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### SAVE THE DATE! MARCOS LIVE IN CONCERT

### SATURDAY NIGHT, FEBRUARY 6TH @8PM

The East 55th Street Synagogue  
308 E55th, New York

**FREE ADMISSION**  
**FREE DESSERT BUFFET**

Spanning The Decades: Music From The 40's-80's. Something for Everyone  
Your Favorite Songs: Sinatra, Billy, Elton, Motown, And So Much More!!

**Not to be missed!**

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February Shabbat Service Schedule

February 13th Parashat Mishpatim
Shabbat Shekalim / Birchot HaChodesh Adar

February 20th Parashat Terumah

This Week

Friday January 29, 2010 **Candle Lighting 4:45 pm**

This week's Torah reading: **Beshalach**

Annual (Ex. 13:17-17:16): Etz Hayim p. 399

Triennial (Ex. 14:26-17:16): Etz Hayim p. 405

Haftarah (Judges 4:4-5:31; 5:1-31): Etz Hayim p. 424

Musings on Beshalach -- Shirat HaYam and Miriam's Song

After the collapse of the walls of water onto the pursuing Egyptians, Moshe and the people burst into song. How were several million people able to sing together? One famous Jewish source (Tosefta Sota 6:2) says it happened through a low grade form of prophecy: "The holy spirit came over them, and they praised Him."

Other ancient interpreters, pointing to the first words of the Song (I will sing unto God...) had other suggestions:

(1) Moshe sang, and those who heard him (ie not everyone) joined in for two choruses [Philo]

- (2) Moshe composed it himself (and presumably taught it to the people?) [Josephus]
- (3) Moshe sang it and the people repeated, line by line [Rabbi Akiva in m. Sotah 5:4]
- (4) Moshe sang in sections, the elders answered "גָּאֵה גָּאֵה סוֹס וְרָבּוֹ רָמָה בְּיָמֵי-אֲשִׁירָה לִיהוָה כִּי" and the people answered "עָזְי וְזָמְרַת יְהוָה לִי לִישׁוּעָה-יְהוָה" [Tibat Marqa]

It should be noted that the LXX and the Samaritan Bible both have SING (plural) rather than I WILL SING.

Additionally, there are traditions that everyone at the Sea experienced prophecy. This is concluded in two different ways. First the song itself seems to indicate that the people saw God. After all they sang "This is my God and I will glorify him." The word "this" seems to suggest they saw something. [Mechilta De Rabbi Yishmael] Meanwhile, in Deut 26:8 Moshe says "the Lord brought us out with great fear." Where the MT has "fear", the LXX and Vulgate have "visions" and Targum Onkelos, Targum Yonatan, and the Peshitta have "sights."

In the Pesach Haggadah, the gap between the two readings is bridged with the drash that the great fear was caused by the revealing of God's being, which would have also been the great vision/sight indicated in the other sources. <http://dovbear.blogspot.com>



Comparison of the two songs shows that Miriam set a different pattern of leadership from Moses. Moses was an elitist leader,[2] perhaps closer to the Holy One, blessed be He ("he is trusted throughout My household," Num. 12:7) than to the people. This might be one explanation for his repeated conflicts with the people. Moses did not perceive his role as based on dialogue and close connection with the people. Little wonder that at one of the peaks of his friction with the people he explicitly refused to "care for them" in a manner which is perceived as feminine: "Did I conceive all this people, did I bear them, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom?'" (Num. 11:12). Miriam, in contrast, is extremely close to the people, as is evident from the character of the Song of Miriam, and as perhaps is hinted when Rashi identifies the midwives Shifra and Puah with Yochebed and Miriam. Rashi's commentary on Exodus 1:15 emphasizes Miriam's bonding with the newborn child: "Puah was Miriam, who speaks softly (po'ah) and murmurs to the newborn in the way of women who calm a crying child." Miriam, who bonds with the infants of the Israelites as they are born, is the one who addresses them and bonds with them also in their adulthood. Miriam chose to lead by the people by addressing them in a language they could understand - through a non-elitist religious rite, somewhat resembling the religious rites of surrounding peoples - and by transforming the magnificent but incomprehensible prophetic song into a chant easily learned by those who heard it.

Lest I be misunderstood, let me stress that the rite which Miriam led was intended to raise the spiritual experience of the people to a higher level: the dance and music did not focus around offering sacrifices to pagan gods, as was the general practice in the surrounding nations and as the Israelites imitated in the sin of the Golden Calf,[3] rather they related to a prayer of thanksgiving to an abstract G-d - the first step in leading the people to monotheism. Miriam, like Moses and Aaron, was also a leader who directed the people towards this sort of faith - little wonder that Scripture refers to her as "Miriam the prophetess"[4] - however she chose to do so in a different manner. Miriam's leadership was guided not by stressing her individuality, separating the "I" from his surroundings, but by forming a network of human relations. Feminist psychologists define such an approach as intrinsically "feminine," growing out of the female personality structure that results from the general way baby girls are raised as opposed to baby boys.[5] <http://www.biu.ac.il/JH/Parasha/eng/beshalah/co1.html>



Narrative units in the Bible are frequently bookended with long poems. This song [Shirat HaYam] marks the conclusion of the Exodus story, and the beginning of the Wilderness tales.

Ashira l'hashem is consistent with ANE literary convention [Ancient Near Eastern] of making announcements at the beginning of poems. (Alter)

Kee goah goah is a great pun. It means "to be exalted" and is also the word for a sea surge.

horse and rider may be an anachronism: At the time Egypt used chariots, not cavalry.

Azi v'zimras is another pun. Zimrah means both song and power.

Who is like you among the gods. possibly indicates that the Israelites weren't quite yet monotheists when then song was first composed.

You will bring them and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, The place, O LORD, which You have made for Your dwelling, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established seems like a clear reference to the Temple, and can be understood as either prophesy or evidence of later tampering. Sarna, incidentally, uses this to explain away the problem of the too-large multitude that was said to have participated in the Exodus.

As is well known, (see [this](#) and [this](#)) (and don't miss serious counterarguments in the comments) nothing that we know about the ancient world, and nothing that archaeologists have found in the Sinai lends even an iota of support to the idea that 600,000 (or 3 million) people left Egypt. Sarna's solution is ingenious. He says that Temple in Jerusalem was the point, or goal of the Exodus. At the time the Temple was built, the population in Israel was about 600,000. Saying that 600,000 left Egypt is a literary way of connecting the Exodus with the Temple, similar to how even the children of immigrants speak of their "American forefathers." <http://dovbear.blogspot.com/>

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The Torah considers it noteworthy that Miriam and the women did not only sing orally, but that their singing was accompanied by tambourines. Where did these tambourines come from? An instrument of gaiety and celebration, tambourines seem out of place during those dark and gloomy years of Egyptian oppression.

The Midrash states that the Jewish women had great vision and foresight, creating and designing tambourines as they prepared for the Exodus.

"The Jewish women of that generation were confident of Divine miracles, so they took along their tambourines from Egypt."

Even during the darkest Exile, the righteous women knew that the Divine promise would be fulfilled, and they would eventually be redeemed.

Moreover, those faithful women translated the hope in their hearts into action. Rather than vague wishful thinking, their belief in the Redemption was real and tangible, (as in the folksaying: "When praying for rain, carry an umbrella!")

Miriam knew with certainty, that regardless of how unrealistic the prospects for Redemption may have looked at the time, the Exodus was actually "right around the corner."

Miriam and the women were fully ready and prepared for this great and auspicious moment.

Having strengthened and encouraged Israel's faith during the hard depressing times, these women deserved to herald the redemption, leaving Egypt with a song in their heart and tambourines in their hands.

Miriam's song was indeed different and it therefore stands out in a class by itself! Miriam's song was not inspired after the fact, as was the singing by the rest of Israel. Rather than being a result and effect of the miracle, her song of faith was the cause and reason for the miracle and its very cause. <http://www.jewish-holiday.com/mirtambourine.html>

### **For Tu B'Shevat**

**Life's Roots -- A Meditation** by By Tzvi Freeman

We are trees, living two lives at once. One life breaking through the soil into this world. Where, with all our might, we struggle to rise above it, grapple for its sun and its dew, desperate not to be torn away by the fury of its storms or consumed by its fires.

Then there are our roots, deep under the ground, unmoving and serene. They are our ancient mothers and fathers, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rivkah, Yaacov, Leah and Rachel. They lie deep within us, at our very core. For them, there is no storm, no struggle. There is only the One, the Infinite, for Whom all the cosmos with all its challenges are nothing more than a fantasy renewed every moment from the void.

Our strength is from our bond with them, and with their nurture we will conquer the storm. We will bring beauty to the world we were planted within.

[http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/67328/jewish/Lifes-Roots.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/67328/jewish/Lifes-Roots.htm)

### **Prayer of Reb Nachman of Bratslav**

Master of the Universe, grant me the ability to be alone;  
may it be my custom to go outdoors each day  
among the trees and grass — among all growing things and there may I be alone, and enter into  
prayer, to talk with the One to whom I belong.  
May I express there everything in my heart,  
and may all the foliage of the field —  
all grasses, trees, and plants —  
awake at my coming,  
to send the powers of their life into the words of my prayer  
so that my prayer and speech are made whole  
through the life and spirit of all growing things,  
which are made as one by their transcendent Source.  
May I then pour out the words of my heart  
before your Presence like water, O Lord,  
and lift up my hands to You in worship,  
on my behalf, and that of my children!

<http://www.theshalomcenter.org/node/378>

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Mazel Tov

Gilda and Henry Block who are being honored this Shabbat by JTS and Temple Emanu-El of Palm Beach. They will receive the prestigious Community Service Award., which is presented to individuals for dedicated service to synagogue, community, and the Conservative Movement, and for exemplary leadership in support of JTS

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### **Quote of the Week**

No man is sterile. Every soul is pregnant with the seed of insight.  
It is vague and hidden. In some people the seed grows,  
in others it decays. Some give birth to life. Others miscarry it.  
Some know how to bear, to nurse, to rear an insight  
that comes into being. Others do not... Abraham Joshua Heschel

Shabbat shalom.

Stacy

Stacy Menzer  
President  
The Conservative Synagogue  
Of the Hamptons  
PO Box 1800  
East Hampton, NY 11937  
631 725 8188  
[www.synagoguehamptons.org](http://www.synagoguehamptons.org)