



Volume 3. Issue 28.

Miryam – Chesed and Emunah

In this week's *Mishnayot* we learnt that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* both punishes and rewards 'measure for measure.' One example brought is that of *Miryam*:

[This principle applies] also for reward. *Miryam* waited for her brother for one hour as it says "and his sister was stationed (*va'teitzav*) from afar" (*Shmot* 2:4); therefore *Am Yisrael* waited for her in the desert for seven days, as it says "and the nation did not travel until *Miryam* was collected" (*Bamidbar* 12:15).

The *Gemara* comments, that this case demonstrates that while punishments are indeed measure for measure, rewards are disproportional and increased.

It would appear from a simple reading of the *Mishnah* that *Miryam's* waiting resembled her care and concern for the welfare of her brother. This in turn was rewarded through *Am Yisrael* waiting for *Miryam* to recover from her affliction of *tzara'at*, itself a demonstration of the nation's concern for her welfare.

Another *Gemara* (*Sotah* 13b) suggests that *Miryam* had a different motive:

Miryam was a prophetess, and she prophesied saying: "My mother is destined to bear a son who will be the saviour of *Yisrael*." When *Moshe* was born, the entire house was filled with light, where upon her father said to her: "My daughter, your prophecy has been fulfilled." And when *Moshe* was thrown into the Nile, he said to her: "My daughter what has become of your prophecy?" This is the intent of "And his sister stood from afar to know what would be done with him" – to know how her prophecy would materialise.

From the above *Gemara*, *Miryam's* waiting for her brother was presumably faith driven. It would therefore initially appear that *Miryam's* strong faith, expressed by her waiting for her brother, was reward with *Am Yisrael* waiting for seven days; an act of compassion. While the outward appearance of the act and reward appear to correspond with

each other, there appears to be a mismatch in the underlying motivations of the act and reward. While some may rightly feel that this is not problematic, we can suggest that being rewarded 'measure for measure' aligns on every level.

In order to do this one can suggest that *Miryam* indeed had both motivations in mind when waiting for her brother. The full *pasuk* cited in the *Mishnah* is as follows:

And his sister was stationed (*va'teitzav*) from afar; to know what would happen to him"

On the one hand she was driven by faith, simply "to know what would happen to him". Yet she was also 'stationed' – a deliberate stand of solidarity and care.¹

Therefore the original assumption that the nation's waiting for *Miryam* to heal was a reward for her compassion, can be maintained. Yet for this understanding of *Miryam's* reward being measure for measure to be complete we must locate where she was rewarded for her undying faith in wanting "to know what would happen to him".

One could suggest that this element of *Miryam's* act was also rewarded. After *Am Yisrael* crossed the Reed Sea and was saved from the Egyptians, they broke out in song. At the end of the *shira* we find the following (*Shmot* 16:20):

Miryam the prophetess, *Aharon's* sister, took the drum in her hand, and all the women followed her with drums and dancing.

Rashi explains the reference to *Miryam* being a prophetess by quoting the *Gemara* cited above. Perhaps it is precisely relevant, after *Am Yisrael* were saved, to mention her credentials here as she is rewarded in leading the women in praising *Hashem*. For it was that prophecy that led to her undying faith - the faith which manifested in her following her brother at an apparently hopeless moment, to "know what would happen to him."

David Bankier

¹ The two parts of the *pasuk*, as described here, are indeed divided by an *etachta*, a cantenation that resembles a break in a *pasuk*. Furthermore, it is only the first half of the *pasuk*, the half that has been described as referring to her care for her brother that was cited by the *Mishnah* further

reinforcing that the *Mishnah* is referring to "stationing" as being rewarded by *Am Yisrael* waiting for her.

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Revision Questions

סוטה א': ד' - ג': ב'

- Where was a *sotah* first taken? (א': ד')
- What was the first thing they would do to a *sotah*? (א': ד')
- What would happen if a *sotah* admitted to having an affair? (א': ה')
- If a *sotah* maintained her innocence, to where was she next taken? (א': ה')
- What else was performed at that location? (א': ה')
- Was the *sotah* allowed to wear jewellery during the process? (א': ו')
- Describe how the *sotah* was prepared? (א': ו')
- Were other women allowed to watch the process? (א': ו')
- Explain the following phrase and list three ways in which it applies to a *sotah*: (א': ז')

במדה שאדם מודד, בה מודדין לו

- How does the above phrase apply to:
 - *Shimshon*?
 - *Avshalom*? (א': ח')
 - *Miryam*?
 - *Yosef*?
 - *Moshe*? (א': ט')
- What *korban* would the *sotah* bring and in what three ways does it differ from a regular *korban* of that class? (א': ב')
- From what material was the cup made that was used for *mei sotah*? (א': ב')
- From where was the cup filled with water? (א': ב')
- From where was the earth taken from and for what was it used? (א': ב')
- List the three opinions regarding what was included in the *parashat sotah*. (א': ג')
- What material was the *parasha* written on and what substance was used for the writing? (א': ב')
- About what would the *sotah* respond "amen, amen"? (א': ה')
- Complete the follow rule and explain: (א': ו')
"כל _____ לא היה מתנה עמה"
- What was done with the *sotah's korban*? (א': ג')
- When during the process was the *sotah's korban* offered? (א': ג')
- Until when can the *sotah* refuse to take part in this procedure? (א': ג')

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
25 th February ז' אדר	26 th February ח' אדר Sotah 3:5-6	27 th February ט' אדר Sotah 3:7-8	28 th February י' אדר Sotah 4:1-2	1 st March י"א אדר Sotah 4:3-4	2 nd March י"ב אדר Sotah 4:5-5:1	3 rd March י"ג אדר Sotah 5:3-4

