

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 18

Behaalsoecha, Sicha 5

The Verse:

Miriam was struck with tzaraas — the miraculous skin ailment — after she spoke disparagingly about her brother Moshe. Accordingly, she entered the protocol for purification from tzaraas, which is to be sequestered outside the Israelite camp for seven days. The Torah then tells us:

“So Miriam was confined outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not travel until Miriam had entered.” (Bamidbar 12:15)

The Rashi:

The people did not travel — This honor was accorded her by the Omnipresent because of the time she remained with Moshe when he was cast into the river, as it says, “His sister stood by from afar to know what would be done to him.” (Shemos 2:4)

The Question:

Rashi writes that the “honor was accorded to her by the Omnipresent,” but it was the Jewish people who waited for her, not G-d. Indeed, the Mishnah that is the source for Rashi’s comment states, “therefore the Jewish people delayed...” (Sotah 9b) Why does Rashi depart from the language of the Mishnah?

The Explanation:

Upon reflection, the notion that the Jewish people waited for Miriam out of respect seems to be misplaced. If they would have traveled without her, she would be in mortal danger, stranded alone in the desert. How can Rashi say that the waiting was out of respect, when seemingly it was out of concern for her life?

The people would never have traveled on without her, the waiting, therefore, must have been with a different objective.

When the Jewish people traveled, they dismantled the camp and the Mishkan. In this scenario, there is no “camp” for the

person afflicted with tzaraas to be banished from, and the person would be allowed to journey together with the rest of the people. Thus, if the people continued traveling, Miriam would have been able to join them. However, her purification would be delayed until they encamped once again, allowing her to fulfill the requirement of seven days of isolation outside the camp.

Therefore, the delay in travel was purely for the sake of Miriam's prompt purification, so that she would not have to wait until the next encampment to be purified from her tzaraas. This is surely a matter of "respect" for Miriam.

When Rashi says, "this honor was accorded her by the Omnipresent," he is not referring to who bestowed the honor upon Miriam, but rather, he is explaining why the honor was necessary: because G-d commanded that she be sequestered outside the camp for seven days for her to be cured, therefore she could not be cured if the people were traveling.

Further Questions:

Rashi presents the waiting for Miriam as a commensurate reward for her having waited by the banks of the Nile to watch over Moshe.

But seemingly these are not equal acts. Miriam was actually protecting Moshe's life, while the people waiting for Miriam was merely an act of honor and respect.

Rashi therefore cites the verse about Miriam's waiting, "His sister stood by from afar," to highlight that she waited from a distance and therefore could not have actually intervened on his behalf in case of danger. Her waiting was more out of concern and respect.

Alternatively, Rashi alludes to the continuation of the story by adding the word "etc." After Pharaoh's daughter retrieved Moshe from the river, Miriam quickly arranged for her own mother to nurse Moshe. Now, Batya would have eventually come to the conclusion that she needed to find an Israelite wet-nurse regardless of Miriam's intervention, because Moshe would not nurse from her. Miriam merely expedited Moshe's nursing from his mother. This is commensurate with the people waiting for Miriam, which was also expediting her purification by allowing her seven day isolation to be begin immediately.
