

"And Miriam answered them, "Sing to Hashem, for He is highly exalted, the horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea." (15:21)

There are some questions concerning the *Shira* which Miriam sang with the women immediately following the *Shira* which Moshe sang with the men. The *posuk* alludes to a question that was asked by the women, as it says: "And Miriam **answered** them". What was the question? Secondly, if Miriam is responding to the women, then the *Torah* should have used the word "ivk" which is the female gender rather than its male counterpart "ovk"? Finally, why of the various acclamations of Hashem's might and glory, does Miriam specifically choose the verse of "*The horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea*"?

It is possible that a profound dialogue took place between Miriam and the women who sang *Shira*. The Egyptian enslavement, with the culminating Exodus was primarily a preparation for the ultimate goal of the giving of the *Torah* on Har Sinai. The Exodus from Egypt served as the vestibule to the inner sanctuary which was Har Sinai. It was there that the Jewish people would achieve their destiny as the *Torah* Nation. Miriam proposed to the Jewish women that they go out with musical instruments to sing and laud Hashem for the great miracles. The wise women questioned her judgement. Since women are exempt from *Torah* study, and this miracle is but a preamble to the giving of the *Torah*, they should rightfully be exempt from *Shira*. Miriam in her wisdom responded: Not only were the riders drowned, but the horses who "supported" these riders also perished! If the punishment for an animal who merely supports the rider is so great then how great should be the reward for the one who supports and sustains one who is performing a *mitzvah*! Therefore "ovk ig,u", she answered "them" in the male gender - referring to the men who are assisted and encouraged in *Torah* study by their wives. Your reward is as great as theirs, since your dedication and devotion plays a most vital role in the continuity of *Torah* study and the survival of our people.