

Miriam and Her Dancing Shoes

By Sandy Eisenberg Sasso | Illustrated by Joani Rothenberg

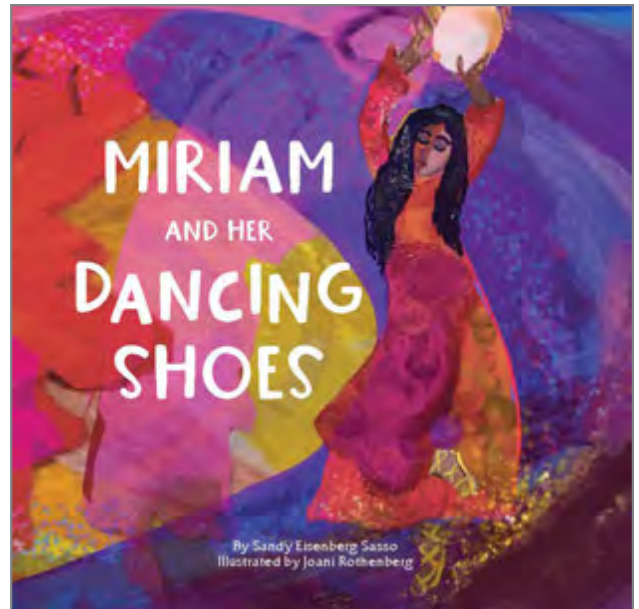
READING GUIDE

About the Book

“Uplifting...about finding reasons to celebrate the successes of life, even when times are tough.”—*School Library Journal*

This interpretation of the familiar biblical story of the Exodus shifts the focus to Moses’ older sister Miriam, whose bravery and celebratory dance provided hope for her people during a dark and dangerous journey, and shows how emotional needs can be as important as physical ones.

The Israelites are fleeing slavery in Egypt. There is no time to pack, but Miriam brings her timbrel and her dancing shoes. Her brother Moses is frustrated, “We’re running for our lives, not planning a party!” But when they need to cross the Red Sea, it is Miriam who keeps their spirits up, leading her people in a dance towards freedom.



Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, the first woman rabbi ordained by the Reconstructionist movement, has used her career as an award-winning author to change how children and adults think about women in Jewish tradition. Sasso continues to work with her cohort of fellow first women rabbis from the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox movements, speaking about their experiences. She lives in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Joani Rothenberg is a fine artist whose work includes illustrations, Judaica art, murals and landscape paintings. She has been appointed Artist-in-Residence for numerous academic, faith-based and arts institutions. During these placements, she creates murals, conducts workshops, or develops art instruction curricula. She is also a board-certified art therapist and has created programs and teaching modules to articulate the benefits of art therapy. She lives in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Key Themes:

Courage, Female empowerment, Freedom and hope, Leadership

ISBN 978-1-68115-727-6

Ages 3–6 years

Use these questions to preface and conclude a reading of this book with children. Encourage them to share their observations as you read the book together, and take time to linger on pages or spreads that generate more discussion.

Before Reading

- What do you already know about Moses's sister, Miriam? As you read this story, compare the responsibilities that Moses and Miriam took on as the Jewish people fled Egyptian slavery.
- Look at the cover of the book. How does it make you feel? What clues does it give you about the story inside? Why do you think the artist chose this swirly, colorful style of art? As you turn the pages, notice how she uses light and dark colors.

After Reading

- The story of Passover has many parts: the saving of Baby Moses, the cruel slavery of the Jews, the ten plagues, the rush to leave Egypt, and so on. Why do you think the author focused on just this one part of the Passover story? What do you think is important about it?
- Moses and Miriam both had important jobs to do: Moses to lead the Israelites as they fled Pharaoh, and Miriam to fill them with hope for the future. Are you more like Moses in the story, someone who organizes and leads, or are you best at inspiring joy and positive feelings, like Miriam? Everyone has some things they're really good at, and other skills that don't come as easily. What friends or family members would be good partners with you, the way Miriam and Moses were? Why?
- Imagine that you need to leave your home behind very suddenly. In addition to things like food and clothing, what would you pack? What objects give you hope, help you express yourself, and inspire you?

Optional: Extension Activity

- Strike up the band! Find a musical instrument, such as a drum or triangle, or a tambourine, like Miriam had. Or create your own instrument. You can use a pot and a wooden spoon, for example, to drum on, or a box of pasta to shake. Now make up a freedom dance! What steps help make you feel free and helpful? Dance to the song that's printed in the back of the book (there's a code you can scan to play it)—or make up a freedom song of your own.

[Alternate]

- Make a Miriam's cup! You will need a clear plastic drinking cup, as well as glue, glitter, paint, and craft gemstones. Decorate the cup to include on your seder table to honor Miriam and her role in the Passover story.

Discussion Questions by Leslie Kimmelman



"THE SOUND IS SO BEAUTIFUL.
WHAT IS IT?" asked Moses.

"I DO NOT REMEMBER
HEARING IT IN EGYPT!"

Who is like the Source of Freedom.

Majestic in holiness.

Awesome in splendor.

Working wonders!

"IT IS THE SONG OF FREEDOM,
THE SOUND OF HOPE," sang Miriam.
Moses and all the people joined her.

Aren't You a Strange Bird!

By Sandy Eisenberg Sasso | Illustrated by Joani Rothenberg

Character Cut Outs

