

## And Pharaoh commanded his entire people saying, "Every son that will be born--into the River shall you throw him." (1:22)

Pharaoh thought that the way to prevent the emergence of a Jewish leader was to drown all baby boys. Indeed, his astrologers had told him that the downfall of the Jewish savior would be effected through water. As a result of this decree, Amram, who was the *gadol ha'dor*, the spiritual leader of that generation, separated from his wife, Yocheved. Ostensibly, all Jewish men followed suit. Rather than bring boys into the world to be drowned by Pharaoh, they left their wives. Miriam, however, yet a young child, challenged her father Amram's decree. She claimed that his decree to separate was far worse than Pharaoh's, since he was also preventing the birth of girls. Moreover, Pharaoh was a mortal king, whose decrees would not outlast him. Amram was a *tzaddik* whose good deeds would protect him and his progeny. The piercing words coming from this young child made a powerful impression upon Amram. Consequently, he remarried Yocheved, and Moshe *Rabbeinu* was born.

Let us take a moment to analyze what happened. One would assume that we are presenting the greatness and influence of a determined, but young, child. After careful perusal, we may note, comments **Horav Baruch Mordechai Eizrachi, shlita**, that the real credit should be attributed to Amram. He truly distinguished himself. The *gadol ha'dor*, the leader of hundreds of thousands of people, made a decree, and an entire nation accepted his word and followed his example. Along came a little girl, his daughter no less, offering an insightful critique of his edict. What did this great leader do? Did he laugh it off? Did he ignore the little girl? No! He accepted her constructive criticism, annulled the decree, and remarried his wife! This represented true greatness! He did not argue; he did not attempt to present "his side" of the story, his reasoning for issuing the decree. He simply accepted Miriam's reproof. We must question what went through Amram's mind. What originally motivated him to make the decree, and what was it about Miriam's analysis of the circumstances that inspired him to rescind his order?

Let us begin by analyzing Miriam's critique; "Your decree is worse than Pharaoh's." What is the decree to which she is referring? Amram made no decree; he merely responded to Pharaoh's decree to kill the Jewish boys. We must, therefore, say that Miriam addressed an issue that went to the very foundation of *Klal Yisrael's* existence. It is, in fact, an issue we must confront even today. Amram was about to nullify, or at least put "on hold", a *mitzvah* of the *Torah*. The *Torah* commands us to "*Be fruitful and multiply*;" it is the first *mitzvah* of the *Torah*. To ignore this *mitzvah* is to ignore the *Torah*--the foundation of our existence! Never has *Klal Yisrael* been without the *Torah*. We have never abandoned the *Torah*, despite the cruel pogroms, the persecutions and catastrophes to which we have been subjected as individuals and as a nation. It is the basis of our life! Therefore, how could Amram say, "Separate from your wives"? This was Miriam's critique. Amram was, by example, issuing a statement: If the situation warrants it, if the lives of your children are put in danger, then do not have children. Miriam questioned, "Is this not, however, contrary to the *Torah*

which remains with us during the most trying circumstances?" If the *Torah* commands us to have children, how could Amram decree, by example, that the situation in Egypt overrides the *Torah*? *Klal Yisrael* has undergone so many trying ordeals in their history, but never have they forsaken the *Torah*. Was Pharaoh's decree any worse than the pogroms, the Inquisition, and the Holocaust that we survived as a nation--because we adhered to the *Torah*?

This poignant--but compelling--critique prompted Amram to rescind his order to the Jewish men to separate from their wives. We never know when the innocent words of a young child can leave a remarkable impression. Perhaps we do not listen well enough.