

The Tof Miriam – Frame Drum

1



“Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine (also called “Tof Miriam” or “Frame Drum”) in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing”

Exodus 15:20

In the Book of Exodus, Miriam was a prophetess, leading the Israelite women in a celebration dance and song with a hand-drum after their miraculous exodus from Egypt across the Red Sea.

SONG – DANCE - DRUM

When these 3 topics are grouped together in scripture, they refer to women.

“Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to God,” and then “Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took the drum in her hand. **All the women followed her with drums and dancing.** Miriam led them in the response (chorus), ‘Sing to God for His victory is great, He has cast horse and rider into the sea. . .’”

Sixteen times the term hand-drum appears in the Hebrew Scriptures. Five instances out of the 16 times musicians are mentioned, and in all cases they are women. (Miriam was 86 years old when she left Egypt.)

INSTRUMENT

The Tof Miriam

The Hebrew word for the hand-drum is; tof miryam, or "drum of Miriam." In modern times it is called a frame drum or "tambourine."



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This instrument was common amongst women in ancient Israel. During the Roman period this hand-drum was renamed “tambourine” and metal chimes added.

2

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

This hand-drum is a symbol of female prophetic tradition of dance and music. The practice of Tof Miriam drumming was a central part of Jewish culture and spiritual feasts before the destruction of the Second Temple. In modern Hebraic culture, the Tof Miriam is used in celebrations of great joy. The stigma of this Biblical drum being archaic is now being reintroduced into Hebraic feasts including Shabbat celebrations.

SCRIPTURES

- *Exodus 15:21^b (Miriam’s Song) I shall sing to YHWH, for he has triumphed gloriously; Horse and driver he has hurled into the sea.*
- *Judges 11:34 When Jephthah arrived at his home in Mizpah, there was his daughter coming out to meet him, with hand-drum and dance!*
- *1 Samuel 18:6-7 When the troops came home and David returned from killing the Philistine, the women of all the towns of Israel came out singing and dancing to greet King Saul with hand-drums, shouting, and sistrums (metal rattle). The women sang as they danced, and they chanted: “Saul has slain his thousands; David, his tens of thousands!”*
- *Jeremiah 31:4 I will build you firmly again, O Maiden Israel! Again you shall take up your hand-drums and go forth to the rhythm of the dancers.*
- *Psalms 68:26 First come singers, then musicians, amidst maidens playing hand-drums.*

Let’s Celebrate! ~Lora

<https://worshipwarriors.net/teachings/tof-drum.pdf>



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