

And all the congregation saw that Aharon was dead. (20:29)

Chazal tell us that Aharon's death was "seen" by the people with the disappearance of the cloud that accompanied them throughout their stay in the wilderness. The protection that resulted from the cloud was in the merit of Aharon. With the death of Miriam, another source of sustenance was withdrawn. The well of Miriam, which provided *Bnei Yisrael* with water, was no longer functional. Moshe *Rabbeinu's* merit was the source of *manna*, the third pillar of sustenance. These three leaders of *Klal Yisrael* were proof that the maintenance of our people is not determined by physical power, but rather by moral and spiritual strength. These three individuals personified the qualities necessary to fulfill one's mission in life.

The *Navi Micha*, (6:8) talks about man's obligations in life. "What does Hashem ask of you? To act justly, loving doing kindness, and walking in quiet modesty with your G-d." Hashem requires three things--acting justly, upholding the principles of the law; loving to act with kindness, a negating of oneself for his fellow man; walking through life in a modest fashion, unpretentious, not looking to bring undue attention to oneself. This is the moral mission of a Jew. We must focus our attention on these attributes, seeking to cultivate these traits.

Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, insightfully suggests that our triumvirate leadership respectively characterized these three qualities. *Mishpat*, living one's life justly in accordance with the laws of the *Torah*, represented Moshe's mission in life. Aharon exemplified *chesed*, inclining one's whole character to perform kindness to others. *Tznius*, the fundamental character of the Jewish woman, reached its zenith in the character and activities of Miriam.

Horav Hirsch goes on to posit that the three physical gifts of which *Klal Yisrael* were beneficiaries paralleled the moral gifts that were reflected by their respective leaders' characters. *Tznius*, modesty, is the quiet, hidden "well" out of whose depth all sanctity of life springs forth. *Chesed*, kindness, is that giving, refreshing and protecting "cloud" which joins with the clear penetrating rays of pure justice to nurture the seeds of welfare and happiness to grow in the field of mankind. *Mishpat*, justice, is the very bread from Heaven, the *manna*, which is essential so that man will endure and that the national community will be sustained. Three leaders, three virtues, all meld together to form the qualities to sustain one nation--*Am Yisrael*.