

Miriam died there, and she was buried there. There was no water for the assembly. (20:1,2)

A well-known quotation comes to mind: “Dead people receive more flowers than living ones, because regret is much stronger than gratitude.” Sadly, after someone takes leave of his earthly abode, some people tend to appreciate them more than when he/she was present in this world. Some people do not know how to appreciate others when they are here. Veritably, both emotions demand that a person process cognitively, not emotionally, and with sincerity. To pay gratitude one must appreciate how he has benefitted from the person. To be regretful, one must confront his own errors. Learning to appreciate is more difficult, as it behooves us to see our deficiencies and how we become better people because of someone else. To confront error is much simpler; it entails the removal of the rationalization lens that cloaks our errors and paints them in a different image, making them appear almost respectable. In any event, it should not be this way. We should learn to appreciate the presence and actions of those who benefit us – when they are here. Likewise, we should confront our negative decisions and correct them while we are able.

This idea comes up in our *parshah* which relates the passing of Miriam *HaNeviah*, followed by the well of Miriam ceasing to provide water for the nation. During the forty years that *Klal Yisrael* sojourned in the wilderness, the water that they received in the *zechus*, merit, of Miriam sustained and nourished them.

When Miriam died, it would have been appropriate for the nation to wail and grieve for the loss of a *tzadekes*, righteous woman, a standard bearer who was a prophetess, the sister of Moshe and Aharon, a critical member of the leadership triumvirate of *Klal Yisrael*. She watched over Moshe as an infant, stood up to the worshippers of the Golden Calf and, later, to Korach and his henchmen. She led the women of the nation in song, using their tambourines. Thus, when she died, the nation should have been beset with grief similar to what is recorded concerning Moshe and Aharon. Their eyes, however, remained dry; the liquid that should have flowed freely from their tear ducts – did not flow. Therefore, explains the *Toldos Yitzchak* and *Minchah Belulah*, Hashem repaid the people *middah k'neged middah*, measure for measure, with the drying up of the well that had heretofore sustained and nourished them. Now, they had reason to cry. If we have no gratitude, then we will have to be regretful.