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Sotah Daf 13

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**Miriam’s Prophecy**

It is written: *Miriam the prophetess, sister of Aaron, took (her drum in her hand)*. The *Gemora* asks: Was she the sister of Aaron, but not the sister of Moshe? Rav Amram said in the name of Rav, and others say that it was Rav Nachman in the name of Rav: This teaches us that Miriam prophesied while she was still only the sister of Aaron (*before Moshe was born*), and she said, “In the future, my mother will be giving birth to a son, who will save Klal Yisroel.” And once Moshe was born, the entire house became filled with light. Her father stood up and kissed her on her head. He said, “My daughter, your prophecy has been fulfilled.” But when Moshe was thrown into the water, her father stood up and tapped her on the head. He said to her, “My daughter, where has your prophecy gone?” And that is what’s written: *His sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen with him*. She wanted to know what would happen with her prophecy. (12b5 – 13a1)

**Yaakov’s Burial**

The *Mishnah* had stated: Yosef merited to bury his father.

The *Gemora* asks: Why initially is it written [Breishis 50:7,9]: *And Yosef went up to bury his father...and with him went up all of Pharaoh’s servants*, and then (it is written): *as well as all of Yosef’s household, and his brothers, and his father’s household*; and why is it later written: *And Yosef returned to Egypt, he and his brothers*, and then: *as well as all who had gone up with him to bury his father?* [Why did the Torah mention the Egyptians before Yosef’s brothers when they left to bury Yaakov, but when they returned to Egypt, the Torah mentions the brothers before the Egyptians?]

Rabbi Yochanan answered: Initially, before they saw the honor of Israel, the Egyptians did not treat the brothers with respect, but afterwards, they observed their honor (*by Yaakov’s burial*), they then treated the brothers with the proper respect. As it is written: *And they came to Goren Hataad* (literally meaning: the threshing floor of the thorn). Now, is there such a thing as a threshing floor for thorns (for they are not harvested and threshed)? Rabbi Avahu says that this teaches us that there were many kings that surrounded Yaakov’s coffin with crowns, similar to a threshing floor where people surround it (the building) with thorn bushes (as a security), for the sons of Esav, Yishmael and Keturah all came there. A Tanna taught: They all came to wage war against the Jews, but when they saw Yosef’s crown hanging upon Yaakov’s coffin, they all took their crowns and hung them upon his coffin. A Tanna taught: Thirty-six crowns were hung upon Yaakov’s coffin.

It is written: *And there they held a very great and imposing eulogy*. We learned in a *braisa*: Even the horses and donkeys joined in the funeral. When they arrived at the Cave of Machpelah, Esav came and wished to prevent the burial there, saying to them: This cave is Mamre in the City of Four (*and only four pairs of people can be buried here*), which is Chevron.

And Rabbi Yitzchak had said: It is called the City of Four because four couples were buried there: Adam and Chavah, Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivkah, and Yaakov and Leah.

Esav claimed, “Once Yaakov had buried Leah in his portion, what remains belongs to me.” They replied to him, “You sold your rights (to Yaakov)!” He said to them, “Granted that I

sold my extra first-born portion, but did I sell my regular right?" They replied: "Yes, you did (*for Yaakov told us so as he was dying*)."

For it is written: *In my grave which I have (karisi) acquired for myself* and Rabbi Yochanan has said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yehotzadak: The word *kirah (karisi)* means "selling" (*mechirah*), for in the coastal towns, they use *kirah* as a term for a "sale."

He said to them, "Produce a document for me (*proving that Yaakov had indeed purchased it*)." They replied to him, "The document is in the land of Egypt. Who will go for it? Let Naftali go, because he is swift as a hind."

As it is written: *Naftali is a hind let loose, who delivers beautiful sayings*. Rabbi Avahu said: do not read it 'imrei shafer' – beautiful sayings, but rather, 'imrei sefer' – the statements of the book (containing the legal document).

Chushim, the son of Dan, who was hard of hearing, was present, so he asked them, "What is happening?" They said to him, "Esav is preventing the burial until Naftali returns from the land of Egypt (*with the document*)." He replied: "Should my grandfather lie here in dishonor until Naftali returns from the land of Egypt?!" He took a stick and struck Esav on the head (killing him), so that his eyes fell out and rolled to the feet of Yaakov. Yaakov opened his eyes and smiled. And that is what is written: *The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked*. At that time, the prophecy of *Rivkah* was fulfilled, as it is written: *Why should I be bereaved of both of you on one day?* Although their deaths did not occur on the same day, their burial, however, did take place on the same day.

The *Gemora* asks: And if Yosef had not involved himself with Yaakov's burial, would his brothers not have occupied themselves with it? Behold it is written: *For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan!*

The *Gemora* answers: They said, "Leave him to Yosef to take charge of his burial, for our father's honor will be greater when it is conducted by kings more so than by commoners." (13a1 – 13a3)

### Yosef

The *Mishnah* had stated: Moshe merited to take the bones of Yosef, and there was none in Israel greater than him [as it is said [Shmos13:19]: *And Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him*. Who was greater than Moshe, for the Almighty attended to him, as it is said [Devarim 34:6]: *And He buried him in the valley*].

The *Gemora* cites a *Baraisa*: Come and see how dear *mitzvos* were to Moshe Rabbeinu, for while all the Jewish people were occupied with the spoils of Egypt, Moshe involved himself with *mitzvos*, as it says: *The wise of heart will take mitzvos*.

And how did Moshe know the location where Yosef was buried? They said: Serach, the daughter of Asher, was a survivor from that generation. Moshe went to her and asked: "Do you know where Yosef was buried?" She answered him, "The Egyptians made a metal coffin for him which they placed in the Nile River, in order that its waters should be blessed (*plentiful; with the ability of irrigating all of their fields*). Moshe went and stood on the bank of the Nile and exclaimed: "Yosef, Yosef! The time has arrived which the Holy One, Blessed be He, swore, 'I will redeem you,' and the oath which you had imposed upon the Jewish people (to take your bones with them) has reached its time of fulfillment. If you will show yourself, all will be well and good; otherwise, behold, we are released from your oath." Immediately, Yosef's coffin floated to the top. And do not wonder how iron can float, for, behold, it is written: *It happened as one (of Elisha's disciples) was felling a beam, the iron (axe-head) fell into the water* etc. [He cried out] *Woe is to me, my master, for it was borrowed. And the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And he showed him the place. And he (Elisha) cut down a piece of wood and cast it in there, and made the iron float to the top*. Now cannot the matter

be argued by a kal vachomer: If iron floated on account of Elisha, who was the disciple of Eliyahu, who was the disciple of Moshe, how much more so on account of Moshe our teacher!

Rabbi Nassan says (*a different version of the story*): Yosef was buried in the tombs of the kings. Moshe went to the tombs of the kings and exclaimed, "Yosef! The time has arrived which the Holy One, Blessed be He, swore, 'I will redeem you,' and the oath which you had imposed upon the Jewish people has reached its time of fulfillment. If you will show yourself, all will be well and good; otherwise, behold, we are released from your oath." At that moment, Yosef's coffin shook (*allowing Moshe to recognize it*), and Moshe took it and carried it with him. All those years that the Israelites were in the Wilderness, those two chests, one of the dead (*Yosef*) and the other of the *Shechinah* (*the Holy Ark*) traveled side by side, and passersby used to ask, "What are those two chests?" They would be told, "One is of the dead and the other of the *Shechinah*." They would ask, "But is it normal for the dead to travel together with the *Shechinah*?" The answer given was, "This one (*Yosef*) has fulfilled everything that is written in the other one."

The *Gemora* asks: And if Moshe had not involved himself with Yosef's burial, would the Jewish people not have occupied themselves with it? Behold it is written: *And Yosef's bones, which the children of Israel had brought up from Egypt, they buried in Shechem*. And even if they would not have done so, wouldn't his children have buried him? But it is written: *And it became a heritage for the children of Yosef* (indicating that Yosef was beloved by his descendants)!

The *Gemora* answers: Yosef's children let the Jewish people bury him, for they said, "His honor will be greater when the burial is performed by many rather than by few." They (the Jewish people) also said, "Leave him, for his honor will be greater when the burial is performed by the great rather than by the small."

It is written: *They buried in Shechem*.

The *Gemora* asks: What was so special about Shechem?

Rabbi Chama the son of Rabbi Chanina said: Yosef was buried in Shechem, for that was the place where the brothers kidnapped him from, and it is fitting for them to return him there.

The *Gemora* asks a contradiction between two verses. One verse states: *Moshe took Yosef's bones with him*, and another verse states: *Yosef's bones, which the Children of Israel brought up!*?

Rabbi Chama the son of Rabbi Chanina said: Whoever does something, but does not complete it, and someone else comes and completes it, the Torah considers it as if the second person did the entire thing. [*Moshe brought his bones to the Wilderness, and the Jewish people brought them to Shechem.*]

Rabbi Eliezer added: If the person does not complete a *mitzvah*, he is demoted from his previous stature (*unless it was unavoidable, like by Moshe and Yosef's bones*). As it is written: *It was at that time that Yehudah* (who did prevent his brothers from killing Yosef, but he did not save him completely) *went down*.

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmeini said: He will also be compelled to bury his wife and children, as it is written: *Shua's daughter, the wife of Yehudah, died*, and it is written: *and Er and Onan died*.

Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: why was Yosef called "bones" in his lifetime? It was because he did not interfere to safeguard his father's honor when his brothers said to him, "*Your servant, our father*," and he said nothing in reply to them.

Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav, and others say that it was Rabbi Chama the son of Rabbi Chanina who said: Why

did Yosef die prior to his brothers? It was because he carried himself with excessive power.

It is written: *And Yosef was brought down to Egypt.* Rabbi Elozar said: Do not read it as *'hurad'* – he was brought down, but rather *'horid'* – he brought down. Yosef lowered Pharaoh's astrologers from their positions (*by interpreting a dream that they were not capable of doing*).

The verse continues: *Potifar, a nobleman of Pharaoh, purchased him.* Rav explains this to mean that Potifar bought him for himself (*for immoral purposes; he was enticed by Yosef's good looks*). The angel Gavriel came and castrated him. Initially, it is written: *Potifar*, and at the end: *Potifera*. (13a3 – 13b3)

### **Moshe's Death**

The Mishnah had stated: Whom have we greater than Moshe etc.

It is written: *And Hashem said to me, 'It is much for you.'* Rabbi Levi said: With the word *'much,'* Moshe lectured another, and with the word *'much,'* a lecture was made against him. With the word *'much,'* he lectured another (as he said to Korach): *It is much for you,* and with the word *'much,'* a lecture was made to him: *'It is much for you.'*

Another explanation: *'It is much for you.'* You have a master (waiting to be the leader, and that is why you cannot enter Eretz Yisroel), and who is this? Yehoshua.

Another explanation: *'It is much for you.'* [Do not pray excessively] so that people should not say: How severe the Master is and how persistent is the student!

The Gemora asks: And why so? [Why did Hashem punish him for the words which he used?]

In the Academy of Rabbi Yishmael a Baraisa was taught: According to the camel is the burden (and according to one's level of righteousness, he is judged).

It is written: *And Moshe said to them, "I am a hundred and twenty years old today."* The extra word "today" teaches us that on that day, his days and years were filled (*the day of Moshe's death was the same day as his birth*). We learn from here that the Holy One, Blessed be He, completes the years of the righteous from day to day, and from month to month, as it is written: the number of your days I will complete.

The verse continues: *I can no longer go out and come in.* What does it mean, *go out and come in*? If this is to be understood literally (*that Moshe lost his strength*), behold it is written: *And Moshe was one hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye had not dimmed, and his vigor had not diminished.* And it is also written: *And Moshe went up from the plains of Moav to Mount Nebo, and it has been taught: There were twelve steps there, and Moshe took them in one stride!?*

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmeini said in the name of Rabbi Yonason: The verse means that he could not go out and come in with words of Torah, thus indicating that the gates of wisdom were closed to him.

*And Moshe and Yehoshua went, and stood at the Tent of Meeting.* A Tanna taught: That was a Shabbos of two peers, and the authority was taken from one to be transferred to the other.

Rabbi Yehudah said: If there were not a verse written like this, it would be impossible for us to say it (on our own): Where did Moshe die? Moshe died in the portion of Reuven, as it is written: *Moshe ascended from the plains of Moav to Mount Nevo,* and Nevo is located in Reuven's portion, as it is written: *The children of Reuven built etc. Nevo etc.* And where was Moshe buried? He was buried in the portion of Gad, as it is written: *He saw the beginning for himself etc.* Now, there was a distance of four *mil* between the portion of Reuven until the portion of Gad! Who carried his body those four *mil*? This teaches us that Moshe lay within the folds of the *Shechinah*. The ministering angels would be



saying, "He carried out the mitzvos of Hashem and his regulations with Israel." And the Holy One, Blessed be He said, "Who will rise up for Me against the evil-doers? Who will stand up for Me against the workers of iniquity?" Shmuel said that Hashem declared, "Who is as the wise man? And who knows the interpretation of a matter (like Moshe)?" R. Yochanan said that Hashem declared, "Where shall wisdom be found (if not by Moshe)?" Rav Nachman said that Hashem declared, "So Moshe died there etc." Samalyon said, "So Moshe died there, the great Sage of Israel."

It has been taught in a Baraisa: Rabbi Eliezer the Great said: Over an area of twelve mil square, corresponding to that of the camp of Israel, a Heavenly Voice made the proclamation: Moshe, the great sage of Israel died. Others say that Moshe never died; it is written here: *and Moshe died there*, and elsewhere it is written: *and he was there with Hashem*. Just as in the latter verse, it means standing and servicing (God; and not that he was dead), so also in the former it means standing and servicing (God).

It is written: *He buried him in the valley in the land of Moav over opposite Beis-Peor*. Rabbi Berechyah said: Although (the Torah provides) a clue within a clue, nevertheless: *no man knows of his burial place to this day*. The wicked regime (of Rome) once sent to the governor of Beis-Peor (the message): Show us where Moshe is buried. When they stood above, it appeared to them to be below; when they were below, it appeared to them to be above. They divided themselves into two groups; to them who were standing above it appeared below, and to those who were below it appeared above. This is in fulfilment of what is said: *no man knows of his burial place to this day*. (13b3 – 14a1)

#### DAILY MASHAL

##### **Miriam's Steadfastness**

It is written: *Miriam the prophetess, sister of Aaron, took (her drum in her hand)*. The Gemora asks: Was she the sister of Aaron, but not the sister of Moshe? Rav Amram said in the

name of Rav, and others say that it was Rav Nachman in the name of Rav: This teaches us that Miriam was saying prophecy while she was only the sister of Aaron (*before Moshe was born*), and she said, "In the future, my mother will be giving birth to a son, who will save Klal Yisroel." And once Moshe was born, the entire house became filled with light. Her father stood up and kissed her on her head. He said, "My daughter, your prophecy has been fulfilled." But when Moshe was thrown into the water, he said to her, "My daughter, where has your prophecy gone?" And that is what's written: *His sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen with him*. She wanted to know what would happen with her prophecy. It was through this that Miriam merited that the entire Jewish people waited for her for seven days.

The commentators ask: What was so significant about waiting around to see how the matter would resolve itself? Wouldn't any curious person wait around to see what might transpire? Another question is asked: Why didn't Yocheved, Moshe's mother wait there as well to see what would happen with the prophecy?

Reb Meir Bergman writes that even with greatness of Yocheved, her faith in Hashem and her fear of God, at the time that Moshe was cast into the river; she thought that Moshe would certainly die there. This is why the Medrash says that Yocheved, after Moshe was thrown into the river, also asked Miriam, "where is your prophecy now?" According to the natural law, Moshe would not be saved and the river was destined to be his end. As a matter of fact, it took an unusual miracle for Moshe to be saved.

Miriam, on the other hand, was strong in her beliefs and she refused to budge. She received a prophecy that Moshe would be the savior of the Jewish people, and although the odds were not favorable, she knew that somehow, he would survive.

This is why she was rewarded so greatly. She was steadfast in her belief in Hashem that nothing could sway her.