

Parsha Ponders

Shelach | June 23, 2022 | 24 Sivan 5782

The benefit of a righteous wife¹

ועבדי כלב עקב היתה רוח אחרת עמו וימלא אחרי והביאתיו אל-הארץ אשר-בא שמה וזרעו יורשנה
My servant Kalev, since he had a different spirit with him, and he was completely after Me, I will bring him to the land to which he is coming, and his offspring will inherit it²

Parshas Shelach tells of the tragic failure of the ten spies, and the people's acceptance of their slanderous report. They were sent to scout out the land of Israel, and their assessment was that it was not conquerable, nor worthwhile. Yehoshua and Kalev were the only spies to defend the land, and insisted on following Hashem's command to conquer it. Hashem responded by punishing the ten spies, and rewarding Yehoshua and Kalev. Hashem stresses that Kalev "had a different spirit with him". What is this referring to? Furthermore, how was it that Yehoshua and Kalev maintained their faith? How did they not succumb to peer pressure? The spies had a point; the enemy occupying the land of Israel was fierce and mighty. Why wasn't this a concern for Yehoshua and Kalev? True, we are told that Moshe prayed that Yehoshua not be influenced by the spies³. However, Kalev got no such prayer. What made Kalev special, such that he didn't need a prayer and was nevertheless successful?

Miriam, the sister of Moshe, was a prophetess. Her first prophecy was when she was a little girl, that her mother would give birth to the Jewish people's savior. When Moshe was born, the entire house filled with light. Her father kissed her on the head, taking this miracle as a sign that her prophecy was correct. However, when the family was forced to send the baby Moshe away in a little boat, due to Pharaoh's decrees against male Jewish babies, her father knocked on her head and asked her: "Where's your prophecy now?"⁴ The story continues that Miriam followed Moshe's boat to see what would happen to him. We are told her intent was to see what the end of her prophecy would be⁵.

It's not that she had doubts. She knew her prophecy was true. Her faith was unwavering. She simply was curious to see how it would unfold. This is alluded to in the word choice in that verse⁶: ותתצב. It wasn't simply that she stood by the water to see. This word implies waiting with diligence and fortitude. She knew without question that Hashem would save Moshe, and that he would be the savior of the Jews⁷. The level of faith of Miriam is impressive. We see later in life her steadfastness hadn't wavered, as she

¹ Based on a *devar Torah* heard from [Rav Hakakian](#) of Yeshivas Ner Yisrael

² [Numbers 14:24](#)

³ [Sotah 34b](#), brought by [Rashi](#) to [Numbers 13:16](#)

⁴ [Sotah 13a](#). The [Maharsha ad. loc.](#) asks that Amram, Miriam's father, already accepted her as a prophetess when the whole house filled with light. How then did he have the right to doubt her abilities when things looked bleak? He brings from [Shoreshei Yishai](#) to [Ruth 1:2](#), by [Rav Shlomo Alkabetz](#), that his version of the *gemarra* said her **mother** knocked on her head. Indeed, [Shemos Rabbah 1:22](#) says her mother knocked her on her head. The [Maharsha](#) asks that still, why didn't Yocheved believe in her? He answers that Miriam must have not told her mother about the prophecy, only her father (to convince him to remarry his wife and have more children). What I don't understand is if so, why did Yocheved say "where's your prophecy now?". See [Ben Yehoyada ad. loc.](#), who, based off our version of the *gemarra*, says that Amram really believed in her, but pretended not to in order to mislead the Satan. [Eitz Yosef ad. loc.](#) says he knew she prophesied but felt she misinterpreted it

⁵ [Sotah loc. cit.](#)

⁶ [Mechilta](#) to [Exodus 15:20](#); [Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer](#) Chapter 42

⁷ [Divrei Aggadah parshas Shelach s.v.](#) רוח אחרת, based on the teachings of [Rav Elyashiv](#)

told the Jewish women to leave Egypt with tambourines. She knew that Hashem would perform a miracle and save them, like her original prophecy foretold⁸.

Our Sages say⁹ that Kalev was married to Miriam. If so, it must be that she must have rubbed off on him. Her quality of steadfastness must have made an impact on her husband, and this is what allowed him to withstand the peer pressure of the spies. Moshe knew that Kalev was married to this righteous woman, and therefore wasn't worried about him¹⁰. This explanation is actually alluded to in the verse where Hashem praises Kalev. Hashem says that היתה רוח אחרת עמו, there was a different spirit with him. If we look carefully, we'll see that the word "was" is feminine. Why? It should have said היתה רוח אחרת עמה. This perhaps can be seen as an allusion to Miriam. Since there was someone feminine with a different spirit with him, i.e. his righteous wife, he was able to learn from her to remain steadfast in his faith in Hashem¹¹.

Good Shabbos

⁸ Exodus 2:4

⁹ Sotah 12a, brought by Rashi to Exodus 17:10 and 24:14, based on I Chronicles 2:18 and 4:5

¹⁰ Emes L'Yaakov to Numbers 13:16

¹¹ Divrei Aggadah *loc. cit.*