



PARSHAS VAEIRA – MALCOLM TOPEROFF

I would like to look at the origin of the name מרים and also look at the other names מרים had.

וימררו את חייהם בעבודה קשה ... (שמות א:יד)

The Yalkut Shimoni (Shemos קסה) says from this posuk – this is why מרים was called מרים.

I found it difficult to understand why the name Miriam should be derived from מר – bitter. It seems an inappropriate derivation. I spoke to Rabbi Yaacov Hamer שליט"א who pointed me to the עזרא אבן on the הגדה, who asks a similar question as to why we begin the הגדה with עבדים היינו on a night of חרות.

The עזרא אבן says that the Bnei Yisrael had to experience עבדות so as to learn such מדות as רחמניות, סבלנות, and עבדי ה' in order to become עבדי ה' נושא בעול אם חבירו and גמילות חסדים.

Miriam had several other names:

- 1) עזובה
- 2) רש"י סוטה יב. – see יריעות
- 3) אפרת
- 4) חלאה (דברי הימים א ד:ה)
- 5) ונערה (דברי הימים א ד:ה)
- 6) ובני חלאה צרת וצחר ואתנן (דברי הימים א ד:ז)
- 7) אחרחל (דברי הימים א ד:ח)

Rabbi Yaacov Marmorstein שליט"א told me that because of the derivation of Miriam from מר and the fact that she was unwell – therefore she was named עזובה - that she was forsaken by men who would not marry her because she was ill. But, Calev took her as his wife – see בבא בתרא קי. and רשי סוטה יב.

Rabbi Toledano זצ"ל said that one should not name a baby מרים, but add another name to מרים.

I am most grateful to R. Nathan Merel and his Sefer – The Coat of the Unicorn Volume 3, for bringing many of the above מקורות.

לעילוי נשמת אבי מורי ר' יעקב דוד בן מאיר ז"ל