

## Wonderful Well

The Mishna (*Avot 5:9*) teaches that ten things were created at twilight on the first *erev* Shabbat of Creation. Maharal notes that each of these things is connected to the physical dimension of the universe and simultaneously had some aspect of the supernatural as well. Hence, they were created in this twilight zone of the Sixth day, interfacing with the supernatural nature of Shabbat. The ‘Well of Miriam’ was one of these ten creations. In what way was it supernatural? Why is Miriam specifically identified with this well?

Chazal explain that the well accompanied the Jews throughout their sojourn in the desert. It would stop near the Mishkan, whereupon the leaders of each tribe would strike the well to draw water to their particular tribe. The *midrash* in Yalkut Shimoni notes that there was so much water that if a woman wanted to visit a friend in another tribe, she would need to take a boat! Clearly a traveling well producing such an abundance of water is beyond a natural expectation.

According to Chazal, the Well of Miriam

is buried deep in Lake Kinneret in the north of Israel. It is said that one should draw water from the Kinneret on Motzaei Shabbat since perhaps one will draw some of the well’s singular water and it will have a healing power. Chazal tell us that in the future the Well of Miriam will trickle from under the doorway of the Beit Hamikdash and water the entire land. It will cause non fruit bearing trees to bear fruit and make the Dead Sea waters sweet. All of these special ‘powers’ of the well further demonstrate its inherent supernatural features.

## These clouds were indicative of Hashem’s Presence upon the people

Netziv notes that water is often connected with the motif of *chesed* and a woman’s essence is naturally connected to *chesed*. Hence, of the three great leaders, it is Miriam who is associated with the well. Netziv further explains that the waters of the well shared a similar phenomenon with the *mann*. The *mann* generally fell outside the camp, however, one who was righteous would find that the *mann* fell very close to his tent. Likewise, one who was a ‘*nediv lev*’, who was *chesed* oriented, would find a

tributary of water flowing directly in front of their tent.

We see the theme of water echoing throughout Miriam's life. She waited by the Nile to ensure that her baby brother would be safe. She also took the initiative to sing and dance after *Am Yisrael* crossed the *Yam Suf*. As a reward for these actions she is blessed to have the well in her merit.

*Maharal* offers a deeper understanding of Miriam's interrelationship with the well. Aharon was gifted with the honor of being associated with the Clouds of Glory. These clouds were indicative of Hashem's Presence upon the people. Aharon's role was indeed to bring Hashem's Presence down into this world through the service in the *Mishkan*. Yet well water, brought to the surface from deep within the ground, symbolizes the people's response to this Divine closeness and reflects their desire to come close to Hashem. "*Kamayim hapanim lepanim*" (*Mishlei* 27:19). With her feminine nature, Miriam, like water, inspired this quality of reflection in *Am Yisrael*. ■

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