

Zera Shimshon

Profound Divrei Torah culled from the writings of the
Gaon and Mekubal Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmani zy"z,
author of Sefer Zera Shimshon on Chumash and Toldos Shimshon on Pirkei Avos,
who promised that all who study his words will be blessed with an abundance of good, wealth
and honor, and will merit to see children and grandchildren thriving around their table.



Chukas תשפ"ה • Zera Shimshon - the Limud that brings Yeshuos •

ליל 349

אמרות שמשון

Whose Merit It Was That Actually Provided the Jews With Water for the Entire Forty Years

ויבאו בני ישראל כל העדה מדבר צן בחדש הראשון
וישב העם בקדש ותמת שם מרים ותקבר שם ולא היה מים
לעדה ויקהלו על משה ועל אהרן (כ א-ב)

The entire assembly of the Children of Israel arrived... the people settled in Kadesh, and Miriam died there and was buried there. And there was no water for the assembly, and they gathered together against Moshe and against Aharon.

Rashi explains why it was at this particular point that the Jews no longer had the Well to provide them with water. ולא היה מים לעדה. מכאן שכל ארבעים שנה היה. And there was no water for the assembly. From here we see that the entire forty years that the Jews spent in the desert they had the Well in the merit of Miriam.

We need to understand why Rashi felt the need to explicitly mention that 'From here we see that the entire forty years they had the well in the merit of Miriam'; would it not have been sufficient for him to merely point out that 'From here we see that they had the well through the merit of Miriam'. It would seem that Rashi was coming to reject a notion that the merit of Miriam did not provide the Well for the entire forty years, but rather for only a portion of the forty years. Nevertheless, we still need to understand the origin of this notion; that Miriam's merit only provided the Well for part of the forty years and not for the entire forty years.

The Gemara in Bava Metzia (פו ע"ב) tells us the following. בשכר שלשה זכו לשלשה וכו' בשכר יוקח נא מעט מים זכו לבארה של מרים וכו' – In reward for three things... in reward for [Avraham telling the Angels whom he presumed to be simple wayfarers] "Let some water be brought" they merited the Well of Miriam.

The Maharsha questions this Gemara, for the Gemara in Taanis (ט ע"א) tells us, שלשה פרנסים טובים עמדו לישראל אלו הן משה, וכו'.

ואהרן ומרים. ושלשה מתנות טובות ניתנו על ידם ואלו הן באר וענן ומן. באר בזכות מרים וכו', מתה מרים נסתלק הבאר שנאמר ותמת שם מרים וכתוב Three excellent leaders arose for the Jews; they are Moshe, Aharon and Miriam. And because of them three excellent gifts were bestowed upon the Jews; they are the Well, the Pillar of Cloud and the Man. The Well was provided in the merit of Miriam... When Miriam died the well disappeared, as it is says, 'and Miriam died there' and immediately thereafter it is written, 'And there was no water for the assembly'. From this Gemara it is clear that it was in the merit of Miriam, and not in the merit of Avraham, that the Jews merited to have the Well provide them with water.

The Maharsha thus explains that the merit of Avraham did indeed provide the Jews with water, but only for a portion of the forty years that they wandered in the desert, while it was the merit of Miriam that provided them with water for the entire forty years, and it was for this very reason that when Miriam died, the Well ceased providing them with water.

The reason why the Maharsha said that the merit of Avraham was only sufficient to provide the Jews for a short period, while the merit of Miriam was sufficient to provide for them for all the forty years, and not the other way around, is because the Gemara concludes and says 'When Miriam died the well disappeared...'; the well disappearing as soon as Miriam died, clearly demonstrates that the entire time up until that point, it was in her merit that the well provided water to the Jews.

We can now understand why Rashi felt the need to expound on the words, ולא היה מים לעדה. And

there was no water for the assembly, and to explicitly mention that From here we see that the entire forty years that the Jews spent in the desert they had the well through the merit of Miriam. For as we explained, it was from these very words, that immediately after Miriam died there was no water for the assembly, that it is clearly inferred that the merit of Miriam didn't just provide the Well for a short period, rather it provided the Well for the entire forty years.

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Mishna 3

Abraham Also Withstood Tests He Was Not Obligated to Endure

“Ten tests our Patriarch Abraham was tested with, and he withstood them all, to make known how great was Abraham’s love [for the Creator].”

We must understand why the Tanna felt the need to say “and he withstood them all” — could anyone think that Abraham would not withstand them? And further, why does it say “to make known how great was Abraham’s love [for the Creator]” rather than “to make known his merit [for successfully enduring them all]”?

One could explain that, in fact, there were two tests that Abraham was not strictly obligated to endure. In the first, the furnace of Ur Kasdim, there is a disagreement as to whether the Patriarchs were obligated by the Torah’s commandments before it was formally given. Therefore, he may not have been obligated to give up his life — since he might still have been considered a *ben Noach* (a descendant of Noah), and as such, it would have been forbidden for him to harm himself, in keeping with the verse (*Bereishit* 9:5) in which Hashem warns Noah and his descendants: “And surely your blood of your lives will I require.”

Also in the final test, the binding of Yitzchak, Abraham could have objected to God: “Yesterday You told me (*Bereishit* 21:12), ‘For in Yitzchak shall your seed be called,’ and now You say to me (*ibid.* 22:2), ‘and offer him

there as a burnt offering.”

Nevertheless, because Abraham saw that his entire generation was sinning through idolatry, he gave up his life out of love for God and in sanctification of His Name. And out of that same love, he also gave over his son Yitzchak. Therefore, the Tanna emphasized “and he withstood them all” to teach that he fulfilled everything God commanded him — even that which he could have been exempt from. And all this was “to make known how great was Abraham’s love [for the Creator],” for he was permitted to give up his life out of his great love for God.

Mishna 6

Do Not Issue Rulings on One’s Own Authority if Not Heard from One’s Teacher

“And seven traits of the Sage: [...] and regarding what he has not heard, he says: ‘I have not heard.’”

It is difficult to understand what the Tanna means when he says that the Sage, concerning something he has not heard, says “I have not heard.”

To explain the intent of the Tanna, we must first cite what *Kevod Chachamim* says (in his work *Kevod HaBayit, Sukkah* 28a): “A Sage must not issue a new ruling based on his own understanding unless he heard it from his teacher. And if his teacher is not available, he must gather other sages to see whether they agree with him.”

According to this, the Tanna is teaching us that when a Sage has not heard a teaching from his teacher, he should not rule

independently, but rather tell the other sages: “I have not heard this,” and therefore, “I need you to deliberate with me in order to decide the law in this case.”

Mishna 12

The Value of Charity is Like the Value of Torah Study

“Four types among those who give charity.”

We must analyze why, in the previous *Mishnah*, four types of students are mentioned, and in the following *mishnayot*, we find four types of people who go to the *Beit Midrash* (study hall) and four types among those who sit before the Sages. Why then did the Tanna insert this *Mishnah*, which discusses the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* (charity), in the midst of *mishnayot* that deal with Torah study?

This can be explained based on what the commentary *Brit Avraham* wrote (on *Tehillim*, *remez* 871) regarding the verse: “He scattered, he gave to the poor; his charity endures forever” (*Tehillim* 112:9). The *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* endures forever, and not even a transgression can annul it. Although the *Gemara* (*Sotah* 21a) says that a transgression extinguishes a *mitzvah*, the greatness of *tzedakah* is such that its value is likened to that of the Torah, which is also said to be unaffected by transgression.

Therefore, the Tanna included this *Mishnah* about those who give *tzedakah* among those that deal with Torah study, in order to hint at this profound insight: that the *mitzvah* of charity is as great as Torah study, and a transgression does not nullify it — just as it does not nullify the merit of Torah.

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Translated and written by Rabbi Moshe Spira - yomospira@gmail.com

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USA - Rabbi Menachem Binyomin Paskesz 347-496-5657 mbpaskesz@gmail.com
Zera Shimshon c/o Rabbi B Paskesz 1645 48th Street, Brooklyn NY 11204

Eretz Yisroel - Rabbi Yisroel Silberberg
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