

*Parashat B'shallach* – Elaina Rappaport

*Shabbat Shalom!*

My Torah portion, *B'shallach*, is about when Moses split the sea of reeds so the Israelites could leave Egypt. There is one aspect that I would like to talk about. That is, how the Israelites kept complaining when they were in the wilderness. It was a pattern. There would be a problem, then G-d and Moses would come to the rescue. Why did the Israelites complain so much? Shouldn't they be happy that they left Egypt and slavery? Well, they were just trying to learn how to be free people.

When they were in Egypt, they couldn't complain to Pharaoh. There wasn't a complaint box where they could put complaints into. Now that they were free, they had freedom of speech, just like the law in the Bill of Rights. The first problem that they encountered was when they left Egypt. Pharaoh and his chariots chased after them. Yet, G-d and Moses fixed that by closing the sea. Then, when the Israelites came to Marah, they couldn't drink the water because it was bitter. They all grumbled to Moses, "What shall we drink?" With that, Moses purified the water with a piece of wood. Next, they complained that there was no food. They rudely said to Moses, "For you have brought us out into the wilderness to starve this whole congregation to death." So the lord gave them manna.

Again, there was no water. G-d had a solution. He told Moses to hit the rock and water came out. But then a serious problem occurred. They got attacked by Amalek. The Israelites could not depend on Moses or G-d that time. They needed to learn how to defend themselves. When Moses found out, he held up his arms and gave the Israelites courage. So in the end, part of being free, is complaining and sticking up for yourself. However, they couldn't just be bothered by everything, they also had responsibilities.

One responsibility the Israelites had was that when the lord gave them manna, they had to collect it by themselves. Also, when they got attacked by Amalek, they had the responsibility of fighting back. Now, in today's society people have responsibilities. If they have a family, they need to support them. Also, people need to stay on top of their

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work. As I become a bat-mitzvah today, I have to take on more responsibilities because I am considered an adult among the Jewish people.

One of my responsibilities was to do a *Tikun Olam* project. After thinking long and hard, I finally decided what I was going to do. I sold bandanas. People bought a pair of bandanas. They got to keep one and the other bandana, I am going to give to the National Leiomyosarcoma Foundation so they can distribute the bandanas to people who have lost hair due to treatment. The money that I received from my sales, will also be given to the foundation for research. I decided on this project because my dad had this awful disease, and it hurts that he is not here today. I know my dad would be beaming with pride today. I hope that one day a cure will be found, so no one else has to suffer with this disease.

I would like to thank Rabbi Small for helping me with my *D'var Torah*, Cantor Cohn for helping me do a great job in today's service and my religious school teachers for giving me Jewish knowledge. A special thank you to my sister Michelle. Even though we fight, we are best friends forever. And lastly, my mom. I would like to thank you for all that you have done for me. You are the best and I love you.

*Shabbat Shalom!*