

JANUARY 21, 1967

SIDRA BE'SHALAH

Tribute to Woman
(To Judy Goldman)

We read in this portion that Miriam took the timbrel in her hand and that the women followed her with timbrels and dances.

The author of keli yakar maintains that this song that she sang was the result of the Holy Spirit. However, this Spirit, being an aspect of prophecy, can come to a person only when they rest or dwell in joy and happiness. Therefore, since a woman suffers pangs of birth -- and this implies as well the difficulties and hardships of raising children, which task devolves more on the woman than on the man -- therefore she required timbrels, which Moses and the men did not, in order to place them in a happier mood and thereby be able to obtain the spirit of song and prophecy.

Interestingly, R. Bahye b. Asher says that the last word, for dances, meholot, should also be read mehilot, forgiveness.

This means, he says, that whoever has a miracle performed to him

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and responds with shirah, in gratitude to God, is forgiven all his sins.

Having arrived at this point, Judy, where you have officiated at this wonderful Bar Mitzvah, the last of three, it is something of a miracle. Your attitude, and the spirit of all of us, is one of shirah -- and therefore all your sins are forgiven, i.e., you start a new chapter in life, one which we hope will be filled with good news and happiness.