

Exodus 15:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

The introduction of Miriam, 'the prophetess, the sister of Aaron,' shows women's leadership roles in Israel. Her taking 'a timbrel in her hand' initiates communal celebration. The phrase 'all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances' pictures corporate worship led by women. Gender-inclusive worship characterizes Israel's response to redemption. Miriam's prophetess designation indicates she spoke God's word, foreshadowing women's roles in New Testament church (Acts 21:9, 1 Corinthians 11:5).

Historical Context

Timbrels (tambourines) and dancing were standard ancient Near Eastern celebration elements. Miriam's leadership role shows that Israel recognized both male and female prophets. She's named alongside Moses and Aaron in Micah 6:4 as Israel's leaders.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Miriam's prophethood role challenge both limiting women's ministry and ignoring biblical gender distinctions?
2. What does gender-inclusive worship in response to redemption teach about the gospel breaking down walls?

Interlinear Text

וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אֵחָת אֶת יָם בְּתִפְּ
took And Miriam the prophethood the sister of Aaron H853 a timbrel
H3947 H4813 H5031 H269 H175 H8596

בְּיָדָהּ וַתֵּצֵא כָּל הַנְּשִׁים אַחֲרַיָּה בְּתִפְּ
in her hand went out H3605 and all the women after a timbrel
H3027 H3318 H802 H310 H8596

וּבְמַחֲלֵל:

and with dances
H4246

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 150:4 (Parallel theme): Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.

1 Samuel 18:6 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.

Psalms 68:25 (Parallel theme): The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels.

Numbers 26:59 (Parallel theme): And the name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, whom her mother bare to Levi in Egypt: and she bare unto Amram Aaron and Moses, and Miriam their sister.

Judges 11:34 (Parallel theme): And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

Psalms 149:3 (Parallel theme): Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.

Judges 4:4 (Prophecy): And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

Micah 6:4 (Parallel theme): For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

Exodus 2:4 (Parallel theme): And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.

Luke 2:36 (Prophecy): And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;