

## *Machar Chodesh*

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Shabbat Shalom! This Shabbat I have a special *Haftarah* that has a lot of meaning for me so I will be explaining my *Haftarah* instead of my Torah portion.

My *Haftarah* is from the book of Samuel and is read on *Machar Chodesh*. This segment from the book of Samuel is read whenever Shabbat falls on the day before a new moon, better known as Rosh *Chodesh*.

First, it may help to know some background knowledge about my *Haftarah*. Saul is the King over the Israelites. But, many of the people of Israel have begun to look up to David, perhaps even more than Saul, or that's what Saul thinks. Saul believes that David is a threat to his throne. This belief makes King Saul very angry and bitter. In the meantime, Saul's son, Jonathan, has developed a deep friendship with David. Saul also resents the friendship, so much that he has already attempted to have David killed.

Now, back to the *Haftarah*.... Before the festival of the new moon David and Jonathan made a plan to let David know whether he needed to leave the land because Saul planned to kill him. They developed a special signal. If Jonathan says to his servant, "Hey! The arrows are on this side of you" then David is safe and may return. But, if he says "Hey! The arrows are beyond you" then it is not safe for David to stay because Saul will kill him.

When the festival of the New Moon came, Saul and Jonathan sat down to eat a meal. Then Saul asked "Why didn't the son of Jesse come to the meal today?" Jonathan answered that David begged him to go to Bethlehem and obviously this is a lie. Notice how good of a friend Jonathan is that he would lie to his father, the king, for David. Saul and Jonathan then argued bitterly about David. Saul was then so filled with rage that he picked up his spear and attempted to strike his son with it.

After this, Jonathan gave David the signal that he had to leave. They both wept and shared their goodbyes. After that, they never saw one another again.

There are so many themes in this brief *Haftarah* that are meaningful to me that it is hard to know where to begin. Let's start with just a few:

First, there is the theme of friendship: Jonathan was so loyal to his friend, David, that he was willing to go against his own father, the king, in order to protect him. Later, after Jonathan's death, David continues to show loyalty to his friend by taking care of his

disabled son. Jonathan's loyalty to David can be a good thing and a bad thing. I know that in my life, loyal friends are very important to me. There are so many times when kids can be mean to one another or talk behind each other's backs. But all you need is one good friend that you can talk to and who you know will be there for you and who will be loyal to you no matter what.

The bad part about this is that Jonathan did go against his father in favor of a friend. In this case, it was probably the right thing for Jonathan to do, but that is not true in all cases. I'm sure that **nobody** here has ever preferred the opinions of their friends over their parents. Certainly, **I've** never felt that way. My parents have often spoken to me about how at my age sometimes kids just want to be around their friends and not their parents or how kids always think that their friends are right and their parents are wrong. Not that **I've** ever felt that way. They have told me that as I get older and I am a parent, I will realize that listening to my parents is the right way to go. I'm getting there, but I'm not quite there yet. The main point is that having a loyal and close friend is so important, but you don't have to exclude your family. There are all kinds of relationships that we need in our lives.

Another theme is about saving a life: Jonathan literally saved David's life. This got me thinking about my Bat Mitzvah Tikun Olam project. I have always had a love for animals so I wanted to do something for animals. I have been collecting items for two animal rescue organizations whose job it is to save the lives of animals. This does not mean that human lives are not important as well. I have also taken part in the Holocaust Memorial Museum Chain of Memories Program. The *tallit* on the empty chair on the bimah represents twin girls, Berthe and Jenny Burakowski, who did not live to see their *B'not Mitzvah*. They did not have a Jonathan to save their lives like many other children who perished in the Holocaust. While there were many brave people who did save the lives of Jews, many more died because people did not speak out or take a risk to save them like Jonathan did for David. I have made a donation to the Holocaust museum in their memories as well as in the memory of my zayde who survived the Holocaust.

There are things that we can do today to help save lives besides what I mentioned, like donating blood or donating food to the needy and hungry. We can all be like Jonathan if we want.

I would like to take this time to thank Rabbi Small and Rabbi Lazowski for their leadership and support. I would like to thank Mrs. Fox for her help and guidance with this *Haftarah* discussion and Cantor Cohn for his endless patience with me. I would also like to thank all of my religious school teachers for helping me to get to this point. Finally, I would like to let my family know how much I appreciate all that they have done

for me. First, my brother Ethan, thank you for making me laugh even when I was really stressed out. And to my parents, thank you mom and dad for always being there for me and encouraging me even when I wasn't sure that I would be totally prepared for this day. I love you. *Shabbat Shalom!*