

IDEAS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION:

◆ What does the women's extra happiness at the Crossing of the Sea, as expressed through their songs and instruments, demonstrate about their faith during the exile?

The Haftarah (the portion read from the Prophets) for this portion is the Song of Deborah, a song sung by another Jewish prophetess after a military victory. This choice of this Haftarah pays tribute to the greatness of the song of the Jewish woman at the Sea.

◆ At the height of the Egyptian bondage, after an exhausting day of labor, the women would beautify themselves with their mirrors and go out to the fields to encourage their husbands. These mirrors were later donated by the women to the Tabernacle. At first, Moses was reluctant to use what he perceived to be tools of vanity in the making of the Divine dwelling. But G-d attested to the merit of the women in using these mirrors by instructing that the mirrors be melted down and made into the Kiyor, the water basin at which the priests purified themselves before performing the service.

◆ In the desert, Miriam made the mistake of speaking to Aaron and criticizing Moses for separating from his wife, Tziporah. Miriam failed to realize that unlike she and Aaron, who were also both prophets, Moses was required to communicate constantly with G-d to teach the Torah to the Jewish people and therefore needed to withdraw from family life.

Due to Miriam's great care and sensitivity for family life, as expressed when she was just a young child to her father, we

can perhaps understand why she was so disturbed by her brother's separation from his wife.

As a punishment, Miriam was stricken with leprosy and Moses prayed to G-d to cure her. The people did not lose their respect and love for Miriam but waited patiently until she was cured to continue their journey.

◆ How can a person experience the pain of exile while still maintaining a strong faith in the Redemption? How did Miriam rebel against the bitterness surrounding her? How can you “rebel” against your own “bitterness” in life?