

## Shabbat – Pesach

Sam Sahl

Shabbat Shalom! Today, for my bar mitzvah, we are reading from the interesting Torah portion of Ki-Tissa, from the book of Exodus. My portion takes place after the destruction of the first set of commandments, which Moses smashed at the sight of the Jewish people praising a golden calf. Moses later makes these people drink the golden calf for what they have done, which was commanded by G-d. Now, Moses and G-d are discussing what the future of the Jewish people will be. G-d is expressing to Moses his anger towards these people and telling him how he will destroy every single one, and recreate the Jewish religion with a new people, but Moses disagrees with G-D . He explains that these are not just Moses's people, but G-d's people, and if he wants Moses to continue his role in helping G-d, then G-d himself needs to lead the way with him. Moses explains that losing hope in these people would be the wrong thing to do, despite his own anger. G-d finds compassion in His mighty heart and agrees to leave the people unharmed, and to lead the way so they may always know their path. My torah portion is not only the birth of the organization and establishment of who the Jewish people are, but the beginning of G-d's and Moses's agreement which became the covenant of G-d and his people. It is in my portion that Moses discusses with G-d the terms of their partnership. Also at this time we begin to learn how much G-d really cares about his people. Without G-d the Hebrew people would have been killed off long ago by the torture pharaoh brought on them. Although G-D was mad and furious he took the time to consult with someone about His options. Another very important aspect of my portion is Moses extraordinary ability to be so responsible. While reading this I have noticed that not only did Moses take on the job to help lead the Jewish

people, but he stayed with them and persevered to make sure they were safe. He told G-d not to kill them because he knows deep down that he needs to care for this people, for without them there would be no Jewish religion. In my life I wish I could have as much responsibility as Moses. Everyday it seems I am unsure where assignments are, confused of when projects are due, and it seems every time I clean my room it magically becomes messy again. Without responsibility in our world there would be chaos and havoc. G-d, too had amazing responsibility, to redeem the Hebrew people. The Hebrews were slaves for many years, doing back breaking work and on the verge of losing hope completely, until G-d takes charge. He redeems these people, he redeems their souls, but most importantly he redeems their religion.

In my haftorah, Ezekiel also shows a great example of how G-d has truly redeemed the Jewish people. It takes place in the desert where G-d is asking Ezekiel, “ Can these dry bones upon the desert live again?” Can they live? Can they breathe? And Ezekiel answers in the only way possible, that only G-d knows. Amazingly enough G-d brings these bones back. He puts flesh on them. He raises them, and finally he makes them breathe. And just like that they are alive and living.

Now as I read through not only my torah portion, but also my haftorah, there is a question that is brought to my attention, do you need to believe in G-d in order to be a bar mitzvah? For me the answer is clear. I think that in order to be recognized as a bar mitzvah you need to have the qualities that G-d has set out for the Jewish people to obtain, such as responsibility and the ability to be compassionate, or like G-d, to be able to redeem. These torah readings have taught me that life does not just revolve around me, but that without a

community of people nothing can be accomplished. For instance, without the Jewish people staying with G-d and Moses, there wouldn't have been any Jewish religion at all. I have been mindful of these teachings for my future years in life and have applied them to bar mitzvah project. For five weeks I lead an after holidays food drive. Doing this I took on the responsibility to care for the community that I live in. I have chosen to help redeem the lives of the people that are in a dire need of food in our economic situation. I hope that people will take what I have explained today to help out those who are in true need in this time.

This day would have never been possible without some great helping hands. First, I would like to thank my family. Mom, Dad you two have always been awesome parents and even though I may complain a lot I just want you to know I love you. Cassie, Jessa I know most of the time I am your annoying little brother, but I just want you to know that I have always thought you were two pretty awesome people, I love both of you so much. I'd also like to thank Rabbi Small for helping me think even deeper than I would have for my portion, Mrs. Fox for helping me organize my ideas into this D'var Torah. Cantor Cohen and Mr. Pinchover for helping me to read and sing my portions, my three awesome Hebrew school teachers, Mr. Yanofsky, Mrs. Fichman, and Ms. Wolpoe. I also need to thank my friends for always sticking by my when things get out of control and always being able to put a smile on my face.

Last, but certainly not least I want to thank everyone who is here for being part of my Bar Mitzvah day.

Now please turn to page 538 in the big red book.