

Rabbi Paula Feldstein
Chukah Sermon 2022

This has been a particularly hard week, even in what has been a hard month since the Supreme Court overturned Roe v Wade. When I first became a rabbi, I served at a Reform congregation in Glencoe, IL and many of the members of the congregation were from Highland Park. July 4th was a very long, hard day as we tried to reach friends there to find out who was at the parade and if everyone was safe. Thankfully, our friends are all safe although some who were there are quite traumatized right now. The synagogue we served, North Shore Congregation Israel, lost a staff member, and has several members in the hospital with gunshot wounds. One synagogue family has an 8-year-old son who is fighting for his life and who will probably never walk again because automatic gunfire injured his spine.

In this week's Torah portion, we read about the death of Moses' siblings, Miriam and Aaron. Immediately after the Torah tells us of Miriam's death it tells us that there is no water. The rabbis connected these two verses and have given us the tradition that it was Miriam who brought water to the community. This is why some people have added a glass of water, a cup of Miriam to their seder table. There is a midrash that there was a well that God gave to Miriam because of her important leadership and that well of water was there for the Jewish people until she died.

Debbie Friedman, of blessed memory, wrote a beautiful song that lifts up Miriam as a Jewish leader and lifts and comforts our souls in times like the one we are living in. I want to teach you that song tonight, "The Water in the Well."

(An excerpt)

Chorus:

Oh the water in the well and the healing in the well
The women and the water and the hope that's in the well

2nd verse

It was in Miriam's honor that the first well came to be,
To celebrate her music, her dance and prophecy,
The people came to Miriam when their spirits rose and fell
She nourished all their visions with the water from the well

You can watch Debbie Friedman teach and lead the entire song here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1jJXCpEqO54>

(see next page)

Attachments area

Preview YouTube video Debbie Friedman - The Water In the Well (2001)

