



Miriam's Well

A Modern Day Exodus

Ice Cube Press, ISBN: 9781888160970, \$21.99, 575 Pages

Contact: Steve Semken, publisher, steve@southslope.net for more information or a review copy.

Book tour includes readings and events in Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Arizona, New York, New Jersey, Florida, Vermont, and other states.

In this modern day retelling of the Exodus, Miriam wanders the political and spiritual desert of a changing America, torn between her roots as the Jewish daughter of a Black father and white mother, her yearning for home, and her brothers Aaron and Moses. Beginning in the middle of the 1965 New York City blackout, Miriam's family encounters a mysterious rabbi, who persuades the

family to go to Israel, where the aftermath of the 6-Day War scatters Moses to western Kansas, Aaron to New York City, and Miriam all over America. An astonishing cook and singer, Miriam has a knack for showing up to feed and help people at landmark events, including People's Park during the Summer of Love, the Wounded Knee encampment in South Dakota, the AIDS epidemic in San Francisco, the Oklahoma City terrorist attack, 9/11, and Hurricane Katrina. As she seeks the promised land, she shows her people, and eventually herself, how to turn the chaos and despair of our times into music, meals, and miracles.

The novel also includes over 35 pages of real recipes from the fictional cooking and baking Miriam does throughout the book. Cover painting by Anne Burkholder, artist and owner of Burkholder Gallery, Lincoln, NE. See the [Miriam's Well book trailer here](#), a [more in-depth video here](#), and [find podcasts, news, excerpts, and blog posts for the novel right here](#).

About the Author

Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg, Ph.D., the 2009-13 Kansas Poet Laureate is the author of two dozen books, including, most recently *Everyday Magic: A Field Guide to the Mundane and Miraculous* (Meadowlark Press), and *Following the Curve* (Spartan Press), a collection of poetry. Her previous work includes *The Divorce Girl*, a novel; *Needle in the Bone: How a Holocaust Survivor and Polish Resistance Fighter Beat the Odds and Found Each Other* (University of Nebraska Press), *The Sky Begins At Your Feet* (Ice Cube Press), a memoir; and five poetry collections, including the award-winning *Chasing Weather: Tornadoes, Tempests, and Thunderous Skies in Word and Image* (Ice Cube Press) with weather chaser/photographer Stephen Locke. Founder of Transformative Language Arts at Goddard College where she teaches, Mirriam-Goldberg also leads writing workshops widely, particularly for people living with serious illness and their caregivers. With singer Kelley Hunt, she co-leads writing and singing retreats. www.CarynMirriamGoldberg.com



Reviews

“Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg's retelling of Exodus is a sprawling tapestry, woven of all the threads of a modern-day Miriam's ancestors, and her own present and future. From the Badagry Point of No Return and a sukkah in the Sinai Desert to a series of camps, communes, and cafes all across America, *Miriam's Well* delves into the mystery of how we find our place in the world, within our families, even within ourselves.” ~ Bryn Greenwood, New York Times bestselling author of *All the Ugly and Wonderful Things*

“I fell in love with Miriam’s wisdom and her sweet engagements with the people she meets along her lush and vibrant travels. I was plunged to the depths of her nightmares, soared with her song, and emerged blessed to have made the journey with her. *Miriam's Well* is the latest terrific book by Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg.” ~ Jocelyn Cullity, author of *Amah & the Silk-Winged Pigeons*

“*Miriam's Well* is truly a hearty feast, and a song of life’s bounty, of its “fragile miracle,” of its sorrows and its cycling, its joy, its mystery, its sorrows, its journeying. The vibrantly moving and compelling storytelling is immediate, intimate, and resounding; bringing us into a complex weaving of tales, told and untold, from the Biblical epic to the painful legacy of United States, which frame the story of one brave woman with an inexhaustible well of caring. Daughter, sister, lover, neighbor, friend, mother, Miriam is one extraordinary ordinary woman whose life is emblematic of our absolutely interdependent web of relationships, physical and metaphysical, over the seasons of a lifetime and the histories of our own time. In Mirriam-Goldberg’s rendering of the web of story that is Miriam’s, Aaron’s, Joseph’s, Moses’, and our own, we are brought into the gift of tenderness and compassion in heartening human response to our historical conundrums. The work is big hearted, embracing, and wonderfully embodies love’s plenty and the power and the beauty of the story, the song, the telling, to remember and transform us.” ~ Gale Jackson, author of *Put Your Hands on Your Hips and Act Like a Woman: Song, Dance, Black History and Poetics in Performance*

“*Miriam's Well* is a page-turner that gently pulls the reader into the heroine’s quest while also chronicling the country’s cultural revolutions, gastronomic recipes, political causes, women’s communes, spirituality, the AIDS crisis, Oklahoma and Twin Tower terrorist attacks. A compelling writer, Mirriam-Goldberg’s *Miriam's Well* captures a quintessential American story, its multitude of nations, of immigrants and indigenes, in the quest towards a meaningful national identity.” ~ Omofolabo Ajayi-Soyinka, Professor of Theatre, and Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies, University of Kansas

“This startlingly insightful and quietly confrontational novel by poet Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg courageously inserts the biblical prophet Miriam into many of the most daunting and provocative ethical conflicts since the early 60's civil rights revolution, as though we are Israel after the Exodus from slavery and before the Promised Land. Mirriam-Goldberg’s story calls on readers to consider 'Have I done enough?' and 'What is it that the Lord requires of you?' A surprising page turner featuring multiple plot twists and turns, the moral challenges and clarity deserve more than attention, they demand debate. Do yourself a favor and share it with friends.” ~ Rabbi Mark H. Levin, author of *Praying the Bible*

“Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg brings back the charged days of the 1970's revolutions and their aftermath in the decades to come in her novel *Miriam's Well*. For those of us who lived through those times, the book is a reminder of their importance.” ~ Thomas Pecore Weso, author of *Good Seeds: A Menominee Indian Food Memoir*.

From Amazon and Goodreads:

“This page-turning, big-hearted, modern-day retelling of the Exodus, (complete with Miriam’s recipes) is a compelling story of an unforgettable woman. Heartfelt thanks to the author for allowing us to accompany Miriam on her journey, and for her story's transforming power.” ~ Harriet Lerner, bestselling author of *The Dance of Anger* and *Why Won't You Apologize?*

“It was as if another world was bleeding through, reminding Miriam of all she sealed herself off from: her family, dead and living; her spirit, and what it had to say. This book isn't just about a 60's culture of characters journeying from one colorful life situation to another with unique pasts and destinies. Miriam-Goldberg reveals the problems in patriarchy, racism, mental health, death, parental, friend and sibling relationships, development and rejuvenation of female tribes, broken hearts, homelessness, AIDS and love with an insightful and intuitive understanding. The main character has a self awareness and sense of being true to herself that will have you sharing this book with your best friends.” ~ Teresa Gerbode, Health Coach

“Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg is a natural story teller. Her gift with words, whether poetry, prose or a recipe, comes across through her insightful and clear voice. This is the type of book you'll pick up again and again, for a variety of reasons. I know you'll enjoy it from beginning through end as I have.” ~ Ronda Miller, author of *Water Signs*

“One facet of the story that I found particularly interesting was the integration of Judaism. I'm not Jewish and am only somewhat familiar with it, and what really struck me was how simply present it was in the lives of the characters. It wasn't forced, it wasn't presented with brass bands, confetti, and fireworks, it was just part of who they were and how they viewed the world. It highlighted that everyone who is a member of a faith lives that faith, regardless of whether they are Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, or anything else--and that is a truly important thing for everyone to understand. This is definitely a book that I'm going to want to read again, because I know I'll find new things each time I read it.” ~ Linda Lassman

Media About *Miriam's Well*

[Kansas Public Radio Presents with Kaye McIntyre: Interview \(see second podcast listed\)](#)

["The Exodus, Midrash, and *Miriam's Well*" - Podcast with Rabbi Mark Levin](#)

[*Miriam's Well*: A Modern Day Exodus: Book Trailer](#)

["Finding the Promised Land in the Exodus of Our Times" - Podcast with Rabbi Lori Wynters](#)

["Miriam and the New York City Blackout" – Excerpt of Author Reading](#)

["Thoroughly Modern Miriam" – Feature by Jennifer Leeper in the Kansas City Jewish Chronicle](#)

[Lawrence Magazine feature on Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg](#)

["An Interview with Caryn Mirriam-Godlberg" - Eliza Gale's Interviews](#)

Book Tour

“Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg gives life and vibrancy to the biblical characters by placing them in the modern era, in situations we can relate to. In addition to appreciating her thoughtful understanding of these biblical figures, I feel that her book will help others realize that they can create their own modern midrashim (interpretations) on people in the Bible. Adding our creativity to the Biblical stories puts us in a long chain of tradition of learning more about these personages by imagining how they would respond to various situations.” ~ Rabbi Debbie Stiel, Temple Beth Sholom

“Miriam, the titular character in the book, is a woman who responds with love and nurturance to the sadness and heartbreak she finds in the world. With wry humor, Mirriam-Goldberg reflected this tone beautifully in her reading and discussion of *Miriam's Well*.” ~ Kristin Soper, Lawrence Public Library

The *Miriam's Well* book tour runs April 2018 through 2019; the latest information [can be found here](#). The tour includes readings, and in some cases, readings combined with dinners or receptions featuring recipes from the book. Many readings are also accompanied by a companion workshop to the novel, “Writing the Tree of Life: Midrash and Personal Mythology to Revision Our Lives,” open to anyone who writes or wants to write. Some Jewish centers and synagogues are featuring the reading following a Havdalah service or as part of a Shabbat service or other event. Please see the *Miriam's Well* webpage ([click here](#)) for the latest. Contact Caryn at CarynMirriamGoldberg@gmail.com to discuss what would best serve your community.

Miriam's Well: A Reading

Join the 2009-13 Kansas poet laureate for a special program, drawing from her new novel *Miriam's Well: A Modern Day Exodus*, about finding our purpose, place, and people. An astonishing cook and singer, Miriam has a knack for showing up to feed and help people at landmark events, including People's Park during the Summer of Love, the Wounded Knee encampment in South Dakota, the AIDS epidemic in San Francisco, the Oklahoma City terrorist attack, 9/11, and Hurricane Katrina. As she seeks the promised land, she shows her people, and eventually herself, how to turn the chaos and despair of our times into music, meals, and miracles. In addition to a reading from the novel, Caryn will talk about Midrash, finding new meaning in our most sacred stories, and what she sees in the story of the Exodus about how we can cultivate more of the promised land in our lives.

“Writing the Tree of Life: Midrash and Personal Mythology to Revision Our Lives

What can we learn about your own lives and legacies from seeing old stories with new eyes? Midrash is the Hebrew tradition of re-interpreting and re-visioning our guiding myths and messages to foster greater meaning, freedom, and authenticity. This practice is rooted in the understanding that the Torah, a holy book in Judaism, “...is a tree of life, and a tree can stay alive only if it grows,” explains writer Alicia Ostriker. We'll look at and write from new angles about guiding myths and narratives in our lives through innovative writing prompts, discussion, humor, and insights that lead you into poetry, fiction, songs. In the process, find new branches and blossoms into who you are, how you live, and how you can help your community re-vision their stories. This workshop is based on Caryn's new novel, *Miriam's Well: A Modern Day Exodus*, which explores wandering the desert of our times in search of the promised land we can discover together.