

Rabbi Elchanan Shoff
PARSHAS BEHAALOSCHA

Can a non-Kohen light the menorah?

Speak to Aaron and say to him in your bringing up of the candles... (Num. 8:2). The *Tosafos Yeshanim* (to *Yoma* 24b) asks why the Torah says “in your bringing up of the candles” as if imply that only Aaron and his descendants can light the *menorah*, if really according to Halacha anybody can light the *menorah*, not just a Kohen? The *Ritva* (there) also asks this question.

The Ostrovtzer Gaon (in his letter to Rabbi Shlomo Engel, cited in the work *Shaalos Uteshuvos Mikadshei Hashem*, vol. 2, 20, p. 80) offers an answer to this question based on what Rabbi Pinchas HaLevi Horowitz of Frankfurt wrote in *Panim Yafos* (here). He explained that on the eighth day of the inauguration—when Aaron assumed the responsibility of lighting the *menorah* every day—the *menorah* itself was actually ritually impure, because it had been in the same tent as the corpses of Aaron’s sons Nadav and Aviyhu. Now, Rambam (Laws of *Bias HaMikdash* 9:7) writes that when the Talmud says a non-Kohen may light the *menorah*, this can only happen in a case where they took the *menorah* out of the Sanctuary and a non-Kohen lit there, and then they returned the *menorah* to the Sanctuary. This is because, otherwise, a non-Kohen cannot come anywhere near the *menorah* for as a non-Kohen he is forbidden from entering the Sanctuary. Accordingly, in order for a non-Kohen to possibly be able to light the *menorah* the *menorah* must have been removed from its place in the Sanctuary and brought elsewhere to be lit and then returned to the Sanctuary. The problem with this is that if the *menorah* itself is ritually impure, then there would be a Halachic issue with bringing the *menorah* back into the Sanctuary after it was lit outside the Sanctuary.¹ If so, then on the eighth day of the inauguration—the day that Aaron

¹ According to Halacha, a person who is ritually impure is forbidden from entering even the Courtyard of the Temple, and certainly the Sanctuary. However, the Halacha is that if a ritually pure person became impure while he was already inside the Temple, then he has only violated this prohibition if he delays his exit from the Temple; if he goes out as speedily as possible, then he has not violated the prohibition. The Talmud Yerushalmi (*Yoma* 3:3) says that if a person became ritually impure when he was in the Courtyard, and then he entered the Sanctuary, then he immediately violates the prohibition of entering the Temple while impure, because vis-à-vis the Sanctuary, the Courtyard is considered “outside” so it is as if he came *from the outside* while impure into the Temple (see however *Minchas Chinuch*, *Mitzvah* 363 who is unsure of the Halacha in this case, and does not cite the aforementioned Yerushalmi). There is also a prohibition to bring

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started lighting the *menorah*, since the *menorah* had contracted ritual impurity, there was no possibility that anyone other than a Kohen could light the *menorah* which is why the Torah says “in *your* bringing up of the candles” as if imply that only Aaron can light the *menorah*.

Alternatively, the Ostrovtzer Gaon offers another reason as to why it would be forbidden for a non-Kohen to light the *menorah* when the *menorah* was impure. The Talmud (*Zevachim* 92a) says that if the libations (i.e. the oil or wine which accompany an animal sacrifice) contract ritual impurity, then they must be burnt in a fire on the altar, because they are holy, but impure (see also Rambam, Laws of *Issurei Mizbeach* 6:5). Accordingly, if the *menorah* is ritually impure—like it was on the day that Aaron started lighting—then the oils which were in the cups also became ritually impure. Accordingly, when one lights the *menorah*, besides fulfilling the commandment of lighting the *menorah*, one is also fulfilling the commandment of burning holy food items which became ritually impure (and in this was the *menorah* is sort of like a *mizbeach* because it too is in a holy place). This second commandment of burning holy food items which became ritually impure is like the ritual service itself and, according to some opinions in the Talmud (*Meilah* 6a) may only be done by a Kohen. Accordingly when the *menorah* is ritually impure and that causes the oil to become ritually impure as well, only a Kohen is allowed to light the *menorah* and not a non-Kohen (see also *Ezras Yisrael* to Shabbos, p. 6).

Seven Candles = Seven Holes in the Head

Speak to Aharon and say to him in your bringing up of the candles, opposite the face of the menorah, the seven candles shall be lit (Num. 8:2). The Midrash applies to this passage the verse which says, “Hashem desires for His righteousness to

ritually impure items into the Temple. Items differ from people in that if an item becomes ritually impure in the Temple, then it does not have this rule that unless taken out as fast as possible, one has violated the prohibition of bringing an impure item into the Temple. However, it is seemingly true that if an item became ritually impure while already in the Temple, then it cannot be brought into the Sanctuary, for that would be a violation of the prohibition of being impure items into the Temple. Accordingly, if an item becomes ritually impure in the Sanctuary and is taken out of the Sanctuary, or even if it just became impure while in the Courtyard, it would be forbidden for one to bring that item into the Sanctuary.

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make greater the Torah and beautify it". Rabbi Chaim Palagi (in *Tenufah Chaim* 1) explains this by citing the words of Rabbi Yisrael Al-Nakavah in his work *Menoras HaMaor* who writes that the seven cavities of the head (2 eyes + 2 ears + 2 nostrils + 1 mouth = 7) correspond to the seven branches of the *menorah*, and the middle branch which is not of a pair, corresponds to the mouth. This middle branch—the mouth—is the holiest of them all, and represents the seventh day of the week which has no counterpart (because the sevenths of different sets are always the consecrated one of the set). This teaches us that one should especially watch his mouth on Shabbos. Rabbi Chaim Palagi explains that the seventh branch was always lit, so too must a person's mouth always be busy with Torah—day and night—such that he will make more and more Torah. This is especially true of the Seventh Day, on Shabbos, as then people are not busy with their work like they are during the rest of the week. Indeed, the Talmud Yerushalmi famously says that the Shabbos and Holiday were only given to Israel in order to give people time to study Torah.

Holding the Levites like babies

And Aaron shall wave the Levites a waving in front of Hashem (Num. 8:11). The *Zohar* (vol 3, 303a) records that Rav Yehuda asked Rav Abba why a Kohen had to wave the Levites. He responded by comparing the matter to a baby who cries and gets angry, in order to appease him, you have to wave him around until he is quiet. So too, Hashem's character trait of *gevurah* becomes angry as typified by Levi the son of Yaakov, whose anger was cursed by his father Yaakov. In order to assuage the "anger" associated with the tribe of Levi, a Kohen who represents *chessed* must "wave" the Levi and quell the anger. The work *Megadim Chadashim (Behaaloscha*, p. 181) cites "contemporary authors"² who discuss the Midrash about Korach (who was Levite) complaining that Aaron and Moshe did a number on him. Part of that complaint was that "he took me in with my hands and my feet, and he would wave me" (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 18:4 and *Midrash Tanchuma*, beginning of *Parashas Korach*). These "contemporary authors" explain that "he took me in with my hands and my feet" means that the Levites were in a lying position and the Kohen would lift them, holding their hands and feet, and wave them that way. The author of *Megadim*

²"*Mechabrei zmaneinu*". He is referring to R. Aaron Yehuda Leib Shteinman, who makes this assertion in his *Ayeles Hashochar* on chumash here, p. 46.

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Chadashim disagrees with said “contemporary authors” and explains that “he took me in with my hands and my feet” simply means that Aaron lifted them off the ground while they were in a normal standing position. Nevertheless, truth be told, the Zohar we cited above actually supports these “contemporary authors” because the Zohar compares waving the Levites to the way that one rocks a baby, and a baby is obviously rocked whilst in a lying down position.

Carried by the Cloud

And Moshe said to Chovav son of Reuel... walk with us... (Num. 10:29). Rabbi Mordechai HaKohen of Tzfas in *Sifsei Kohen* explains that Moshe told him that *you* would have to walk with us, but the rest of the Jewish people themselves weren't actually walking, they were carried by the Cloud like a person who is carried by a ship. In other words, the Cloud only carried Jews who were Jews by birth, but not the converts like Chovav. Rabbi Chaim Palagi in *Reah Chaim* (vol. 2, Parshas Behaaloscha pg. 166 in the *Shuvi Nafashi* ed.) discusses why Moshe had to mention this details now when he was trying to get Chovav to come along with him. Perhaps, a reason for this is because converts who convert for ulterior motives are suspect, and not accepted. Converts were not accepted in the times of King Shlomo because the Jews were so prosperous and wealthy and free of enemies that a converts motives were inherently suspect. Perhaps, by requiring the converts to do strenuous walking, and not providing them the first class travel benefit of the clouds carrying them, this is what allowed their desire to convert from pure motives to be taken seriously in the first place.

And it consumed the edge of the camp (Num. 11:11). The *Sifri* explains that this refers to converts who would live **at the edge of the Jewish encampment**. (See *Meshech Chochmah* who discusses why the converts' place was outside of the cloud.) Another opinion is found in the midrash (*Koheles Rabbah* 1:18) on the passuk “All the rivers go to the sea, but the sea is not full.” The Midrash explains that this refers to converts who all join the Jewish People, but the Jewish People themselves will never be lacking in numbers. That Midrash continues and says that in the future when the Holy Land will be reapportioned amongst the Tribes of Israel, **all converts will take a place within whichever tribe's territory they had converted with** (see also Rashi to Ezek. 47:23).

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Motherly Love

Did I become pregnant with this entire nation? Did I give birth to them, that You shall say to me... (Num. 11:12). The Maharam Schick writes that Hashem put into the nature of the world that there should be a natural love between a parent and child because the burden of child rearing is so heavy that if not for this love, parents would be turned off by it. Accordingly, in this passage, Moshe was telling Hashem that it is His fault for not giving him a special bond of love with the Jewish People like a parent has for their child, because now Moshe was unable to bear the burden of dealing with the misbehaving nation.

The Ostrovitzer Gaon (*Kovetz Obel Moed*, 2nd Year, 108 and *Pardes Yosef* to Gen. 44:31) discusses Yosef's brothers saying that if they returned to their father without Binyamin, then their father would die. In a side-note to that discussion, he points out that we find in many instances that a father would put in so much effort on his children's behalf, and suffer much pain for them yet the converse, that a child would put in efforts to help his father is not nearly as common. In fact, he notes, that is not uncommon to see people want nothing to do with their elderly parents and not what to know anything about them. How can such a thing be that children do not reciprocate the love their parents showed for them? He suggests that all of this can be traced back to the origins of mankind. The first human, Adam, did not have a father—he was created from the ground—so he never had any special intrinsic love for his father. Because of this, love of one's parents is not encoded in humans and was not passed down to future generations. On the other hand, Adam did have children, and he loved them and had mercy on them like any father who has mercy on his children, so the love that a parent has for his children is indeed engrained in the human condition.

One, Two, Five, Ten, Twenty??

Not a single day will you eat it, and not two days, and not five days and not ten days and not twenty days, [rather] until a month's days, until it is coming out of your nose... (Num. 11:19–20). Ibn Ezra explains that the significance of these numbers by stating that five corresponds to the five fingers of the hand that one eats with, ten corresponds to the ten fingers of both hands that one might eat with, and twenty corresponds to the twenty fingers and toes of both hands and feet, like the

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saying goes, “All the food you can eat with the fingers of your hands and feet.” Rabbenu Bechaya also adopts this approach and elaborates upon it.

The Tosafists in *Daas Zekanim* (here) take a different approach. They propose that all these numbers of days that the quail was said to be available for food correspond to the different days on which the Jews are supposed to rest. They explain that all together, the verse at hand mentions 67 possible days ($1 + 2 + 5 + 10 + 20 + 29 = 67$). This figure equals the amount of Shabbosos and Holidays in a year, for the Lunar year has an average of 354 days which means that there is an average of 50 Shabbosos in one year ($354 / 7 = 50 R4$). If one adds to this, the four days of Pesach which are holidays in the Diaspora (first two days and last two days), plus the two days of Shavuos, two days of Rosh HaShannah, one day of Yom Kippur, four days of Sukkos (first two days, and the two days of Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah), plus the four possible extra Shabbosos of an added Adar, one reaches the number 67 ($50 + 4 + 2 + 2 + 1 + 4 + 4 = 67$). Only on these 67 special days could a Jew be fully justified in asking for meat, but the rest of the year not.

Alternatively, *Daas Zekanim* explains that each of these intervals of time mentioned in the verse at hand corresponds to another significant time of happiness in the Jewish calendar. “One day” refers to Yom Kippur, “two days” refers to either Rosh HaShanah or Shavuos, “five days” refers to the five days between Yom Kippur and Sukkos, “ten days” refers to the Ten Days of Repentance, and “twenty days” refers to the twenty-one days on which we say the full *Hallel* outside of the Holy Land.³

Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar (*Ohr HaChaim* here) offers another way of looking at this. He explains that what was happening here is that Hashem commanded them to eat so much meat that they would become disgusted by it and would no longer have any desire to eat the meat. In order to achieve that effect, He would have to require them to eat enough meat that everyone would have their fill. Now some people, if they had a desire to eat meat, could quench that desire by eating it one day, others would take two days, still others would need five days, more people would need 10 days, and

³ The mnemonic for remembering those days is **חבטח** – Two days of Pesach (**ב** = 2), two days of Shavuos (**ב** = 2), nine days of Sukkos including Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah (**ט** = 9), and the eight days of Chanuka (**ח** = 8).

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finally some would also need 20 days. So here, Hashem said that He is commanding them to eat meat not just for 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 days, but for a full 30 days so that everyone will be completely more than satisfied and disabused of their desire to eat meat. In essence, Hashem commanded that all Jews *must* eat meat for the full 30 days, and those who did not would not only have failed to fulfill a positive commandment, but also would have violated a negative commandment.

Moshe will die, Yehoshua will lead...

And the lad ran and he told Moshe and he said Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp (Num. 11:27). Rashi and the Midrashim explain that Eldad and Medad's prophecy was "Moshe will die, and Yehoshua will bring [the Jews into the Holy Land]" (משה מת, יהושע מכניס). Rabbi Heschel of Krakow explains (cited in *Chanukas HaTorah*) that when the Torah speaks about the Pharaoh's daughter giving Moshe his name, she said "from the waters I have drawn him" (מן המים משיתיהו). This phrase could have been written differently as "from waters I have drawn him" (ממים משיתיהו), yet for whatever reason the Torah decided to add the letters ה' and נ' to the expression. Accordingly, he explains that when Yehoshua complained about Eldad and Meidad's prophecy, he meant to say that if the reason for Moshe's name would have been "from waters I have drawn him" (ממים משיתיהו), then there is an allusion to Eldad and Medad's prophecy in the word ממים which can serve as an acronym for "Moshe will die, and Yehoshua will bring [the Jews into the Holy]" (משה מת, יהושע מכניס). However, now that there was an extra ה' and נ' in the phrase which reads "from the waters I have drawn him" (מן המים משיתיהו), it cannot serve as an allusion to their prophecy. Accordingly, Yehoshua's complaint was that Eldad and Medad's prophecy is unsubstantial. Rabbi Heschel finds an allusion to this in the word "camp" (מחנה) which can be split into being read as "protest" (מח) and "נה" (נה) and "ני" (נה).

Silence is golden

And the lad ran and he told Moshe and he said Eldad and Meidad are prophesying in the camp (Num. 11:27). Rashi explains that Eldad and Medad's prophecy was "Moshe will die, and Yehoshua will bring the Jews into the Holy Land". The Vilna Gaon, (as well as R. Avraham Yehoshua Heschel the Rebbe of Apta in *Ohev Yisrael*), and others used this passage to offer a different spin on a

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Talmudic saying. The Talmud (*Megillah* 18a) expresses the importance of silence by saying “A word is [worth] a *sela*, silence [is worth] two [*selas*].” While at face value, this saying expresses the idea that silence is something important, it carries another level of interpretation. They explain that this saying alludes to Moshe’s fate and the prophecy concerning his death. The reason why Hashem banned Moshe from entering the Holy Land, and instead requiring him to die and requiring Yehoshua to lead the Jewish People, was the fact that Moshe deserved punishment for hitting the rock (*sela* in Hebrew) instead of speaking to it. If Moshe would have said just *one word*, he could have avoided this fate and been allowed to triumphantly lead the Jewish People into the Holy Land. If Moshe would have said just *one word*, he would have obviated the need for Eldad and Medad to prophesy, and would have essentially “silenced” them. Accordingly, the Talmudic aphorism extolling silence can be read differently, “A word uttered to the *sela* [would cause] silence [for] the two [prophets, i.e. Eldad and Medad].”

Joshua the Scholar

And Yehoshua son of Nun—Moshe’s attended, from his choicest [students] answered... (Num. 11:28). The *Yalkut Shimoni* (to Prov. 21:21) says that originally people looked at Yehoshua as an unlearned ignoramus because he was not actually an expert in Torah, but because he attended to Moshe, he merited to become his heir. This is on account of the fact that Yehoshua would put linen on Moshe’s bench and sit at Moshe’s feet. Hashem said that He cannot ignore the reward due to Yehoshua, so Yehoshua eventually became Moshe’s successor. Similarly, the *Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 21:14 and Tanchuma to Parshas Pinchas 11)* says that after Hashem revealed to Moshe the Halacha that a daughter can inherit her father if he has no sons, then Moshe decided that the time had come to ask Hashem that his sons inherit him. However, Hashem responded in the negative saying that Moshe’s sons did not study enough Torah, but Yehoshua who trained under Moshe should instead be viewed as a more worthy successor. Both of these Midrashic sources compare Yehoshua to a fig, because a fig as opposed to other fruits ripens slowly but surely, just as Yehoshua slowly but surely accrued enough Torah knowledge to be a worthy successor to Moshe, even if in the beginning he was not considered especially learned. Yehoshua was able to achieve this not through his intellectual prowess, but through his hard work and dedication to serving Moshe.

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As Rabbi Zadok of Lublin writes in *Resisei Layla* (52), Moshe Rabbenu is the root of the Jewish People's ability to defeat any nation in the world through the power of Torah, except the Nation of Amalek. When it came to Amalek, Moshe sent his student Yehoshua to lead the Jews in battle. Yehoshua's inner will and drive led him to transcend the 49 level of understanding that Moshe achieved. Rabbi Tzaddok explains, that when it comes to pure learning, every person is limited by the boundaries of his own intellect, beyond which he can no longer understand the materials. However, when it comes to the advantage of one who attends/serves a Torah Scholar (*shimush Talmidei Chachamim*), there is no limit as long as he is willing and ready to do what he does, he can go beyond the 49 level of understanding, he can enter even the 50th gate of understanding which is usually inaccessible. For this reason, Moshe sent Yehoshua to defeat Amalek.

[Who's the most humble of them all?](#)

And Miriam and Aharon spoke about Moshe regarding the Cushite woman which he took, for a Cushite woman he had took (Num. 12:1). In this story, Miriam complained to Aaron about Moshe having separated from his Cushite wife due to his high level of spirituality. She claimed that they too reached the heights of prophecy, but were not required to separate from their spouses, so why did Moshe feel like he was different than everyone else and use his lofty spiritual position to justify leaving his wife? The Torah seems to give an answer to this question by explaining "And the man Moshe was very humble, more than any person on the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3), but the meaning of this answer still eludes us.

Rabbi Aryeh Leib Tzintz (in *Melo HaOmer* here) frames Miriam's question a bit differently than we have presented it, and uses that to explain the Torah's answer. He begins by citing the Talmud (*Chullin* 91b) which compares the reactions of various righteous men to their Divinely granted greatness. Hashem gave Avraham greatness, and he responded by saying, "I am dust and ashes". Hashem gave Moshe and Aaron greatness, and they responded by saying, "We are but what?" Hashem gave King David greatness, and he responded by saying, "I am a worm, and not a man." In all of these cases, whenever a righteous person achieved greatness, he belittled himself. Rabbi Tzintz explains that the outcome of a person growing in spiritual awareness is

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that whenever he goes up a level, he realizes his own futility and failings when compared with Hashem's everlasting goodness, thus the self-deprecating comments.

Avraham saw himself as something less than King David, because King David still looked at himself as a living creature (a worm), and Avraham looked himself as something even less significant than that (dirt and ashes—insentient minerals). But Moshe and Aharon looked at themselves as something even less significant than Avraham did. Avraham at least looked at himself as something which exists, while Moshe and Aharon looked at themselves as so insignificant vis-à-vis Hashem's importance that in relation to Hashem, they do not even exist.

Accordingly, R. Tzintz explains that Miriam's mistake was that she looked at Moshe and Aharon's joint comment as evidence of the fact that both of them were on the same spiritual level, and predicated her question of why Moshe separated from his wife while Aaron did not on that assumption. The Divine answer to this question reveals that even though Moshe and Aaron offered the same self-deprecating comment of their own insignificance, Moshe was still more humble than anyone else who ever lived—even more than Aharon. Accordingly, Miriam was unjustified in comparing herself and Aaron to Moshe, because though all three of them were prophets Moshe stood above his two siblings and reached a higher level of prophecy.

Saying the name of the Sick

And Moshe cried to Hashem saying, 'O God, please heal her now' (Num. 12:13). The Talmud (*Brachos* 34a) derives from the wording of Moshe's prayer that when one prays on another's, one need not explicitly mention the other's name. This is why Moshe did not mention his sister Miriam's name when praying for her to be healed from her leprosy.

Rabbi Isser Frankel writes in his biography of the Ostrovtzer Gaon (p. 40, also quoted in *Beis Meir* vol. 1 to Num. 12:13) that one time, the Ostrovtzer Gaon was speaking to the Gerrer Rebbe and he told the Gerrer Rebbe his full name Avraham Mordechai and his mother's name in order that the Gerrer Rebbe should pray on his behalf for a recovery from his illness. The Gerrer Rebbe was surprised that the Ostrovtzer Gaon had to give him his name and his mother's name in order to pray for him, because according to the aforementioned Talmudic ruling, one need not

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mention the name of the sick when praying for their recovery, as we see that Moshe did not mention Miriam's name. The Ostrovtzer responded by saying that even though Moshe did not explicitly say Miriam's name, but he alluded to her name and her mother's name, as the phrase "heal now" (רפא נא = 332) in *gematria* equals "Miriam [daughter of] Yocheved" (מרים יוכבד = 332). This idea is also cited by the *Degel Machane Efrayim* (here) and by the *Bnei Yisaschar* in *Maggid Taalumah* (to *Brachos* 34a) in his name.⁴

Others qualify the Talmud's ruling in a different way. The *Magen Avraham* (*Orach Chaim* 119:1) quotes in the name of the Maharil (in the beginning of his Laws of Mourning), then when one prays for another in their presence, they need not mention their name. But if one prays for another outside of their presence, then one must explicitly mention the other's name. Rabbi Chaim Palagi in *Einei Kol Chai* notes that a close reading of the Talmud's verbiage already suggests this nuance, as the Talmud says "He who requests mercy *over* his friend", with the word "over" implying that he is doing so in his friend's presence, while "standing over him", such a person "does not need to mention his name".

⁴ The *Bnei Yisaschar* (there) asks a penetrating question: Why does the Talmud say that one need not mention the name of the sick for whom one is praying? Is it because Hashem knows all the ideas hidden in one's heart, so even if he doesn't say the person's name out loud, Hashem knows for whom he is praying (see *Maharsha* there)? If that's true, then why does Rashi (to Num. 21:2) explain that when the Amalekites attacked the Jews the second time, they spoke the Canaanite language in order to fool the Jews into thinking that they were Canaanites, so they would pray for the Canaanites downfall and not the Amalekite's. What would be the purpose of this ruse, if Hashem knows the truth anyway, so it doesn't really matter which nation the Jews would mention in their prayer? From these questions, the *Bnei Yisaschar* concludes the content of one's prayer is indeed of paramount significance, one cannot just rely on their deepest thoughts in their heart, they must say it explicitly. He then cites the *Degel Machane Efrayim* as noting that even though Moshe did not explicitly mention Miriam's name when praying for her, he did allude to her name (in the fashion mentioned above). **Accordingly, even though verbalizing one's prayer is very important, but when praying for the sick, it is also important not to mention their name in front of them in order to avoid, chas v'shalom, causing any Heavenly prosecution to be raised against them. But still, one should at least allude to the person's name in some way like Moshe hinted to Miriam's name and her mother's name, even though he did not use those name explicitly.**

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Alternatively, *Yalkut HaGersbuni* (beginning of *Parshas Vayera*) writes in the name of *Sodi Razy'a* (a Kabbalistic work of Rabbi Elazar Rokeach of Worms) that when a patient is suffering greatly, then one praying for his recovery need not explicitly mention his name. His name only has to be mentioned when he is not suffering *so much*. He adduces this nuance from the wording of the Torah concerning Hashem visiting Avraham after his circumcision, where it says, “And Hashem appeared to him [Avraham]” (Gen. 18:1) without specifying explicitly who “him” is.

Moshe had no daughters

If her father would surely spit in her face, would she not be embarrassed seven days... (Num. 12:14). Why would the Torah suddenly talk about Miriam’s father Amram? What does he have to do with anything here? The Ostrovtzer Gaon in *Meir Einei Chachamim* (3rd edition, to Num. 12:14)⁵ explains that Miriam thought that because Moshe had not yet fathered a daughter, he was forbidden from separating from his wife. Based on this, the Ostrovtzer Gaon explains that the Talmud (*Sotah* 12a) relates that after Amram had already fathered Miriam and Aharon, he divorced his wife Yocheved. He was then confronted by his daughter Miriam who told him that she should remarry Yocheved in order to continue having more children. Amram followed his daughter’s advice, and from that union Moshe was born. The question is how Miriam argued to her father that he must remarry and sire more children, if he already had a son and a daughter and thus already fulfilled the commandment of procreation? How did Miriam’s argument then compel him to have more children, if he already fulfilled his obligation? The Ostrovtzer Gaon answers that Miriam was of the opinion that would later be the opinion of Beis Shammai (*Yevamos* 61b) who maintain that a man must have two sons in order to fulfill the commandment of procreation, and one son and one daughter is not enough.⁶ With

⁵ This idea is also brought in his name at greater length in *Dvash VeChalav* (p. 109), *Mishbitzei Shlomo* (p. 129), *Niflaos HaSabba Kadisha* (*Likkutei Chaim*, p. 89), *Klil Tiferes* (which is printed in *Tiferes Yehonasan, Parshas Behaaloscha* 3), and *Beis Meir* (*Parshas Behaaloscha* 9).

⁶ According to this, Moshe was born thanks to Beis Shammai’s opinion regarding procreation. However, another way of looking at it is that Moshe’s birth was only justified according to Beis Hillel’s opinion: The commentators (see *Ran* to the first chapter of *Taanis*) explain that during the years of famine, when Yosef was in Egypt, he did not engage in intimacy with his wife, in order to show his commiseration with his

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this, he explains that Hashem mentioned Miriam's father in order to highlight the hypocrisy of her own position. On the one hand, she used Beis Shammai's opinion to compel her father to remarry, yet on the other hand, she imposed Beis Hillel's

family in the Land of Canaan who were suffering from the famine. For this reason, when the Torah reports on the birth of Yosef's two sons, they were said to be born "before the famine had come". However, his older brother Levi did engage in intimacy with his wife during those years, and for this reason when Yaakov and his family came down to Egypt in middle of the years of famine, Levi's wife gave birth to a daughter—Yocheved—at the border to Egypt. Levi did not refrain from intimacy with his wife because he did not think that Yosef was suffering from the famine because presumed Yosef to be dead or an apostate (see also *Beis Yosef to Orach Chaim* §574). The Tosafists in *Daas Zekanim* (to Gen. 41:50) offer another two answers to this question. Firstly, they say that the prohibition of intimacy during a famine is not absolute, it only applies to extra-pious people like Yosef, while Levi did not accept upon himself that level of piety. Alternatively, they explain that at the root of the matter is a Halachic dispute between Yosef and Levi. Yosef followed the opinion of Beis Shammai who maintain that one must father two sons in order to fulfill the commandment of procreation. Accordingly, once Yosef had already fathered Efrayim and Menashe before the famine, he was no longer allowed to engage in intimacy once the famine came, because he already fulfilled his obligation to procreate. Levi, on the other hand, followed the opinion of Beis Hillel that in order to fulfill said commandment, one must father a son and a daughter, and at the famine's onset, Levi only had three sons, but no daughters. Accordingly, he continued to engage in intimacy, so that Yocheved was born during the famine. In view of this, it comes out that Moshe's birth (or at least his mother's birth) is only justified according to Beis Hillel's opinion, but not to Beis Shammai's.

When talking about Moshe personally, we find some sources which suggest that he was connected to Shammai (see *Meshech Chochmah* to Ex. 20:18 and *Sefer HaZechus* to Tu B'Shvat), while on the other hand, the Arizal (*Shaar Maamarei Razal* to Avos 2:6) writes that Moshe was associated with Hillel. He explains that Hillel was a spark of Moshe's soul (a sort of reincarnation), and because of that both of them lived 120 years. Also, the Mishnah relates that when Hillel saw a human skull floating on the waters, he said, "Because you drowned others, you were drowned, and in the end those who drowned you will be drowned." The Arizal explains that this skull refers to that of Pharaoh whose downfall Moshe saw, and was again seen by Hillel. Hillel's statement "Because you drowned others, you were drowned" refers to the fact that because the Egyptians drowned the Jewish baby boys in the river, the Egyptians themselves drowned at the Red Sea, and "and in the end those who drowned you will be drowned" refers to all those people throughout history who tried to "drown" the Jewish People and will eventually meet their own downfalls.

*Much of the material presented in **Oneg!** has been translated by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein from Rabbi Elchanan Shoff's weekly Hebrew 'Aalefcha Chochma' parsha sheet. To sign up to the **Oneg!** weekly email list, or to sponsor a week of **Oneg!** send an email to BKLAshul@gmail.com*

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opinion on her brother Moshe to argue that he was unjustified in separating from his wife. Surely one cannot hold both opinions..! The Talmud (*Eruvin* 6b) says about somebody who follows the stringencies of both Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel in any given case, “A fool walks in the dark” (Ecc. 2:14). This is why Hashem mentioned to Miriam her father.

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