



SoulSpa 3.16 • P. Beshallah  
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ברוך אתה יהוה  
אלהינו מלך העולם  
אשר קדשנו במצותיו  
וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה:

Barukh Atah Adonai  
eloheinu melekh ha'olam  
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav  
v'tzivanu la'asok b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are You, YHVH, our God,  
eternal sovereign, who sanctified us  
in God's *mitzvot* and commanded us  
to busy ourselves in words of Torah.

“Sounds” like Sinai: scrambling senses  
Newly freed people – inhabit it

וישע יהוה ביום ההוא את ישראל  
מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וַיֵּרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מִצְרַיִם  
מֵת עַל־שַׁפְּתַי הַיָּם: וַיֵּרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־  
הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה בְּמִצְרַיִם  
וַיֵּיכְרוּ הָעַם אֶת־יְהוָה וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ  
בַּיהוָה וּבַמִּשְׁחָה עַבְדּוֹ:

אז ישיר-משה ובני ישראל את-  
השירה הזאת ליהוה ויאמרו לאמר

אֲשִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי־גָאָה גָאָה סוֹס  
וְרָכְבוֹ רָמָה בָּיָם עָזִי וְזַמְרַת זָה  
וַיְהִי־לִי לִישׁוּעָה זֶה אֱלֹהֵי וְאֶנְוָהוּ אֱלֹהֵי  
אֲבִי וְאַרְמְמָנָהוּ יְהוָה אִישׁ  
מִלְחָמָה יְהוָה שְׁמוֹ מִרְקַבַּת  
פָּרְעֹה וְחִילוֹ יָרָה בָּיָם  
וּמִבְּחַר שְׁלֹשׁוֹ טָבְעוּ בַיַּם־סוּף

We're not in spiritual Kansas anymore: transformation in the face of something utterly elementally new

תְּהַלַּת יְכַסִּימוּ וַיֵּרְדוּ בְּמַצּוֹלַת  
כְּמוֹ־אֶבֶן יְמִינְךָ יְהוָה נֶאֱדָרִי בְּכַח  
יְמִינְךָ יְהוָה תִּרְעַץ אוֹיֵב  
וַיִּבְרַב גְּאוֹנְךָ תִּהְרַס קִמְיָד תִּשְׁלַח חֲרֹנֶךָ  
יֶאֱכְלֵמוּ כֶּסֶף וּבְרוּחַ אֲפִיךָ  
נִעְרְמוּ מֵיַם נָצְבוּ כְמוֹ־נֶד נְזִלִים  
קָפְאוּ תְּהַמַּת בְּלִבָּיָם  
אָמַר אוֹיֵב אֲרֹדְךָ אֲשִׁיג אַחֲלֶק  
שְׁלַל תִּמְלֹאמוּ נַפְשֵׁי אֲרִיק  
חֲרָבִי תוֹרִישְׁמוּ יָדֵי נִשְׁפָּת בְּרוּחְךָ  
כִּסְמוּ יָם צָלְלוּ כְּעוֹפְרַת  
בְּמֵיִם אֲדִירִים מִי־כַמְכָּה  
בְּאֵלִם יְהוָה מִי כַמְכָּה נֶאֱדָר בְּקֹדֶשׁ  
נִוְרָא תְּהַלַּת עֲשֵׂה פְלָא

Hysteria → binarism? gloating?  
SO WHY IS THIS HERE?!

וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אֲחוֹת אַהֲרֹן  
אֶת־תִּפְתֵּי בִּינָה וַתִּצְאֵן כָּל־הַנְּשִׂאִים  
אֲחֵרֶיהָ בַתְּפִילִּים וּבַמַּחֲלָת: וַתַּעַן לָהֶם  
מִרְיָם שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כִּי־גָאָה גָאָה סוֹס  
וְרָכְבוֹ רָמָה בָּיָם:

Exodus 14:29-5:11, 20-21

Far more gratitude/praise of God than much else  
Feels a bit like Kaddish (praise, praise, praise)

29-30. YHVH delivered Israel that day from the hand of Egypt:  
Israel saw Egypt dead on the sea shore. Israel saw the mighty  
hand that YHVH dealt Egypt, and the nation had awe of YHVH:  
they believed in YHVH and in God's servant Moshe.

WHAT ARE THOSE SPACES? - the two shores and water in between? pathway?  
White fire through the black fire. A magnet for OUR filling in the text.

FIRST  
SONG  
EVER

1-4. Then Moshe and the Children of Israel sang this song to  
YHVH, saying:  
for God triumphed! Horse and driver God hurled in the sea.  
Yah is my strength and my song, and  
will be my salvation. This is my God: I will glorify Him,  
God of my father: I will exalt Him.  
YHVH, man of war, YHVH is His name! Pharaoh's chariots  
and troops God cast in the sea,  
The pick of his officers drowned in the Sea of Reeds.

5-11. The deep covered them: they went down to the depths  
like a stone. Your right, YHVH,  
glorious in power, Your right, YHVH, shatters foes!

In Your great triumph You break Your opponents;  
You send Your fury, ate them as straw. At the blast of Your

nostrils, divine imagefy: made [Egyptians?] waters piled up,  
into a sea dragon?! the deep froze in the sea's heart.

The foe said, "I will pursue,  
overtake, divide the spoil; My desire fills of them.

I will bare my sword: My hand will subdue them."  
You blew Your wind, the sea covered them. They sank as lead

in majestic waters. Who is like You, YHVH,  
among the gods! Who is like You, majestic in holiness,  
awesome in splendor, doing wonders!

“LOGICAL ELATION!”

...20-21. Miriam the prophet, sister of Aharon, took a hand drum  
in her hand, and all the women went out after her in dance with  
drums. Miriam answered them: “Sing to YHVH, for God  
triumphed! Horse and driver God hurled in the sea.”

BRING A  
TIMBREL!

AND the midrash (Megillah 10b): “My children are drowning and you sing praises?”  
midrashic corrective for gloating, counter-xenophobia?



## Shemot Rabbah 23:4

מיזם שִׁבְרָא הַקַּב"ה אֶת הָעוֹלָם וְעַד  
שֶׁעָמְדוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל הַיָּם לֹא מָצִינוּ  
אֶדָם שֶׁאָמַר שִׁירָה לְהַקְב"ה אֶלָּא  
יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּרָא אֶדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן וְלֹא אָמַר  
שִׁירָה, הִצִּיל אַבְרָהָם מִכְּבֹשֶׁן הָאֵשׁ  
וּמִן הַמְּלָכִים וְלֹא אָמַר שִׁירָה וְכֵן  
יִצְחָק מִן הַמַּאֲכָלֶת וְלֹא אָמַר שִׁירָה,  
וְכֵן יַעֲקֹב מִן הַמַּלְאָךְ וּמִן עֵשָׂו וּמִן  
אֲנָשֵׁי שֶׁכֶם וְלֹא אָמַר שִׁירָה, כִּיּוֹן  
שֶׁבָאוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לַיָּם וְנִקְרַע לָהֶם, מִיָּד  
אָמְרוּ שִׁירָה לְפָנֵי הַקַּב"ה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר:  
אֵז יִשִּׁיר מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

From the day God created the world until Israel stood at the sea, we find no one who sang a song to God except Israel. God created the first human and he didn't sing a song. God saved Avraham from the fiery furnace and from [enemy] kings, and he did not sing a song; and [saved] Yitzhak from the knife and he didn't sing a song; and [saved] Ya'akov from the angel and from Eisav and from the men of Shekhem, and he didn't sing a song. When Israel came to the sea and it was parted for them, immediately they sang a song before God, as in (Ex. 15:1), "**Then Moshe and the Children of Israel** sang...."

singing creates the community; embodied

## Netivot Shalom [Shalom Noah Bereshovsky, d.2000] on Crossing the Sea

יש כמה מדרגות באמונה. יש אמונה  
המח, למעלה ממנה היא אמונת  
הלב... כי מאמונת המוח לאמונת הלב  
רחוק יותר מרחוק שמים מארץ.

There are varying levels of *emunah* [=faith]. There's *emunah* of the mind, which is higher than *emunah* of the heart – as far above faith of the heart as heaven is above the earth.

ויש עוד מדרגה גבוהה מהם, היא  
אמונת האברים שאמונת ה' הדורה  
בכל אבריו כמאה"כ כל עצמותי  
תאמרנה ה' מי כמוך.

And there is an even higher level of *emunah*, which is *emunah* of the body [to physically step into the Sea]. When this *emunah* flows through one's limbs, one feels like (Ps. 35:10), "**All my bones cry out: Mi Khamokhah [=Who is like You]?"**

גם לא אמרו שירה ביצי"מ, ועדיין לא  
שרתה עליהם שכינה, כיון שעוד לא  
הגיעו לתכלית שלימות האמונה  
מחמת קליפת מצרים שעדיין היתה  
קיימת בהם. וזה הי' הגילוי של  
קרי"ס, שישראל הגיעו אז לתכלית  
המדרגה של אמונה, וכיון שהגיעו  
לתכלית שלימות האמונה שרתה  
עליהם שכינה ואמרו שירה.

[Our ancestors] didn't sing [=shirah] during the Exodus from Egypt until Shekchinah rested [=shartah] on them, since they **had not achieved total purpose in *emunah* due to Egypt's spiritual husk still enduring in them.** This is the revelation that happened at the splitting of the Sea of Reeds: Israel achieved total purpose in *emunah*, and Shekchinah sang on them – so they sang.

## MIRIAM AND THE SONG

### Rashi, Ex. 15:21

ותען להם מרים. משה אמר  
שירה לאנשים - הוא אמר והם  
עניו אחריו - ומרים אמרה  
שירה לנשים:

*Miriam answered them* – Moshe sang the Song to the men — he sang it and they repeated it after him. Miriam sang the Song to the women and they repeated it after her.

### Hizkuni, Ex. 15:20

מרים הנביאה בעלת דברי השבח  
כמו ואהרן אחיך יהיה נביאך.

*Miriam the prophet* – She was a master of words of praise, and is called a prophet [later in Torah using the same word] as in (Ex. 7:1), "Aharon your brother will be your prophet."

## Rabbeinu Bahyah, Ex. 15:20

ומה ששורה הנבואה על אשה נראה לומר שאין לתמוה שהרי מין האדם היא ואדם נקראת שנאמר ויקרא את שם אדם. והנה מזה אמרו שרה היתה נביאה כמרים או גדולה ממנה שנקראת יסכה על שם שסוכה ברוח הקדש, ודרשו רז"ל כל אשר תאמר אליך שרה וגוי, מלמד שהיה אברהם טפל לשרה בנבואה

Why did prophetic spirit dwell on woman [rather than man]? There is no surprise in this: woman is human. Did Torah not call both human (Gen. 5:2)? Our sages (Megillah 14) said that Sarah was a prophet like Miriam or even greater than her, as Torah calls her “covered,” like a Sukkah filled with the Holy Spirit. As they *drashed*, [God told Avraham to “listen to all Sarah tells you [to eject Yishmael and Hagar]” (Gen. 21:12), proving that Avraham was inferior to Sarah in prophesy.

אבל הכתוב לא הזכיר נבואה עד מרים, או מטעם מדרש שהזכרתי או מטעם שרצה להמתין עד זמן הגלות השכינה שעליו אמרו רז"ל ראתה שפחה על הים מה שלא ראה יחזקאל, והודיענו כי מרים הנביאה מקלסת לשכינה וכל הנשים אחריה ואומרת השירה הזו בעצמה כמשה ובני ישראל.

But Torah did not mention prophesy until Miriam, either because of the [above] *midrash* or because [God] wanted to wait until **the time of Shekhinah's revelation**, about which the wise said (Mekhilta d'R. Yishmael, Beshallah 6), "**Even a maidservant saw at the Sea what Ezekiel did not see.**" So we are informed that Miriam the prophet [sings] to Shekhinah and all the women after her – she sings this song herself – as did Moshe and the Children of Israel.

## Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

Miriam sang to them: “Let us give thanks and praise before God, as might and eminence are God’s; God is exalted above the exalted, and elevated above the high. As the wicked Pharaoh plotted and pursued the Children of Israel, his horses and his chariots, God threw [them] in the Sea of Reeds.”

## Dead Sea Scrolls

The [Dead Sea Scrolls](#) (c. 75 BCE) adds seven extra lines at the end of Ex. 15:21 (Frag 6A II + 6C, lines 1-7), implying that it’s a continuation of Miriam’s Song:

with an **olive branch**  
**for the pridefulness**  
You are great, O deliverer  
**the enemy’s hope has perished**  
they have perished in the  
mighty waters, the enemy  
Praise God in the heights,  
you have given salvation  
[who] did glorious things.

– transl. R. Danya Ruttenberg

[אשירה ליהוה]	1 בזית ע'ל אויביכה
[	2 כי גאוה' גא'ה ע'זי וזמרת יה
[	3 גדול אתה מושיא א'ת עמכה
[	4 אבדה' תקות שונה ונש'כח זכרו
[עמכה]	5 אבדו במים אדירים ש[ונ]יכה'
[	6 ירוממכה למרום] כי ב'יית נתתה' לאבותינו
[	7 עו]שה גאות vacat ]

### *Translation*

1. you despised [your enemies	I will sing to YHWH]
2. for he has triumphed[ glorious]y. [Yah is my ]s[rength and might	]
3. You are great, delivering [your people	]
4. The enemy's hope has perished and[ his memory] is for[gotten	]
5. Your e[nemie]s perished in the mighty waters [	Your people]
6. will exalt you to the heights[, for] you gave[ a cove]nant[ to our fathers	]
7. [the one do]ing glorious things. vacat [	]

– transl. Ariel Feldman

### Ellen Frankel, The Five Books of Miriam

MIRIAM THE PROPHET DECLARES: Only a single verse of my Song at the Sea is recorded in the Torah, the faint echoes of my brother's song: "sing to YHVH, for God has triumphed gloriously: horse and driver God has hurled into the sea" (15:21) The song that my brother Moses sings swells the narrative as waves fill the sea, a magnificent poem charged with dramatic imagery and power. Still, my song, though so much briefer, today stirs the hearts of Jewish women, inspiring them to create new songs, poems, stories, meditations, interpretive commentaries, and prayers.

THE SAGES IN OUR OWN TIME TEACH: This biblical episode portrays Miriam as a prophet and a leader of her people, especially the women. Even though Moses' triumphant Song at the Sea is eighteen verses long, while Miriam's is only one verse (and even the single verse is a direct quote from her brother's song), this imbalance reflects later editing, not Miriam's second-class status in her own time. In fact some of us believe that Miriam's song was censored or lost, due to a later generation's uneasiness with female leadership.

### R. Danielle Upbin, [Song\(s\) of the Sea](#)

The song of Miriam, recorded in one lone verse, speaks volumes. Some scholars claim that these two songs are one and the same... But the two songs in fact serve different functions. Shirat Hayam is a record of events when the Israelites had full faith in God and trust in Moses their leader. Miriam's song functions more like prayer, its words more akin to liturgy.

First, consider the length: just one verse. In Eastern religions, one word or phrase can serve as a focal point of prayer. Reciting the word again and again, the worshipper can get lost in the experience of the sound. In the Hasidic tradition, this is how the niggun functions — the repetitive melody becomes a meditation, stirring the soul and captivating the heart. One can imagine the women as swirling colors, dancing on the shores of the sea, timbrels in hand, singing to God.

Second, consider the structure. Miriam's song has an urgency to it. Shirat Hayam begins *Az yashir Moshe* — then Moses will sing. But Miriam's song is written in the present tense, in the plural imperative: *Shiru l'Adonai*, sing to God now. The Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 23:8) recognizes this, stating that when Israel emerged from the sea, the angels came to sing to God first. But God said, let my children sing first because they are of flesh and blood. **They must sing now before they die.** But you, as long as you desire, you remain alive and can sing. Miriam grabbed the moment...

In our day, we don't need a playbook to tell us to sing when we pray. It comes naturally. Melodies tether us to one another and to God. There is a mystical power in unbridled human song. It lifts the spirit and brings us to our feet, evoking the passion and celebration at the shores of the sea.

May we take a page from Miriam's song book by creating our own unique songs of praise to God. They don't have to be long, just love notes from the heart. On whatever shores we find ourselves, may these songs bring us together in freedom, community and lasting peace.

**Rabbi Ruth Sohn, "The Song of Miriam"**

I, Miriam, stand at the sea  
and turn  
to face the desert  
stretching endless and  
still.  
My eyes are dazzled  
The sky brilliant blue  
Sunburnt sands unyielding white.  
My hands turn to dove wings.  
My arms  
reach  
for the sky  
and I want to sing  
the song rising inside me.  
My mouth open  
I stop.  
Where are the words?  
Where the melody?  
In a moment of panic  
My eyes go blind.  
Can I take a step  
Without knowing a  
Destination?  
Will I falter  
Will I fall  
Will the ground sink away from  
under me?

The song still unformed—  
How can I sing?

To take the first step—  
To sing a new song—  
Is to close one's eyes  
and dive  
into unknown waters.  
For a moment knowing nothing risking all—  
But then to discover

The waters are friendly  
The ground is firm.  
And the song—  
the song rises again.  
Out of my mouth  
come words lifting the wind.  
And I hear  
for the first  
the song  
that has been in my heart  
silent  
unknown  
even to me.

## BONUS MATERIALS

### Tosefta, B.T. Sotah 6:1

דרש ר"ע בשעה שעלו ישראל מן הים בקשו לומר שירה שרתה עליהן רוח הקודש ואמרו שירה כיצד אמרו שירה כגדול [שמקרא] את ההלל בבית הכנסת [ועונין] אחריו על כל ענין משה אמר 'אשירה לה' [וישראל אמרו] 'אשירה לה' משה אמר עזי וזמרת יה [וישראל אמרו] 'אשירה לה' משה אמר ה' איש מלחמה וגוי [וישראל] אמרו אשירה לה'

R. Akiva *drashed*: At the time that Israel rose up from the Sea, they wanted to sing. The Holy Spirit rested [=shartah] on them and they sang a song [=shirah]. How did they sing [it]? Like [an adult] who leads Hallel in *shul* and all respond each time. Moshe said 'I will sing to YHVH,' and Israel said 'I will sing to YHVH.' Moshe said, 'Yah is my strength and my song,' and Israel said, 'I will sing to YHVH.' Moshe said, 'YHVH, a man of war,' and Israel said 'I will sing to YHVH.'

ר' אליעזר בנו של ר' יוסי הגלילי אומר כקטן שקורא את ההלל בבית ועונין אחריו על כל דבר ודבר משה אמר 'אשירה לה' וישראל אמרו אשירה לה' משה אמר עזי וזמרת יה וישראל אמרו עזי וזמרת יה משה אמר ה' איש מלחמה וגוי ר' נחמיה אומר שמע בבית הכנסת שנאמר אז ישיר משה וגוי שאין ת"ל לאמר מלמד שהיה משה פותח בדבר וישראל עונין אחריו וגומרין עמו משה אמר אז ישיר וישראל אמרו אשירה לה' כי גאה גאה משה אמר עזי וזמרת יה וישראל אמרו זה אלי ואנוהו משה אמר ה' איש מלחמה וישראל אמרו ה' שמו

R. Eliezer ben R. Yosi HaGlili said: It's like a child leading Hallel at school and everybody repeats each thing after him. Moshe said, 'I will sing to YHVH,' and Israel said, 'I will sing to YHVH.' Moshe said, 'Yah is my strength and my song,' and Israel said, 'Yah is my strength and my song,' etc.

Nehemiah said: It's like the *Sheema* at *shul*. Moshe began saying something and Israel responded and finished what he was saying. Moshe said 'Then Moshe sang,' and Israel said, 'I will sing to YHVH.' Moshe said "Yah is my strength and my song,' and Israel said, 'This is my God: I will glorify Him.'

### The Women's Torah Commentary

SONG OF MIRIAM (15:20–21) Preceded by a prose introduction (v. 20), the single stanza of v. 21 is known in contemporary parlance as the Song of Miriam. This poetic verse is likely the title of the full poem, suggesting that the victory song in vv. 1–19 may have been composed by a woman (see at v. 1).

*Miriam the prophet.* Unnamed in Moses' birth narrative (2:4, 7–9), the woman mentioned in more biblical books (five) than any other female figure finally gets a name. She also gets a title, one that never appears for Moses in the book of Exodus. Miriam is the first of several biblical women—including Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (II Kings 22:14), and Noadiah (Nehemiah 6:14)—to bear the title of prophet. The authority of prophets as conveyors of God's will to the people was gender inclusive both in the biblical world and in other parts of the ancient Near East. The 8th-century-B.C.E. prophet Micah acknowledges Miriam's leading role in the Exodus when he proclaims in God's name that to deliver Israel, "I sent you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam" (Micah 6:4). In the present verse, Miriam appears also as a singer and a leader of other singing women, a role familiar from other biblical texts and ancient cultures.

## Ellen Frankel, The Five Books of Miriam

### MIRIAM'S NAMES

OUR DAUGHTERS ASK: Even though the sister of Aaron and Moses plays a critical role in the story of the Exodus from Egypt she remains nameless until this parasha. Why is she named *Miriam* here?

MIRIAM ANSWERS: My name is an amalgam of two Hebrew words – *mar*, meaning bitter, and *yam*, meaning sea. My life was indeed bitter, like the waters we encountered after crossing the Sea of Reeds, as it is written, “they could not drink the water of marah because it was bitter, that is why it was called marah.” (15:23) I was always overshadowed by my younger brothers. It was they who faced Pharaoh, who invoked the deadly plagues on Egypt, who et with God and inspired the people. And I was consigned to silence. And when at last I rose up with Aaron to demand that my youngest brother share the leadership with us, it was I alone who was stricken with leprosy.

My name, like me, arose out of Egypt. Miriam is derived from the Egyptian word *mer*, meaning “beloved.” Indeed, the people loved me, especially on account of the miraculous well, which sustained them during their forty years in the wilderness.

THE RABBIS CONTINUE: You are known by many names. You received the name Helah when you fell ill (*holah*) after marrying Caleb and giving birth to Hur; the name Azuvah when Caleb deserved (*azuv atah*) you during your illness; Naarah when you regained your health, because like a young woman (*na'arah*) again, and were take back by your husband; Yiriot because your face was like the curtains (*yiriot*) of the Tabernacle; Efrat because Israel was fruitful (*paru*) thanks to you; Zeret, because you rivaled (*zarah*) all other women; Tzohar because your face was as clear as noon (*tzohorayim*); Etnab because all who saw you brought gifts (*etnan*); and Akharhel, because all the women went out after you with timbrels and dances (*akhar hel*),

SARAH THE ANCIENT ONE MUSES: Why does Miriam need so many names? Because during her life she follows the path of Hesed, loving-kindness, comforting her people in distress, encouraging them when they lose faith, providing succor ad song. Although her own lot is so often bitter, *mar*, she so sweetens the lot of others that she becomes beloved, *mer*.