

And the people settled in Kadosh, and Miriam died there...there was no water for the congregation...the people quarreled with Moshe. (20:1,2,3.)

The people followed a pattern that has regrettably become typical: When events did not proceed in their favor, they either complained or protested. The **Alshich Hakadosh** notes that the *Torah* does not mention that they expressed grief over Miriam's loss, as it does regarding the deaths of Moshe and Aharon. Thus, he infers that they did not shed tears when Miriam died. Because they did not acknowledge her merit as the source of their water supply, they lost it. Being surrounded by *kedushah*, holiness, has little effect if one does not recognize and appreciate it.

We must address *Klal Yisrael's* reaction -- or lack thereof -- to the loss of Miriam. *Chazal* teach us that the battle with the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, is a formidable one. They suggest a number of tactics an individual can employ to enable him to succeed in this battle. After attempting to struggle with the *yetzer hora* to no avail, one should study *Torah* diligently. If this strategy does not work, he should recite *Krias Shema* and accept upon himself the yoke of Heaven. If this course of action does not engender success, he is told to reflect upon his mortality, specifically the day of death which everyone must eventually confront. The fear of this forbidding moment should inspire the individual to overwhelm the evil-inclination and repent. The *Talmud* is apparently implying that the last approach, remembering *yom ha'missah*, the day of death, will secure one's ability to triumph over the *yetzer hora*. If so, we ask, how could *Bnei Yisrael* debate Moshe? How could they start a conflict immediately after Miriam's death? Did not the death of such a sainted leader serve as a "subtle" reminder of their own mortality?

In his *Al Hatorah*, **Horav Mordechai Hakohen** remarks that *yom ha'missah* certainly serves as a reminder - as a last resort. When it catalyzes *machlokes*, controversy, conflict, dispute, however, nothing, helps. They witnessed the *tzaddeikas*, Miriam *Ha'neviyah*, die. Did it leave an impression on them? No, because *machlokes* overrides everything - even one's own mortality. How often do we see elderly people - scholars who have devoted so much of their lives to *Klal Yisrael* - involved in controversy? Why? These adversarial relationships symbolize the overwhelming power of the *yetzer hora* of *machlokes*.