

The Torah of Music

Community Scholars Program

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Singing through the Sea, Lamenting at the River: Song Narratives in Tanakh

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Exodus 15:1-2	שמות ט"ו:א-ב'
(1) Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD. They said: I will sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously; Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea. (2) The LORD is my strength and might; He is become my deliverance. This is my God and I will enshrine Him; The God of my father, and I will exalt Him.	(א) אָז יִשְׂרָאֵל מָשָׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא־מָרוּ אֲשִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי־גָאָה גָּאָה סוֹס וּרְכָבוֹ רָמָה בַּיָּם: (ב) עָדִי וְזָמַרְתִּי וְהִי־לִי לִישׁוּעָה זֶה אֱלֹהֵי וְאֹנִיָּהוּ אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי וְאֶרְמְמֶנָּהוּ:

Exodus 15:20-21	שמות ט"ו:כ-כ"א
(20) Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her in dance with timbrels. (21) And Miriam chanted for them: Sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously; Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea.	(כ) וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אֶחָת אֶהָרָן אֶת־הַתֵּרָף בַּיָּדָה וַתֵּצֵאֵן כָּל־הַנָּשִׁים אַחֲרֶיהָ בְּתַפִּים וּבַמַּחֲלָת: (כא) וַתַּעַן לָהֶם מִרְיָם שִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי־גָאָה גָּאָה סוֹס וּרְכָבוֹ רָמָה בַּיָּם: (ס)

- What is the role of singing in this scene?
- Where do we see power, and where do we see powerlessness? Does music play a role in the expression of power and powerlessness?
- Are there other moments in the Jewish/human story that come to mind when considering the dynamics of power and powerlessness as expressed in the above texts?

Psalms 137:1-6	תהילים קל"ז:א-ו'
(1) By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat, sat and wept, as we thought of Zion. (2) There on the poplars we hung up our lyres, (3) for our captors asked us there for songs, our tormentors, for amusement, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." (4) How can we sing a song of the LORD on alien soil? (5) If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither; (6) let my tongue stick to my palate if I	(א) עַל נְהָרוֹת א בָּבֶל נָשָׁם יֹשְׁבָנוּ גַם־בִּכְיָנוּ בָּזְכְּרָנוּ אֶת־צִיּוֹן: (ב) עַל־עֲרָבִים בְּתוֹכָהּ תָּלִינוּ כְּנִרוֹתֵינוּ: (ג) כִּי נָשָׁם שְׁאֲלוּנוּ שׁוֹבֵינוּ דְּבַר־שִׁיר וְתוֹלְלֵינוּ שְׂמִיחָה שִׁירֵנוּ לָנוּ מִשִּׁיר צִיּוֹן: (ד) אֵיךְ נִשְׁרִי אֶת־שִׁיר־יְהוָה עַל אֲדָמַת נָכָר: (ה) אִם־אֶשְׁכַּח יְרוּשָׁלַם תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי: (ו) תִּדְבֹּק־לְשׁוֹנִי לַחֲכִי־אִם־לֹא אֶזְכְּרָכִי אִם־לֹא אֶעֱלֶה אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַם עַל רֹאשׁ שְׂמִיחָתִי:

cease to think of you, if I do not keep Jerusalem in memory even at my happiest hour.	
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