

# A Canonical Reconsideration of the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1-21):

The Song of Moses or the Song of Miriam?

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## Introduction

Over the years, the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1-21) has been subject to much scholarly investigation, especially concerning authorship, date, and structure.<sup>1)</sup> Most notable is the question

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\*\* *Author's Note*: Professor Jung Woo Kim has been my mentor since 2000 when I first took his course on the Book of Psalms as an M. Div. student at Chongshin University, S. Korea. His love for the Psalms has taught me the invaluable lesson about the joy of remaining in God's presence like the "door keeper" at the house of God (Ps 84:10). To this day, I am constantly challenged by his scholarly brilliance and creativity, especially his fruitful engagement with the Hebrew poetry in light of the Asian literary heritage. I owe my heartfelt gratitude to him for having been a Christlike example for me to follow through his life and academic ministry. It is my great privilege and pleasure to contribute to this journal in his honor.

1) See H. Schmidt, "Das Meerlied, Ex 15:2-19," *ZAW* 49 (1931), 59-66; J. D. W. Watts, "The Song of the Sea-Ex XV," *VT* 7 (1957), 371-380; G. Fohrer, *Überlieferung und Geschichte des Exodus: Eine Analyse von Ex 1-15*, BZAW 91 (Berlin: 1964), 110-15; James Muilenburg, "A Liturgy on the Triumphs of Yahweh," in *Studia Biblica et Semitica: Theodoro Christiano Vrietzen... Dedicata* (Wageningen: H.Veenman & Zonen N.V.,1966), 238-250; George W. Coats, "The Song of the Sea," *CBQ* 31 (1969), 1-17; Frank M. Cross, "The Song of the Sea and Canaanite

regarding the nature of literary relationship between the subunit embodying Miriam's voice (Exodus 15:20-21), and the preceding material (Exod 14; 15:1-19)<sup>2</sup>). A common explanation is that the Song of Miriam in Exodus 15:21b (cf. 15:1b) is an antiphonal response to the Song of Moses and the Israelites in Exodus 15:1b-18. This notion is in line with the traditional ascription of the triumphal ode to the great patriarch Moses, but has increasingly been challenged by established biblical scholars on several grounds.<sup>3</sup>) One outspoken proponent of the nontraditional view is Phyllis Trible, who states:

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Myth," *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 112-144; W. Wifall, "The Sea of Reeds as Sheol," *ZAW* 92 (1980), 325-332; Mark S. Smith, *The Pilgrimage Pattern in Exodus*, JSOTSup 239 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 205-226; Brian D. Russell, *The Song of the Sea: The Date of Composition and Influence of Exodus 15:1-21*, SBL 101 (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).

- 2) See also Frank M. Cross and David Noel Freedman, "The Song of Miriam," *JNES* 14 (1955), 237-250; Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1974), 246-247; Rita J. Burns, *Has the Lord Indeed Spoken Only Through Moses? A Study of the Biblical Portrait of Miriam*, SBLDS 84 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1987), 11?, esp. 14; Martin L. Brenner, *The Song of the Sea: Ex 15:1-21*, BZAW 195 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), 22-84; James W. Watts, *Psalm and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative*, JSOTSup 139 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 41-62; Phyllis Trible, "Bringing Miriam Out of the Shadows," *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy*, ed. Athalya Brenner, FCB 1:6 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 166-186; Russell, 32-39.
- 3) Some of the representative works include the following: Benno Jacob, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus*, trans. W. Jacob (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1992), 423, first published in German, 1940; Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), 181-182, first published in Hebrew in Jerusalem, 1951; Nahum Sarna, *Exodus*, JPSTC (Philadelphia: JPS, 1991), 75-83; Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, Interpretation, ed. J. L. Mays (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 161; William C. Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, AB 2A (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 508-549, esp. 548; Peter Enns, *Exodus*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 295-117.

In fact, once upon an early time, before editors got jobs, the entire Song of the Sea, not just the first stanza, was ascribed to Miriam and the women of Israel. Later, redactors (editors) who were intent upon elevating Moses took the song right out of her mouth and gave it to him -to Moses, the inarticulate one- in company with the sons of Israel. Thus they constructed an ending for the Exodus story that contradicted the older tradition. Unable to squelch the Miriamic tradition altogether, the redactors appended it in truncated form (Exod. 15:20-21) to their preferred Mosaic version.<sup>4)</sup>

Trible's examination of the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1-21) through the lens of a "feminist hermeneutics of suspicion"<sup>5)</sup> has been extended by J. Gerald Janzen, with a slightly different focus.<sup>6)</sup> Instead of exposing Miriam's suppressed voice under the patriarchal narrative, Janzen concludes that the final form of the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1-21) attests to Miriam as its initiator. The literary arrangement of Exodus 15:1-21 evinces that Moses and the Israelites sang under Miriam's liturgical leadership, not vice versa. The outstanding literary feature corroborating this argument is the particle ׀ in Exodus 15:19, which Janzen argues triggers an analepsis.<sup>7)</sup> Janzen's interpretation of the role of ׀ in his literary analysis of Exodus 14-15 requires a reevaluation for a number of reasons.<sup>8)</sup> Most importantly, he does not address Isaac

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4) Tribble, 172.

5) Further discussion on this topic is found in Jane Schaberg, et al., eds., *On the Cutting Edge: The Study of Women in Biblical Worlds: Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza* (New York: Continuum, 2004).

6) J. Gerald Janzen, "Song of Moses, Song of Miriam: Who is Seconding Whom?" *CBQ* 54 (1992), 211-220; repr., *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 187-199.

7) See other comments sympathetic to his conclusion in Fokkelen van Dijk-Hemmes, "Some Recent Views on the Presentation of the Song of Miriam" in *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy* (ed. Athalya Brenner; FCB 1/6; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 2006; Alice Bach, "With a Song in Her Heart: Listening to Scholars Listening for Miriam" in *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader* (ed. Alice Bach; New York: Routledge, 1999), 419; Carol Meyers, "Miriam, Music, and Miracles," in *Miriam, the Magdalen, and the Mother*, ed., Deirdre Good, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 27-48.

Rabinowitz's argument about another element essential to understanding the literary shape of the Song at the Sea (15:1-21): the particle **אֵל** in Exodus 15:1, which functions as "a redactional device."<sup>9)</sup> More recent discussions of the text of Song at the Sea (15:1-21) which indicate awareness of both Janzen and Rabinowitz's studies either lack clarity about the confounding issue or rely unduly on Janzen's rather unconvincing premise.<sup>10)</sup> The primary aim of this article is to evaluate the validity of Janzen's interpretation of **אֵל** in his literary analysis of Exodus 14-15 and to demonstrate that the present literary structure of the Song at the Sea does not uphold the Miriamic priority. This paper also presents a brief comparison of the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1-21) and other ancient victory songs, primarily the Songs of Deborah (Judg 5) and Hannah (1 Sam 2). This comparative evaluation further supports the thesis that the final form of the biblical text points to Moses as the initiator of the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1b-18).

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8) The main points of Janzen's article are maintained in his commentary on Exodus. J. Gerald Janzen, *Exodus*, WBC 2 (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Know Press, 1997), 108-111.

9) Isaac Rabinowitz, "AZ Followed by Imperfect Verb-Form in Preterite Contexts: A Redactional Device in Biblical Hebrew," *VT* 34 (1984), 53-62.

10) For example, Dozeman mentions both Janzen's analeptic **אֵל** (15:19) and Rabinowitz's "redactional **אֵל**" (15:1) and tends to embrace both options by opining that Exod 5:19 could be considered as either the conclusion of Exod 15:1b-18 or the introduction of Exod 15:20-21. However, it is dubious whether the latter idea (based on Janzen) is compatible with Rabinowitz's concept of the literary repositioning indicated by **אֵל**. Russell concurs with Janzen's conclusion but Russell's argument remains incomplete as he does not address Exodus 14:22-29 (esp. vv. 22, 29), a critical factor in understanding the literary framework of Exodus 15:1-15. See Dozeman, 329-331; Russell, 35-39.

## 1. כִּי Kī (Exod 15:19a) as an analeptic particle?

The archaic linguistic profile of the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1-21) has prompted many studies on the poem's particular placement within the enveloping narratives. While most scholars have applied critical methods in attempts to illuminate the relationship of the poetic unit to the adjacent narratives, Janzen deviates from his predecessors by seeking to present a synchronic portrait of the literary arrangements based on the "present form" of the Song at the Sea (15:1-21).<sup>11)</sup> The literary seam between the narrative and the poetry, Janzen observes, lies in Exodus 15:19, which includes the recapitulation of the events in Exodus 14:26-28 and the formulaic repetition of Exod 14:29a, which belies an editorial accretion.<sup>12)</sup>

Exod 15:19a (cf. Exod 14:26-28)

For Pharaoh's horses, with his chariots and his horsemen, went into the sea, and YHWH brought back the sea water upon them.<sup>13)</sup>

Exod 15:19b (=Exod 14:29a)

But the Israelites walked on the dry land in the midst of the sea.

Janzen asserts that the net impact of the apparently redundant account of the preceding events in Exodus 15:19 is to create a virtual overlap of the two scenes in a chronological sequence. While the Israelites safely cross the dry ground of the Red Sea (14:29a//15:19b), the sea water coagulates as standing walls to their right and left (14:29b). During the morning watch, YHWH causes the water to engulf and drown the panicked Egyptian enemies (14:26-28; 15:19a). Miriam, accompanied by her dancing maidens (15:20-21a), then bursts into a victory song (15:21b) after

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11) Janzen cites Childs for not having dealt with the issue more thoroughly. Janzen, 110. Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1974), 248-251.

12) Janzen, 214.

13) All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

which Moses and the Israelite men respond in an antiphonal chorus (15:1b-18). Janzen explains that this literary effect occurs because the leading particle כִּי (“for”) in Exodus 15:19, which serves as a prose introduction to 15:20-21, signals an “analepsis” (15:19-21), which takes the readers back to the time frame of Israel’s dry-shod crossing in 14:29a (cf. 15:19b).<sup>14</sup> The subunit of Exodus 15:20-21, which features Miriam’s invitation for Moses and the Israelites to join in her victory song, is the “vital information” that receives a “belated introduction” for literary impact.<sup>15</sup> “Analepsis,” according to Janzen, also functions as “a narrative device” in Genesis 20:2-4 and Jonah 1:10 through the use of כִּי.<sup>16</sup>

I propose that the same particle “for” at the beginning of Exod 15:19 likewise introduces an analepsis. The effect of this particle, introducing as it does the summary of 14:26-28 and the exact quotation from 14:29, is to reposition us at 14:29 and to provide us with additional information as to what happened then. What actually happened at that point is now supplied in 15:20-21.<sup>17</sup>

Janzen further asserts that Miriam’s utterance of the pronoun “to them” (לָהֶם, 15:21) and the imperative “Sing!” (שִׁירוּ, 15:21) in the third-person masculine plural form is a telltale sign that she addressed the Israelites, not a band of ladies.<sup>18</sup> The employment of the verb עָנָה (15:21), rather than שָׁר (15:1), in Miriam’s incipit likewise bolsters her liturgical precedence in the antiphonal recitation. Janzen thus concludes that the final literary shape of Exodus 14-15 confirms that the Song at the Sea in Exodus 15:1-18 should be attributed to Miriam instead of Moses:

Frank Moore Cross and David Noel Freedman titled their Frank Moore Cross and David Noel Freedman titled their ground breaking study

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14) Ibid, 214.

15) Ibid, 214.

16) Ibid, 214.

17) Ibid, 214.

18) Ibid, 215-216.

of 15:1-18 “The Song of Miriam,” on the ground that “[i]t is easy to understand the ascription of the hymn to the great leader. It would be more difficult to explain the association of Miriam with the song as a secondary development.” If, however, 15:19-21 is an analepsis, the present form of the text does not after all ascribe the hymn to Moses, but to Miriam. Thus by any analysis—diachronic or synchronic—the Song at the Sea is the Song of Miriam, and its performance as narrated in 15:1?8 comes as Moses and his fellow Israelites “second” her hymnic initiative.<sup>19)</sup>

To be sure, Janzen’s close reading of the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1-21) in its present textual form is commendable as it moves beyond Brevard S. Childs’s cursory assessment of Exodus 15:1-21 in the exodus narrative. Nonetheless, some of Janzen’s arguments demand further investigation, especially his conclusion that כִּי in Exodus 15:19 activates an analepsis.

First, a careful review of Genesis 20:18 and Jonah 1:10, Janzen’s main illustrations, indicates that the instances of כִּי in these texts are not analogous to that in Exodus 15:19. After the particle כִּי at the beginning of Genesis 20:18, for instance, the narrator provides missing details that elucidate the immediate context of the narrative. In the narrative pericope of Genesis 20:1-18, YHWH rebukes Abimelech in a dream for taking Sarah from Abraham (v. 3). After Abimelech pleads innocence in the matter (vv. 4-5), God relents (vv. 6-7) and reopens the closed wombs of the women in Abimelech’s household through the intercession of Abraham (vv. 17-18). Janzen asserts that the reason for God’s declaration of judgment, “You are about to die,” in Genesis 20:3b is “withheld” until the introduction of כִּי in Genesis 20:18.<sup>20)</sup> However, the root cause is clearly mentioned immediately after the divine indictment in Genesis 20:3b: “since she is a man’s wife”(v. 3, **וְהוּא בְעֵלְתָּ בְעַל**).

Then God came to Abimelech in a dream by night. And He said to him, “You are about to die on account of the woman whom you have

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19) Ibid, 216.

20) Ibid, 214.

taken, since she is a man's wife." (Gen 20:3)

The literary function of כִּי in Genesis 20:18 is quite apparent when considering the preceding narrative context. The particle כִּי (Gen 20:18a) begins the narrator's explication of the need for Abraham's involvement as an intermediary and the subsequent divine restoration to resolve the crisis (Gen 20:17) of the closed wombs in Abimelech's household (Gen 20:18b). Given this context, the particle כִּי in Genesis 20:18 simply functions as a causal connector, not as an analeptic as an analeptic cue.

וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל אַבְרָהָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּרְפָּא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־אֲבִימֶלֶךְ  
וְאֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־חַיְלָתָיו וַיֵּלְדוּ:  
כִּי־עָצָר עָצָר יְהוָה בְּעַד כָּל־רַחֲמָם לְבַיִת אֲבִימֶלֶךְ עַל־דְּבַר שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ  
אַבְרָהָם: ס

And Abraham prayed unto God. Then God healed Abimelech, his wife and his female servants so that they bore children. For (כִּי) YHWH completely restrained every womb of Abimelech's household on account Sarah, the wife of Abraham. (Gen 20:17-18)

As Shimon Bar-Efrat aptly notes, the narrator's insertion of supplementary details through a causal particle, such as "for" (כִּי), is "fairly frequent" in Old Testament narratives.<sup>21)</sup> He remarks:

The form is appropriate for the function, since the word 'for' reflects the fact that the explanations are integrated within the narrative and adjacent to the events to which they refer.<sup>22)</sup>

In this case, the word כִּי signifies that the narrator will supply background information not previously revealed to the reader, including circumstantial events, traditions, and people's thoughts.<sup>23)</sup>

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21) For example, Bar-Efrat cites Gen 13:6, 26:7; Judg 13:15-16; 1 Sam 9:9; 2 Sam 13:18, 22, 19:32; 1Kgs 5:15; Job 2:13. Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989; repr., New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 30-31.

22) Ibid, 30.

23) Ibid, 30.

It is another matter, however, to argue that the particle necessarily initiates an analepsis. Some instructive examples are as follows:

The land was not able to bear their dwelling together, **for** (כִּי) their possession was great that they were not able to dwell together. (Gen 13:6)

Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he would speak thus: “Come, let us go to the seer.” **For** (כִּי) the one who is today called a prophet was formerly called a seer. (1 Sam 9:9)

Then Manoah said to the angel of YHWH, “Let us detain you so that we may prepare a young goat for you.” And the angel of YHWH said to Manoah, “Even if you detain me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you should offer it to YHWH.” **For** (כִּי) Manoah did not know that he was the angel of YHWH. (Judg 13:15-16)

Neither does the example of Jonah 1:10 fare well under scrutiny. Janzen cites Bar-Efrat’s reference to two instances of analepsis in Jonah 1:10, but Bar-Efrat does not state that the particle כִּי is responsible for generating the flashbacks in the verse.<sup>24</sup>

Then the men were greatly afraid, and said to him, “What is this that you have done?” **For** (כִּי) the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of YHWH, **for** (כִּי) he had told them.

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24) The first chapter of Jonah depicts the prophet who gets caught up in a sea storm after evading God’s calling. In verse 10, the sailors are terrified because the culprit designated by the lot turns out to be Jonah and utter the question, “What is this that you have done?” The narrator employs כִּי here and offers the insider’s information concerning Jonah’s predicament: Jonah had already told the sailors that he was fleeing from the presence of YHWH (Jonah 1:10b). In this particular instance, the content that follows the particle makes it clear that the question posed by the sailors is a rhetorical one that heightens the urgency of the situation. Hence, the function of כִּי which begins the narrator’s clarification (כִּי יָדָעוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים) in Jonah 1:10 is introducing an answer to the pressing question. Ibid, 177.

Rather, Bar-Efrat's comment is found in the context of his reiteration that the verbal construction produces the backward glimpses in the narrative. In fact, most temporal shifts (e.g., analepsis and prolepsis) that interrupt the flow of the biblical narrative are achieved not by the insertion of a particle but by the variation of verbal forms, such as the qatal form indicating the past perfect.<sup>25)</sup> In the case of Jonah 1:10, the verbs “they knew” (יָדְעוּ) and “he told” (הִגִּיד) create the internal references to the past behind the surrounding context. Considering Janzen's misinterpretation of the function of כִּי in the previous examples, the question remains of what role the particle in Exodus 15:19 has within the literary unit of Exodus 15:1-21.

Janzen's argument concerning כִּי in Exodus 15:19 based on the instance of כִּי in the narrator's extraneous description (i.e., Gen 20:18; Jon 1:10) is untenable. More specifically, Exodus 15:19 comprises a recapitulation of the previous events in Exodus 14:26-28 (15:19a) and a duplication of the expression in Exodus 14:29a, “But the Israelites walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea” (15:19b, בָּנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵלְכוּ בַיַּבֶּשֶׁה בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם). The summary (15:19a) and verbatim repetition (15:19b) of the previous events in Exodus 15:19 should not be equated with the narrator's gap-filling comments, as shown in the earlier examples. At this point in the narrative, the reader has already been informed that the Egyptian armies were destroyed, and the Israelites crossed the Red Sea.<sup>26)</sup> The usage of כִּי in Exodus 15:19 thus has a different function than the particle found in the narrator's supplementary

25) In 1 Kgs 11:14-25, for instance, in an account detailing the rise of Solomon's adversaries, the first analepsis is rendered by the phrase containing *wayyiqtol* and infinitive construct (1 Kgs 11:15, וַיְהִי בְהֵיטֵת), whereas the second one is rendered by *qatal* (1 Kgs 11:23, בָּרַח), which is used to express the “past perfect tense.” Bar-Efrat, 176. See also Jerome T. Walsh, *Style and Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 123-124, 139.

26) If it is argued that the author's explication actually begins from Exodus 15:20 (Miriam's celebration), it is hard to explain why כִּי does not appear at the beginning of verse 20 (cf. Jonah 1:10).

insertion. In this respect, the role of the particle **אז** (then) in Exodus 15:1, which begins the narrative block under consideration (Exod 15:1-21), deserves further attention.

## 2. The particle “then” (**אז**) as a literary device

Rabinowitz cogently demonstrates that the particle **אז** has a variable syntactical function depending on the subsequent verbal form.<sup>27</sup> The particle **אז** in Exodus 15:1 is one of such unexpected occurrences in the biblical narrative where the particle is followed by an imperfect verb (**אָשִׁירָה**).<sup>28</sup> Traditionally, grammarians have posited that an imperfect verb preceded by **אז** in a past setting retains the “old preterit meaning of the imperfect.”<sup>29</sup> Rabinowitz skillfully counters this conventional explanation contending that the particle followed by an imperfect construction in a past context is atypical because it “express[es] neither a future temporal nor a logical consequence.”<sup>30</sup> According to Rabinowitz, a distinction must be made between **אז** followed by an imperfect verb used in a past context and **אז** followed by a perfect verb, since the former, as a “redactional device,” introduces a subnarrative that occurs concomitantly with the antecedent event.<sup>31</sup> The imperfect verb is used because the action in the following narrative is considered incomplete until the action in the preceding narrative is complete.<sup>32</sup>

*אִזְ* + imperfect in a past-definite context, on the other hand, is never

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27) Rabinowitz, 53–62.

28) For example, Rabinowitz cites 15 of these cases. Exod 15:1; Num 21:17; Deut 4:41; Josh 8:30, 10:12, 22:1; 1 Kgs 3:16, 8:1, 9:11, 11:7, 16:21–22; 2 Kgs 8:20–22; 12:18, 15:16, 16:2–6.

29) Ibid, 53.

30) Ibid, 53.

31) Ibid, 53–54.

32) Ibid, 54.

thus strictly sequential. Rather, referring to the foregoing context of narrated past events, *'āz̄* + imperfect indicates this context as approximately the time when, the time or circumstances in the course of which, or the occasion upon which the action designated by the imperfect verb-form went forward: this was when(*'āz̄*; i.e. the time or occasion or circumstances mentioned or spoken of in the foregoing context) so-and-so *did* (imperfect) such-and-such.<sup>33)</sup>

Rabinowitz persuasively supports his argument by citing 15 instances in which the imperfect verb used with **זָכַר** in a definite-past temporal scheme consistently signifies an action anterior to the preceding context. He concludes that the imperfect construction (**הִזְכִּירְתִּי**) used with **זָכַר** in Exodus 15:1 returns the reader to the scene coterminously, as if to give a flashback glance at the events narrated in the preceding text of Exodus 14:26-29. Hence, the Song at the Sea should be thought of as sung by Moses and the Israelites (Exod 15:1-18) and seconded by Miriam and her band of women (Exod 15:20-21) as the events, including the deaths of the Egyptians on the shore, continue to unfold before the Israelites' eyes.<sup>34)</sup> If Rabinowitz's observation is valid, then it becomes clear that Janzen's argument based on the final literary form of Exodus 15:1-21 requires a revision—the placement of the Song at the Sea (15:1-21) preceded by the non-consequential **זָכַר** reveals a compositional scheme that identifies Moses, not Miriam, as the initiator of the song.

### 3. A synchronic overview: Exodus 14:22-15:21

The literary arrangement of Exodus 14:22-15:21 indicates that verse 19, along with verses 20-21, is to be understood as an integral part of the enveloping narrative framework. A critical

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33) Ibid, 54.

34) Ibid, 59.

component of the literary structure in Exodus 15:1-21 which has not been addressed sufficiently is the parallel expressions in Exodus 14:22 and 29.

וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבֵּשָׁה וְהַמַּיִם לָהֶם חֲמָה מִיְּמִינָם וּמִשְׂמָאלָם:  
And the Israelites went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground,  
and the water were a wall for them on their right and on their left.  
(Exod 14:22)

וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִלְכוּ בַיַּבֵּשָׁה בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם וְהַמַּיִם לָהֶם חֲמָה מִיְּמִינָם וּמִשְׂמָאלָם:  
But the Israelites had walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea,  
and the water were a wall for them on their right and on their left.  
(Exod 14:29)

Here, the inverted parallel between 14:22a (enter + the Israelites; the sea + the dry ground) and 14:29a (the Israelites + walk; the dry ground + the sea) and the repetition of 14:22b in 14:29b capture the dynamic scene taking place between the two great walls of seawater (14:22b//14:29b).<sup>35</sup> In short, the Israelites enter the sea (וַיָּבֹאוּ) onto the dry ground (14:22a) and walk (הִלְכוּ) on dry ground in the middle of the sea (14:29a). This narrative doublet in Exodus 14 has two close links to the literary block of Exodus 15:1-21: the particle **אז** in Exodus 15:1 and the exact repetition of 14:29a in 15:19b, the outer limits of the literary unit of Exodus 15:1-19 (see Fig. 1).

Exod 15:19b (=Exod 14:29a)  
But the Israelites walked on the dry land in the midst of the sea.

It should be noted that the verb used to describe the Israelites' actions in the middle of the sea is not "enter" (בוא) but "walk" (הלך), which returns the reader to the time and space between the sea walls. Again, the crucial point is that this literary

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35) So Jacob, 405; Propp, 502. See also Jean Louis Ska, *Le Passage de la Mer: Étude de la construction, du style et de la symbolique d'Ex 14, 1-31* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1986), 128-129.

“repositioning”<sup>36)</sup> is not circumscribed to the pericope following Exodus 15:19 (i.e., Exod 15:20-21) but extends to the entire unit of Exodus 15:1-21 in its current narrative sequence. Three literary features of Exodus 15:1-21 contribute to this structural rearrangement: 1) the word pair שיר and כי; 2) the exact repetition of the refrain in 15:1b and 15:21b: “For He is exalted triumphantly! The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea!”; and 3) a succinct summary of Exodus 14:23-28 in Exodus 15:19a.

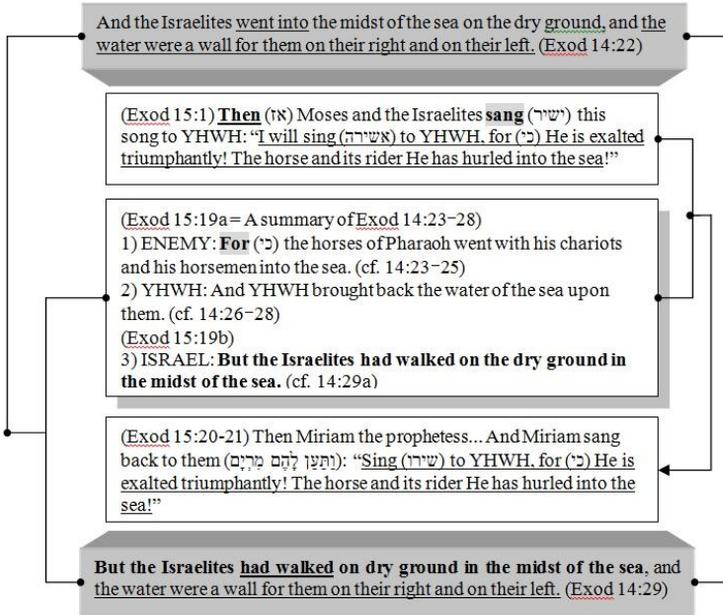


Fig. 1 The Literary Structure of Exod 14:22 15:21

Remarkably, the literary unity of Exodus 15:1-21 is reinforced by the interlacing of the verb שיר and the corresponding particle

36) Janzen, 214.

כי throughout the unit. The verb שיר (Exod 15:1a, 1b, 19a) and the particle כי (Exod 15:1a, 1b, 21a) occur three times in Exodus 15:1-19. First, the “causal כי” (Exod 15:1b) follows the cohortative imperfect in the first-person singular “I will sing” (אָשִׁירָה) and introduces the reason for the “summons to praise and singing.”<sup>37)</sup> This usage, which frequently appears in biblical poetry, is also seen in the third instance of כי (Exod 15:21a) which follows the masculine plural imperative “Sing!” (שִׁירוּ). The hymnic celebration is invoked in both cases for precisely the same cause: “**For** (כי) He is exalted triumphantly! The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea!” (Exod 15:1b, 21b) This emphatic repetition (15:1b//15:21b) connects the Song of Moses (15:1b-18) and the Song of Miriam (15:21b) in sequential unity. The second instance of כי (Exod 15:19a), though, is linked with the imperfect verb יָשִׁיר (Exod 15:1a, אָז יָשִׁיר־מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל). Both verses (15:1a and 15:19a) form the outer narrative framework of the poetic section of the song (15:1b-18), rhythmically marked with bicola and tricola. The particle כי in Exodus 15:19 precedes a narrative statement that provides an underlying rationale for the victory song uttered by Moses and the Israelites (Exod 15:1b-18), restating how Israel’s YHWH has dealt with the Israelites and their enemies. The narrative artistry is apparent in the placement of Exodus 15:19 between the “walls of sea water” demarcated in the narrative by Exodus 14:22 and 14:29 (see Fig. 1). The events in Exodus 14:23-28 are skillfully encapsulated in Exodus 15:19a, in which YHWH emerges as the ultimate Warrior of Israel. As Israel’s Egyptian enemies enter the sea (cf. Exod 14:23-25), YHWH executes judgment by bringing the sea water crashing upon them (cf. Exod 14:26-28). In the end, the Israelites make a safe journey along a dry path through the sea (cf. 14:29a). Enclosing this battle scene is the Song of Moses and the Israelites (Exod 15:1b-18) and the jubilant response of the Israelite women under Miriam’s leadership (Exod 15:20-21).

Through the particle אֲז in Exodus 15:1, the coherent literary

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37) Muilenburg, 153.

whole of Exodus 15:1-21 is unraveled between the two walls of sea water, while YHWH displays the salvific power for the Israelites. In this literary arrangement, the Song of Moses and the Israelites (Exod 15:1b-18) is followed by Miriam's refrain (Exod 15:21b).<sup>38)</sup> The use of the verb ענה, which also connotes "sing responsively" (cf. Deut 31:21; 1 Sam 18:7, 21:12, 29:5), in reference to Miriam's response (Exod 15:21a, ותען; cf. Exod 15:1a, ישיר) strengthens this line of interpretation.<sup>39)</sup> In this artistic literary construct, Miriam's masculine plural imperative "Sing!" (Exod 15:21a, שירו; cf. ותען להם) prompts the seemingly eternal cycle of the Song at the Sea. In the ethereal space created by the cosmic intervention of the raging sea water, the Song of Moses and the Song of Miriam continue in a round until the engulfing waters devour their last enemy.

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38) Following Tribble, Janzen also remarks that Exod 15:20-21, which features Miriam's performance, did not come right after Exod 14:29 so as to bracket the entire exodus narrative with the Israelite women's role (Exod 1-2//Exod 15:20-21). Janzen, 219; Tribble, 18, 20. However, this macro inclusio does not particularly add to his main argument, since Exod 15:20-21 as Miriam's responsive refrain still sustains the narrative emphasis on the women's decisive role in Israel's salvation history. It should also be noted that the female characters in Exod 1-2 play relatively subordinate roles in that all of them contribute to preserving the life of Moses, God's primary agent in the book of Exodus.

39) Russell asserts that the verb ענה (ל) does not necessarily connote an antiphonal singing in Exodus 15. But his argument remains unpersuasive, since Russell does not evaluate the literary unit of Exod 15:20-21 in light of the larger context of Exod 14:22-15:21. There is no convincing reason, aside from conforming to Janzen's interpretive scheme, to think that the verb only indicates the "beginning of the singing," especially given the biblical evidence to the contrary (i.e., Deut 31:21; 1 Sam 18:7, 21:12, 29:5). The usage of the verb ענה in Deut 31:21 is particularly instructive as the verb is used to connote "to answer back in singing." See his opposing arguments in Russell, 37.

#### 4. The Song at the Sea in light of other victory songs

The foregoing analysis of the present form of the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1-21) and its key literary features support the conclusion that the initiator of the Song in Exodus 15:1b-18 should be identified as Moses. The question of whether the content of the Song endorses such a notion then arises. Does the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1-21) resemble the victory songs of other ancient women in any way? Despite a narrow scope, a brief survey of representative biblical texts will be helpful to gauge the extent to which the main poetic section of the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:2-18) is similar to the ancient victory song of women.

The Old Testament presents a limited number of victory songs by ancient Israelite women. These texts usually depict women's performance style, such as their dance and use of musical instruments, but much of the songs' lyrical content remains unknown beyond the short refrains.<sup>40)</sup> Notable exceptions are the victory songs of Deborah (Judg 5) and Hannah (1 Sam 2), which are regarded as sharing the style and structure of the Song at the Sea (Exod 15).<sup>41)</sup>

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40) For example, see 1 Sam 18:6-7, 21:12, 29:5 (cf. 2 Sam 1:20, 6:20)

41) Despite some deviances, all three ancient biblical poems share the following dominant characteristics of victory songs: 1) Ascription of the specific title to God for the victory in the first-person address; 2) Description of the divine punishment upon the enemy in which God's universal power is emphasized and the enemy's consequent downfall is derided; 3) Employment of the combat imagery in which God deploys the forces of nature to destroy the enemy. John T. Willis, "Song of Hannah and Psalm 113," *CBQ* 34 (1973), 143; Eunice B. Poethig, "The Victory Song Tradition of the Women of Israel," Ph. D. diss., (Union Theological Seminary, 1985); A. J. Hauser, "Two Songs of Victory: A Comparison of Exodus 15 and Judges 5" *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. E. R. Follis, JSOTSup 40 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 280. See the recent discussion on various alternative views regarding the Song's genre in Dozeman, 327-329.

#### 4.1. Ascription of the divine name

All three poems feature first-person addresses and distinct divine references that emphasize YHWH's decisive role in the victories over the enemy.<sup>42)</sup> Unlike the Songs of Deborah (Judg 5) and Hannah (1 Sam 2), however, the Song at the Sea (Exod 15) contains divine titles that bear strong masculine overtones, especially in Exodus 15:2.

עָוִי וְזִמְרָת יְהוָה לִישׁוּעָה זֹאת אֱלֹהֵי וְאַנְיָהוּ אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי וְאַרְמְמָנָהוּ:  
 My strength is YHWH of might,  
 And He has become my salvation;  
 This is my God, and I will praise Him,  
 The God of my father, and I will exalt Him. (Exod 15:2)

Many biblical scholars have questioned the traditional translation of the Hebrew word זִמְרָה (Exod 15:2) as “song” (N/KJV, N/RSV, JPS, NIV<sup>1984</sup>) and proposed “might/vigor” (NRSV, NJPS) and “defense/protection” (NIV<sup>2011</sup>; cf. LXX, *σκαπαστης* = “defender, protector”) as more viable options. Michael L. Barré makes the most cogent argument in favor of the shift in a diachronic study of the term זִמְרָה (Exod 15:2) in the biblical texts, along with possible cognates in Ugaritic and Akkadian texts.<sup>43)</sup> For example, the hendiadys עָוִי וְזִמְרָת יְהוָה (Exod 15:2) finds a striking Ugaritic parallel in RS 24.252 (KTU 1.108), in which rendering *dmr* (√זמר) as “to sing” or “to prune” does not fit the context:<sup>44)</sup>

(9) 'zk *dmrk* la (10) nk ḥtkk nrmtk  
 btk (11) ugrt lynt špš wyrḥ  
 (12) wn'nt šnt il

*May your vigor, your might, your power, your potency, (and) your*

42) Hauser, 266.

43) Michael L. Barré, “My Strength and My Song in Exodus 15:2,” *CBQ* 54 (1992): 623–637.

44) Barré, 629.

splendor (be)  
 in the midst of Ugarit for (as long as) the days of Sun and Moon,  
 and (to) the fullness of the years of El.

A cluster of words connoting masculine strength and dominance in line 9 and 10 reinforces the suggestion that the Hebrew verbal counterpart  $\sqrt{\text{זמר}}$  and its nominal form  $\text{זְמַרָה}/\text{זְמַרָת}$  signify “to be strong/strength” or even “to protect/protection” in some contexts.<sup>45)</sup>

The Mesopotamian tradition provides additional data that explain the semantic parameter of the Hebrew term  $\sqrt{\text{זמר}}$  in Exodus 15:2. The abstract concept of “life-force” or even “sickness” is often personified and/or deified in the ancient Near Eastern culture, and as such the terms like “strength” and “vigor” (even as “male sexual potency, manliness”) have evolved to designate a type of tutelary deity.<sup>46)</sup> In that vein, Barré draws attention to the Mesopotamian lament in *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* (“Poem of the Righteous Sufferer,” i 43-48), which features a series of deific attributes that is reminiscent of Exodus 15:2:

My (personal) god has abandoned me and disappeared],  
 My (personal) goddess has left and kee[ps at a distance]  
 My tutelary deity at [my] side has [de]parted,  
 My protecting spirit has taken flight, and seeks] someone else.

My vigor has [be]en taken away, my potency diminished  
 My (healthy) appearance has gone, has run for cover.<sup>47)</sup>

The noticeable progression is that of a “descending hierarchical pattern” (personal god /goddess - tutelary deity - protecting spirit - “vigor,” “potency,” “[healthy] appearance”) here as opposed to an “ascending pattern” in Exodus 15:2 (“strength,” “might/protection” “salvation” - “my God” “the God of my father”).<sup>48)</sup> Barré

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45) A novel interpretation of the nominal form  $\text{זְמַרָת}$  ( $\sqrt{\text{זמר}}$ ) in 2 Samuel 23:1 is feasible, especially in light of the Akkadian royal epithets. Ibid, 627.

46) Ibid, 633.

47) Ibid, 636.

contends that the joint occurrences of a “protective deity” (often abstract ideas personified) and a “personal deity” in the Akkadian text is analogous to the close association of the hendiadys (עֲזֵי יְהוָה וְזִמְרַת יְהוָה) and the emphatic “my God” (זֶה אֱלֹהֵי) in Exodus 15:2.<sup>48)</sup> The following clause “You have become my salvation” (וַיְהִי-לִי לִישׁוּעָה) corroborates his assertion because  $x_l + \text{וַיְהִי-לִי}$  is a typical syntax for the “covenant formula” or the “royal adoption formula,” which underscores the present state of God’s saving activity in relation to his loyal subjects.<sup>50)</sup> For example, Jacob’s utterance of “Then YHWH shall become my God” (הָיָה יְהוָה לִי לֵאלֹהִים) in Genesis 28:21 epitomizes the case in which YHWH acquires the role of the “patriarch’s personal deity.”<sup>51)</sup>

The broad conceptual overlap suggests that the placement of the divine epithets in Exodus 15:2, such as “my God” (זֶה אֱלֹהֵי) and “the God of my father” (אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי), after the terms “my strength” (עֲזֵי), “YHWH of might” (זִמְרַת יְהוָה), and “my salvation” (וַיְהִי-לִי לִישׁוּעָה) is not incidental. A collocation of these divine references in Exodus 15:2 strongly evokes YHWH’s role in patriarchal terms uncharacteristic of women’s victory songs. This observation finds further substantiation from the use of the expression “the God of my father” (אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי) in Exodus 15:2. The same phrase “the God of my father” (אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי) occurs once in Exodus 18:4 in a narrative concerning Moses. The antiquity of the divine epithet is evident in relatively later texts in which the plural construct form of “fathers” (אֲבוֹתָם) appears consistently.<sup>52)</sup> In Exodus

48) Ibid, 634.

49) Ibid, 634.

50) Ibid, 636.

51) Ibid, 636.

52) See also Herbert G. May, “The God of My Father: A Study of Patriarchal Religion,” *JBR* 9 (1941), 155–200; J. Philip Hyatt, “Yahweh as the ‘God of My Father,’” *VT* 5 (1955), 130–136. H. Spieckermann argues against associating “the God of my father” (Exod 15:2) with the God of Israel’s patriarchs, but he does not properly take into account the literary function of the term within the larger exodus narrative. H. Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart: Eine Theologie der*

18:4, Moses invokes the title in naming his second son, Eliezer.

וְשֵׁם הָאַחַד אֱלִיעֶזֶר כִּי־אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי בְּעֻזִּי וַיַּצֵּלֵנִי מִחֶרֶב פְּרָעָה:

And the name of the other was Eliezer. For he said, “The God of my father was my help, and He delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.” (Exod 18:4)

Moses’ mention of the “the God of my father” (אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי) at this particular narrative juncture is significant for several reasons. Most importantly, Moses’ naming of his two sons is recounted after the dramatic exodus of Israel and their arrival at the “mountain of God” (הַר הָאֱלֹהִים, Exod 18:5), where the God of Israel is first revealed to Moses. The peculiar expression “the God of my father” (אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי) evokes the initial call narrative in Exodus 3, which records God’s self-disclosure as “the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב). The juxtaposition of these two narratives (i.e., Exod 3 and Exod 18) through the phrase “the God of your father” underscores God’s faithful fulfillment of the promise given to Moses at Mount Sinai (Exod 3:10-12) – that Moses will lead the Israelites out of Egypt to worship God on “this mountain” (v. 12, הַהַר הַזֶּה). Moses’ life story through this point is aptly captured in the names of two sons: Moses was a “sojourner” in a “foreign land” but the “God of his father” became his “help” by saving him from “Pharaoh’s sword” (Exod 18:3-4). Here, the singular construct form of the word “your (singular) father” rather than the expected “your/their (plural) fathers” (cf. Exod 3:15; 4:5) also connects the figure of Moses to the patriarch Jacob in Genesis 31-32, which more or less presents a prophetic type-scene of the later exodus. The syntax of Jacob’s two-fold invocation of the “God of my father” (Gen 32:10) before his encounter with Esau is notable because “my father” precedes a singular proper noun in each case:

וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֲבִי אַבְרָהָם וְאֱלֹהֵי אָבִי יִצְחָק יְהוָה הָאֵלֹהִים אֲלֵי שׂוֹב  
לְאַרְצְךָ וְלְמִוְלַדְתְּךָ וְאֵיטִיבָה עִמָּךְ:

Then Jacob said, “God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, YHWH who said to me, ‘Return to your land and to your kindred, and I will be good to you.’”

From a grammatical point of view, the plural construct form of “fathers” is anticipated in Moses’ case (Exod 3:6) when compared with the usage in Genesis 31:42. Clearly, the singular construct of “my father” does not modify the “Fear of Isaac” in this instance:

לֹאֲלֵהֶם אֲבִי אַבְרָהָם וּפָחַד יִצְחָק הָיָה לִּי כִּי עִתָּה רִיקָם  
שָׁלַחְתָּנִי אֶת־עַנְיִי וְאֶת־יָגִיעַ כַּפֵּי רַגְלִי אֱלֹהִים וַיִּזְכַּח אֶמְשׁ:

“Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, now you would surely have sent me away empty. My misery and the toil of my hands— God has seen it, and He has rebuked you yesterday!”

As can be seen, the singular construct form of “my father” in the Moses narrative of Exodus 3:6 and Exodus 18:4 underlines Moses’ unique status as the Israel’s patriarchal leader and legitimate mediator of their ancestral tradition. If this line of reasoning is valid, it does no justice to render the particular expression the “God of my father” in Exodus 15:2 apart from the word’s literary function within the larger narrative unit of Exodus 1–15. Between the two semantic anchor points (Exod 3:6; 18:4) lies another reference to the “God of my father” in Exodus 15:2. From a literary perspective, the narrator rightfully assigns the divine ascription, “the God of my father” (Exod 15:2) to Moses’ lips at the culmination of YHWH’s salvific deliverance of Israel from their enemy.<sup>53)</sup>

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53) That it was Moses, rather than Miriam who exclaimed, “the God of my father” in Exodus 15:2, becomes more apparent when we consider that it was a male’s duty to honor the ancestral deity in the ancient Near East. For instance, the cult of the “deity of the father” in the ancient patriarchal religion was inherited through a paternal line, whereby the supreme patriarch becomes venerated as

## 4.2. Women's victories over enemies

All three poems contain mocking references to the enemies' prideful rise and subsequent collapse. The Songs of Deborah (Judg 5) and Hannah (1 Sam 2), however, both depart from the Song at the Sea (Exod 15) as the singers proclaim victory over their nemeses in terms of motherhood. The latter part of Deborah's victory song, for instance, describes the ascent and the descent of two mothers: Deborah rises up as "a mother in Israel" (Judg 5:7, אִם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל) against Sisera's mother, who desperately awaits the successful return of her already-dead son (Judg 5:28-30). The final victory for Israel is won by Jael, another mother figure from the Kenite clan (Judg 5:24, אִשֶּׁת הַחֵבֶר הַקֵּינִי), who drives a tent peg through Sisera's temple after lulling the Canaanite general to sleep with warm milk. The graphic portrayal of Sisera's humiliating death between the legs of a woman (בֵּין רַגְלֶיהָ, Judg 5:27) contrasts with his mother's presumptuous fancy concerning the Israelite virgins (שָׁלַל רַחֵם רַחֲמָתַיִם לְרֹאשׁ גְּבֵרָה, Judg 5:30).<sup>54</sup> Hannah likewise identifies herself as a mother in her exuberant praise of YHWH, who intervened to reverse her miserable fate of childlessness. In

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the "father" by the successive generations. This partially elucidates the apposition in Exodus 3:6 between the three patriarchal figures ("the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob") and "the God of your (Moses's) father." Roland de Vaux, *The Early History of Israel*, trans. David Smith (Darton: Longman and Todd, 1978), 269.

54) In his study on the literary dynamics between the narrative and the poetry of Judges 4-5, Jung Woo Kim aptly notes the deliberate shifts of focus on women in spatial terms. The narrator moves from the women at the tent to the women at the palace: "Deborah under the palm tree" (4:5) to "Jael next to the terebinth tree" (4:11) to "the mother of Sisera at the lattice of her royal residence" (5:28). The battle scene culminates in the piercing outcry (וַתִּיבֹב אִם סִסְרָא) of Sisera's mother who anxiously imagines her son's successful looting of "wombs" (רַחֲמָתַיִם), while Sisera remains dead at Jael's feet (5:28-30). See Jung Woo Kim, "A Comparative Study of the Hebrew Poetry and Narrative: The Case of Judges 4-5," *The Poetics of Hebrew Poetry* (Seoul: Kihon, 2013), 64-65.

1 Samuel 2:5, Hannah describes herself as a “mother of seven” who had been barren (עַד־עֲקָרָה יְלֵדָה שְׁבַעַה) and her enemy as a “feeble mother” who had been fruitful (וְרַבַּת בְּנִים אֲמָלְלָהּ), most likely in reference to Peninnah (1 Sam 1:2), who had severely provoked her earlier (1 Sam 1:6).

A preliminary analysis of the representative victory songs attributed to women indicates that the female singers do not necessarily subvert their femininity in articulating their stories of triumph. Biblical heroines, both mothers and wives, find expressive outlets in the victory songs as they recount the dramatic reversals enacted by YHWH. In contrast, the Song at the Sea (15:1b-18) exhibits no conspicuous traits which align with the victory songs ascribed to female figures. If Miriam the prophetess (מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה, Exod 15:20) had sung her own song in Exodus 15, the surviving text of the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1b-18) most likely would have preserved at least some aspects of her active role in the exodus narrative. Therefore, the final form of the text in Exodus 15:1-21 presents no firm literary evidence that the Song at the Sea originally belonged to Miriam.

## Conclusions

Based on various critical stances, recent biblical scholarship has challenged the traditional notion that Miriam and the Israelite women sang the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1-21) only as a responsive chorus. Notably, Janzen has argued that the final form of Exodus 15:1-21, particularly the analeptic כִּי in Exodus 15:19, identifies Miriam as the initiator of the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1b-18, 21). This article, however, concludes that the current literary shape of Exodus 14-15 attributes the Song to Moses. In addition to the literary function of the particle אִם, the literary framework created by the double envelope structure (Exod 14:22//14:29; 15:1//21) whose core is at Exodus 15:19 is the key

to understanding the narrative sequence and interdynamics of Exodus 14:22-15:21. In this literary realignment, Exodus 15:19 occupies the central space between the sea walls where YHWH emerges as the ultimate Warrior of Israel as the vivid events of Exodus 14:22-28 are integrated. Further examination of the text reveals that the song lacks elements characteristic of the ancient victory songs of ancient women: the description of the God of Israel is cast with a markedly male presence, and there is no trace of female self-identification in the grand epic. In particular, the expression “the God of my/your father” (אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי, אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתַי), which is used to refer to Moses three times (Exod 3:6; 15:2; 18:4) in the exodus narrative (1-15), connects to the highlights of Moses’ ministry and thus cannot be accorded to Miriam. Overall, no clear literary evidence is available to presume that the present form of the canon affirms the Miriamic priority.

**<Key Words>**

Exodus 14, Exodus 15, Song at the Sea, Song of Moses, Song of Miriam, Canon, Analepsis, Victory Song, God of My Father

**<주요어>**

출애굽기 14, 출애굽기 15, 홍해에서의 노래, 모세의 노래, 미리암의 노래, 캐논/정경, 회상법, 승전가, 내 아버지의 하나님

\* 접수일 2016년 2월 16일, 수정일 2016년 3월 26일, 게재 확정일 2016년 4월 2일

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<초록>

## 홍해에서의 노래(출 15:1-21)에 대한 정경적 재고

모세의 노래 혹은 미리암의 노래?

안한나

(햇불 트리니티 신학대학원)

최근 성서 학계는 전통적으로 모세의 저작으로 여겨진 ‘홍해에서의 노래’ (출 15:1b-18)가 원래 미리암의 것이었다는 주장을 여러 비평학적인 가정들을 통해 점진적으로 수용하고 있다. 특히 J. Gerald Janzen은 정경적인 독법을 통해서도 출 15장의 본문이 미리암 전승의 선재성을 지지함을 알 수 있다고 주장해 주목을 받고 있다. 반면 필자는 출애굽기 내러티브에 나타난 ‘홍해에서의 노래’의 최종 형태가 모세의 선창을 기술한다는 것을 관련된 본문의 정경적인 독법을 통해 밝힌다. 특히 필자는 Janzen이 주장하는 회상적 기능의 **יָ** (출 15:19)가 Isaac Rabinowitz의 편집적 기능의 **יָ** (출 19:1a)를 충분히 고려하지 못한 오류를 범하고 있음을 지적한다. 더 나아가 필자는 출 14:22-15:21에 나타난 이중 구조적 문예장치(the double-envelope structure)가 홍해 도강을 에워싼 내러티브의 연계성과 역동성을 이해하는 결정적인 해석학적 열쇠를 가지고 있다고 주장한다. 아울러 홍해에서의 노래를 드보라와 한나의 승전기(삿 5; 삼상 2)와 비교할 때, 출 15:2에 나타난 ‘내 아버지의 하나님’과 같은 신적 존칭들은 기존의 정경적 형태가 결정적으로 모세를 ‘홍해에서의 노래’의 선창가로 지목하고 있음을 증명해 주고 있다.

<Abstract>

**A Canonical Reconsideration of  
the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1-21):  
The Song of Moses or the Song of Miriam?**

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A growing number of scholars working from a variety of critical assumptions endorse the idea that the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1b-18), which is traditionally associated with Moses, should be attributed, instead, to Miriam. This article examines J. Gerald Janzen's contribution supporting the Miriamic priority based on a canonical reading of the exodus narrative. A close reading of the relevant biblical texts, however, indicates that the final form of the exodus account affirms the Mosaic initiative of the song. The purported function of the analeptic כִּי in Exodus 15:19 does not hold up in the broader narrative scheme of Exodus 14-15, especially in light of Isaac Rabinowitz's thesis of וַיִּזְכֹּר as a literary device in Exodus 15:1. The present author argues that the double-envelope structure (Exod 14:22//14:29; 15:1//21) created by the distinct literary features of Exodus 14:22-15:21 provides the interpretive framework for understanding the narrative dynamics of the events surrounding the Song at the Sea. Moreover, the divine ascriptions in the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:2), in contrast to the songs of Deborah and Hannah, evince that the present literary form of the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1b-18) places the song first on Moses's lips.

