

Cross The Sea To Freedom

Contributed by [Hal Stern](#)

Source: Miami Cuban history, Kabbalah online "The 72 Names of G-D", street mural on Calle Ocho





Exodus 14 verses 19-21 tell the tail end of the Exodus, as the Jews approach the Red Sea with the Egyptian army in hot pursuit. They are 3 verses of 72 characters each, a highly unusual pattern in the Torah. If you reverse the order of the middle verse, as it deals with HaShem's severity in bringing darkness to the Egyptian army, and line up the 3 verses, reading down the columns as an acrostic you get the 72 "Names of God" revealed to the Israelites. They are names in that they represent ways in which HaShem may be manifest in the world. But even then, with all of the possibilities of calling for Divine help exposed, it's up to the Israelites to literally take the first step.

God said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Speak to the Children of Israel! Lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea, and split it. Then the Children of Israel will cross the sea on dry land." The Midrash explains that nothing happened until Nachshon ben Amminadav actually stepped into the waves at the last minute. Prayer is good, but the Israelites had to get off the schneid and do something.

The first step to freedom is terrifying. Especially when it involves water, violence, and the unknown.

Tony Lopez was a Cuba-born sculptor whose large-scale roosters dot the "Calle Ocho" in Miami's Little Havana. He is also the creator of Miami's Holocaust Memorial, an outstretched hand reaching up - to the open sky, toward freedom. Cuban artists who found refuge in Miami share similar tales - of imprisonment, of crossing the sea under uncertain conditions, of the joy of hearing their Miranda rights read when the Coast Guard arrested them because, for the first time, they had actual rights. Today, the "Ladies in White" attend Sunday Mass in Cuba, holding flowers, walking silently as an opposition group to the political imprisonment of journalists, librarians and activists.