

# THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT CHUKAT-BALAK

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## Every Little Helps



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In Parashat Chukat, we learn of death of Moshe and Aharon's sister, Miriam the Prophetess, who was one of the leaders of the Exodus from the Egypt. The Gemara in Megillah (14a) describes Miriam as one of the seven major female prophets of Israel.

Miriam features prominently in two incredible incidents in the Torah: first when she watches over the infant Moshe as his crib is placed in the River Nile, and second when she suffers from *tzara'at* (a spiritual illness similar to leprosy) after she speaks *Lashon Hara* about Moshe and his wife. When Miriam had

*tzara'at* and was exiled from the camp for seven days, the Jewish people waited for her to return to the camp. In trying to understand why Miriam merited this great honour of the entire nation waiting for her, our Sages make the connection between these two events and say that "Miriam waited one hour for Moshe; therefore, the people waited seven days for her in the wilderness." (Sotah 11a)

As a young six-year-old girl, Miriam looked after and cared for her infant brother at a time when it was dangerous to be a Jewish child in Egypt. According to some sources, Miriam was looking out for Moshe or 15 minutes before Pharaoh's daughter drew him out from the water. Her reward for that 15 minutes was that an entire nation, including her brother Moshe and the *Mishkan* (mobile Temple), waited an

entire week for her. Is it conceivable that because a young girl cared for her brother for 15 minutes she would merit such a wonderful reward years later?

Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzahl, previous Chief Rabbi of the Old City of Jerusalem, answers with an emphatic: yes. Every minute of helping others and doing good deeds is counted. The reward for a young girl's good deed to her brother is beyond any proportion to the time involved. This teaches us the tremendous impact of our deeds. A small action that we do has the potential to change the world. We do not know how it is recorded in heaven, but we should be aware that even seemingly insignificant acts such as smiling at a passer-by, or welcoming a new resident to the neighbourhood, are all recorded and are important.

## Parasha Puzzle

1. Whose deaths are recorded in parashat Chukat?
2. Which of the seven species of the Land of Israel are mentioned?
3. What does Balak do when he hears Bilaam's third curse?
4. Which weapon is mentioned in Parashat Balak that appears nowhere else in the Torah?

