

# *Rituals & Liturgy to Lift Up the Role of Women in the Exodus*

With Passover, we have the wonderful opportunity to lift up the role of Women in the Exodus and in Judaism. The story of the Exodus is driven forward by several strong women:

- (1) Moses's mother Yocheved, who bravely hid baby Moses for 3 months until his cries became too loud
- (2) Moses's sister Miriam, who watched over him and made sure their mother became wet nurse to Moses after he was saved
- (3) Pharaoh's daughter (who the rabbis of old named Batya), who drew Moses out of the water and raised him in Pharaoh's palace
- (4) Shifrah and Puah, the midwives who refused to kill Israelite babies and bravely stood up to Pharaoh, claiming that Israelite women were so strong that they did not need the help of midwives

And due to the role that women have historically played in preparing for Passover - both preparing the house and preparing the festive meals of the holiday - it is also a perfect opportunity to remember and honor women who were and are important to us.

## **Miriam's Cup**

At the time of the first hand-washing of the seder, which does not traditionally have a blessing that accompanies it, take the opportunity to include the ritual of Miriam's cup. See page 2 for liturgy/readings.

## **The Orange on the Seder Plate**

Consider placing an orange on the seder plate a symbol of inclusion. See page 3 for a reading to include in your seder regarding the orange on the seder plate.

## **A Poem**

There is a beautiful poem written by Mayim Bialik that honors the traditional role of the mother in making Passover happen. See page 4.

## **Opening the Door for Miriam**

When we open the door to welcome Elijah, welcome in Miriam as well. See page 5 for new Hebrew words honoring Miriam, to be sung to the same tune as "*Eliyahu Hanavi*."

# *Miriam's Cup*

## **Women Who Met By The Water**

Two remarkable women met by the water: Pharaoh's daughter and Miriam, the sister of Moses. The result of this interfaith encounter is the covert of baby Moses and his royal "adoption." We do not know the name of Pharaoh's daughter from the text of our Torah, but we do know that she defied her father's evil decree and risked his wrath by taking Moses into her home. She and Miriam together began the cycle of love, hope, and -ultimately- redemption.

## **Miriam's Cup**

We introduce now, toward the beginning of our evening together, Kos Mir-yam, Miriam's cup. Legend tells of a mysterious well filled with *Ma-yim Cha-yim*, living waters, that followed the Israelites through their wandering in the desert while Miriam was alive.

Miriam's Well was said to hold divine power to heal and renew. It's fresh waters sustained our people as we were transformed from a generation shaped by slavery into a free nation. Throughout our subsequent journeys, we have sought to rediscover these living waters.

Tonight at our seder, let us remember that we are still on the journey. Just as the Holy One delivered Miriam and her people, just as they were sustained in the desert and transformed into a new people, so may we be delivered, sustained, and transformed on our journey to a stronger sense of ourselves, both as individuals and as one people.

[Lift up Miriam's Cup and say:]

*Zot Kos Mir-yam, Kos Ma-yim Cha-yim, Zei-Cher Li-tzi-at Mitz-ra-yim.*

This is the Cup of Miriam, the cup of living water.

Let us remember the Exodus from Egypt.

These are the living waters, God's gift to Miriam, which gave new life to Israel as we struggled in the wilderness. May the Cup of Miriam refresh and inspire us as we embark on our journey through the story of the Exodus from Egypt tonight.

## *The Orange on the Seder Plate*

The story we most often hear about why it has become traditional to place an orange on the seder plate typically is told in much this way: One time, a woman approached her Orthodox rabbi and asked him, "What do you think of women becoming rabbis?" He responded, stroking his beard, "A woman belongs on the *Bimah* like an orange belongs on the seder plate!" While this story has a certain punch, this is only legend. The true origin of placing an orange on the seder plate comes from a group of lesbian college students who likened their feeling of exclusions within the Jewish community to a crust of bread placed on the seder plate. Wanting a physical symbol of their quest for inclusion that did not negate the ritual of Passover, they instead chose the orange, which contains the seeds of its own rebirth and has a sweet taste. We welcome the symbol of the orange for the meaning of its origin and the meaning it has come to own: full inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community and all women in the fullness of Jewish life, learning, and leadership.

*Shulchan Oreich: The Festive Meal*

Start without me  
I'm really ok  
I'll be right in  
She never sat like I wanted her to  
She would start to sing so pretty  
An ancient melody  
And a new melody from her ancient childhood  
Then I must check the brisket  
Or the potatoes or the ceiling or the dishes or the kitchen floor  
The festive meal was her palace  
Her beauty and radiance and sadness all laid out for us on her table  
Meat and vegetables and sweets and pretty dishes and tablecloths and  
Things she never had  
Her time to give us what God had given her:  
A long table, a festive meal, and a taste of the world to come.

## *We Open the Door for Miriam*

As we lift up Kos Miriam (the cup of Miriam) alongside Kos Eliyahu (the cup of Elijah), we pray that Miriam's well may never be empty. Thus our daughters may continue to draw from her wisdom. We welcome her into our seder and join together in song in her honor:

### *Miriam Ha-Nevi'ah*

*Miriam Ha-ne-vi'ah*  
*Oz v'Zim-rab b'Ya-dah*  
*Miriam Tir-kod I-ta-nu*  
*L'ta-ken Et ha-O-lam*

(Miriam the prophet, strength and song are in her hand.  
Miriam, dance with us to heal the world.)