

Bible Heroes

Miriam's Song

Teachers Story notes



Essential Teachers notes:

Miriam's song is actually quite dark and yet the idea of spontaneously breaking into song as a response to something inexplicably deep is one that still prevails to this day. This retelling takes a little artistic licence with the order of things but also leads the kids through the joy and panic and fear and relief of the Israelites.

Main Passage : Exodus 15

Additional Passages : Exodus 14 + 16

Miriam stood near her brother Moses watching the pillar of cloud move round the camp of Israelite's. There was an distant figure leading it, the Angel, not that Miriam had ever managed to get close enough to see. Miriam wasn't the only one watching, everyone seemed to be standing staring. The strange pillar had been ahead of them, a great marker of where they should go, soft and white during the day and burning with fire, bright enough to light the sky, thorough every night. What did it mean that it was moving?

Suddenly a shout went up, not a shout of joy but of fear. On the horizon there was the great dust cloud of an army approaching. The Egyptians were coming to reclaim their slaves. Panic rose in the people, there was nowhere to escape, death or capture were the only options. Moses was quickly surrounded by a crowd of angry family leaders. Miriam looked round at the chaos in the camp and the growing dust cloud, panic was everywhere, then she remembered the pillar of cloud.

"Look" she shouted as loud as she could "look at the pillar" She grabbed her timbrel and banged it's skin fiercely continuing to shout until Moses saw her. He followed her gaze and saw the cloud moving into the path of the army. The cloud seemed to grow even brighter that evening, there was no fire, and it's calm glow soothed the worried camp as they packed their belongings.

Miriam, Moses and their brother Aaron walked down to the waters edge. Handing Miriam his staff, Moses stretched his hands over the water and lifted his face to heaven. Moments later Miriam dug the staff in the ground to stop herself from being blown over. From the east a tunnel of wind came pushing the water into huge arcs.

"Aaron, go tell the people we must walk through as soon as the land is dry enough" shouted Moses above the roar of the wind. Staring at the shapes in the waters Miriam saw the ground appear, first like dry puddles in the sea, then the puddles grew and joined to form a path with huge walls of water each side. "Come Miriam" shouted Moses taking the staff from her hands.

The Israelite's stood on the banks of the sea with faces of fear, shock and wonder. Aaron ran up to Moses shouting breathlessly; "They will not move". Miriam knew just what to do. She grabbed Moses by the hands and dragged him into the pathway then she turned round, lifted her timbrel and started to sing;

"I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted.
The Lord is my strength and my song he has become my salvation.
He is my God, and I will praise him!"

She repeated her song then started to walk through the pathway with Moses by her side. Their voices raised in song together. Behind them the fear softened and the people started to join in with the song as they passed through the water lined route.

As the sun rose the pillar of cloud seemed to fade and the horses and chariots of the Egyptian army could be seen clearly camped on the other side. They too saw the last of the Israelite's walking through the strange pathway in the sea. Grabbing their belongings and readying their horses, the army shouted and rushed towards the water. The chariots found the mud and stones hard to pass over, the horses sunk in the soft ground, but the army didn't not stop pouring into the path. Miriam noticed Moses walk calmly to the waters edge and once the last Israelite had left the pathway in the sea he stretched his hands over the sea and the huge walls of water collapsed. A cheer went up from the Israelite's and Miriam once again lifted her timbrel and started to sing a song of praise.

"I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted.
Your right hand, Lord, was majestic in power.
Your right hand, Lord, shattered the enemy."

Today's hero is Miriam, she shows us the gift of Song.