

## ***B'reisheet***

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Shabbat Shalom, and thank you for taking the time to come support me, as I become a woman in the Jewish community. I've thought a lot about the kind of person I want to be as I complete my bat mitzvah. As a young woman, I am going to strive to be a confident and caring person who takes risks and stands up for what I believe is right. My torah portion, B'reisheet, has many examples of courage, caring, and self-confidence that I would like to demonstrate in my own life. Today, I will discuss two stories in my torah portion that shaped my thoughts on who I want to be when I grow up. These stories are Eve and the Tree of Knowledge and Cain and Abel.

Eve knew that eating from the Tree of Knowledge was forbidden. Adam had warned her that she would be killed if she touched the tree. Yet, Eve took a risk and ate an apple from the forbidden tree. In the end, Eve's decision did not kill her but Eve and Adam were banished from the Garden of Eden. Their dismissal was probably very scary but eventually had a positive outcome. Eve and Adam had to learn how to live in the outside world as farmers and started a family that later became generations of humanity including the Jewish people.

In my own life, I want to be confident like Eve and take risks. In some ways, I am already doing this by sailing solo on my boat, Blue Moon, skiing black diamonds, and going to sleep away camp. In all these situations I am nervous, but I don't let my fear overcome me. Sometimes I fall out of my boat, tumble on the slopes, or miss my family, but taking the risks gives me new experiences that enrich my life. Just as Eve thrived after she took the risk of eating an apple from the Tree of Knowledge, I hope that I will take risks that lead to positive experiences in my life.

The story of Abel and Cain also shaped my ideas about how I want to live my life in the Jewish and broader community. "Am I my brother's keeper?" Cain asked God when Cain, the son of Adam and Eve, was questioned about the whereabouts of his

brother, Abel. Cain killed Abel out of jealousy after God accepted Abel's offering and not Cain's. After reading this story, I asked myself the same question: Am I my brother's keeper? I believe that I have the responsibility to care for my sisters, Samara and Talia, and also for all others in the world. My sisters mean everything to me. They are the two people I go and hug when I am feeling frustrated about school or upset about an argument that I had with friends. Sammy and Tal's laughs are contagious. Our giggles fill every room of our house when we play wii or watch old home videos. My sisters are my teammates whether I'm running around the block with Sammy or dribbling a soccer ball at the local field with Tal. I know that my sisters look up to me as the oldest. I'm not the perfect big sister. Sometimes I am angry and I lash out at my sisters. I get scared easily and I'm not the brave heroine when there is danger. I am working harder to be a better role model. I constantly try to comfort them when they are upset. I laugh at all of their jokes, even the ones that make no sense. I always enjoy showing Samara and Tal a new trick I learned in soccer or hockey. Each day I will try to have patience with them, and be brave for them in hard situations.

My parents show me that you can't only care for your family; you also have to care about strangers. My dad is an emergency doctor. Every day he goes into work and tries his best to keep patients alive that he has never seen before in his life. My mom is an advocate for children and families who are struggling. My parents' careers influenced me to want to assist people who aren't lucky enough to have the same support that I have in my life. I have chosen to connect with an organization in Quito, Ecuador called CENIT. CENIT, El Centro de la Niña Trabajadora or the Center for the Working girl, provides an education, job training, medical and social services, psychological help, and recreation to young girls and their families in Ecuador from trained volunteers. For my bat mitzvah project, I collected donations of medical supplies and basic necessities. In April, I am going to Ecuador with my parents to deliver the supplies.

My torah portion taught me to think about who I want to be as I continue my journey to adulthood. The story of Adam and Eve showed me that I should not doubt my decisions and live with the courage to take risks in life. The story of Cain and Abel helped me understand that I need to care for the people around me, both my family and

the people in my community. I will continue to think about these life lessons even after my bat mitzvah day is over as I go out into the world.

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