



## Short and Sweet? Behalotcha 2012

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### 1. Bamidbar 12:9-13

<p>G-d displayed anger towards them and departed. When the cloud left its place over the Tent, Miriam was stricken with scales, white like snow. When Aaron turned to Miriam and saw her stricken with scales, Aaron said to Moses, "Please, my lord, do not hold a grudge against us for acting foolishly and sinning. Let Miriam not be like a stillborn child, who comes from the womb with half its flesh rotted away." Moses cried out to G-d, "O G-d, please heal her."</p>	<p>וַיַּחַר-אַף ה' בָּם, וַיִּלֶךְ. וְהֶעָנָן, סָר מֵעַל הָאֹהֶל, וְהִנֵּה מִרְיָם, מְצֹרְעֶת כַּשֵּׁלֶג; וַיִּפֹּן אַהֲרֹן אֶל-מִרְיָם, וְהִנֵּה מְצֹרְעֶת. וַיֹּאמֶר אַהֲרֹן, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה: בִּי אָדֹנָי--אֵל-נָא תִשֶׁת עֲלֵינוּ חֲטָאת, אֲשֶׁר נִוְאלְנוּ וְאֲשֶׁר חֲטָאנוּ. אֵל-נָא תְהִי, כְּמֵת, אֲשֶׁר בְּצִאתוֹ מִרְחֹם אִמּוֹ, וַיֵּאָכֵל חֲצִי בְּשָׂרוֹ. וַיִּצְעַק מֹשֶׁה, אֶל-ה' לֵאמֹר: אֵל, נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ.</p>
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Why is Moses prayer so short? Think of your own reasons before looking at the commentaries below.

### The Nature of the Prayer

#### 2. Hertz Bamidbar 12:13

This prayer is a model of brevity. It says so much in five of the simplest, shortest Hebrew words.

#### 3. Fox Bamidbar 12:13

I could not find a way to reflect the sound of the Hebrew.

#### 4. Ibn Ezra Bamidbar 12:13

Evidence of Moses' great pity for his sister.	זה יורה שהיה בצער על אחותו.
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#### 5. Etz Chaim Bamidbar 12:12

Might we speculate that, because Miriam's affliction was caused by her feeling alienated from her brother, the knowledge of his praying for her generated the healing potential within her?



## Why So Short?

### 6. Alter Bamidbar 12:13

The rhetorical contrast between Aaron's petition to Moses and Moses' petition to G-d is pointed. Aaron's speech is relatively lengthy and centers on an elaborate and horrifying simile of stillbirth for Miriam's skin diseases...Moses' prayer is a mere five words and five syllables devoid of any metaphorical elaboration or explanation of motive and circumstance, a kind of pure verbal distillate of imperatively urgent plea. The starkness of the language makes it all the more affecting.

### 7. Jewish Study Bible Bamidbar 12:13

Moses' brief prayer for Miriam is an example of biblical prose prayer. The terseness of Moses' prayer may reflect his disappointment with his siblings. Prayer expressed in poetic style, used for more public or ceremonial occasions, is far more common in the bible. For example, Hannah's lengthy prayer of thanksgiving after Samuel's birth.

### 8. JPS Bamidbar 12:13

Moses is caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, Miriam had spoken openly against him and deserved to be punished. On the other hand, as his sister, she evoked his compassion. The result is this terse prayer. Its brevity seems to reveal Moses' lack of enthusiasm and minimal compliance with Aaron's plea.

### 9. Rashi Bamidbar 12:13

<p>Why did Moses not pray at length? So that Israel should not say, "His sister is in a state of distress, and he stands and prays a great deal." Alternatively, Moses did not pray at length for Miriam so that Israel should not say, "For his sister, he prays at length, but for us, he does not pray at length."</p>	<p>מפני מה לא האריך משה בתפלה, שלא יהיו ישראל אומרים אחותו נתונה בצרה והוא עומד ומרבה בתפלה. דבר אחר שלא יאמרו ישראל בשביל אחותו הוא מאריך בתפלה, אבל בשבילנו אינו מאריך בתפלה.</p>
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Write down each commentator's answer/s and then categorize them.



## Long Vs. Short Prayers

### 10. Sifre Bamidbar 105

<p>R. Eliezer's students asked him: How much should a person extend their prayers? R. Eliezer said to them: No longer than Moses, as it says "I threw myself before G-d for forty days and forty night as before" (Devarim 9:18). And how long should one abbreviate one's prayers? R. Eliezer said to his students: Don't abbreviate more than Moses who said "G-d, please heal her" (Bamidbar 12:13). There is a time to say long prayers and a time to say short ones.</p>	<p>שאלו תלמידיו את ר' אליעזר עד כמה יאריך אדם בתפלה א"ל אל יאריך יותר ממשה שנאמר ואתנפל לפני ה' כראשונה את ארבעים היום ואת ארבעים הלילה ועד כמה יקצר בתפלה א"ל אל יקצר יותר ממשה שנאמר אל נא רפא נא לה יש שעה לקצר ויש שעה להאריך.</p>
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