

Miriam died there, and she was buried there. There was no water for the assembly. (20:1,2)

Chazal (*Taanis* 9a) explain the juxtaposition of *Klal Yisrael's* lack of water upon Miriam's death with the miraculous well that accompanied them throughout their forty-year journey. This well, duly dubbed *be'eirah shel Miriam*, Miriam's well, gave water in the *zechus*, merit, of Miriam *HaNeviah*. Thus, when she died, the well dried up. The *Zohar HaKadosh* (*Emor* 103B) attributes the miracle of Miriam's well to her standing at the banks of the Nile River to ensure the safety of her infant brother, Moshe (*Rabbeinu*), who had been placed in a reed basket, hidden from the Egyptian soldiers who were bent on murdering Jewish male infants. Due to this one act of caring, Hashem miraculously provided the Jewish nation with water for forty years in the wilderness.

Another woman performed a heroic act at the same time that Miriam stood at the river. Bisyah, Pharaoh's daughter, saw the basket containing the infant Moshe in the water, and she stretched out her arm to pull it in. She went on to raise Moshe in the palace. She named him Moshe to bring to mind that he was *mashui*, drawn from the river. *Chazal* teach that Moshe had as many as ten names. Yet, the name by which he is recognized for all posterity is Moshe, the name Bisyah gave him. She saved Moshe's life. Thus, she receives the naming rights for the young Moshe. By comparison, Miriam's reward seems to eclipse the reward received by Bisyah. The question that confronts us is: Whose act deserves greater recognition? Bisyah for saving Moshe? Or Miriam, who waited patiently by the water's edge? Understandably, actually saving a human life should be viewed on a higher level than merely standing by and watching what would occur. If so, why did Miriam warrant such an outstanding reward?

Horav Noach Weinberg, zl, derives from this that when Bisyah saved Moshe, she had no idea of the infant's identity. All she knew was that a child needed to be saved. She stepped in and did what was expected of her. Miriam's concern was for *Klal Yisrael*. Therefore, one can say that she was waiting to see how things would play out – how Moshe would be saved growing up in Bisyah's home. Miriam was able to see things that others did not. Thus, she was privy to Moshe's illuminating their home at birth; she knew from day one that Moshe was destined to be the redeemer who would take the Jewish people out of Egypt. Miriam was not merely watching a Jewish child (which certainly, in its own right, warrants distinctive merit); she was waiting to see how things would materialize for the future leader of the Jewish people. Bisyah, on the other hand, was acting on behalf of one Jewish child. Given her pedigree, this was an amazing act of selflessness, of courage and self-sacrifice for Judaism. At the end of the day, we have two women standing by the water: one is acting to ensure the survival of the entire Jewish Nation; the other is protecting one Jewish child.

Rav Weinberg underscores their discrepant intentions, and the consequent future ramifications. Bisyah's intent was to save one Jewish child. She succeeded, and the name that he carried was the name she gave him. This was her reward. Miriam's intent transformed her individual deed into

a much greater act. She was thinking of *Klal Yisrael*; thus the nation was provided with water for their forty-year journey, compliments of the well/rock that carries her name.

Our intentions define our actions. *Rav Weinberg* posits that his idea is especially relevant with regard to prayer. When one prays, he should broaden the scope and focus of his prayer. Rather than pray for himself and his immediate family, he should pray for his community, for all of *Klal Yisrael*. One's intentions are transformative, having the ability to alter himself. One whose deeds are focused inward will become a better person, but he will remain a singular individual who lives for and transforms himself. This is wonderful. It does not, however, compare to the individual who acts on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*, whose every activity is intended globally. He becomes a *Klal Yisrael mentch* – like *Miriam*, like all the leaders of *Klal Yisrael*. We do not live for ourselves. We live for – and serve at – the pleasure of Hashem. Thus, our intentions should focus on the larger picture – *Klal Yisrael*.