

Miriam and Her Song

וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אָחוֹת אֲהֲרֹן אֶת־הַתִּיבֵּל בְּיָדָהּ וַתֵּצֵאן כָּל־הַנְּשִׂיִם אַחֲרֶיהָ בַּתִּפְּסִים וּבַמַּחְלֹת:

Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her in dance with timbrels.

וַתַּעַן לָהֶם מִרְיָם שִׁירוֹ לַיהוָה כִּי־גָאָה גָּאָה סוּס וָרֶכֶב וָרָמָה בַיָּם: (ס)

And Miriam chanted for them: Sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously; Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea.

Rashi

AND MIRIAM THE PROPHETESS TOOK — But where had she prophesied?
When she was THE SISTER OF AARON alone — before Moses was born she
said, “My mother will at some time bear a son who will deliver Israel etc.”, as is
stated in Treatise Sotah 12b (cf. Megillah 14a).

Megilah ibid.

Was she the sister only of Aaron, **and not the sister of Moses?** Why does the verse mention only one of her brothers? **Rav Naḥman said that Rav said: For she prophesied when she was the sister of Aaron,** i.e., she prophesied since her youth, even before Moses was born, **and she would say: My mother is destined to bear a son who will deliver the Jewish people to salvation. And at the time when Moses was born the entire house was filled with light, and her father stood and kissed her on the head, and said to her: My daughter, your prophecy has been fulfilled.**

But once Moses was cast into the river, her father arose and rapped her on the head, saying to her: My daughter, where is your prophecy now, as it looked as though the young Moses would soon meet his end. **This is the meaning of that which is written** with regard to Miriam's watching Moses in the river: **“And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him”** (Exodus 2:4), i.e., **to know what would be with the end of her prophecy,** as she had prophesied that her brother was destined to be the savior of the Jewish people.

Timbrels

Rashi

WITH TIMBRELS AND WITH DANCES — The righteous women in that generation were confident that God would perform miracles for them and they accordingly had brought timbrels with them from Egypt (Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 15:20:2).

Is this a feminine trait? Something about anticipation?

Who needs another song?

Rashi

AND MIRIAM SANG UNTO THEM — Moses sang the Song to the men — he sang it and they repeated it after him; and Miriam sang the Song to the women and they repeated it after her (Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 15:20:2).

A model of leadership?

Rav Yosef Bechor Shor

ואמרו כל השירה אלא שכל השירה כבר נאמרה

They said the whole song but since it was said before..

Haamek Davar, Netziv

אלא הנשים עשו להם שיר ארוך שלא היה ראוי לכתוב זאת בס"ת שלא היה בא בשפע רוה"ק. אבל הסוגר מכל בית היה ע"פ מרים ברוה"ק. וכיב"ז יש לפרש מש"כ ותענינה הנשים המשחקות ותאמרן הכה שאול באלפיו ודוד ברבבותיו היינו שהיה שיר ארוך בכמה בתים ובכל בית היה הסוגר הכה שאול וגו'.

Nachal Kedumim, Chidah

דכי איכא אימתא דשכינתא ליכא הרהור וה"ה נאמר כשיש גלוי שכינה בפרהסיא אז איכא אימתא דשכינתא וליכא הרהורים ויכולים אנשים ונשים לשיר ואין לחוש וז"ש הנך יפה דודי אף נעים זו גלוי שכינה שיכול לומר הנך יפה על דרך זה אלי. אף ערשנו רעננה זה המשכן כמ"ש ז"ל בשבח בנים ובנות דזמרן נשי עם אנשים וליכא הרהור דאיכא אימתא דשכינתא ויכולים לשורר בנים עם בנות. וזה אפשר בקראין כי הנה הכא מרים הנביאה וכל הנשים זמרן נשי נגד כל ישראל באזניהם ויקשה דקול באשה ערוה. לכן אמר ותקח מרים הנביאה את הת"ף בידה רמז שכבשה הפלונית גימטריא ת"ף תחת ידה בכח תקף גדולת נביאותה ובכח השכינה הרומזת לה' התף ובכחו הנעלמת בתיבת התף לבטלה וידוע שהיא העיקר. ואח"ז ותצאן כל הנשים וגו' שלא יש הרהור. ותען להם מרים להם בלשון זכר כלומר דנשים כאנשים וליכא איסור הרהורים.

So violent?

What was different about the men vs. the women?

Men

אז

י

ה' וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר אֲשִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי־גָאָה גָאָה סוּס וְרֹכְבוֹ רָמָה בַיָּם:ש

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD. They said: I will sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously; Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea.

Women

וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אַחֹת אַהֲרֹן אֶת־הַתֶּף בְּיָדָהּ וַתֵּצֵאנָּה כָּל־הַנְּשִׂיִם אַחֲרֶיהָ בַתְּפִים וּבַמַּחֲלֹת:

Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her in dance with timbrels.

What kind of leader was Miriam?

Micah 6, 4

כִּי הֶעֱלֵיתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וּמִבֵּית עֲבָדִים פָּדִיתִיךָ וְאֶשְׁלַח לְפָנֶיךָ אֶת־מֹשֶׁה אֶהֱרֹן וּמִרְיָם:

In fact, I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage, And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

Rashi

Jonathan paraphrases: Moses to teach the transmission of the laws, Aaron to atone for the people, and Miriam to instruct the women.

R. Jonathan ben Uziel

וּשְׁלַחִית קִדְמָךְ תִּלְתָּא נְבִיין מֹשֶׁה לְאַלְפָּא מְסִירַת דִּינֵין אֶהֱרֹן לְכַפְּרָא עַל עַמָּא וּמִרְיָם לְאוֹרָאָה לְנִשְׂיָא:

Ibn Ezra

לְנִשְׂיָא וּשְׁלֵחִית קְדָמָה תִּלְתָּא נְבִיין מִשֶּׁה לְאַלְפָּא מְסִירַת דִּינִין אֶהְרֹן לְכַפָּרָא עַל עֲמָא וּמְרִים לְאוֹרָאָה

Leadership is spiritual

Abarbanel from midrash

ובילמדנו אמרו ואשלח לפניך את משה אהרן ומרים אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא בא וראה מה ביני לבין
בשר ודם מלך בשר ודם ששלח שלוחים למדינה בני המדינה מספקין להם מזון אבל אני לא עשיתי
כן ששלחתי לפניך שלשה גואלים ולא הייתם זקוקים לזון אותם אבל הם היו זנים אתכם המן
בזכות משה ענני כבוד בזכות אהרן הבאר בזכות מרים, הנה הבינו הכתוב הזה שהוא כולל לכל
הנסים אשר נעשו לישראל במדבר.

Redak

It's about prophecy

והמבשרים היו שלשה נביאים משה ואהרן ומרים

Zohar, the Panthenon, lehavdil

ג' אחים היו, משה אהרן ומרים, כמו שאמר ואשלח לפניך את משה אהרן ומרים, מרים היא הלבנה (מלכות), משה הוא שמש (ז"א), אהרן הוא זרוע הימין (חסד), חור זרוע שמאל (גבורה), ויש אומרים נחשון בן עמינדב, בתחילה מתה מרים, ונסתלקה הלבנה ונסתלקה הבאר, אחר כך נשבר זרוע הימין המקרב תמיד את הלבנה באחוה בשמחה, ועל כן כתוב ותקח מרים הנביאה אחות אהרן, אחות אהרן ודאי, שהוא הזרוע המקרבת באחדות באחוה עם הגוף (שהוא ז"א)... (חקת לט, ועיין שם עוד)

...ומאין לנו ששלתם חקוקים ברקיע, היינו כי למדנו בכולם כתוב (שמתו) על פי ה', ובמרים לא כתוב על פי ה', מפני שאינו דרך העולם. אלא אמר אביו בכולם כתוב שם, ותמת שם מרים, וימת שם אהרן, וימת שם משה, כתוב כאן שם וכתוב שם שם, שנאמר ויהי שם עם ה', (מכאן נשמע ששלתם חקוקים ברקיע עם ה'). (זהר חדש בראשית תריב)

Why did malchut come from Miriam?

What are the rabbis saying?

Sotah 11b 12a

The one who says that it is referring to the **houses of the priesthood and the Levites** is referring to **Aaron and Moses**, who were sons of Jochebed. **And the one who says** that it is referring to **houses of royalty** is referring to **David**, who **also comes from Miriam**, as it is written: **“And Azubah,” the wife of Caleb, “died, and Caleb took to him Ephrath, who bore him Hur”** (I Chronicles 2:19) and, as will be explained further, Ephrath is Miriam. **And it is written: “David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah”** (I Samuel 17:12). Therefore, he was a descendant of Miriam.

The Gemara discusses the family of Caleb: In Chronicles it says: **“And Caleb, the son of Hezron, begot children of Azubah his wife, and of Jerioth, and these were her sons: Jeshar, and Shobab, and Ardon”** (I Chronicles 2:18). The Gemara asks: Was Caleb actually the **son of Hezron? Wasn't he the son of Jephunneh**, as the verse states in Numbers 13:6? The Gemara answers: He was the son of Hezron, but he is called “son of Jephunneh” as an appellation indicating that he was **a son who turned away [sheppana] from the counsel of the spies**.

T

The Gemara asks: **But** it is **still** difficult. Hezron could not be his father, as Caleb **was** the **son of Kenaz, as it is written: “And Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, took it”** (Judges 1:13). This would mean that Caleb was also a son of Kenaz. **Rava said: Caleb was the stepson of Kenaz**, as he and Othniel shared a mother but had different fathers.

12a

The Gemara comments: The language of another verse **is also precise** based on this explanation, **as it is written**: “And Caleb the son of Jephunneh **the Kenizzite** said unto him” (Joshua 14:6). Although his father was Jephunneh, he is known as “the Kenizzite,” although he was not actually a son of Kenaz. The Gemara accepts this proof and states: **Conclude from it** that Rava’s explanation is correct.

he verse states: “And Caleb, the son of Hezron, begot children of Azubah his wife, and of Jerioth, and these were her sons: Jeshar, and Shobab, and Ardon” (I Chronicles 2:18). The Gemara analyzes the verse: The verse refers to the wife of Caleb by the name **Azubah**. The Sages teach that **this is Miriam. And why is she called Azubah? As everyone initially abandoned her [azavuha]** and did not want to marry her because she was sickly and unattractive. The verse additionally states: “And Caleb, the son of Hezron, **begot children [holid]** of Azubah his wife” (I Chronicles 2:18). The Gemara asks: Why use the term “*holid*,” begot children? **But** doesn’t this verse state that **he married her? Rabbi Yoḥanan says:** This teaches us that with regard to **anyone who marries a woman for the sake of Heaven**, as he married her due to her righteousness without concern for her appearance, **the verse ascribes him credit as if he gave birth to her.**

The same verse refers to Miriam additionally as **Jerioth**, which the Gemara explains was appropriate, **for her face was like extremely pallid curtains [yeriof].**

The verse continues: “**And these were her sons [vaneha].**” The Gemara explains: **Do not read it as *vaneha*, her sons; rather, read it as *boneha*, her builders.** In other words, the rest of the names in the verse are not the names of her children, but rather appellations for her husband, whose marriage to her built her, as it were. The first appellation for Caleb, “**Jeshar,**” is referring to his actions, **as he set himself straight [yisher]** and did not join in the counsel of the spies. The second appellation, “**Shobab,**” is referring to the fact **that he broke [sibbev] his evil inclination** by rebelling against the other spies. The third appellation, “**and Ardon [veArdon],**” is referring to the fact **that he ruled [rada] over his evil inclination. And some say: Because the face** of his wife Miriam became beautiful **like a rose [vered]** after they were married, she was also called Vardon, due to her rose-like complexion.

The Gemara interprets an additional verse as referring to Caleb. It is stated: **“And Ashhur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah”** (I Chronicles 4:5). **Ashhur is Caleb. And why was he called Ashhur? Because his face became blackened [husheharu] from the extensive fasts** that he accepted upon himself so that he would not be entrapped by the counsel of the spies. **“The father of”** is also referring to Caleb, **as he became like a father to his wife**. The next word in the verse, **“Tekoa,”** is an additional reference to Caleb, **as he attached [taka] his heart to his Father in Heaven**.

The phrase in the verse **“had two wives”** actually means it is as if **Miriam became like two wives**, because she changed over the course of time. And therefore the two names written in the verse: **“Helah and Naarah,” were not two separate women, Helah and Naarah. Rather, initially Miriam was sickly [hela] and forlorn, and ultimately she was healthy and beautiful like a young woman [na'ara]**.

The Gemara expounds the following verse as referring to Miriam: **“And the children of Helah were Zereth [Tzeret] and Zohar and Ethnan”** (I Chronicles 4:7). She was now called **“Tzeret,” for she became so beautiful that she was like a rival [tzara] to other women**, as they were jealous of her beauty. She is called **“Zohar,” as her face shined like the sun does at noon [tzohorayim]**. She is called **“Ethnan,” as any man that saw her would be aroused so much that he would bring a gift [etnan] to his wife** to entice her.

Why did Miriam speak lashon Hara?

Was it gossip or prophecy of sorts?

What is leadership?