

LESSON 5

September 29, 2024

Unit II: Songs of the Old Testament Time to Party!

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 104:1-9

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Exodus 14:21-31; 15:1-21

PRINT PASSAGE: Exodus 15:1-3, 11-13, 17-18, 20-21

KEY VERSE

Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. (Exodus 15:20, KJV)

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Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing. (Exodus 15:20, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Trace the historical elements within Moses' and Miriam's celebratory songs of praise.
- Keep faith, whether facing a difficult situation or celebrating a victory.
- Create a timeline noting God's answers to prayer across the history of the local church.

*Key Terms

Habitation (verse 2, KJV)—Hebrew: *maon* or *main* (maw-ohn'): dwelling; regarding God (who has no physical residence, but is everywhere—His presence filling all things), His home is in His people; the blood-cleansed heart is His permanent dwelling.

Inheritance (verse 17)—Hebrew: *nachalab* (nakh-al-aw'): possession; property; heritage; gift; portion; it derives from the root word *nachal*, which means "inheritance," but in its Semitic root, it is a word for a stream flowing downward. That is what an inheritance is: the father's wealth flowing down to the next generation.

Man of War (verse 3)—Hebrew: *milchamab* (mil-khaw-maw'): The Lord is a "warrior" (NIV)—able to deal with all those that strive with their Maker. Scholars render the Latin *bellator fortis* as a translation of the same phrase: Jehovah is a strong warrior or mighty in war.

Redeemed (verse 13)—Hebrew: *gaal* (gaw-al'): purchased and ransomed from slavery; acted as kinsman; bought back; claimed.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



The Biblical Context

After enduring the ten plagues, Pharaoh finally allowed the Israelites to leave Egypt. Led by Moses, they set up camp near the Red Sea. However, Pharaoh had a change of heart and decided to pursue them with his army. God then instructed Moses to have the people camp at Pi-hahiroth, which was strategically positioned between Migdol and the Red Sea. This move made it appear as if the Israelites were wandering, thus confusing Pharaoh. To ensure that he would chase after the Israelites, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. As Pharaoh's chariots closed in, the Israelites cried out in fear. But Moses encouraged them, assuring them that God would fight for them. He lifted his staff over the Red Sea, and a strong east wind divided the waters, creating a dry path. The Israelites crossed the sea safely while the Egyptian army pursued them. Once the Israelites had made it to safety, the waters returned and drowned Pharaoh's army. This event marked the decisive "exodus" from Egypt. The Israelites bore witness to God's power and deliverance firsthand. After crossing the Red Sea, Moses and the Israelites sang a triumphant song praising God (see Exodus 15:1-18). This song celebrated their deliverance and God's victory over their enemies. It exalted God's majesty, strength, and fury. The news of the plagues and the Red Sea crossing struck fear in other nations. The song contrasted God's power with Egyptian arrogance and contained prophetic elements, predicting future events. It spoke of the impact that the Israelites' deliverance would have on other nations, causing panic and awe. Exodus 14 and 15 represent a pivotal moment in Israel's history—the miraculous escape from Egypt and the subsequent celebration of God's deliverance. These events demonstrate God's faithfulness, power, and sovereignty.

Introduction

Today's lesson reflects on the songs of praise to God sung by Moses and Miriam after their miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, which led to their escape from Egyptian bondage and deliverance from Pharaoh's army. The music that we'll be discussing has sustained our faith through times of immense challenge and celebration, and it has been a significant part of our people's history.

Music played a crucial role in inspiring, mobilizing, and giving voice to the historic struggle for justice and equality. Martin Luther King Jr. himself recognized the importance of music during the movement, stating that "The freedom songs play a strong and vital role in our struggle. They give the people new courage and a sense of unity." These "freedom songs" were not just melodies but anthems of hope, resilience, and determination. Songs like "We Shall Overcome," "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round," and "This Little Light of Mine" became rallying cries for civil rights activists.

Mass meetings were held, where powerful singing, testimonies, prayers, and preaching sustained the communal spirit necessary for the struggle. Singing together created a sense of unity, reinforcing the belief that they were part of something greater than themselves. The lyrics resonated deeply, reminding activists that they were not alone in their fight for justice.

The spiritual power of celebratory singing during the Civil Rights Movement transcended mere entertainment. It fueled courage, solidarity, and resilience. As we reflect on this lesson in Israel's history, let us remember the transformative force of music and its ability to ignite change.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Wholehearted Worship (*Exodus 15:1-3*)

KJV

THEN SANG Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

2 The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

3 The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.

NIV

THEN MOSES and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: "I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea.

2 "The LORD is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.

3 "The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name."

Moses, inspired by the Holy Spirit, composed this hymn of praise. It was an impromptu expression of worship, celebrating God's power, faithfulness, and salvation. This powerful anthropomorphism highlights God's might and strength (**verse 1**). It portrays Him as a warrior who fights on behalf of His people (**verse 3a**). The phrase "man of war" signifies that God is a formidable protector and defender. In Hebrew, the name "LORD" (Yahweh or Jehovah) signifies the self-existent, eternal God. By emphasizing His name, the Israelites acknowledged that their deliverance came from the One who truly exists and has all power (**verse 3b**). The Red Sea crossing symbolizes our deliverance from sin and our bondage through Jesus Christ. The Lord is our strength and salvation (**verse 2**). We can trust in His power to overcome any obstacle. The Israelites' song teaches us to respond to God's deliverance with heartfelt worship and praise. **Exodus 15:1-3** invites us to recognize God as our mighty Deliverer, to honor His name, and to respond with worship and gratitude for His salvation.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What decisions can we make to intentionally express gratitude to God for His mighty acts in our lives?

God's Holiness and Wonders (*Exodus 15:11-13*)

KJV

11 Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

12 Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.

13 Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.

NIV

11 "Who among the gods is like you, LORD? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?

12 "You stretch out your right hand, and the earth swallows your enemies.

13 "In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling."

Exodus 15:11-13 is a continuation of the Song of Moses, which the Israelites sang after miraculously crossing the Red Sea. **Verse 11a** contains a rhetorical question that emphasizes the unique and supreme nature of the Lord. The Israelites had witnessed God's incomparable power in delivering them from Egypt and parting the Red Sea (**verse 12**). They even acknowledged that other so-called gods existed, but none could compare to the Lord. The Israelites recognized that God's holiness set Him apart from any other deity (**verse 11b**). They understood that God's glory was not just in strength or miracles but in His moral character. "Holiness" refers to God's absolute purity, moral perfection, and separateness from sin. The word *fearful* in the text means awe-inspiring or reverential. Even when the Israelites praised God, they did so with a sense of reverence and humility. True worship acknowledges God's greatness and inspires awe. God's wonders included the plagues in Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, and the destruction of Pharaoh's army. These miraculous acts demonstrated His power over creation and His ability to intervene in human affairs. The right hand symbolizes strength and authority (**verse 13**). The Israelites understood that God's right hand was instrumental in their deliverance, emphasizing His active involvement. This also foreshadows Jesus, who sits at God's right hand (see Hebrews 1:3). "The earth swallowed them" refers to the drowning of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea. The same waters that had parted for the Israelites closed in on their enemies. It symbolizes God's judgment on evil and His protection of His people. **Verses 11-13** celebrate God's unmatched holiness, His awe-inspiring power, and His faithfulness to His covenant promises. As we reflect on this passage, may we also recognize God's uniqueness and offer Him reverent praise.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Explore the impact of praising God. How does it shape our perspective, strengthen our faith, and draw us closer to Him?

Celebrating God's Victories (*Exodus 15:17-18, 20-21*)

KJV

17 Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O LORD, which thy hands have established.

18 The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.

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20 And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

21 And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

NIV

17 "You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance—the place, LORD, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, Lord, your hands established.

18 "The LORD reigns for ever and ever."

.....

20 Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing.

21 Miriam sang to them: “Sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea.”

Verse 17 of the Bible talks about God’s promise to bring His people, the Israelites, to a secure and unmovable dwelling place in Canaan, the Promised Land (**verse 17**). This was chosen by God, where His people could dwell forever. This verse has a spiritual significance, representing the eternal inheritance that believers have in Christ—a heavenly dwelling where God establishes us forever (**verse 18**). In the Old Testament, the sanctuary was the tabernacle or Temple where God’s presence was among His people. This has spiritual significance because God desires to dwell with His people. In the New Testament, this desire was fulfilled through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers. Miriam, Moses’ sister, was a prophetess with the spirit of prophecy. Her leadership and worshipful response demonstrate the importance of women in God’s plan (**verse 20**). After the Red Sea crossing, Miriam led the women in a song of praise and dance, expressing gratitude for God’s deliverance (**verse 21**). Her example reminds us that worship is not limited to formal settings and can happen anywhere, involving everyone. Overall, the text highlights God’s faithfulness in establishing His people in a secure dwelling place, His desire to dwell among us, and the importance of worship and leadership.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In what ways can you be a living sanctuary for God? How can your life reflect His holiness?

A Closing Thought

The song of Moses declares, “The LORD shall reign forever and ever.” His reign is eternal. Trust in His sovereignty, even when circumstances seem uncertain. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Your Life

Recall moments when God delivered you from challenges, fears, or bondage. Celebrate those victories and give God the glory. Remember His faithfulness.

Your World!

The Lord reigns forever. Our world’s leaders come and go, but His sovereignty remains. Let’s pray for wise leaders who honor God’s principles and seek justice for all.

Closing Prayer

Lord, there is no one like You. May we never forget Your unmatched power and love. Help us recognize Your supremacy in a world filled with distractions and false idols. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week’s Lesson)

As you prepare for next week’s lesson, reflect on a time when you experienced the joy of God’s salvation. How did it impact your life? Read Psalm 51:1-4, 10-12, 15-17.

