



Torah Reflections for the week of Passover

April 2 – 10, 2007 15 – 22 Nisan 5767

Reading for the Seventh Day of Passover: Exodus 13:17 – 15:26

Imagine you are an Israelite standing on the shores of the Red Sea, after crossing through the miraculously parted waters, and you hear the sound of timbrels and joyous singing of women's voices. You look up in wonder and see Miriam and the women rejoicing in ecstasy before the Holy One of Blessing:

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. And Miriam chanted for them: Sing to the Eternal One, for God has triumphed gloriously. (Exodus 15:20-21)

Miriam's charismatic appeal draws you in. You yearn to join in the joyful celebration.

Miriam, the prophetess, served as both a spiritual leader and as a healer of her people. According to a midrash, God honored Miriam's righteous devotion to the Jewish people and had mercy on the people by providing a well of living waters ("*mayim hayim*") which followed the Israelites on their journey through the desert. This water source, which came to be known as Miriam's Well, represents the essence of life, healing and spiritual renewal.

Many Jews today include a "Miriam's Cup" filled with water in their Passover Seder alongside the traditional Cup of Elijah. We are all so much in need of Miriam's healing waters, especially during this time of war and uncertainty. One custom is for everyone at the seder table to fill Miriam's cup with water from their own glasses at the beginning of the seder. As each person pours water into Miriam's cup, one might offer a prayer of healing for a loved one, for a family member, for certain individuals or groups that are hurting or in need of hope here in America, in the Middle East, in Israel, or anywhere else in the world that comes to mind.

The seventh day of Passover commemorates the Israelites' crossing of the Sea on our journey to freedom. We can follow Miriam's example and round out our celebration of the Exodus with songs of gratitude at the end of the holiday week. Some may find this day fitting for a nature outing by a body

of water, or quiet meditation. Finally, Passover concludes with *Yizkor* memorial prayers for loved ones who have died.

We all yearn for spiritual healing and comfort in our lives. If you have lost loved ones during this last year, may you be blessed with tender words and healing hugs from family and friends. If you have suffered from physical or emotional pain and suffering this last year, may you be blessed also with the healing hands and compassion of skilled physicians, therapists, or other healing professionals. If you feel lonely and isolated due to a chronic illness or a physical disability, may you also be blessed with new or renewed connections with kindred spirits and with the Source of Life. If you find yourself lost in a spiritual wilderness, feeling cut off from your spiritual wellspring, may the Holy One of Blessing open up your heart so that you become aware of your own body as a vessel for Divine light and inspiration.

May we all feel a shower of divine blessing fill our spirits with love and hope. May Miriam's living waters soothe our souls as they are weary, comfort our bodies where they are ailing, and heal our hearts when they are broken. May each of us learn to be ever-stronger channels for goodness and peace. By our acts of loving kindness, may we once again merit to drink from the living waters of Miriam's well.

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This Torah reflection was written by Rabbi Aliza Berk of the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center. It is brought to you by the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center (a beneficiary of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties), an affiliate of the Institute on Aging.

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3330 Geary Boulevard, 3rd Floor West, San Francisco, CA 94118 (415) 750-4197
www.jewishhealingcenter.org