

## Remember what Hashem, your G-d did to Miriam. (24:9)

We are admonished to internalize what occurred to Miriam when she criticized Moshe. Her ordeal serves as an eternal warning to refrain from any form of slander or disparaging words, regardless of the provocation. This “*zechirah*,” remembrance, is one of the six *zechiros* we say every day. We may question the significance of Miriam’s “*lashon hora*.” Is it truly that critical for us to remember that Miriam spoke about her brother, Moshe, and his relationship with his wife, Tziporah?

**Rabbi Elchanan Sorotzkin, zl**, cites the *Rambam* who gives insight into Miriam’s actions. He maintains that we are to develop a deeper understanding of what happened to Miriam, who spoke against her older brother. She did not speak disparagingly of him. Rather, she inappropriately compared him to other prophets. How much more so should we be on the alert to be vigilant about every word that exits our mouth. *Horav Sorotzkin* explains that the *Rambam* alerts us about another kind of *lashon hora*. He is referring to speaking *lashon hora* against *gedolei Yisrael*, *Torah* leaders. This type of speech has recently become more prevalent. In fact, the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, to speak against *rabbanim*, *Torah* leaders, and those who devote themselves to *Torah*, is extremely strong. Even Miriam *Ha’Neviyah*, who risked her life for Moshe, spoke against the leader of *Bnei Yisrael*. Furthermore, even when *Klal Yisrael* observed Miriam’s grave punishment, they still criticized Moshe when he prayed for Miriam’s healing. They questioned the length of his prayers. Is that not the height of audacity? Miriam was suffering for criticizing Moshe. How did *Klal Yisrael* respond? Did they learn a lesson? No! They began to measure the length of Moshe’s prayer on behalf of his sister. Would he have done the same for someone else, who was not his sister? Punishment does not seem to serve as a deterrent. Nothing seems to matter, because the *lashon hora* is aimed at a *gadol*. For that type of *lashon hora*, the *yetzer hora* works overtime.

When we look through history, we will see how in every generation, the *Torah* leaders are the first ones against whom criticism is directed. That they either do not work hard enough, or they only care about their own personal interests or families are some of the more common criticisms our *rebbeim* and leaders must endure. Yes, it is very important to retain Miriam’s punishment in our minds, because her *lashon hora*, albeit the most common type, is also the most difficult to control. While we might be able to guard our tongues regarding the common Jew, restraining ourselves from talking about *gedolim* is more challenging.