

Dear Friends,

A gutten moed.

Tonight is shvii shel Pesach. As a nation, we're crossing the yam suf . Together, we're re-experiencing such open revelation that we can point with our fingers—Zeh Keili V'anveihu. Yet again, we're at the **high point of Yetzias Mitrayim, the crescendo of Pesach**, when all of klal Yisrael gathered on dry land and lifted their hearts and their voices in shirah.

What is fascinating about the shirah is that when Moshe and Klal Yisrael completed their incredible song of praise and faith, there is a coda. Something comes after. And what is that? That is the **song of Miriam, who led the women in their own shirah**. The pasuk tells us, Vatikach Miriam haneviah, achos aharon, as hatof behadh vatezanah col hanashim achareha btupim uvimecholos.

(The)Miriam the neviah, sister of Aharon, took a tambourine in her hand and the women went out with her with tambourines and dancing.

What's the significance of this song? Why did the women need their very own song?

Shiras Miriam is called so because this special song reflected who Miriam was. It was born from her personal dedication—**and the strength and courage of all the women**.

Miriam, the Midrash tells us, was born at a critical point in the slavery. When she was born, everything got worse. The servitude became increasingly bitter. And so her name, Miriam, comes from the word Marirus, meaning bitterness. Within the anguish of children being snatched from their parents, the harshness of the decrees, Miriam showed a special strength. When baby Moshe had to be placed in the Nile, it was Miriam who stood at the banks, watching over her brother. She watched and she waited and she davened. So Miriam is distinguished for two

things. The first is the bitterness. The anguish. **And the second is the waiting. The emunah. The hope.** The staying loyal even as her family is torn apart and her world disintegrates.

Miriam didn't sing alone. All the women joined in this shirah. Because all the women in Mitzrayim had these two characteristics. Their experience of the slavery was especially acute. And their ability to hold on to hope enabled the continuation of klal Yisrael. So the women all sang along with her. **These two strengths became the prism for a spiritual experience that needed a unique expression when they experienced the geulah.** And so the women took out their tambourines and they sang and they danced.

The tambourines, the tupim, reminds us of another word. תפף means to beat the drum. But it is used in the navi to mean something different. In Nochum, we read the phrase תפף על לב, to beat the heart. When a person is in so much grief that it explodes out of his body, when it leaks out of every pore, then what does he do? He raises his arm and thumps on his chest, beats on his heart.

There is a very deep parallel here. It's because of the suffering, those heartbeats which may have been a source of bewilderment—how can you keep on when there is so much pain—that the women were later able to beat on the tambourines. **It was because the pain and anguish of the exile resonated so deeply that the joy in redemption exploded in a song that was recorded for all eternity.**

Miriam stood and waited for Moshe. She had the emunah, the ability to hang on, hold onto hope. Like Rochel Imeinu, buried alone in Beis Lechem, does not let up with her crying, does not abandon her prayers and her tears, **it was the women who waited and yearned and held up their families through Mitzrayim.**

And so, when the men had finished their praise of Hashem, their turn came. It was a woman's song, because it was a woman's koach which led them to that place. It was a woman's koach to feel the merirus, the bitterness, the anguish. **To**

allow the strings of their hearts to play a melody that was filled with sorrow—that allowed them later to raise their voices in thanks and joy. It was their emunah, the hope, the holding on through the darkness, that gave them the privilege of expressing their emunah at the Yam Suf.

Because the more it pains us, the more hurt we are, the more we yearn for something different. **The more we ask, and wish for, and raise our voices and plead for a whole new world.** And then it is granted. And when it comes, it's because it was fueled by the pain. It was achieved by the bitterness. And it came because we never gave up hope, we continued holding on, no matter what. Those are the traits of women.

It is my prayer to you that we be zocheh to turn our pain into song. That we tap into the ability, that feminine strength, to hold on to the hope, no matter the bitterness that surrounds us. And may we be zocheh to point to miracles and say, **Zeh Keili V'anveihu—this is my Hashem**, and I will make His Name beautiful.

A Gutten Yom Tov,

Mrs. Faigie Zelcer

Penimi | Director

P: 718.514.2525 x 101

E: fzelcer@penimi.org

US: 1266 56th Street Brooklyn, NY 11219

CA: 460 Champagneur Montreal, QC H2V 3P5