



## Miracles at the Sea

Each year, the Shabbat following Tu BiShvat is known as Shabbat Shira, because we read Parashat Beshalach, which tells the story of the crossing of the sea.

When the Jews crossed the sea, *Chazal* calculated 10 special miracles. The water parted into 12 pathways, so that each tribe found its own path, and each tribe crossed separately. The tribes wanted to see each other – so the waters became transparent, clear as glass, and they could see each other without worrying that perhaps others hadn't passed through the sea.

Likewise, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* wanted the walk through the sea to be easy and comfortable, that there should be no distress to any Jew, so their hearts would open and they all could sing *Shirat HaYam* from the depths of their soul. For this reason, miracles occurred, mainly for the children, that if they would suddenly want a candy, or a pacifier, candies or pacifiers would 'pop out' from the sea. Thus everyone would receive everything he wanted on the spot, in such a way that their hearts were open to say *Shirat HaYam*, bursting forth from a pure soul.<sup>1</sup>

The women also took part in *Shirat HaYam* and the Torah specifically records what they sang. Miriam the prophetess took her drum in her hand and all the women began to follow her, singing: "Sing to the L-rd, for He has triumphed gloriously." Commenting on Miriam's song, Rashi brings the Midrash:

"And Miriam the prophetess, sister of Aharon, took the drum..." – when did she prophesize? When she was

Aharon's sister, before Moshe was born, when she said, 'My mother will bear a son' (Sotah 13a).

Another interpretation: "the sister of Aharon" – since he risked his life for her when she got *tzara'at*, she is mentioned in his name.

"The drum" – a type of musical instrument.

"And all the women went after her in dance with drums" – the righteous women of the generation were certain that G-d would perform miracles for them, so they took their drums with them from Egypt. Moshe sang *Shirat HaYam* for the men – he would recite and they would repeat; Miriam sang *Shirat HaYam* for the women.

On the verse, "the women went after her," *Chazal* say all of the women went out to "protest," and wanted to sing like the men. The men told them, 'You can't sing, because of *kol isha*.' Said Miriam, 'Let each woman carry a drum, and when you feel that the men are approaching and might hear the sound of our song, bang the drums hard, so the sound of the women's song won't be heard.' Miriam was a prophet before Moshe Rabbeinu, and she told the women, 'I will sing and you should follow,' and they began singing "Sing to the L-rd, for He has triumphed gloriously," like the men sang. The women said to her, 'Are you trying to make fun of us? These are the same words as Moshe Rabbeinu's song!' She said to them, 'I have come to teach you that we need to accept all the teachings of the Rabbi without exception, and even his song can't be negated, but let us sing it together, specifically the way he loves.'

### Horse and Rider He Hurled Into the Sea

By splitting the sea, G-d also wanted to teach us that the evil Egyptians, who harmed the entire Jewish nation, would receive their punishment – perpetrators and dispatchers, their vehicles and their weapons, all need to be destroyed. We learn this from what was said at *Shirat HaYam*: "Horse and rider He hurled into the sea." But what was the horses' sin? Rather, this is the punishment the wicked deserved, that even the horses received their punishment.

There were different types of wicked people in Egypt: those who were utterly wicked and cruel, the less wicked and those who were somewhat wicked. G-d meted out the appropriate punishment to each group. He sent the utterly wicked into the sea like straw and hay, and the suffering of drowning was terrible – measure for measure. For those who were less wicked, He lessened their suffering and drowned them like stones, which plunge immediately; this is "hurled into the sea." And those who were somewhat wicked, relatively better, He drowned like lead, so their suffering would be minimal.

1 See Rabbi Ovadiah Bartenura on Masechet Avot, 5, who calculates the 10 miracles, and the Gra's interpretation there.

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