



The Torah of Activism: Prophecy Through Language

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*This source sheet was prepared for **A Day of Learning for Our Hostages** on September 30, 2024, a day of learning together as a community to honor the shloshim of the six hostages murdered in August, show solidarity with the hostages still in captivity, and call on the Israeli government and the international community to prioritize their return.*

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Miriam is a Prophetess?

Shemot 15:20

וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אַחֹת אַהֲרֹן אֶת־הַתֵּף בְּיָדָהּ וַתֵּצֵאנָּה כָּל־הַנָּשִׁים אַחֲרֶיהָ
בְּתַפִּים וּבַמַּחֲלֹת:

Then **Miriam the prophet**, Aaron's sister, picked up a hand-drum,* and all the women went out after her in dance with hand-drums.

Close Reading is Akin to Prophecy

ב. וַתִּהְיֶה הָאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֵּרָא אֹתוֹ כִּי־טוֹב הוּא וַתִּצְפְּנֶהוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה יָרְחִים:
ג. וְלֹא־יָכְלָה עוֹד הַצַּפִּינֹת וַתִּקַּח־לוֹ תִּבְתָּ לָמָּא וַתַּחְמְרֶהּ בַּחֲמֶר וּבַגִּזְיֹת וַתִּשֶׂם בָּהּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד
וַתִּשֶׂם בְּסוּף עַל־שִׁפְתַי הַיָּאֵר:
ד. וַתִּתְצַב אַחֲתוֹ מֵרֶחֶק לְדַלֵּה מֵהַיַּעֲשֶׂה לוֹ:
ה. וַתֵּרָד בַּת־פַּרְעֹה לְרַחֵץ עַל־הַיָּאֵר וְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ הִלְכֹת עַל־יַד הַיָּאֵר וַתֵּרָא אֶת־הַתִּבָּהּ בְּתוֹךְ
הַסּוּף וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אִמָּתָהּ וַתִּקְחֶהּ:
ו. וַתִּפְתַּח וַתֵּרָאֶהוּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד וְהִנֵּה־נָעַר בֶּכֶה וַתַּחְמַל עָלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר "מִי־לְדֵי הָעִבְרִים זֶה":
ז. וַתֹּאמֶר אַחֲתוֹ אֶל־בַּת־פַּרְעֹה "הַאֵלֶּךְ וּקְרָאתִי לָךְ אִשָּׁה מִיִּנְקָת מִן הָעִבְרִית וַתִּינַק לָךְ
אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד?":
ח. וַתֹּאמֶר־לָהּ בַּת־פַּרְעֹה "לָכִי וַתֵּלְדִי הָעַלְמָה" וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־אִם הַיֶּלֶד:
ט. וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ בַּת־פַּרְעֹה "הִילִיכִי אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד הַזֶּה וְהִינִקְהוּ לִי וְאֲנִי אֶתֵּן אֶת־שְׂכָרְךָ" וַתִּקַּח
הָאִשָּׁה הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּנְיִקְהוּ:

2. The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw how beautiful he was, she hid him for three months.
3. When she could hide him no longer, she got a wicker basket for him and caulked it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child into it and placed it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile.
4. **And his sister stationed herself at a distance, to learn what would befall him.**
5. The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe in the Nile, while her maidens walked along the Nile. She spied the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to fetch it.
6. When she opened it, she saw that it was a child, a boy crying. **She took pity on it and said, "This must be a Hebrew child."**
7. Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, **"Shall I go and get you a Hebrew nurse to suckle the child for you?"**
8. And Pharaoh's daughter answered, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother.
9. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will pay your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it.
10. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, who made him her son. She named him Moses,* explaining, "I drew him out of the water."

Who is Miriam that she became such a careful reader of texts?

Sotah12a

"וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֵוִי לְהִיכֹן הַלֵּךְ? אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה בַּר זְבִינָא: שְׁהֵלֶךְ בְּעֵצַת בָּתוּ
 תָּנָא עֲמָרָם גְּדוֹל הַדּוֹר הָיָה כִּיּוֹן שָׂרָאָה שְׂאֲמַר פְּרַעֲהָ הָרָשָׁע "כָּל הַבֵּן הַיְלֹוֹד
 הַיָּאֲרָה תִשְׁלִיכְהוּ" אָמַר "לְשׂוּא אָנוּ עֲמַלִין עֲמַד" וְגִירֵשׁ אֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ עֲמָדוֹ כּוּלָן
 וְגִירֵשוּ אֶת נְשׁוֹתֵיהֶן. אָמְרָה לוֹ בָּתוּ "אֲבָא קָשָׁה גִזְרִיתָּךְ יוֹתֵר מִשָּׁל פְּרַעֲהָ
 שְׁפָרְעָה לֹא גָזַר אֶלָּא עַל הַזְּכָרִים וְאֵתָּה גִזְרָתְךָ עַל הַזְּכָרִים וְעַל הַנְּקִיבוֹת פְּרַעֲהָ
 לֹא גָזַר אֶלָּא בְּעוֹלָם הַיָּזָה וְאֵתָּה בְּעוֹלָם הַיָּזָה וְלְעוֹלָם הַבָּא פְּרַעֲהָ הָרָשָׁע סָפֵק
 מִתְקַיְימָת גִּזְרִיתוֹ סָפֵק אֵינָה מִתְקַיְימָת אֵתָּה צְדִיק בּוֹדֵאֵי שְׁגִזְרִיתָּךְ מִתְקַיְימָת
 שְׂנֵאֲמַר 'וְתִגְזַר אוֹמֵר וְיִקָּם לָךְ' עֲמַד וְהַחֲזִיר אֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ עֲמָדוֹ כּוּלָן וְהַחֲזִירוּ אֶת
 נְשׁוֹתֵיהֶן

The verse states: "And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took for a wife a daughter of Levi" (Exodus 2:1). The Gemara asks: To where did he go? Rav Yehuda bar Zevina says: He went according **to the advice of his daughter (Miriam)**, as the Gemara will proceed to explain.

A Sage teaches: Amram, the father of Moses, was the great man of his generation. Once he saw that the wicked Pharaoh said: "Every son that is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive" (Exodus 1:22), he said: We are laboring for nothing by bringing children into the world to be killed. Therefore, he arose and divorced his wife. All others who saw this followed his example and arose and divorced their wives. His daughter, Miriam, said to him: Father, your decree is more harsh for the Jewish people than that of Pharaoh, as Pharaoh decreed only with regard to the males, but you decreed both on the males and on the females. And now no children will be born. Additionally, Pharaoh decreed to kill them only in this world, but you decreed in this world and in the World-to-Come, as those not born will not enter the World-to-Come. Miriam continued: Additionally, concerning Pharaoh the wicked, it is uncertain whether his decree will be fulfilled, and it is uncertain if his decree will not be fulfilled. You are a righteous person, and as such, your decrees will certainly be fulfilled, as it is stated with regard to the righteous: "You shall also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto you" (Job 22:28). Amram accepted his daughter's words and arose and brought back, i.e., remarried, his wife, and all others who saw this followed his example and arose and brought back their wives.