

## The End of Amram and Yocheved's Famous Children

The time for mine and Ian's Bar Mitzvah portion (*Parashat Chukat* was Ian's and my *Bar Mitzvah* reading in July of 1997) arrives every year giving me an opportunity to meditate on this *Torah* Reading once again and tune-in for any fresh *Ruach Elohim's* insights. He never disappoints! In my July 13, 2019, message entitled *The Trials of Leadership* and in my June 19, 2021, message entitled *Don't Lose Heart in Doing Good* I focused primarily on lessons from Moses the man, and his Leadership. The Children of Israel had arrived at *Kadesh* (the same Hebrew root as *Kadosh*) and things happened. This year the HS has had me focusing on the three protagonists of the story. There was much I did not know about them, and especially Miriam. Insights flew like confetti as I read and listened for the Comforter's sparkles of novel perspicuity.

[א] ויבאו בני־ישראל כל־העדה מדבר־צִן...

20: <sup>1</sup>*Vayabo'u Benei Yisrael, kol ha-edah midbar Tzin...*

*"20: <sup>1</sup>In the first month, the entire community of Bnei-Yisrael arrived at the wilderness of Zin. The people stayed at Kadesh. There Miriam died and was buried..." (Nu. 20:1)*

Miriam, the daughter of Amram and Yocheved, and older sister of her two famous brothers, Aaron, and Moses, was born in Egypt at the time when the Children of Israel were being reduced to slavery, oppression, and hard labor. This was in the year 2362 (after Creation), eighty-six years before the exodus. She was born four years before Aaron and seven years before Moses. Having been born at the time when the bitter enslavement began, is it possible (coincidence?) her parents named her *Miriam* (from the Hebrew word meaning "bitterness"). Her father, *Amram*, was the grandson of Levi, the son of our patriarch Jacob. He was a leader and head of the Jewish people. Miriam was a prophetess, as the *Torah* states clearly (Ex. 15:20). Miriam, together with her two brothers was one of the three devoted shepherds of the Children of Israel throughout their forty years' wandering in the desert on the way to the Promised Land. But Miriam, Aaron and Moses died within twelve months of entering the promised land. Miriam died on the 10th of Aviv in the year 2487—a year to the day before the Jewish people crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land, under the leadership of Joshua. Aaron died on Rosh Chodesh Av, and Moses died on the 7th of Adar 2488.

Our reading tells us that Miriam died at the age of 126 (or 127) in *Kadesh*, and she was buried there. Right after she died, the next verse tells us there no water to drink, and the rock from which the water used to flow was no longer distinct from the other rocks in the desert. Even though they are within a year of the fulfillment of the 40 years of wandering spoken by *Adonai* 39 years earlier, they became fearful that they would now be left without water and, as returning to what they had done so often before, they raised a hue and cry against Moses and Aaron. *Adonai* was not going to leave them without water, of course, and the well was to return, this time at Moses's word. *Adonai* told Moses to gather the people and, in their presence, to **speak to the rock to give water**. Perhaps, the rock began to drip water at his word, but Moses, angered by the rebelliousness of the people, hit the rock twice with his staff, and the water began to gush forth in abundance. Perhaps, unwittingly, Moses and Aaron missed an opportunity to sanctify *Adonai's* name in public, hitting the rock instead of speaking to it. It would have been a great lesson to the people to see how even a rock is obedient to *Adonai's* word. In consequence, *Adonai* told Moses (and Aaron) that he (they) would not enter the Promised Land and would die in the desert along with all the generation whom they had led out of Egypt (recall that in *Nu. 14:29-29* they were told none of the adults that grumbled against *Adonai* (except Joshua and Caleb) would enter the Promised Land. I always thought that Moses and Aaron who were not grumblers were, therefore, destined to enter the Promised Land (and only later would they be disqualified). But the only two adults mentioned as entering did not include the names of Moses and Aaron. It was unconditional for Joshua and Caleb but conditional on anyone else! Reminds me of the line ♪ *So close, so close and yet so far* ♪ (The Four Seasons, My Eyes Adored You, 1974)

For *Benei Israel*, the 39<sup>th</sup> year is coming to a close and the finish line is palpable. What should be the year of the *gold medal finish* of Miriam, Aaron, and Moses turns into something else altogether. Miriam's time is come (we do not know when He will call us to Him), and as we see, this will also be the reckoning year for Aaron and Moses. Endurance until the end was required of Aaron and Moses, and guess what, it is required of us as well. Consider the following verses:

*“And you will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end shall be saved (Matt. 10:22)... But the one who endures to the end will be saved (Matt. 24:13)... And they have no root in themselves but last only a short while. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, immediately they fall away (Mark 4:17)... And you will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end will be saved (Mark 13:13)... Don't work for food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on Him, God the Father has put the seal of approval (John 6:27)... it bears all things, it believes all things, it hopes all things, it endures all things (1 Cor. 13:7)... Therefore, we ourselves boast of you among the communities of God—about your perseverance and faithfulness through all the persecutions and troubles that you endure (2 Thes. 1:4)... Suffer (endure) hardship with me, as a good soldier of Messiah Yeshua (2 Tim. 2:3)... You, however, keep a clear mind in all things, withstand (endure) hardship, do the work of proclaiming the Good News, and fulfill your service (2 Tim. 4:5)... focusing on Yeshua, the initiator and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, disregarding its shame; and He has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary in your souls and lose heart (Heb. 12:2,3)... Behold, we consider blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the outcome of Adonai—that Adonai is full of compassion and mercy (James 5:11)... For this finds favor if, for the sake of conscience toward God, someone endures grief from suffering undeservedly (1 Peter 2:20).*

In the *Parashat*, the Children of Israel showed us that when they had a pressing need (water), instead of turning to *Adonai* (and waiting for His intervention), they look back at Egypt through rose-colored glasses so that instead of seeing 430 years of slavery they only see a place where their physical needs were met. Are you also tempted to look back at your life with rose colored glasses? I am. But alas, the Ruach is leading us differently, toward the Promised Land. It is time to put on your big boy/girl pants and press on toward the reward of the high calling in *Yeshua*: *“<sup>12</sup>Not that I have already obtained this or been perfected, but I press on if only I might take hold of that for which Messiah Yeshua took hold of me. <sup>13</sup>Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself as having taken hold of this. But this one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the reward of the upward calling of God in Messiah Yeshua” (Phil. 3:12-14).* Great Advise!

In closing, Miriam's son was *Hur*, a leading nobleman of the tribe of Judah. Together with Aaron, *Hur* was appointed to the leadership of the people. During the war with Amalek Aaron and *Hur* held Moses' hands up so Israel could prevail and also while Moses went up Mount Sinai for forty days to receive the *Torah* and bring down the written *Torah* tablets. *Hur* was murdered by the worshippers of the Golden Calf when he opposed them and tried to prevent them from committing that grievous sin. *Hur* was the grandfather of *Betzalel*, the *chief* architect of the Sanctuary in the Wilderness (the *Mishkan*). This sounds like an awesome lineage where we see generations of excellence. Miriam's contributions lived on through her offspring. What an awesome woman! *Shabbat Shalom!*