

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

The *Kli Yakar* explains that there is a distinct connection between Miriam's death and *Klal Yisrael's* lack of water. The Torah does not record that the assembly wept at Miriam's death, as they did for Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Aharon. She was not eulogized properly, because they did not appreciate what they had received due to her merit. They knew that Moshe was the intermediary through which they received the Torah from Hashem. Aharon engendered harmony and unity among the people. Miriam had “long ago” helped save Jewish infants in Egypt, but no one remembered, it was “ancient history.” Therefore, Hashem dried up the well, so that the people would realize that the water that had previously sustained them was *b'zchus*, in the merit, of Miriam.

Things have not changed much. We still tend to forget what others have done for us. Let us go back and trace Torah's renaissance in America. Do we know – or care – who were the pioneers and architects of Torah, the *Roshei Yeshivah*, *Rabbonim* and dedicated lay leadership who gave their very lives, so that we today could avail ourselves of their toil and devotion to the spiritual needs of *Klal Yisrael*? Sixty years ago there was very little in terms of *Torah chinuch*, education. A handful of individuals, *Roshei Yeshivah*, embers from the fires of the Holocaust came here with a fiery dedication to rebuild what the Nazis had destroyed. They teamed up with *rabbonim* and *baalei batim*, dedicated lay leaders, who understood the primacy of Torah and its significance to the Jewish People. Together they created a nucleus, a team that would succeed in establishing the greatest renaissance of *Torah* since the days of *Ezra HaSofer*.

We owe them everything. What we have today is only due to them. Do we even know who they are? They were determined people who refused to accept negativity, who did not succumb to apathy, and overcame every challenge with resolution and fortitude. Perhaps they would not fit into “today's” Torah milieu for various reasons: the color of their hat, the type of *yarmulke* they wore. Perhaps their level of education does not coincide with what has become the standard – today. This was, however, a very different period of time with a different set of values. All too often, we judge people by our standards and our perspective, ignoring the fact that their challenges – viewed in historical context – were much different from ours. Indeed, we stand on their shoulders. They sacrificed, labored and persevered, so that we can enjoy and thrive in the spiritual oasis that America has become.

Let us derive a lesson from the *B'eirah shel Miriam*, the well of Miriam, the well that sustained *Klal Yisrael* for so long. Let us remember who it was that sacrificed for us. The past must be viewed through the prism of the past – not through the spectrum of the present. Above all, let us never forget the sense of *hakoras ha'tov*, gratitude and appreciation, that we owe them. In this way, the well that sustains us will never dry up.