

Zera Shimshon

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Published Mantua 1778*

Chapter XXXVI: Beha'alotecha (Num. 8:1–12:16)

Essay 7. Moses' prayer for Miriam

"וַיִּצְעַק מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה לֵאמֹר אֵל נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ, וּפְרַשׁ רִשׁ"י "אֵל נָא" בָּא הַפְּתוּב לְלַמְדָּךְ דְּרַף אֶרֶץ שְׁהִשׁוּאֵל דְּבַר מִתְּבִירוֹ צָרִיף לֹמַר שְׁנַיִם אִו שְׁלִשָּׁה דְּבָרֵי תַחֲנוּנִים וְאַחַר כֵּן יִפְרַשׁ שְׁאֵלוֹתָיו. "לֵאמֹר", מַה תִּלְמוּד לֹמַר "לֵאמֹר", הַשִּׁיבֵנִי אִם אַתָּה מְרַפָּא אוֹתָהּ אִם לֹא עַד שֶׁהִשְׁיבּוּ וְכוּ' עכ"ל. וְכֵן הוּא הִלְשׁוֹן בְּגִלְקוּט בְּשֵׁם הַסְּפָרִי.

Miriam contracted the skin disease *tzara'at*, “**So Moses cried out the L-rd, saying, “Please G-d [אֵל נָא] [*El na*], heal her, now [נָא] [*na*].”**¹ The word *na* appears twice in this verse, and could be understood to mean “please” or “now.” The verse is typically understood such that the first “*na*” means “please,” and the second “*na*” means “now.”

Rashi explained, “[Regarding the words] ‘Please G-d [*El na*],’ Scripture comes to teach you proper behavior [*derech eretz*], that one asking for something from his friend needs to say two or three words of supplication and afterward explain his requests.”

Rashi continues his analysis: “[Regarding the word] ‘Saying,’ what is it teaching us by stating the word, ‘saying’? [It’s teaching that Moses said more to G-d. He said,] ‘Answer me whether you are going to heal her or not,’ until He replied: ‘If her father spat in her face, would she not bear her shame for seven days? Let her be shut out of camp for seven days, and then let her be readmitted.’²”

This comment of Rashi’s is brought from the language of the Yalkut Shimoni (742:2) in the name of the Sifrei.

וְהַעוֹלָם מְקַשִּׁים לְמַה הִפָּךְ הַסֵּדֶר, דִּתְחִלָּה הִנֵּה לּוֹ לְרִשׁ"י לְפָרֵשׁ מֵלֵת "לֵאמֹר" וְאַחַר כֵּן "אֵל נָא רַפָּא" וְכוּ'.

Question 1: Everyone asks why [Rashi] reversed the order in analyzing the verse, that at the beginning Rashi should have explained the word “saying,” and afterward he should have explained the words, “Please G-d, heal.”

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¹ Num. 12:13.

² Num. 12:14.

וַיֹּאמֶר דְּמַתְחִלָּה קִשְׁיָה רִישִׁייה דְּקָרָא אָסִיפִייה, דְּפִשְׁטָה דְּקָרָא הוּא שְׁמֵלַת "נָא" רְצָה לֹאמֵר "מִיָּד בְּשַׁעָה זֹ" וְשָׁנָה מִשָּׁה לֹאמֵר וְשִׁתִּי פְעָמִים "נָא", "אֵל נָא רְפָא נָא", כְּדִי שְׁהִקֵּב"ה יַעֲשֶׂה מִיָּד בְּקוֹשְׁתּוֹ, כְּדָאמְרִינוּ בְּעֵלְמָא שְׁנָה עֲלֵיו הַכְּתוּב לְעַכְבָּ, וְכִהִי הוּא דְּכָל הַמְתַּאמֵּץ בְּתַפְלָתוֹ אֵין תַּפְלָתוֹ חוֹזֶרֶת רִיקָם. וְלִפִּי זֶה אֵין מְקוֹם לְמַלַּת "לֹאמֵר" דְּמֵאֵי אָמִירָה שְׁיִיד כָּאן, הֲלֹא תַפְלָתוֹ שְׁל מִשָּׁה הִיְתָה שְׁיִרְפָּאנָה מִיָּד וְאֵין צוֹרֵךְ כְּלָל לְאָמִירָה. לְכֹן צָרִיךְ לֹאמֵר דְּמַלַּת "אֵל נָא" אֵינוּ רְצָה לֹאמֵר מִיָּד בְּשַׁעָה זֹ כְּמוֹ "רְפָא נָא", אֵלָּא הוּא לְשׁוֹן תַּחְנוּנִים כְּמוֹ "אָנָּה", וְאֵין כָּאן לֹא כְּפֹל וְלֹא חִיזוּק בְּתַפְלָה זֹ אֵלָּא בְּאֵל לְלַמֵּד דְּרָךְ אֲרִיז שְׁהַשׁוֹאֵל דְּבָר מְחִבִּירוֹ וְכוּ', וְלִפִּי שְׁמֵלַת "לֹאמֵר" מְכַרַּחַת פִּירוּשׁ זֶה מְשׁוּם הֵכִי הַקְּדִים לְפָרֵשׁ "אֵל נָא" וְכוּ'.

Answer to Question 1: **It can be said that initially there's a problem with the first part of the verse and the last part. For the plain meaning is that the word "na" means "immediately, at this time," i.e., "now." Moses taught [us] to say "na" two times, i.e., if instead of interpreting the first "na" to mean "please," we also interpret it to mean "now," the verse would have meant, "Now G-d, heal her, now," in order that the Holy One, Blessed be he, would immediately fulfill his request. As it is said generally, "the verse repeated it to make [this requirement] indispensable."³ Like the case that [regarding] everyone who exerts himself in his prayers, his prayer will not return unanswered.⁴**

Because of this, there's no room for the word "saying," for how is a statement relevant here? I.e., above we explained that the word "saying" hints that Moses added a statement, "Answer me whether you are going to heal her or not." But if **Moses' prayer was that He should heal her immediately, then** either his prayer would have been answered in the affirmative, meaning Miriam would have been healed immediately, or it would have been answered in the negative, meaning that Miriam would not have been healed immediately. Thus, **there is no need at all for a statement** asking G-d to notify him whether he would agree or not to heal Miriam.

Therefore, it's necessary to say that the words "El na" do not have the intent of "immediately, at this time" as do the words "heal her, na." Rather, this first occurrence of the word na is the language of supplication, like the word ana [אָנָּה] ["please"], and thus, despite the two uses of the word na, there is no duplication here and no strengthening of this prayer. Rather, the first "na" means "please," and the second "na" means "now." [The first "na"] comes to teach proper behavior, "that one asking for something from his friend needs to say two or three words of supplication and afterward explain his request." Because the word "saying" requires this explanation, because of this, [Rashi] first explained "Please G-d [אֵל נָא] [El na]."

³ Pesachim 61a.

⁴ Berachot 32b: "Rabbi Chanin said that Rabbi Chanina said: Anyone who prolongs his prayer is assured that his prayer does not return unanswered."

אִי נָמִי, יֵשׁ לוֹמֵר דְּקָשָׁה עַל מֹשֶׁה מֵאֵי קֶאֱמֵר "לֹאמֵר" דֵּהֵינּוּ הַשִּׁיבֵינִי עַל דְּבָרֵי אִם אַתָּה מְרַפָּא וְכוּ', וְכִי זֶה מִדַּת דְּרָף אֲרָץ שְׁהִקֵּב"ה יִשְׁיב לְאָדָם אִם יִקְבֵּל תְּפִלָּתוֹ אִם לֹא. וְיֵשׁ לוֹמֵר דְּיֵשׁ מִקְשִׁים הֵיאָד צַעֲק מֹשֶׁה בְּתִפְלָתוֹ וְהָרִי אָמְרוּ תַּנּוּ"ל כֹּל הַמְרִים קוּלוֹ בְּתִפְלָתוֹ הָרִי זֶה מִנְּבִיאֵי הַשְּׁקֵר. וּלְפִי דַעֲתָנוּ קוֹשְׁיָא מְעִיקְרָא לִיתָא, דְּאִיתָא בְּטוֹר וּבְהֶגְהָת שׁוֹלְחָן עָרוּף אֲוֹרַח חַיִּים (סִימָן ק"א), וְאִם מִשְׁמִיעַ קוּלוֹ כְּדֵי שְׁיִלְמְדוּ מִמֶּנּוּ בְּנֵי בֵיתוֹ, מוֹתֵר. וְאִף כָּאֵן מֹשֶׁה הוֹצִירָהּ לוֹמֵר בְּקוּל כְּדֵי שְׁיִלְמְדוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל הַדְּרָף אֲרָץ שְׁהִשְׁוֹאֵל דְּבָר מִתְּבִירוֹ וְכוּ'.

Alternatively, it can be said that one can question Moses why he said “saying,” which is “Answer me regarding my words, if you are going to heal her or not.”

Question 2: Is this proper behavior for Moses, [to ask] that the Holy One, Blessed Be He, answer a man if he will accept his prayer or not?

Question 3: It can also be said that there are those who question how Moses “cried out” [literally, “yelled”] in his prayer, for the wise men of blessed memory said, “One who raises his voice during prayer is [considered to be] among the false prophets [as they too were wont to cry out and shout to their gods].”⁵

Answer to Question 3: In our opinion, there’s no problem initially with this second question, for it’s brought by the Tur and by the Rema’s annotation of the Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim (siman 101, se’if 2), “And if he makes his voice heard so that the members of his household will learn from him, it is permissible.”⁶ Here, too, Moses needed to speak loudly in order that Israel would learn proper behavior that “one requesting something from his fellow needs to say two or three words of supplication and afterward explain his request.”

אַלְא דְּקָשָׁה לָמָּה דְּנִקָּא בְּפַעַם הַזֹּאת חֲשַׁב מֹשֶׁה לְלַמֵּד לְיִשְׂרָאֵל דְּבָר זֶה וְלֹא בְּשַׂאֵר הַתְּפִלוֹת שְׁהִתְפַּלֵּל.

Question 4: But it’s difficult to understand why especially at this time, in the incident with Miriam, Moses thought to teach Israel this thing, and not at the other prayers that he prayed.

⁵ Berachot 24b.

⁶ Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, siman 101, se’if 2: “And one should not only pray in one’s heart, but one must actually enunciate the words with one lips and let them be heard in a whisper tone by one’s own ears; [however] one should not let one’s voice be heard [fully during the Amidah]. [However,] if one is unable to direct one’s intention [to the Amidah] while in a whisper tone, one is allowed to raise one’s voice. And this is [only] when one is praying privately, but [if one is praying] with the congregation, it is forbidden, as this is a nuisance for the congregation.” The Rema adds, quoting the Tur: “If one is letting one’s voice be heard in one’s home when praying, so that the members of one’s household will learn from him, it is permitted.”

וגז לומר דאמרין בנלקוט מפני מה לא האריך משה בתפלתו כדי שלא יהיו ישראל אומרים בשביל שהיא אחותו הוא מאריך עכ"ל. ומעתה בשאר הפעמים הנה מוכרח להתפלל בלחש כדין חובת התפלה, ואם הנה מתפלל פעם אחת בקול כדי שילמדו ישראל הדרך ארץ שצריך לומר קודם התפלה שנים או שלשה דברים של תחנונים, שמא היו לומדים ממנו נמי שמוותר להתפלל בקול רם. אמנם עתה בפעם הזאת שהוכרח להתפלל בקול רם מחמת ענין אחר, כדי שלא יהיו ישראל אומרים בשביל שהיא אחותו הוא מאריך, משום הכי חשב ללמד הדרך ארץ ולא חשש שיטעו ישראל לומר שמוותר להתפלל בקול רם, דשאני הכא דאיכא טעמא דחשד.

Answer to Question 4: **It can be said that it says in the Yalkut Shimoni (remez 742), "Why didn't Moses extend the length of his prayer at this instance? Why did he only say five words? So that Israel would not say that because [Miriam] was his sister, he was extending his prayer.**

Now, for the other times that he prayed, besides this incident with Miriam, he was compelled to pray in a whisper, according to the law of the obligation of prayer. If he would pray one time loudly, in order to teach Israel proper behavior that it's necessary prior to prayer to say two or three words of supplication, perhaps they would learn from him also that it is permissible to pray with a loud voice.

However, now at this time, when Miriam was sick, he was compelled to pray loudly because of another matter, viz, in order that Israel wouldn't say that it was because it was his sister that he extended his prayer. That is, if he had prayed silently, as he always did at other times, the people would not have known how much time he was devoting to praying on behalf of Miriam, and may have said that he was devoting much of his silent prayer on her behalf, because of nepotism. By instead praying out loud, and only saying five words, they would have understood that he was not extending his prayer on Miriam's behalf.

Because of this fact that he decided to pray out loud for that purpose, he thought to also simultaneously teach proper behavior, and he wasn't afraid that Israel would err and would think that it's acceptable to pray out loud, because it was different in this case, as there was a sense of suspicion. I.e., the people would understand that Moses was praying out loud in this case, not to teach that it was acceptable, but to show that he was only devoting five words of his prayer to Miriam, and he wasn't engaging in nepotism.

ואם תאמר דילמא ישראל לא יבינו טעם החשד ואתו למיטעי שמוותר להתפלל בקול, משום הכי נתחכם משה ואמר להקב"ה השיבני אם אתה מרפא אותה אם לאו, כלומר אני יודע שהתפלתי שלא פראוי לפי שהתפלתי בקול, אבל סבור הייתי שוותר לי מפני החשד, ואם טעיתי השיבני אם אתה מרפא אותה אם לאו, שאז אקזור ואתפלל בלחש כדין חובת התפלה. ומשום הכי ניתחא שפיר להפוך הסדר לפרש מלת "לאמר" אחר "אל נא רפא נא" וכו' כמו שפתיב רש"י ז"ל, שהרי במלת "לאמר" ניצולו ישראל מן הטעות ולמדו הדרך ארץ הנ"ל.

Answer to Question 2: We noted above that the rabbis interpreted the word "saying" as meaning that Moses directly asked G-d if He would answer Moses' prayer or not, and we asked if it was appropriate of Moses to question G-d in this way. This can be understood as follows: **You**

may say that perhaps Israel didn't understand the sense of the suspicion, i.e., that Moses was praying loudly at this time so that Israel would understand he wasn't extending his prayer for Miriam out of nepotism. If Israel didn't understand this, it may have erred that it was permissible to pray loudly. Because of this, Moses was wise and said to the Holy One, Blessed be He, "Answer me if you are healing her or not." This is as if to say, "I know that I prayed inappropriately because I prayed loudly, but I was of the opinion that this was permitted to me because of suspicion. If I erred, answer me if you are healing her or not, for then I will go back and pray in a whisper according to the law of the obligation of prayer."

Thus, Moses was not being rude, G-d forbid, but was sincerely asking whether his analysis and action was proper or not.

Because of this, it is nicely convenient for Rashi to reverse the order, and to explain the word "saying" after explaining the words "Please G-d, heal her, now," as Rashi of blessed memory wrote, for by the word "saying," Israel was saved from the error and learned proper behavior.

ואפֿשר נִמִּי שְׁמַלַת "וַיִּצְעַק" לֹא בָּאָה לִדְבַר שֶׁהִתְפַּלֵּל בְּקוֹל רָם, רַק שֶׁהִתְפַּלֵּל מִקִּירוֹת לִיבּוֹ, דְּאִיתָא בְּזוֹהַר שְׁמוֹת (דף י"ט ע"ב) צְעָקָה וְשׁוֹעָה בְּמֵאֵי מִתְפַּרְשֵׁן? אָמַר ר' יִצְחָק שׁוֹעָה הִיא בְּתַפְלָה דְּנֹקָא בְּדַכְתִּיב "שְׁמֹעָה־תַּפְלָתִי ה' וְשׁוֹעָתִי הַאֲזִינָה". צְעָקָה שְׁצוֹעֵק וְאִינּוּ אֹמֵר כְּלוּם. אָמַר ר' יְהוֹנָדָה הִלְכָּה גְדוּלָה צְעָקָה מִפּוֹלֵן שֶׁהִצְעָקָה הִיא בְּלֵב. הִנָּה הוּא דַּכְתִּיב "צְעַק לְבָם אֶל־ה'" וְעֵי"ש. וְלִפִּי זֶה יֵשׁ לִדְבַר שֶׁמִּתְחַלֵּה צְעַק מִשָּׂה בְּלִבּוֹ אֶל ה' וְאַחַר כֵּן הִתְפַּלֵּל וּבִנְיָה הַכֹּל גִּיחָא.

It's also possible that the word "And he cried out" didn't come to say that he prayed with a loud voice, only that he prayed from the depths of his heart, as is brought in the Zohar on parsha Shemot (page 19b),⁷ "What is the distinction between *tze'aka* [צְעָקָה] and *shav'ah* [שׁוֹעָה], two words that can be translated as 'shouting'? Rabbi Yitzchak said, *Shav'ah* is specifically words of prayer, as is written, 'Hear my prayer, O L-rd; give ear to my cry.'⁸ *Tze'aka* is that he shouts but doesn't say anything, i.e., it's sound without words. Rabbi Yehuda said, the greatest shout of all is *tze'aka*, the shout of the heart. This is what is written, 'Their heart cried out to the L-rd,'⁹ and see there. Because of this, we can say that initially, the cry of Moses was from his heart to the L-rd, i.e., it was a loud cry of pain over his sister's condition. But there were no words in the cry, so he was not acting against the halacha. Afterward he prayed, and in this way of interpretation everything is fine.

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⁷ Zohar II:20a.

⁸ Ps. 39:13.

⁹ Lam. 2:18.

Zera Shimshon

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Published Mantua 1778*

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Essay 7. Moses' prayer for Miriam

"וַיִּצְעַק מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה לֵאמֹר אֵל נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ, וּפְרַשׁ רִשׁ"י "אֵל נָא" בָּא הַפְּתוּב לְלַמְדָּךְ דְּרַף אֶרֶץ שְׁהִשׁוּאֵל דְּבַר מִתְּבִירוֹ צָרִיף לֹמַר שְׁנַיִם אִו שְׁלִשָּׁה דְּבָרֵי תַּחֲנוּנִים וְאַחַר כֵּף יִפְרַשׁ שְׁאֵלוֹתָיו. "לֵאמֹר", מַה תִּלְמוּד לֹמַר "לֵאמֹר", הִשְׁיבֵנִי אִם אַתָּה מְרַפָּא אוֹתָהּ אִם לֹא עַד שֶׁהִשְׁיבֻ וְכוּ' עכ"ל. וְכֵן הוּא הִלְשׁוֹן בְּגִלְקוּט בְּשֵׁם הַסְּפָרִי.

Miriam contracted the skin disease *tzara'at*, “**So Moses cried out the L-rd, saying, “Please G-d [אֵל נָא] [*El na*], heal her, now [נָא] [*na*].”**¹ The word *na* appears twice in this verse, and could be understood to mean “please” or “now.” The verse is typically understood such that the first “*na*” means “please,” and the second “*na*” means “now.”

Rashi explained, “[Regarding the words] ‘Please G-d [*El na*],’ Scripture comes to teach you proper behavior [*derech eretz*], that one asking for something from his friend needs to say two or three words of supplication and afterward explain his requests.”

Rashi continues his analysis: “[Regarding the word] ‘Saying,’ what is it teaching us by stating the word, ‘saying’? [It’s teaching that Moses said more to G-d. He said,] ‘Answer me whether you are going to heal her or not,’ until He replied: ‘If her father spat in her face, would she not bear her shame for seven days? Let her be shut out of camp for seven days, and then let her be readmitted.’²”

This comment of Rashi’s is brought from the language of the Yalkut Shimoni (742:2) in the name of the Sifrei.

וְהַעוֹלָם מְקַשִּׁים לְמַה הִפָּךְ הַסֵּדֶר, דִּתְחִלָּה הִנֵּה לֹו לְרִשׁ"י לְפָרֵשׁ מֵלֵת "לֵאמֹר" וְאַחַר כֵּף "אֵל נָא רַפָּא" וְכוּ'.

Question 1: Everyone asks why [Rashi] reversed the order in analyzing the verse, that at the beginning Rashi should have explained the word “saying,” and afterward he should have explained the words, “Please G-d, heal.”

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¹ Num. 12:13.

² Num. 12:14.

וַיֹּאמֶר דְּמַתְחִלָּה קִשְׁיָה רִישִׁייה דְּקָרָא אָסִיפִייה, דְּפִשְׁטָה דְּקָרָא הוּא שְׁמֵלַת "נָא" רְצָה לֹאמַר "מִיָּד בְּשַׁעָה זֹה" וְשָׁנָה מִשָּׁה לֹאמַר וְשָׁתִי פְעָמִים "נָא", "אֵל נָא רְפָא נָא", כְּדִי שְׁהִקֵּב הַיַּעֲשֶׂה מִיָּד בְּקִשְׁתּוֹ, כְּדִאֲמַרִּינוּ בְּעֵלְמָא שְׁנָה עֲלֵיו הַכְּתוּב לְעַכְבָּ, וְכִהִי הוּא דְּכָל הַמְתַּאמֵּץ בְּתַפְלָתוֹ אֵין תַּפְלָתוֹ חוֹזֶרֶת רִיקָם. וְלִפִּי זֶה אֵין מְקוֹם לְמַלַּת "לֹאמַר" דְּמֵאֵי אָמִירָה שְׁיִיד כָּאן, הֲלֹא תַפְלָתוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה הִיָּתָה שְׁיִרְפָּאנָה מִיָּד וְאֵין צוֹרֵךְ כְּלָל לְאָמִירָה. לְכֵן צָרִיךְ לֹאמַר דְּמַלַּת "אֵל נָא" אֵינוֹ רְצָה לֹאמַר מִיָּד בְּשַׁעָה זֹה כְּמוֹ "רְפָא נָא", אֲלֵא הוּא לְשׁוֹן תַּחְנוּנִים כְּמוֹ "אָנָּה", וְאֵין כָּאן לֹא כְּפֹל וְלֹא חִיזוּק בְּתַפְלָה זֹה אֲלֵא כָּא לְלַמַּד דְּרָךְ אֲרִיז שְׁהַשׂוֹאֵל דְּבָר מְחִבִּירוֹ וְכוּ', וְלִפִּי שְׁמֵלַת "לֹאמַר" מְכַרַּחַת פִּירוּשׁ זֶה מִשּׁוּם הֵכִי הַקְּדִים לְפָרֵשׁ "אֵל נָא" וְכוּ'.

Answer to Question 1: **It can be said that initially there's a problem with the first part of the verse and the last part. For the plain meaning is that the word "na" means "immediately, at this time," i.e., "now." Moses taught [us] to say "na" two times, i.e., if instead of interpreting the first "na" to mean "please," we also interpret it to mean "now," the verse would have meant, "Now G-d, heal her, now," in order that the Holy One, Blessed be he, would immediately fulfill his request. As it is said generally, "the verse repeated it to make [this requirement] indispensable."³ Like the case that [regarding] everyone who exerts himself in his prayers, his prayer will not return unanswered.⁴**

Because of this, there's no room for the word "saying," for how is a statement relevant here? I.e., above we explained that the word "saying" hints that Moses added a statement, "Answer me whether you are going to heal her or not." But if **Moses' prayer was that He should heal her immediately, then** either his prayer would have been answered in the affirmative, meaning Miriam would have been healed immediately, or it would have been answered in the negative, meaning that Miriam would not have been healed immediately. Thus, **there is no need at all for a statement** asking G-d to notify him whether he would agree or not to heal Miriam.

Therefore, it's necessary to say that the words "El na" do not have the intent of "immediately, at this time" as do the words "heal her, na." Rather, this first occurrence of the word na is the language of supplication, like the word ana [אָנָּה] ["please"], and thus, despite the two uses of the word na, there is no duplication here and no strengthening of this prayer. Rather, the first "na" means "please," and the second "na" means "now." [The first "na"] comes to teach proper behavior, "that one asking for something from his friend needs to say two or three words of supplication and afterward explain his request." Because the word "saying" requires this explanation, because of this, [Rashi] first explained "Please G-d [אֵל נָא] [El na]."

³ Pesachim 61a.

⁴ Berachot 32b: "Rabbi Chanin said that Rabbi Chanina said: Anyone who prolongs his prayer is assured that his prayer does not return unanswered."

אִי נָמִי, יֵשׁ לוֹמֵר דְּקָשָׁה עַל מֹשֶׁה מֵאֵי קֶאֱמֵר "לֹאמֵר" דֵּהֵינּוּ הַשִּׁיבֵינִי עַל דְּבָרֵי אִם אַתָּה מְרַפָּא וְכוּ', וְכִי זֶה מִדַּת דְּרָף אֲרָץ שְׁהִקֵּב"ה יִשְׁיב לְאָדָם אִם יִקְבֵּל תְּפִלָּתוֹ אִם לֹא. וְיֵשׁ לוֹמֵר דְּיֵשׁ מִקְשִׁים הֵיאָד צַעֲק מֹשֶׁה בְּתִפְלָתוֹ וְהָרִי אָמְרוּ תַּנּוּ"ל כֹּל הַמְרִים קוּלוֹ בְּתִפְלָתוֹ הָרִי זֶה מִנְּבִיאֵי הַשִּׁקָּר. וְלִפִּי דַעֲתָנוּ קוֹשְׁיָא מְעִיקְרָא לִיתָא, דְּאִיתָא בְּטוֹר וּבְהֶגְהָת שׁוֹלְחָן עָרוּף אֹרַח חַיִּים (סִימָן ק"א), וְאִם מִשְׁמִיעַ קוּלוֹ כְּדֵי שְׁיִלְמְדוּ מִמֶּנּוּ בְּנֵי בֵּיתוֹ, מוֹתֵר. וְאִף כָּאֵן מֹשֶׁה הוֹצִירָד לֹמֵר בְּקוּל כְּדֵי שְׁיִלְמְדוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל הַדְּרָף אֲרָץ שְׁהִשְׁוֹאֵל דְּבָר מִתְּבִירוֹ וְכוּ'.

Alternatively, it can be said that one can question Moses why he said “saying,” which is “Answer me regarding my words, if you are going to heal her or not.”

Question 2: Is this proper behavior for Moses, [to ask] that the Holy One, Blessed Be He, answer a man if he will accept his prayer or not?

Question 3: It can also be said that there are those who question how Moses “cried out” [literally, “yelled”] in his prayer, for the wise men of blessed memory said, “One who raises his voice during prayer is [considered to be] among the false prophets [as they too were wont to cry out and shout to their gods].”⁵

Answer to Question 3: In our opinion, there’s no problem initially with this second question, for it’s brought by the Tur and by the Rema’s annotation of the Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim (siman 101, se’if 2), “And if he makes his voice heard so that the members of his household will learn from him, it is permissible.”⁶ Here, too, Moses needed to speak loudly in order that Israel would learn proper behavior that “one requesting something from his fellow needs to say two or three words of supplication and afterward explain his request.”

אַלְא דְּקָשָׁה לָמָּה דְּנִקָּא בְּפַעַם הַזֹּאת חָשַׁב מֹשֶׁה לְלַמֵּד לְיִשְׂרָאֵל דְּבָר זֶה וְלֹא בְּשַׂאֵר הַתְּפִלוֹת שְׁהִתְפַּלֵּל.

Question 4: But it’s difficult to understand why especially at this time, in the incident with Miriam, Moses thought to teach Israel this thing, and not at the other prayers that he prayed.

⁵ Berachot 24b.

⁶ Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, siman 101, se’if 2: “And one should not only pray in one’s heart, but one must actually enunciate the words with one lips and let them be heard in a whisper tone by one’s own ears; [however] one should not let one’s voice be heard [fully during the Amidah]. [However,] if one is unable to direct one’s intention [to the Amidah] while in a whisper tone, one is allowed to raise one’s voice. And this is [only] when one is praying privately, but [if one is praying] with the congregation, it is forbidden, as this is a nuisance for the congregation.” The Rema adds, quoting the Tur: “If one is letting one’s voice be heard in one’s home when praying, so that the members of one’s household will learn from him, it is permitted.”

וגיש לומר דאמרין בנלקוט מפני מה לא האריך משה בתפלתו כדי שלא יהיו ישראל אומרים בשביל שהיא אחותו הוא מאריך עכ"ל. ומעתה בשאר הפעמים הנה מוכרח להתפלל בלחש כדין חובת התפלה, ואם הנה מתפלל פעם אחת בקול כדי שילמדו ישראל הדרך ארץ שצריך לומר קודם התפלה שנים או שלשה דברים של תחנונים, שמא היו לומדים ממנו נמי שמוותר להתפלל בקול רם. אמנם עתה בפעם הזאת שהוכרח להתפלל בקול רם מחמת ענין אחר, כדי שלא יהיו ישראל אומרים בשביל שהיא אחותו הוא מאריך, משום הכי חשב ללמד הדרך ארץ ולא חשש שיטעו ישראל לומר שמוותר להתפלל בקול רם, דשאני הכא דאיכא טעמא דחשד.

Answer to Question 4: **It can be said that it says in the Yalkut Shimoni (remez 742), "Why didn't Moses extend the length of his prayer at this instance? Why did he only say five words? So that Israel would not say that because [Miriam] was his sister, he was extending his prayer.**

Now, for the other times that he prayed, besides this incident with Miriam, he was compelled to pray in a whisper, according to the law of the obligation of prayer. If he would pray one time loudly, in order to teach Israel proper behavior that it's necessary prior to prayer to say two or three words of supplication, perhaps they would learn from him also that it is permissible to pray with a loud voice.

However, now at this time, when Miriam was sick, he was compelled to pray loudly because of another matter, viz, in order that Israel wouldn't say that it was because it was his sister that he extended his prayer. That is, if he had prayed silently, as he always did at other times, the people would not have known how much time he was devoting to praying on behalf of Miriam, and may have said that he was devoting much of his silent prayer on her behalf, because of nepotism. By instead praying out loud, and only saying five words, they would have understood that he was not extending his prayer on Miriam's behalf.

Because of this fact that he decided to pray out loud for that purpose, he thought to also simultaneously teach proper behavior, and he wasn't afraid that Israel would err and would think that it's acceptable to pray out loud, because it was different in this case, as there was a sense of suspicion. I.e., the people would understand that Moses was praying out loud in this case, not to teach that it was acceptable, but to show that he was only devoting five words of his prayer to Miriam, and he wasn't engaging in nepotism.

ואם תאמר דילמא ישראל לא יבינו טעם החשד ואתו למיטעי שמוותר להתפלל בקול, משום הכי נתחכם משה ואמר להקב"ה השיבני אם אתה מרפא אותה אם לאו, כלומר אני יודע שהתפלתי שלא פראוי לפי שהתפללתי בקול, אבל סבור הייתי שוותר לי מפני החשד, ואם טעיתי השיבני אם אתה מרפא אותה אם לאו, שאז אקזור ואתפלל בלחש כדין חובת התפלה. ומשום הכי ניתא שפיר להפוך הסדר לפרש מלת "לאמר" אחר "אל נא רפא נא" וכו' כמו שפתיב רש"י ז"ל, שהרי במלת "לאמר" ניצולו ישראל מן הטעות ולמדו הדרך ארץ הנ"ל.

Answer to Question 2: We noted above that the rabbis interpreted the word "saying" as meaning that Moses directly asked G-d if He would answer Moses' prayer or not, and we asked if it was appropriate of Moses to question G-d in this way. This can be understood as follows: **You**

may say that perhaps Israel didn't understand the sense of the suspicion, i.e., that Moses was praying loudly at this time so that Israel would understand he wasn't extending his prayer for Miriam out of nepotism. If Israel didn't understand this, it may have erred that it was permissible to pray loudly. Because of this, Moses was wise and said to the Holy One, Blessed be He, "Answer me if you are healing her or not." This is as if to say, "I know that I prayed inappropriately because I prayed loudly, but I was of the opinion that this was permitted to me because of suspicion. If I erred, answer me if you are healing her or not, for then I will go back and pray in a whisper according to the law of the obligation of prayer."

Thus, Moses was not being rude, G-d forbid, but was sincerely asking whether his analysis and action was proper or not.

Because of this, it is nicely convenient for Rashi to reverse the order, and to explain the word "saying" after explaining the words "Please G-d, heal her, now," as Rashi of blessed memory wrote, for by the word "saying," Israel was saved from the error and learned proper behavior.

ואפֿשר נָמִי שְׁמַלַת "וַיִּצְעַק" לֹא בָּאָה לִדְבַר שֶׁהִתְפַּלֵּל בְּקוֹל רָם, רַק שֶׁהִתְפַּלֵּל מִקִּירוֹת לִיבּוֹ, דְּאִיתָא בְּזוֹהַר שְׁמוֹת (דף י"ט ע"ב) צְעָקָה וְשׁוֹעָה בְּמֵאֵי מִתְפַּרְשֵׁן? אָמַר ר' יִצְחָק שׁוֹעָה הִיא בְּתַפְלָה דְּנֹקָא בְּדַכְתִּיב "שְׁמֹעָה־תַפְלָתִי ה' וְשׁוֹעָתִי הַאֲזִינָה". צְעָקָה שְׁצוֹעֵק וְאִינּוּ אֹמֵר כְּלוּם. אָמַר ר' יְהוֹנָדָה הִלְכָּד גְּדוּלָּה צְעָקָה מִפּוֹלֵן שֶׁהִצְעָקָה הִיא בְּלֵב. הִדָּא הוּא דְכַתִּיב "צְעַק לְבָם אֱלֹהִים" וְלִפִּי זֶה יֵשׁ לִדְבַר שֶׁמִּתְחַלֵּה צְעַק מִשָּׂה בְּלִבּוֹ אֶל ה' וְאַחֲרַי כִּדְ הִתְפַּלֵּל וּבְזֶה הַפֶּל גִּיחָא.

It's also possible that the word "And he cried out" didn't come to say that he prayed with a loud voice, only that he prayed from the depths of his heart, as is brought in the Zohar on parsha Shemot (page 19b),⁷ "What is the distinction between *tze'aka* [צְעָקָה] and *shav'ah* [שׁוֹעָה], two words that can be translated as 'shouting'? Rabbi Yitzchak said, *Shav'ah* is specifically words of prayer, as is written, 'Hear my prayer, O L-rd; give ear to my cry.'⁸ *Tze'aka* is that he shouts but doesn't say anything, i.e., it's sound without words. Rabbi Yehuda said, the greatest shout of all is *tze'aka*, the shout of the heart. This is what is written, 'Their heart cried out to the L-rd,'⁹ and see there. Because of this, we can say that initially, the cry of Moses was from his heart to the L-rd, i.e., it was a loud cry of pain over his sister's condition. But there were no words in the cry, so he was not acting against the halacha. Afterward he prayed, and in this way of interpretation everything is fine.

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⁷ Zohar II:20a.

⁸ Ps. 39:13.

⁹ Lam. 2:18.