

And the people settled in Kadesh. Miriam died there and she was buried there. (20:1)

As a result of their involvement in the *Mei Merivah*, waters of strife, Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Aharon *HaKohen* were not permitted to enter *Eretz Yisrael* (Moshe hit the rock instead of speaking to it, as Hashem had instructed him. The reason that this was considered a breach in obedience which warranted his losing out on *Eretz Yisrael* is far too complex a topic to be addressed within the limitations of this paper.) Miriam *HaNeviah* also died in the wilderness. Why did she lose out on the opportunity of a lifetime?

Horav Avigdor HaLevi Nebentzhal, Shlita, suggests that Miriam inadvertently played a role in her own loss to entering *Eretz Yisrael*. In his commentary to the beginning of *Parashas Shelach* (ibid 13:2), *Rashi* explains the juxtaposition of the episode of the *meraglim*, spies, upon the incident in which Miriam spoke against Moshe. When the *meraglim* saw the punishment sustained by Miriam as a result of *lashon hora*, evil speech, they should have taken heed and not slandered the Holy Land. Thus, the reason that the *meraglim* were punished may in a roundabout manner be attributed to Miriam. As a result of their slander and *Klal Yisrael's* negative reaction, the nation was prevented from reaching the goal of entering *Eretz Yisrael*.

What a frightening lesson. Miriam did not interact with the *meraglim*. She did not slander *Eretz Yisrael*. On the contrary, she spearheaded the women's faith in Hashem. She sang *Shirah*, a song of praise, to Hashem following the Splitting of the Red Sea, as did her brother, Moshe. Nonetheless, if an individual of her exemplary stature acted in a manner which should have served as a lesson for others – and it did not, not as a result of an error on her part – but because of their failing – she is punished. If the lesson that could have been derived from her infraction was inadvertently the cause of their punishment, then she must in some way share with them in their penance. Thus, if they could not enter *Eretz Yisrael* – neither could she.

Having said this, we should attempt to apply this lesson to our lives, as well. If inadvertency is cause for punishment, how much more so does the onus of guilt hang over the head of someone whose actions were the direct catalyst of another Jew's sin. This is especially true when one maintains a position of significance, in which he is held in esteem. He can expect people either to wrongly follow in his footsteps or be turned off as a result of his actions. As a member of the *Mamleches Kohanim v'goi kadosh*, Kingdom of priests and a holy nation, we are not accorded the luxury of "taking it easy" or telling others to "mind your own business; my life is my life; I can do what I want." We have a responsibility to Hashem to maintain the highest degree of propriety at all times.