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## Then Miriam the Prophetess Took a Tambourine in Her Hand **15: 19-21**

Then Miriam the prophetess took a tambourine in her hand DIG: What was noteworthy about Miriam's role in this celebration? Later, what does Miriam do that contrasts sharply with the spirit of this song (Numbers 12)?

REFLECT: What has God done for you that you could sing about? How could you use your creativity (in music, art, drama or dance) more often to praise God for the wonderful things He has done in your life?

Here the writer, using narrative prose, sums up the deliverance from **the Egyptians**. The reason for the song is when **Pharaoh's horses, chariots and horsemen went into the Red Sea, ADONAI brought the waters of the sea back over them but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground (15:19)**. Now we are introduced to a **woman** we have not heard about since the birth of **Moses**.<sup>286</sup>



The Song of **Miriam** is introduced by this prose passage. **Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her with tambourines and dancing (15:20).** The women's voices, with **their** musical accompaniments, took up the refrain below. **The rabbis teach that she is a prophetess because she foretold the birth of Moses.** She is the first **woman** in the Bible to be called a **prophetess**, and **she** must have been more than ninety years old at this time (2:4, 7:7). Other **women** were called **prophetesses**, but not many. **Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (Second Kings 22:14),** the unnamed **wife** of **Isaiah (Isaiah 8:3),** and **Anna (Luke 2:36)** were all called **prophetesses**. The position and duty of a **prophetess** are the same as those of a prophet. That is, **they** were authorized to speak for **God**. As a result, **Miriam** had a favored status in the nation of **Isra'el**. The title of **prophetess** was no empty title. **Micah** tells us that **God** delivered **Isra'el** out of **Egypt** by the hand of **Moses, Aaron and Miriam (Micah 6:4),** but later, **her** status as a **prophetess** would lead **her** into trouble (**Numbers 12:1-2**).<sup>287</sup>

*From this time on, it would be customary for **the women** to express **their** delight in victory by songs, music and dancing in the presence of their conquerors.*<sup>288</sup> *This would become a genre known as the Victory Song.*

**Miriam sang a song to Moses and the men of Isra'el: Sing to ADONAI, for He is highly exalted. All the women** were singing in response to the men: **The horse and its rider He has hurled into the Red Sea (15:21).** It seems that this passage served as a refrain to the larger hymn sung by the men.