be with us in each and every exile.¹³ Just as the burning bush is not consumed, so will neither exile nor illness have any power to consume the Jewish *neshamah*.

The word אֶהְיֶה/*Eheye* – “I will be” is actually one of G*d’s names. This name especially has healing powers. “Rabah said: Seafarers told me: The wave that sinks a ship appears with a white fringe of fire at its crest, and when stricken with clubs on which is engraved: I am that I am, Y-ah, the Hashem of Hosts, Amen, Amen, Selah’ – “E-heye asher E-heye, Y-ah, Hashem Tze-vaot...” – אֶהְיֶה – it subsides.¹⁴ Perhaps the name “I will be...” has such healing powers, because healing take place as long as we have *emunah* and hope for the future.

⁹ Tehillim 52:3.

¹⁰ Sforno, Bamidbar 12:13.

¹¹ Yedid Nefesh Hymn, Askenazi and Sefard Siddur, Mincha prayer on the Eve of Shabbat, verse 2.

¹² Shemot 3:14.

¹³ Rashi, Shemot 3:14.

¹⁴ Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra 73a.

Meditation:

Make yourself comfortable wherever you are. Close your eyes.

1. Feel connected, with your feet on the earth, your head upright, your chest expanded.
 2. Feel Hashem's life-giving breath circulating within you, as you breathe slowly and deeply through your nose. Filtering the air and taking in cleansing breaths, inhaling Hashem's light to every fiber of your being.
 3. Breathe in, imagine and pronounce the name *ל-א*/"K-El – alef, lamed," giving you strength.
 4. Exhale, ask Hashem "please! *נא*/"Na – nun- alef."
 5. Repeat four more times.
 6. Now inhale as you ask Hashem "please heal" *נא רפא*/"refa na – reish, peh, alef, nun alef."
 7. Then exhale pronouncing the word *לה*/"lah – lamed heh" as you focus on a particular part of your body that needs healing, a place that may be painful. Tune into the pain as you pray *לה*/"lah" – her, bringing light into the pain, lifting the pain to become part of a greater future where this pain has served its purpose.
 8. Now repeat the entire five word prayer in one sequence:
 1. Inhale *ל-א*/"K-El"
 2. Exhale *נא*/"Na"
 3. Inhale *נא רפא*/"refa na"
 4. Exhale *לה*/"lah."
- Each time you get up the last word of the prayer *לה*/"lah" which means "her," focus in on a person or a body part where you want to bring Hashem's healing.
9. Repeat this entire sequence three more times.
 10. When you are ready shake out your hands and feet out and open your eyes. You may practice this simple powerful healing prayer spontaneous whenever you meet someone who needs healing.

Notes:

The grandson of the Ba'al Shem Tov, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Ephraim explains that from this prayer that Moshe prayed for his sister Miriam there is an allusion to the custom when praying for someone sick to mention the name of the sick together with his or her mother's name. The words *נא רפא*/"refa na" – *refa na* – "heal her please" from Moshe's prayer has the numerical value of 332 the exact same numerical value as the name of Miriam together with the name of her mother Yocheved.¹⁵

¹⁵ *Degel Machane Efraim, Parashat B'Ha'alotcha*. The word "Refa רפא" equals 281, the word "na נא" = 51 totaling 332. The name Miriam מרים equals 290, the name Yocheved יוכבד = 42 totaling 332!

About Us



Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work.

For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's spiritual empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times.

*In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, *Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion*.*

Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters. She lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, Israel.

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or visit her blog: <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html>

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