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TANAKH
OF THE LAND
OF ISRAEL

EXODUS • שמות

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EGYPTOLOGY

14:21 The legend of King Snofru

This verse depicts God's final miraculous deed within Egyptian borders. It was a miracle that needed to prove God's might to the Egyptians (Ex. 14:18). It needed to save the Israelites from the Egyptians, but no less, it needed to erase any doubts the Israelites may have had in God and in Moshe (Ex. 14:31). The parting of the sea was done with the aid of the east wind which is known to fiercely blow in Egypt and the southern Levant in springtime, between April and June.

An Egyptian legend from the time of the Second Intermediate period (1650–1550 BCE) has certain parallels with the story of the parting of the sea. It tells about King Snofru, the founder of the Fourth Dynasty (2613–2589 BCE). According to the legend, the king, who was feeling sad, called upon his chief lector priest for advice (see "Competition with staffs and snakes" on page 23). The chief lector priest suggested that the king go down to the water and have a group of twenty very young, minimally dressed, attractive women row a boat in front of him. The king did this, and his mood lifted. Suddenly, the head rower stopped rowing because her pendant fell into the water. The king again called his chief lector priest, who split the water in half. The pendant was found and returned to its owner, and the women continued to row.



Relief of King Snofru

יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּלֶךְ מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּסַּע עַמּוּד הָעָנָן מִפְּנֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲמֵד
מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם: וַיָּבֹא בֵּין מַחֲנֵה מִצְרַיִם וּבֵין מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל
וַיְהִי הָעָנָן וַהֲחֹשֶׁךְ וַיֹּאדָר אֶת־הַלַּיְלָה וְלֹא־קָרָב זֶה אֶל־זֶה
כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה: וַיִּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדוֹ עַל־הַיָּם וַיֵּלֶךְ יְהוָה וְאֶת־
הַיָּם בְּרוּחַ קָדִים עָזָה כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה וַיִּשָּׁם אֶת־הַיָּם לַחֲרֻבָּה
וַיִּבְקְעוּ הַמַּיִם: וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיּוֹמָהּ וַהֲמַיִם

the column of cloud moved from in front of them to their
20 rear. It came between the Egyptian and Israelite camps, as
cloud and darkness for one, but lighting the night for the
• 21 other, keeping the two apart all night. Then Moshe stretched
out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back
by a strong east wind all night, turning it to dry land and
22 dividing the waters. So the Israelites walked through the

In order to convince both Egyptians and doubtful Israelites alike, God performed the greatest miracle which demonstrated His might, and enabled the Israelites to leave Egypt and start their new phase in becoming a nation. The connection between the Egyptian legend about King Snofru and the parting of the sea performed by God cannot be ascertained, especially since many elements in the two stories are different. Yet, in both sto-

ries a dry land was created unnaturally in the midst of a body of water, which then returned back to the way it had been before. It is possible that the motif of parting the water was culturally embedded within the Egyptian mind, and when performed as a majestic miracle by God, it was understood by the Egyptians as the ultimate manifestation of God's supremacy over the Egyptian realm of magic and magicians.
▪ RSH



ויאמר יהוה אל־מֹשֶׁה נָטֵה אֶת־יָדְךָ עַל־הַיָּם וַיָּשָׁבוּ הַמַּיִם
 עַל־מִצְרַיִם עַל־דִּכְבּוֹ וְעַל־פָּרָשָׁיו: וַיֹּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדוֹ עַל־הַיָּם
 וַיָּשָׁב הַיָּם לַפְּנוֹת בִּקְדָּר לְאַיְתָנּוֹ וּמִצְרַיִם נָסִים לִקְרָאתוֹ וַיִּנְעֲר
 יְהוָה אֶת־מִצְרַיִם בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם: וַיָּשָׁבוּ הַמַּיִם וַיִּכְסּוּ אֶת־הָרֶכֶב
 וְאֶת־הַפָּרָשִׁים לְכָל חֵיל פְּרָעָה הַבָּאִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם בַּיָּם לֹא־
 נִשְׁאַר בָּהֶם עַד־אֶחָד: וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָלְכוּ בִּיבֶשֶׁת בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם
 וְהַמַּיִם לְהֵם חֹמָה מִיְּמִינָם וּמִשְׁמָאלָם: וַיֹּשַׁע יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
 אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וַיֵּרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מִצְרַיִם מֵת עַל־
 שַׁפְּת הַיָּם: וַיֵּרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה
 בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיֵּרְאוּ הָעָם אֶת־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמְנוּ בִּיהוָה וּבִמֹּשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ:

- 26 Then the LORD said to Moshe, "Stretch out your hand over
 the sea. The waters will flow back over the Egyptians and
 27 their chariots and cavalry." Moshe stretched out his hand
 over the sea, and at daybreak the water came back in full
 force. The Egyptians fled at its approach but the LORD
 28 swept them into the sea. The waters returned, covering
 the chariots, the cavalry and the whole Egyptian army that
 had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them
 29 remained. But the Israelites had walked through the sea on
 30 dry land, with a wall of water to their right and left. That day,
 the LORD saved the Israelites from the Egyptians. And when
 the Israelites saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore, and
 31 witnessed the wondrous power the LORD had unleashed
 against the Egyptians, the people were in awe of the LORD,
 and they believed in Him and in Moshe His servant.



The Israelites
 safely cross the
 Sea of Reeds,
 but Pharaoh
 and his troops
 are drowned,
 Bartolo di
 Fredi, Collegiate
 Church of San
 Gimignano, Italy,
 1356

טו • א אֲנִי יִשִׁיר־מִשָּׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ
 לֵאמֹר אֲשִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי־גָאָה גָּאָה סוֹס
 ב וְדָכְבוּ רַמָּה בַיָּם: עֲזִי וְזַמְרַת יְהוָה וַיְהִי־לִי
 לִישׁוּעָה זֶה אֱלֹהֵי וַאֲנִי־הוּ אֱלֹהֵי
 ג אָבִי וְאֶרְמָמְנָהּ: יְהוָה אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה יְהוָה
 ד שְׁמוֹ: מִרְכַּבַּת פָּרְעֹה וַחֲיִלּוֹ יָרָה בַיָּם וּמִבְחָר
 ה שְׁלֹשִׁיו טָבְעוּ בַיָּם־סוּף: תַּהֲמֹת יִכְסִּימוּ יָרְדּוּ בַּמַּצּוֹלֹת
 ו כְּמו־אֶבֶן: יִמִּינָךְ יְהוָה נֶאֱדָרִי בַכֶּחַ: יִמִּינָךְ
 ז יְהוָה תִּדְרֹעַן אוֹיֵב: וּבִרְבַּג גָּאוֹנְךָ תִּדְרֹס
 ח קִמִּיךָ תִּשְׁלַח חֲרֹנְךָ יֹאכֶלְמוּ כִּקֵּשׁ: וּבְרוּחַ

And then, Moshe and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: I will sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed in glory; horse and horseman He hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song – and now my salvation. This is my God, I will glorify Him, my father's God, I will exalt Him. The LORD is a Master of war; the LORD is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and army He hurled into the sea; the best of his officers drowned in the Sea of Reeds. The deep waters covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone. Your right hand, LORD, is majestic in power. Your right hand, LORD, shatters the enemy. In the greatness of Your majesty, You overthrew those who rose against You. You sent forth Your rage; it consumed them like stubble. By the blast of Your nostrils the waters heaped; the surge stood



NEAR EAST

15:1 Song of the Sea literary style

Ashira, "I will sing" – the opening word of the Song of the Sea – is identical to what is found in triumphal poems in the royal archives of Ugarit in Syria. Other literary elements of the Song of the Sea – one of the great epic poems of the Tanakh – are

parallel to what is found in neighboring Western Semitic and Egyptian myths and inscriptions.

The Song of the Sea bears a striking resemblance to Western Semitic myths about one of the great gods vanquishing a sea deity and thus securing eternal lordship – a concept referenced here in the Song of the Sea's final verse. God, the "Warrior," rises up as master of the waves and unleashes His fury against His foes.

According to Prof. Joshua Berman (Bar-

Ilan University), the most striking parallel to the Song of the Sea is the Egyptian account of Ramesses II's victory over the Hittite empire at the battle of Kadesh. Ramesses inscribed an account of this battle on monuments across his empire. There are ten copies of this work, known as the Kadesh Inscription, that have survived.

The Kadesh Inscription is remarkably similar to the account of the battle against the Egyptians. Ramesses' troops break ranks at the sight of the Hittite chariot force. Ramesses pleads for divine help and is encouraged to move forward with victory assured. Ramesses' troops return to survey the enemy corpses. They offer a victory hymn that includes praises of his name, references his strong arm, and gives tribute to him as the source of their strength and salvation. Ramesses is described as consuming his enemy "like chaff" – and he leads his troops peacefully home, intimidating foreign lands along the way. He arrives at the palace and is granted eternal rule.

That there are so many parallels between the Kadesh Inscription and the Song of the Sea is another example of the Torah's adaptation of the form and plot line of ancient Near Eastern literature to tell its own story of salvation. Ancient Near Eastern victory poems, especially the Ramesses poem, give glory to the conquering king who, with the help of the gods or as a divine being himself, smites and defeats the enemy. In the Song of the Sea, there is no human involvement – God himself single-handedly defeats the Egyptian army. • IBZ

יַעֲבֹד עַמֶּךָ יְהוָה יִקְנִיתָ:
 תִּבְאֲמוּ וְתִטָּעֻמוּ בְּהָרִי גִּילְתָּךְ מִקְדָּשׁ אֲדֹנִי כֹנֵנִי
 עַד־יַעֲבֹד עַם־זֶה לְשִׁבְתְּךָ פְּעֻלַּת יְהוָה יִהְיֶה וְיִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד:
 בָּא סוֹס פִּרְעֹה בִּדְרָכָו וּבִפְרָשָׁיו בָּיִם וַיֵּשֶׁב יְהוָה עֲלֵהֶם אֶתִּמֵּי
 הַיָּם וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָלְכוּ בַיַּבֶּשֶׁה בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם:

כ • וַתִּקְחֵה מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אֶחָת אֶהָרֹן אֶת־הַתִּף בִּידָהּ וַתַּצֵּאֵן
 כֹּא כָל־הַנָּשִׁים אַחֲרֶיהָ בְּתַפִּים וּבִמְחֹלֶת: וַתַּעַן לָהֶם מִרְיָם שִׁירֹו

stone – until Your people crossed, LORD, until
 the people You acquired crossed over. You will 17
 bring them, You will plant them on the mountain, Your
 heritage – the place, LORD, that You made for Your
 dwelling, the sanctuary, LORD, that Your hands
 established. The LORD will reign for ever and all 18
 time. This they sang when Pharaoh's horses, chariots
 and cavalry had gone into the sea and the LORD had 9
 brought the waters of the sea back over them while the
 Israelites had walked on dry land through the sea.

Then Miriam, the prophetess, sister of Aharon, took a 20 •
 tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her
 with tambourines and dance. And Miriam led them in 21



EGYPTOLOGY

15:20 Women's victory songs

Miriam leads the Israelite women's dance with drums. Both the Tanakh and ancient Near Eastern sources include descriptions of women participating in similar dances.

The Tanakh describes the victory song led by Devora (Judges 5:1-3, 12), the dance of Yiftah's daughter (Judges 11:34), and women singing and dancing to greet King Sha'ul (I Sam. 18:6-7).



➤ Relief with female musicians

Archaeological findings show that, throughout the ancient Mediterranean, it was not uncommon for women to participate in public dance celebrations. On metal and ivory vessels from Cyprus, Phoenicia, and Mesopotamia, women are depicted as musicians and dancers. There is evidence on tomb wall paintings and other sources that women participated as musicians in Egyptian culture, including in war dances and dramatic commemorative dances. » HA

The Torah



A Women's Commentary

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Women of Reform Judaism
The Federation of Temple Sisterhoods



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15 Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to יהוה.
They said:

I will sing to יהוה, for He has triumphed gloriously;
Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea.

²יהוה is my strength and might;

He is become my deliverance.

This is my God and I will enshrine Him;

The God of my ancestors, and I will exalt Him.

³יהוה, the Warrior—

יהוה is His name!

⁴Pharaoh's chariots and his army

He has cast into the sea;



Celebrating Deliverance (15:1–21)

Most scholars understand the poetic celebration of Israel's miraculous rescue from the Egyptians to be a very ancient poem, dating to the late 12th or early 11th century B.C.E.—much older than the somewhat different prose account that precedes it. In form and content, the poetry draws from the mythological epics of ancient Canaan, in which the heroic deity Baal conquers the primordial forces of chaos, represented by surging waters, so that order can be established. The military imagery of that cosmic battle is echoed and historicized in the Song at the Sea (*Shirat HaYam*), in which the natural elements—water and wind—become God's weapons against human enemies. The miracle of deliverance is captured in exuberant language, making this passage the thematic centerpiece of Exodus.

Thus far the narrative movement of the book has taken us toward God's holy mountain, first mentioned in 3:1 and now again at the end of this

poem (see also 3:12 and 4:27); most of the rest of Exodus focuses on God's revelation at this mountain. On its location, see at 18:5.

The poetic account of victory at the sea appears in two segments, a longer version (vv. 1–18, with a prose frame in vv. 1 and 19) followed by a much briefer version (v. 21, with a prose introduction in v. 20). On biblical poetry, see at Deuteronomy 32:1–43.

SONG AT THE SEA (15:1–19)

Many modern scholars conclude that the Song was created and performed by women. Beginning in the mid-20th century, a considerable body of literary, historical, sociological, and musicological evidence has been amassed to suggest that the Song should be attributed to Miriam. For example, one ancient manuscript tradition calls it the Song of Miriam. Also, songs of military triumph belong to a victory song genre typically composed and performed by women—not men—to greet victorious

טו אִזְּ יִשְׁרָאֵל־מִשָּׁהּ וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ
 לֵאמֹר אֲשִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי־גָאָה גָאָה סוֹס
 וּרְכָבוֹ רָמָה בָּיִם: ² עֲזֵי וְזִמְרַת יְהוָה וַיְהִי־לִי
 לִישׁוּעָה זֶה אֵלֵי וַאֲנִי־הוּ אֱלֹהֵי
 אָבִי וַאֲרַמְּנֶהוּ: ³ יְהוָה אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה יְהוָה
 שְׁמוֹ: ⁴ מִרְכַּבַּת פָּרְעֹה וַחֲיִלּוֹ יִרְהַב בָּיִם וּמִבְחָר

troops after battle (see at 15:20). Thus, the title "Song of Miriam" that is often used by modern scholars and interpreters for v. 21 might in fact be appropriate for this passage as well.

1. *Moses... sang this song.* The prose introduction mentions Moses, the chief human protagonist of the Exodus narrative, as the performer of the Song, along with the people. Hence it has traditionally been assumed that Moses is the author of the Song. Why would a woman's composition (see previous comment) be attributed to a man? Perhaps the centrality of Moses to the Exodus story meant that authorship of this hymnic masterpiece accrued to him.

I will sing to יהוה. Directed to God alone, human agency in the victory over the enemy disappears; neither Moses' rod nor outstretched arms, both prominent in the prose account (14:16, 21, 26-27), appear in the poem.

He. On the palpable masculinity of the poetic figure employed in vv. 1-4, see at v. 3, below.

2. *יהוה... deliverance.* The first part of this verse is also found in Isaiah 12:2 and Psalm 118:14, suggesting a liturgical use of this resounding affirmation of God's power to save those in need.

enshrine. This term may allude to the building of an abode (shrine) for God, a project to which much of the second half of Exodus is devoted. However, because the poetry places it in parallel with "exalt," the Hebrew term might better be translated "glorify."

ancestors. Heb. *av*, which is sometimes translated "father." Yet here it does not refer to the poet's biological male parent; rather, it alludes to the ancestors of Genesis as a collective (see also Exodus 3:13, 15, 16; 4:5; 13:5, 11). The inclusive term "ancestor" best represents the poet's claim that the deity celebrated for deliverance at the sea is the same as the One who appeared to earlier generations.

3. *the Warrior.* As one of the most strikingly male metaphors applied to God in the Bible, this
 (continued on p. 389)

²⁰Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, picked up a hand-drum, and all the women went out after her in dance with hand-drums. ²¹And Miriam chanted for them:

Sing to יהוה, for He has triumphed gloriously;
Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea.

20 וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אֲחֹת אַהֲרֹן אֶת-
הַתֵּף בְּיָדָהּ וַתֵּצֵאן כָּל-הַנָּשִׁים אַחֲרֶיהָ
בַּתָּפִים וּבַמַּחֲלֹת: 21 וַתַּעַן לָהֶם מִרְיָם
שִׁירָו לַיהוָה כִּי-גָאֹה גָאֹה
סוּס וּרְכָבוֹ רָמָה בַּיָּם: ס

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).

20. 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.

hand-drum. This translation of *tof* is more appropriate than either the anachronistic "tambourine" or the vague "timbrel" that appears in many English translations; tambourines are not attested until the Roman period, more than a thousand

years later. The hand-drum, or frame-drum, is the only percussion instrument mentioned in the Bible, in contrast to other classes of instruments (such as string and wind instruments) for which there are many examples. Archeological evidence—such as terracotta statuettes of women (never men) playing the frame-drum—indicates that this was largely a woman's instrument. Thus, the mention of instrumental ensembles, including the frame-drum in other biblical texts (such as Psalm 150), suggests the presence of female musicians. Because of the rhythmic nature of ancient Hebrew music, drum playing—by women—would have been an essential part of most musical performances.

all the women. It was apparently customary in ancient Israel for women to welcome victorious armies with victory songs (see Judges 11:34; I Samuel 18:6-7). Accomplished female musicians would have earned the esteem of their community. Also, groups of female performers likely would have met together to practice their instruments and compose songs for specific occasions, which would have provided occasions for female bonding and for women to exert organizational skills and mentor younger performers.

dance. Along with singing and drum playing, dance was an integral part of this performance genre. It is likely that most musical performances in the biblical world involved movement as well as vocal and instrumental expression (see Psalms 149:3; 150:4).

ידוד a new song" (Isaiah 42:10), the masculine noun *shir* is used. This indicates "that just as no male gives birth, so the triumph which is yet to come will not be succeeded by subjugation" (*M'chilta, Shirta* 1).

Then Miriam the prophet (15:20). Miriam is called "the prophet" in this verse, although she never prophesies in the Bible. The *M'chilta* says she predicted the birth of Moses to her father, who praised her when Moses was born—but then blamed her when they were forced to expose him in the basket (*Shirta* 10; also BT *Sotah* 12a–13a, referring to Exodus 2:1–3).

and all the women went out after her in dance with hand-drums (15:20). The Rabbis speculated as to where the women obtained the musical instruments they played when they danced at the sea. Like a mother who remembers to pack all the necessities for a family trip, the women's confidence that God would deliver them made them bring these instruments along: "But where did the Israelites get hand-drums and flutes in the wilderness? It was simply that the righteous were confident and knew that God would perform miracles and mighty deeds when they left Egypt, so they prepared hand-drums and flutes" (*M'chilta, Shirta* 10). Although the *M'chilta* calls the righteous *tzaddikim* (masculine plural), the medieval commentator Rashi, in his remarks on this verse, made a point of calling them *tzadkaniot* (feminine plural), referring to the women.

And Miriam chanted for them (15:21). Interpreters visualized two choral groups at the sea chanting the same song, both led by prophets: the men by Moses, the women by Miriam. Just as Moses recited the Song among the men, so it was Miriam who recited among the women: "Sing to ידוד for He has triumphed gloriously" (*M'chilta, Shirta* 10).

In rabbinic literature, Miriam and Moses often appear in parallel, with Miriam given an equal status to Moses. In a midrash in the 13th-century-C.E. *Midrash HaGadol*, Joseph explains two dreams of Pharaoh in which the number three appears. According to Joseph's interpretation, the double appearance of this number refers to the three patriarchs and to the three leaders who would redeem the people from Egypt: Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. Furthermore, the miraculous well of Miriam, which accompanied the people of Israel though the wilderness and sustained them because of Miriam's righteousness (BT *Taanit* 9a; *B'midbar Rabbah* 1.2), was among the ten miraculous entities created by God during the twilight on the eve of the

*'Where did the Israelites get hand-drums
and flutes in the wilderness?'*

first Sabbath (Mishnah *Avot* 5:6). This well complements the manna, which was given to the people because of Moses' righteousness. The Talmud (BT *Taanit* 9a, among many other sources) explains as follows: "Rabbi Yose the son of Rabbi Judah says, 'Three good leaders had arisen for Israel—namely, Moses, Aaron, and Miriam—and for their sake three good things were given: the well, the clouds of glory, and the manna. The first was given for the merits of Miriam, the second for those of Aaron, and the third for those of Moses.'" The well disappeared at Miriam's death, but one tradition says a vessel of water from Miriam's well is one of three concealed objects that Elijah will restore in the messianic age, along with vessels of manna and of sacred oil (*M'chilta, Vayassa* 6).

—Claudia Setzer

Voices

Leaving Egypt

Merle Feld

Exodus 13:17-22

The night is so dark
and I am afraid.
I see nothing, smell nothing,
the only reality—
I am holding my mother's hand.

And as we walk
I hear the sounds
of a multitude in motion—
in front, behind,
all around,
a multitude in motion.

I have no thought of tomorrow,
now, in the darkness,
there is only motion
and my mother's hand.

Miriam: The Red Sea

Muriel Rukeyser

Exodus 14:26-15:21

High above shores and times,
I on the shore
forever and ever.
Moses my brother
has crossed over
to milk, honey,
that holy land.
Building Jerusalem.
I sing forever
on the seashore.
I do remember
horseman and horses,
waves of passage
poured into war,
all poured into journey.
My unseen brothers
have gone over,
chariots
deep seas under.
I alone stand here
ankle-deep
and I sing, I sing,
until the lands
sing to each other.

The Other Shore

Shira Rubenstein

Exodus 14:26-15:21

The guilt begins on the other shore of the Reed Sea,
with us, drained from terror and excitement,
with the sun beating down,
seagulls swooping overhead,
waves lapping against the bodies on the sand,
so gently, now.
Children laugh or cry,
but the world is quiet,
afterwards.

Who is like you, O God?
We know about fear
and doubt,
resentment and guilt.
We thought we'd be leaving it behind.
How heavy a load can be carried out of Egypt?
How many in that army were blameless?

How many innocents will die for this freedom?

We don't know whether these questions are for God or us.
We try to drown them out with drums,
hoarse, harsh song,
the pounding of tired feet in a desperate dance.
We think of the cracks of the whip,
the insults,
every murdered child
—all the times we wished
something like this would occur.
We tell ourselves we have a right to rejoice.

It would be easier to believe
if the horses
hadn't had time
to
scream.

The Song of Miriam

Ruth Sohn

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.

Thirst IV

Kadya Molodowsky (transl. Kathryn Hellerstein)

Exodus 15:22–25

My pitcher lies, dry and thirsty,
And I walk through all the streets
Seeking out a drop of water,
And I am spent
Near my pitcher.
I lay my lips
To the roots of the trees,
I stretch with eyes and mouth
To the sky's rains.
And my tongue is bitter from roots of the trees,
My mouth is thirsty,
And my eyes are tired from looking at the sky.
I seek my pitcher,
And it is dry.

Newly Commissioned Gottlieb Torah

הנאמרים אלה יהיו ביום לא נשאר בהם עוד אלה ונצי ישראל הלכו
ביבשה בתוך הים והמים להם זמורה מימיהם ומימיהם ויושע
יהיה ביום הזה את ישראל מיד מצרים וירא ישראל את מצרים
מות על שפת הים וירא ישראל את הים הגדול אשר עשה יהוה
במצרים וירא העם את יהוה ויאמינו ביהוה ובמושה עבדו

אֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל מֹשֶׁה וְנָצִי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הָעִשִׂירָה הַזֹּאת לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְאֶמְרָם	אֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל מֹשֶׁה וְנָצִי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הָעִשִׂירָה הַזֹּאת לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְאֶמְרָם
וַיִּרְכְּבוּ רַכְבּוֹת בָּיָם	וַיִּרְכְּבוּ רַכְבּוֹת בָּיָם
לְעִשְׂוֵּתָא	לְעִשְׂוֵּתָא
אֲנִי וְאֶרְמוֹנִי	אֲנִי וְאֶרְמוֹנִי
שָׁמָּה	שָׁמָּה
שָׁלְשִׁי טַבַּעַן בָּיָם סוּף	שָׁלְשִׁי טַבַּעַן בָּיָם סוּף
אֲנִי	אֲנִי
יְהוָה דַּרְעָךְ אֲרוֹמָא	יְהוָה דַּרְעָךְ אֲרוֹמָא
קַמִּיךְ	קַמִּיךְ
אֲנִיךְ גַּעֲר־כּוֹ בָּיָם	אֲנִיךְ גַּעֲר־כּוֹ בָּיָם
נִלְמָא	נִלְמָא
אֲנִיךְ אֲרֻדְךָ אֲשִׁיךְ	אֲנִיךְ אֲרֻדְךָ אֲשִׁיךְ
נִפְשִׁי	נִפְשִׁי
בְּרִיךְ וְזֶדֶךְ כִּסְמוֹ יָם	בְּרִיךְ וְזֶדֶךְ כִּסְמוֹ יָם
אֲנִיךְ	אֲנִיךְ
כְּמוֹכָה גַּאֲרִי בְּקֻדְשִׁי	כְּמוֹכָה גַּאֲרִי בְּקֻדְשִׁי
פְּלָא	פְּלָא
בְּחִסְדֶּךָ עִם זֵי גַאֲלִית	בְּחִסְדֶּךָ עִם זֵי גַאֲלִית
קֻדְשֶׁךָ	קֻדְשֶׁךָ
אֲנִיךְ יִשְׁבִּי פְּלִישְׁתִּי	אֲנִיךְ יִשְׁבִּי פְּלִישְׁתִּי
אֲדִים	אֲדִים
כָּל יִשְׁבִּי כַּעֲרֶךָ	כָּל יִשְׁבִּי כַּעֲרֶךָ
וְפִיךָ	וְפִיךָ
יַעֲבֹר עִמָּךְ יְהוָה	יַעֲבֹר עִמָּךְ יְהוָה
קִצִּית	קִצִּית
לְשִׁבְתֶּךָ פְּעֻלַּת יְהוָה	לְשִׁבְתֶּךָ פְּעֻלַּת יְהוָה
דִּין	דִּין
בֹּא סוֹס פִּרְעֹה בְּרַכְּנוּ וּתְפַרְשִׁי בָּיָם	בֹּא סוֹס פִּרְעֹה בְּרַכְּנוּ וּתְפַרְשִׁי בָּיָם
הָיָם	הָיָם
וְנָצִי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִלְכוּ בִּיבְשֶׁת בְּתוֹךְ	וְנָצִי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִלְכוּ בִּיבְשֶׁת בְּתוֹךְ

ותקחו מרים הנביאה אהרן את התוף בידה ותצאן כל הנשים
אחריה בתפים ובמוזלות ותען להם מרים שירו ליהוה כי גאה גאה
סוס ורכבו רמה בים
ויצאו אל מדבר שור וילכו שלשית ימים במדבר ולא מיצאו מים
ויבאו מרתה ולא יכלו לשאת מים ממרתה כי מרים הם על כן קרא שמה מרתה

Iranian,
Sephardic
Torah
Dated to
1800's

תאמר אלהים לא נשאר כהם עד אחר וכו' ישראל
בכשה נתן הים והמים להם חמה מימים ומשמאלם
יהיה כיום ההוא את ישראל מיר מצרים וראי ישראל את מצרים
מת על שפת הים וראי ישראל את הים הגדלה אשר עשה
במצרים ויראו העם את יהוה ויאמרו ביהוה ובמשה עבדו

אוישיר משה וכו' ישראל את השירה הזאת ראו וראו
אשירה ליהוה כי נאה גאה

ועבדו מור בים
לשירה

אני וארמנו
מרכבת פרעה וחילו ירהבם

שיר שירי שבוע בים סוף
ימינך יהוה נא ררי ככף

יהוה תרעץ אויב
תשלח חרנך יאכלמו כקש

אפיך לער מו מים
קפאו תהמת כל בים

אויב ארץ אש
אריק חרבי תורישמו יד

מור וחרן כסמו ים
מי כמכה בארם יהוה

כמכה לארץ כנען
נטיית ימינך תבלעמו ארץ

מסדר עם זינאלת
שמעו עמים יי

אויב ילדי מואב יאחזמו רע
תפל על ימים אויב

כנען ארץ ידמו כאב
על ימים

תבאמו ותטעמו בהר נחלת
מקדש אויב

יהוה ימלך לעל ים יער
ישיב יהוה על ימים

בא סיס פרעה ברכו ויפרישו בים
וכו' ישראל הלכו בכשה בתור

ותקח מרים הנביאה אהרן את התוף כליה ותצאן כל הנשים
אחריה כותפות ותעל להם מרים שירו ליהוה כי נא

סיס ורכו רמה בים
ויסע משה את ישראל ויסע משה את ישראל ויסע משה את ישראל

ויסע משה את ישראל ויסע משה את ישראל ויסע משה את ישראל
ויסע משה את ישראל ויסע משה את ישראל ויסע משה את ישראל

Holocaust ¹⁰⁰ dated 77

1500k
Pragati

היום

והקול בדים הוציאה מן הים את התה בידה ותצא כל הילדים

וּרְכֹבֵי רֶמֶה בֵּינָם
לִישׁוּעָה

אֲבִי וְאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם
שִׁמּוֹ

Holocaust
Tarah

שְׁלֹשִׁי טַבְעוֹ בֵּינָם סוּף
אֲבִי

יְהוָה רֶגֶל עַל אֹיֵב

קִמִּיךְ
אֶפְסִיךְ זָעַר בְּנוֹ מֵיָם
נִזְלִים

אֹיֵב אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
נִפְשִׁי

בְּרוּחֶךָ כִּסְבּוֹ יָם
אֲדִירִים

כְּמוֹכָה זָאֵר בִּקְדֻשָּׁה
פֶּלֶא

בְּזִסְדֶּךָ עִם אֱלֹהִים
כְּדִשָּׁה