

Webmaster's note: This is an actual Beth Chai Bat Mitzvah service book. Bar and Bat Mitzvah students may write their own services in collaboration with the rabbi. We are grateful to Amy Herman for allowing us to post her service here, which was prepared with Rabbi Art Blecher and Amy's parents. Amy's original Bat Mitzvah book contained numerous illustrations and Hebrew lettering, which we were not able to include here.

CONGREGATION BETH CHAI

**The Greater Washington Jewish
Humanist Society**

BAT MITZVAH SERVICE

for

Amy Elizabeth Herman

September 23, 2000

A Bat Mitzvah is a traditional religious ceremony where a Jewish youngster begins to become a responsible adult in the eyes of Judaism.

At Beth Chai each student prepares for this occasion by first completing the prescribed course of study in the congregation's school. Then the student follows an individualized study program in a specialized subject area selected with the support of the family and the concurrence of the Rabbi. The individualized program combines independent research and regular tutorial meetings with the Rabbi. A Bat Mitzvah service is arranged for each family.

The Summer Day

Who made the world?

Who made the swan, and the black bear?

Who made the grasshopper?

This grasshopper, I mean--

the one who has flung herself out of the grass,

the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,

who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down--

who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.

Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.

Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.

I don't know exactly what a prayer is.

I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down

into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,

how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,

which is what I have been doing all day.

Tell me, what else should I have done?

Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?

Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?

Mary Oliver

Rabbi

In every beginning there is darkness. The darkness of chaos seems eternal.

In every beginning there is darkness;_the darkness of ignorance, which smothers human dignity;_the darkness of fear, which chokes the creative will;_the darkness of tyranny, which stifles freedom.

Yet form emerges, light dawns, and life is born.

Responsive Reading with Congregation and Rabbi

(The congregation reads the italicized, indented words.)

We give thanks for the gift of Family,

For the home in which we enjoy it,

And for the dear ones with whom we share it.

May we grow closer to one another in love;

With laughter and soft words,

With shared concerns and mutual respect.

May we make our home a sanctuary,

Warmed by reverence, adorned by devotion,

With bonds that are strong and enduring.

May our words and deeds in the years ahead

Create for us lives worthy of blessing.

Today we gather to celebrate a step in the perpetuation of our family's heritage.

This day we celebrate our promise for the future.

This family is blessed with three wonderful children, including today's Bat Mitzvah.

May they acquire wisdom.

May they build lives of joy and compassion.

Bat Mitzvah

The Sabbath candles celebrate the giving of light that makes for life.

Candle Lighting

*Ba-ruch hah-nayr shel Shahbaht ah-sheh kid-shah-nu bish-loh-moh
u-may-ir et li-bey-nu.*

Blessed is the light of the Sabbath, which sanctifies us with its peace and enlightens our minds.

Congregation

May the rays of these candles cast their glow upon us and bring

the radiance of joy to all who dwell in darkness.

May our homes be blessed with the spirit of truth, and our dear ones with the light of love.

May all our days be filled with happiness and achievement, with peace and contentment, for us and for others, for our families and friends, for all the people of the world.

Bat Mitzvah

In this quiet hour, we reflect upon the meaning of our lives.

As these Sabbath candles give light to all who behold them, so may we, by our lives, give light to all who behold us.

As their brightness reminds us of the past generations who have kindled light, so may we, in our own day, be among those who kindle light.

Responsive Reading with the Bat Mitzvah and Congregation

On this day we would see the world in a new light.

On this day we would add new spirit to our lives.

On this day we would taste a new time of peace.

We would rest from desire for gain, ambition for things.

We would raise our eyes to look beyond time and space toward eternity.

O, may we come to see the world in a new light.

As it is written: "Let a new light shine upon Zion, and see its splendor."

Reading

Before you know what

kindness really is

You must lose things,

feel the future dissolve in a

moment

like salt in a weakened broth.

What you held in your hand,

what you counted and

carefully saved,

all this must go so you know

how desolate the landscape

can be

between regions and kindness.

How you ride and ride

thinking the bus will never stop,

the passengers eating maize and chicken will stare out the window
forever.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness,

you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho lies

dead by the side of the road.

You must see how this could be you,
how he too was someone
who journeyed through the night with plans
and the simple breath that kept him alive.
Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside, you
must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.
You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.
Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends you out into the day to mail letters and produce bread,
only kindness that raises its head
from the crown of the world to say
It is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.

Naomi Shihab Nye

Rabbi

Please join us for a few moments of silent reflection

Silent Reflection

(Please refer to the back of the service book if you would like written meditation material)

Service Resumes

Reading

For Jews and Christians alike, as well as for Muslims and all persons of religious faith, being human means – must mean – to see each other’s humanity. In other words: I am human not only because I have been given the ability to listen, to speak, to feel pain and joy, but also – and perhaps mainly – because others have been endowed with the same ability. It is the others’ humanity that shapes my own... No wonder that most laws in Scripture deal with human relations.

To the homeless, the poor, the beggar, the victims of AIDS and Alzheimer’s, the old and the humble, the prisoners in their prison and the wanderers in their dreams, it is our sacred duty to stretch out our hand and say: "In spite of what separates us, what we have in common is our humanity."

We cannot and must not live isolated from one another. Isolation bequeaths loneliness, whose consequences are not always productive and healthy. Our humanity is measured not by our solitude, but by our attitude toward someone else’s.

Granted, at times it is not easy to remain human in inhuman circumstances. But then, why should it be?

Elie Wiesel

Reading

Do not be daunted

by the enormity of the world's grief.

Do justly, now.

Love mercy, now.

Walk humbly, now.

You are not obligated to complete the work,

but neither are you free to abandon it.

Talmud

Reading

My first language is Music. When I think of what it means to be human at its most perfect and what it's like to speak Human, I think of music. I think of the language that cannot lie, regardless of what lyrics may be forced upon it. I think of a language that both heart and head-left brain and right brain-Yin side and Yang side can all speak and comprehend with perfect, simultaneous, and equal clarity... the receiver's perception is nothing short of pure wonder.

Carman Moore

Song: Hinei Ma Tov

Hi-nei ma tov u-ma na-im shevet a-chim gam ya-chad.

Hi-nei ma tov u-ma na-im shevet a-chim gam ya-chad.

Hi-nei ma tov shevet a-chim gam ya-chad.

Hi-nei ma tov shevet a-chim gam ya-chad.

[Repeat 1 time from from top]

Behold how good and pleasant it is
When people dwell together in unity

.

Psalm 133:1

Bat Mitzvah

Let there be love and understanding among us; let peace and friendship be our shelter from life's storms. Let us work with good companions, live with hope in our hearts, lie down and rise up in peace.

Song: Lo Yisa Goy

Lo yi-sa goy el goy che-rev, Lo yil-me-du od mil-cha-ma (repeat)

Lo yi-sa goy el goy che-rev, Lo yil-me-du od mil-chama (repeat)

And everyone 'neath a vine and fig tree, shall live in peace and unafraid (repeat)

And into plowshares beat their swords, they shall study war no more. (repeat)

Reading

Hurt No Living Thing

Hurt no living thing:

Ladybird, nor butterfly,

Nor moth with dusty wing,

Nor cricket chirping cheerily,

Nor grasshopper so light of leap,
Nor dancing gnat, nor beetle fat,
Nor harmless worms that creep.

Christina Rossetti

When we experience ourselves, our lives, and our Earth as sacred, something changes. When we allow the spirit of the Earth to touch us, when we live in contact with the trees, the clouds, the moon, and the soil, when we know that the animals and plants and rocks are our neighbors, then something precious begins to awaken.- The forests become cathedrals, and the birds singing in the trees become our choirs. We see that all forms of life are part of a great fellowship, and we begin to realize what a tremendous privilege it is to be able to live harmoniously with the whole fabric of creation.

John Robbins & Ann Mortifee

Responsive Reading with the Bat Mitzvah and Congregation

When Torah entered the world, it brought important teachings for all.

Its highest teaching is love and kindness.

What is hateful to you, do not do to any person.

That is the whole Torah. All the rest is commentary. Go and learn it.

Those who study Torah are guardians of our heritage.

*Honoring one another, doing acts of kindness, and making peace:
These are our highest duties.*

Let us learn in order to teach.

Let us learn in order to do!

Congregation Reads Together

Each of us is an author,

Each of us a scribe, writing with our lives upon a scroll,

Lines that will never be erased.

No kindness is ever done in vain,

And each mean act leaves its imprint;

All our actions, the good and the bad,

Are noted and remembered.

May our lives reflect this awareness;

May our deeds bring no shame or reproach.

May the entries we make in the book of our life

Be ever worthy of our noblest aspirations.

Responsive Reading with Rabbi and the Mitzvah Class

(Mitzvah class reads the italicized words)

Who is wise?

He who learns from everyone.

Who is strong?

He who conquers himself.

Who is rich?

He who is content with his lot.

Who is honorable?

He who treats all men honorably.

Talmud

***Mitzvah Class Readings – Compiled from Biblical Sources:(2
groups alternate)***

Justice, justice shall you pursue, _That you may live in your land.

If a stranger sojourns with you in your land, _You shall not wrong him.

The stranger that sojourns with you, _Shall be unto you as the native among you, _And you shall love him as yourself, _For you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

One law shall be among you. _For the native and the stranger alike.

If your fellow man becomes poor and his means fail, _You shall uphold him.

Harden not your heart to the needy in your midst, _Nor shut your hand to your needy brothers and sisters. _But open your hand unto them; _and lend them sufficient for their needs.

Behold how good and how pleasant it is _when brethren dwell together in unity.

Hate not your fellow in your heart; _Love your neighbor as yourself.

You shall give your bread to the hungry, _and bring the poor that are cast out to your house.

When you see the naked, cover them, _And do not hide your face from your fellow.

Then shall your light break forth as the morning_ And your healing shall spring forth speedily.

Rabbi

The problems of our youth is not youth. The problem is the spirit of our age: denial of transcendence, the vapidness of values, emptiness in the heart, the decreased sensitivity to the imponderable quality of the spirit, the collapse of communication between the realm of tradition and the inner world of the individual. The central problem is that we do not know how to think, how to pray, how to cry, how to resist the deception of too many persuaders.

Abraham Joshua Heschel

Reading

To be thirteen is to stand between two worlds, the past of childhood and the promise of adolescence. The middle years of teenage are often very hard to cope with. They are a testing ground for adult life. If we are too dependent on others we must learn to become more independent.

If we think too little of our talents, we must train ourselves to respect them. If we are afraid of the future, we must grow accustomed to live the surprise of challenge. Adolescence can be wasted in fear and in laziness, so that growing up is too painful to bear. Or it can be a time of happy excitement when new responsibility becomes a pleasure and new learning becomes our hope for success.

Rabbi Sherwin Wine

Bat Mitzvah

Dreams

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

Langston Hughes

Reading

Be cautious in judgement.

What passes for Truth is often only hallowed opinion.

Raise up many students.

Distinguish historical form from timeless Truth; dare to change the first to uphold the second.

Find a teacher to challenge your answers

Acquire a friend to challenge your questions.

Allow everyone the room to doubt: the ability to challenge opinions - even your own.

Readings from Wisdom of the Jewish Sages: A Modern Reading of Pirke Avot by Rabbi Rami Shapiro

Responsive Reading with Rabbi and Congregation

Do not despair because of suffering, for life is suffering. Suffering and also joy.

When life brings you sufferings, hurt. When life brings you joy, laugh.

Cling to nothing, for all is fleeting.

Do not cling to judgments nor imagine that the good cannot err or the wicked change their ways.

All life is change, all feeling is in flux.

Look to what is now and act accordingly.

When seeking truth, question thoughtfully.

The "truths" we desire support what we already know.

We become the victims of our own opinions and rationalizations.

The Truth we need to know frees us from the known, makes us simple, and plants us firmly in reality.

Readings from Wisdom of the Jewish Sages: A Modern Reading of Pirke Avot by Rabbi Rami Shapiro

Reading

When a young man fell off a truck on the main road into Goma [a refugee camp near Rwanda] the gravel ripped the skin off half of his face and he sustained a bad tear near his left eye and mouth--it was clear that he would greatly benefit from a skillful surgeon. Among the newly arrived German medical team was a young gynecological surgeon named Otto. It was Otto's first day in

Mugunga, or in any refugee camp for that matter, and he was overwhelmed. As I told him of the boy, he looked at me with extreme apprehension and said he needed his nurse... Otto's nurse couldn't speak English.

After struggling for a while with the communication, I gave up and asked her in Yiddish if she would mind if I spoke to her in Yiddish-it was so close to German I was sure she would understand me. She nodded yes as though it were a perfectly common occurrence for someone to ask her that question. Yiddish, German, and English intertwined and floated upward like divine sparks as we worked.

At the end of one of my last days in Mugunga, a young, very gaunt widow approached me with a malnourished three-year-old. We bought her a bowl of beans and potatoes, only to discover moments later a young starving, emaciated orphan girl of perhaps ten years. But we were out of money. Extremely discouraged, we began to search for a way to get more food when, turning back, I saw that the young widow had invited the girl to share her food- the baby, the stranger girl, and the young mother were all scooping up potatoes and beans from a shared bowl with their hands. What would I have done if I were in the young mother's place?

Anne E. Goldfield

Rabbi

To be human means to take off the headphones and unplug virtual reality. We need to listen again and to relearn the multiple voices of the universe. From these voices will come the songs of healing and renewal which we will sing with our children and with their children.

If we are to survive as humans, it is crucial that we learn once again to sing.

Mary Evelyn Tucker

Song

The Rose

Some say love, it is a river that drowns the tender reed_ Some say love, it is a razor that leaves your soul to bleed_ Some say love, it is a hunger, an endless aching need_ I say love, it is a flower and you its only seed.

It's the heart afraid of breaking that never learns to dance_ It's the dream afraid of waking that never takes the chance_ It's one who won't be taken, who cannot seem to give_ And the soul afraid of dying that never learns to live.

When the night has been too lonely and the road has been too long_ And you think that love is only for the lucky and the strong_ Just remember in the winter far beneath the bitter snows_ Lies the seed that with the sun's love in the spring becomes the rose.

Amanda McBroom

Rabbi's Introduction to Bat Mitzvah's Address

Bat Mitzvah's Address

Musical Piece

Sister's Remarks

Parent's Remarks

Congregation Representative's Remarks

Musical Selection

Reading

Blessed is the power that moved our ancestors and sustained them on their journey.

Abraham left familiar ways, set forth to an unknown land, and learned to silence terror with a ready heart.

Isaac came to know how parents may risk their children for the sake of a vision; out of his weakness he forged the strength to live and love.

Jacob dreamed and fought and grew, at last to become the blessing he wrestled for.

So did those who came before us send forth a blessing fashioned out of their own longing to outgrow themselves. And their longing is ours.

Blessed is the power that sustains us on our journeys to the distant shores of blessing.

Reading

Every day we find a new sky and a new earth_ with which we are trusted like a perfect toy._ We are given the salty river of our blood_ winding through us, to remember the sea and our_ kindred under the waves, the hot pulsing that knocks_ in our throats to consider our cousins in the grass_ and the trees, all bright scattered rivulets of life

We are given the wind within us, the breath_ to shape into words that steal time, that touch_ like hands and pierce like bullets, that waken_ truth and deceit, sorrow and pity and joy,_ that waste precious air in complaints, in lies,_ in floating traps for power on the dirty air._ Yet holy breath still stretches our lungs to sing.

We are given the body, that momentary kibbutz_of elements that have belonged to frog and polar_bear, corn and oak tree, volcano and glacier._We are lent for a time these minerals in water_and a morning every day, a morning to wake up,_rejoice and praise life in our spines, our throats,_our knees, our genitals, our brains, our tongues.

We are given fire to see against the dark,_to think, to read, to study how we are to live,_to bank in ourselves against defeat and despair_that cool and muddy our resolves, that make us forget_what we saw we must do. We are given passion_to rise like the sun in our minds with the new day_and burn the debris of habit and greed and fear.

We stand in the midst of the burning world_primed to burn with compassionate love and justice,_to turn inward and find holy fire at the core,_to turn outward and see the world that is all_of one flesh with us, see under the trash, through_the smog, the furry bee in the apple blossom,_the trout leaping, the candles our ancestors lit for us.

Excerpted from "Nishmat" by Marge Piercy

Rabbi: Mourners' Kaddish

On Shabbat, we provide members of our community the opportunity to recite the mourners' kaddish in memory of family and friends no longer with us. Those who would like to join me, please do. I would like to ask everyone to rise, including those who do not wish to recite the kaddish, to provide community and comfort for those who do.

Yit-ga-dal v'yit-ka-dash sh'mei ra-ba. B'al-ma di v'ra chi-ru-tei v'yam-lich mal-chu-tei. B'cha-yei-chon uv-yo-mei-chon uv-cha-yei d'chol beit yis-ra-eil ba-a-ga-la u-viz-man ka-riv v'im-ru a-mein.

Y'hei sh-mei ra-ba m'va-rach l'a-lam ul-al-mei al-ma-ya.

*Yit-ba-rach v'yish-ta-bach v'yit-pa-ar v'yit-ro-mam v'yit-na-sei
v'yit-ha-dar v'yit-a-le v'yit-ha-lal sh'mei d'ku-d'sha.*

B'rich hu.

*L'ei-la min-kol bir-cha-ta v'shi-ra-ta tush-b'cha-ta v'ne che-ma-ta
da-a-mi-ran b'al-ma v'im-ru a-mein.*

*Y'hei shla-ma re-ba min sh'ma-ya v'cha-yim a-lei-nu v'al kol yis-
ra-eil v'im-ru a-mein.*

*O-se sha-lom bim-ro-mav hu ya-a-se sha-lom a-lei-nu v'al kol yis-
ra-eil v'im-ru a-mein.*

Responsive Reading with the Rabbi and Congregation

In the rising of the sun and in its going down, we remember them.

*In the flowing of the wind and in the chill of winter, we remember
them.*

In the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring, we
remember them.

*In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer, we
remember them.*

In the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn, we
remember them.

In the beginning of the year and when it ends, we remember them.

When we are weary and in need of strength, we remember them.

When we are lost and sick at heart, we remember them.

When we have joys we yearn to share, we remember them.

*As long as we live, they too shall live, for they are now part of us,
as we remember them.*

Song: Zeicher Tsadikim

Zei-cher tsa-di-kim_Liv-ra-cha.

Zei-cher tsa-di-kim_Liv-ra-cha.

Liv-ra-cha. Liv-ra-cha

Zei-cher tsa-di-kim_Liv-ra-cha

(The memory of just people is a blessing.)

Responsive Reading with Bat Mitzvah and Congregation

Let us rejoice in the light of day, in the glory and warmth of the sun, in the reawakening of life to duty and labor.

We rejoice in the light of day.

In the quiet night, with its rest from toil and its revelation of worlds beyond the dark.

We rejoice in the peace of night.

In the earth with its hills and valleys, its widespread fields of grain, its fruit and hidden treasure.

We rejoice in the beauty of earth.

We rejoice in the strength to win our daily bread, and in homes where we find refuge from the cold and storm.

We rejoice in the shelter of home.

In the love of fathers and mothers who have nurtured our lives,
with whose blessing we have gone forth to our own work in the
world.

We rejoice in the love of parents.

In the children who bless our homes, whose eager minds and hearts
are the promise of tomorrow.

We rejoice in our children.

In friends who share our sorrows and joys, in the fullness of the
abundant life.

We rejoice and will rejoice for evermore.

Rabbi's Blessing of Bat Mitzvah

Bat Mitzvah

The Road goes ever on and on
Down from the door where it began
Now far ahead the Road has gone
And I must follow, If I can
Pursuing it with eager feet,
Until it joins some larger way
Where many paths and errands meet.
And whither then? I cannot say.

J. R. R. Tolkein

Kiddush

*Ba-ruch hah-kid-dush shel shah-baht hah-bah mip-ri hah-gah-fen
u-mah-ah-shir et naf-shey-nu.*

Blessed is the Kiddush of Shabbat which comes from the fruit of
the vine and enriches our hearts.

Challah

*Ba-ruch hah-le-chem hah-yo-tzey min hah-ah-retz vah-zahn et
chah-yey-nu.*

Blessed is the bread which comes forth from the earth and
nourishes our lives.

End of Service

feghfegh

No more words. In the name of this place we drink in

with our breathing, stay quiet like a flower.

So the nightbirds will start singing.

Rumi

feghfegh

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Rabbi Blecher for his work in preparing us for this occasion.

We would like to thank Iris Straus for her assistance which made this celebration possible.

We would like to thank Robert Zalkind for leading the singing.

We adapted this service from several past Bar Mitzvah services of Beth Chai, with some additions from selected published sources, including *Wisdom of the Jewish Sages: A Modern Reading of Pirke Avot*, by Rabbi Rami Shapiro; *Bearing Witness: A Zen Master's Lessons in Making Peace*, by Bernie Glassman; and *What Does it Mean to Be Human: Reverence for Life Reaffirmed by Responses from Around the World*, Compiled and Edited by Frederick Frank, Janis Roze, and Richard Connolly.

Artwork from *Living Judaism* by Rabbi Wayne Dossick and Mitzvah Service Books of Noah Koretz, Abigail Huston, and Alex Hartzman. and Parabola Magazine.

Readings

The word religion comes from the Latin, *religio, religare*: To connect. To knit together. To include. I take it to mean the energy, the force, the yearning in the human heart and the human brain for inclusiveness, wholeness, togetherness. When this energy flowers, it is extraordinary. When it becomes twisted, it turns to horror. When it becomes irreligious, religion operates as a mode of divisiveness and exclusion, but when it is acting from its real meaning, then it is this marvelous force of continual reformation. It propels people to recognize that each of us is unique and individual.

Spirituality is the name of this force. Spirituality is the presence of what everyone recognizes as the unity of the One and the Many, the All in All. This spirituality is at the core of every religion. When this spirituality is intact and active, religion is alive. When the spirit is missing, so-called religion petrifies, turns into stony fundamentalism, and it kills.

A renewed spirituality, real religion in constant reformation, can transform ourselves and our world.

James Parks Morton

feghfegh

He who binds to himself a joy_ Does the wingéd life
destroy_ But he who kisses the joy as it flies_ Lives in
eternity's sun rise.

William Blake

feghfegh

feghfegh

This love of live, this reverence, has been expressed in innumerable poems and myths, in the epics of six thousand cultures that still survive on earth, in the traditional wisdom that is not yet totally forgotten. The real task of education is to reawaken these sensitivities, to stimulate their unfolding by creating an environment that nurtures them. Then one day there may be an explosion of artistic and scientific creativity, of constructive discrimination between what demeans and what gives dignity to life and confirms our harmony with the universe. I do believe that we can free ourselves from being slaves to today's barbarity and recapture the essence of being humanly alive.

Jose Munoz

feghfegh

Whenever the Rabbi of Sasov saw anyone's suffering either of spirit or of body, he shared it so earnestly that the other's suffering became his own. Once someone expressed his astonishment at this capacity to share in another's troubles. "What do you mean 'share'?" said the rabbi. "It is my own sorrow; how can I help but suffer it?"

Martin Buber

feghfegh

"Hope" is the thing with feathers –
That perches in the soul
–
And sings the tune without the words –
And never stops
– at all –

And sweetest – in the Gale – is heard –
And sore must be
the storm –
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so
many warm –

I've heard it in the chillest land –
And on the strangest Sea
–
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb – of Me.

Emily Dickinson

feghfegh

When we live out of unknowing we're shedding our suit of armor. Each time we let go of our fixed ideas about ourselves and others, we're letting go of our individual system of survival. For these systems may have once helped us survive, but now they are destroying us. They are destroying our ability to act spontaneously, to respond

directly, to take care of any situation that arises.

Living out of unknowing, we are naked. We go from one situation to the next, from one person to another, from one system to another, and we respond to each directly and appropriately. One day we have a job, the next we don't. One day we have our family around us, the next we've lost someone we love. When we live from unknowing we have no expectations of what will be and how we will feel. We are disarmed, going from one situation to the next, and bearing witness.

from Bearing Witness, by Bernie Glassman

feghfegh

Men, whose boast it is that ye

Come of fathers brave and free,

If there breathe on earth a slave,

Are ye truly free and brave?

If ye do not feel the chain

When it works a brother's pain,

Are ye not base slaves indeed,

Slaves unworthy to be freed?

They are slaves who fear to speak

For the fallen and the weak;

They are slaves who will not choose

Hatred, scoffing and abuse,

Rather than in silence shrink

From the truth they needs must think:

They are slaves who dare not be

In the right with two or three.

James Russell Lowell

feghfegh

If you could only see your beauty,_for you are greater than
the sun._Why are you withered and shriveled in this prison
of dust?_A basketful of bread sits on your head_but you
beg for crusts from door to door.

Rumi

feghfegh

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[This was part of Amy's Bat Mitzvah presentation]

For a long time, Zipporah loved. She loved life, was happy with it.

In her childhood she liked to play and create. Her favorite words were "why?" "how?" "who?" "where?" "what?" "when?". Her inquisitiveness compelled her to find new things, and to learn the secrets of nature. As she moved with her tribe, the Midianites, herding sheep and migrating, she found something new each time, and she learned many patterns such as: Where to find food and water, why the moon could be seen in the sky at night and the sun in the day. She was a joyous child, and her father Jethro loved her very much. She was most entranced by birds, and they seemed entranced by her. It was because her name, Zipporah, meant bird, and there is such power in names that a bond was created between them.

All things grow—even children—and so she grew too. Although she grew, she never did lose her inquisitiveness and her sense for adventure. She often stopped at the well alone, despite the danger of it. While she was stopped there once, she saw a man, drinking water from his hands. When he lifted his head, her heart began to beat twice as fast. His face had a stern beauty to it. She admired it at once. His refined nose, proud gait, and his eyes. He had deep eyes that looked like they held the world locked up inside, and his mouth was set in a grim line. She waited silently a few minutes until the man had gone. Only then did she fill her skin with water. Afterwards she was ready to go and walked home slowly, completely wrapped in the chaos of her own thoughts.

Zipporah could not get to sleep at all that night and after restlessly lying on her pallet for what seemed to her like hours, she got up for a drink of water. As she was drinking the cool liquid she heard some scuffling. At first, she dismissed it for some night animal, but again she heard it. Then she heard a murmur of voices. Surprised, she walked towards the sound. She listened carefully, recognizing her father's voice, but there was another, one she didn't recognize.

"I warned you, Efron. I told you not to come back here, or I would kill you! Amorites are not welcome here," her father said.

"Wait, please, I beg of you. I have already received enough injustice from my own tribe! Would you, the priest of your tribe, not accept me?" The stranger's voice pleaded with Jethro, but it

was all in vain.

"I gave you your chance," Jethro growled.

Zipporah could bear it no longer. Her father was going to kill a stranger! She stepped outside the tent, intending to plead with her father for this man. But all intentions fell away as she saw who he was. He was the man she had seen at the well, and she grew afraid of what her father might say.

"Run!" she yelled to Efron. He did not heed her words or even seem to understand them, so again she tried to tell him. "Fly!" she shouted, and this time Efron heeded her words, and ran, almost as if he had wings. Zipporah, sad to see him go, quietly slipped into her tent before her father could ask questions of her, and fell exhausted, into a fitful sleep.

After that night, Zipporah often thought about Efron, wondering if he were still alive, or if he had long since passed away. Jethro often preached about forgiveness, and sometimes Zipporah wondered if he was apologizing to Efron. After many weeks had gone by, Zipporah was once again at the spring. A majestic, black bird with fierce eyes alighted on her hand. Her eyes twinkled in delight as she looked at it and listened to its low calls. She began to hear a pattern and could make sense of it. She replied to the bird, hoping it could understand her, as she had understood it. It began to fly away. Zipporah, unhappy to see it go, called to it, and it told her to follow. She followed it for a long time and began to wonder if she really had understood the bird, when she saw an exhausted man on his hands and knees. She felt pity for him, so she helped him up, reassured him that they were close to water, and helped him slowly to the well.

A few hours later Zipporah returned to her tribe, accompanied by the bird and the young man. He was well treated by everybody, and many greetings were exchanged because Zipporah's tribe was a trusting sort with strangers. He was introduced to everybody, and though he could not remember all their names, all the people could remember his. Soon the name "Moses" could be heard here and there in tents, at gatherings and other such places. The people were

excited because it was not often a stranger came across their little tribe. Moses was tall, a sign of a leader to them, much like Zipporah and her father. Moses was strong, his skin was, to their surprise and astonishment, light. He would join in their feasts and dances and all other gatherings. Whether a birth or a funeral or a wedding, he was there. He joined in all the regular work, too. He was one of the tribe. It was while he was herding his flock that another herder came and talked. They became fast friends. One day, while Zipporah was at the well again, she saw Efron. She had believed she would never see him again, so she was surprised to see him now. "What are you doing here," she asked. He told her: "I have been staying nearby, hiding from your people." They did not speak to each other after that and went their separate ways, but not before he showed her the rainbow. It was more beautiful than she had ever imagined anything could be. She looked at it in awe and admiration, and finally it faded away, just as her memory of the man beside her would fade away some day.

She never saw him again and was left simply to imagine what had happened to him. Soon after, Zipporah's father arranged a marriage for her with Moses. The wedding took place outside on a cool morning. Moses had built a new tent for him and Zipporah to live in. Zipporah's father, the priest of the Midianites, stood in front of it with a water skin at his side. He called Zipporah and Moses forward from their own tents. They acknowledged each other when they were standing in front of the priest. As a symbol of the love and care they would show one another, Moses kissed Zipporah's hand, and Zipporah then kissed Moses'. Then Jethro picked up some sand and let it run through his fingers. As he did so, he spoke, "As the sands of time are forever moving onward, so shall you be together, always moving on." The wind gently scattered the sand, and the grains that had fallen through Jethro's fingers were lost in the multitude of all the others. Then he spoke again, "Though each drop of water is one in millions, each is special, and though each grain of sand is one in millions, each one is special. You also were one in millions, but you have now been joined and are two in millions. Together, you will be able to do anything. Therefore, I will give to you each a single droplet of water and a single grain of sand." Jethro dipped his hand in the water skin and put a drop on Moses' and Zipporah's foreheads and

handed them each a grain of sand.

The marriage at first was a happy one. This began to change when Zipporah saw the devastation Moses laid upon Egypt. The frogs were bad enough and the Nile of blood, but when he killed the first-born, she was outraged. None of it would have had to happen if Moses' God had not hardened Pharaoh's heart. She was most astonished though when the god became angry at the rejoicing of the Jews after they had been set free.

One night while Zipporah and Moses ate, Moses said to Zipporah, "The Lord has spoken to me today. The Lord has told me we must, as a people, destroy the Amorites. The Lord has promised to help us. When the rod of God is raised, we shall prevail." Zipporah took this all in silently. Then she said, "The Lord is good, God has provided us with food and has watched over us throughout our journey, and yet... the Lord has told us not to kill, but by ordering us to destroy the Amorites the Lord is commanding us to kill. How can we follow both orders, and not commit a sin?" Moses replied without hesitation, "God has commanded we destroy the Amorites and we will not do otherwise." Zipporah uttered a simple "Oh," and they ate the rest of their meal in stony silence. Later that night, when Moses had long since fallen asleep, Zipporah was still sitting up thinking about Moses and his God, about how fancy it all was. She longed for the simplicity of her own religion - - of preaching peace and doing acts of kindness. And for the one rule that was followed by all: do not kill.

Many weeks had passed since Moses' declaration that he would do anything God told him to do, and each of those days Moses grew more distant from Zipporah. Then one night, while they were having dinner, Moses said to Zipporah, "I am torn greatly in a decision I must make. God has demanded that we kill all the Midianite men and capture all the women and children, but—" After Moses said that Zipporah stood up so suddenly that any words Moses would have said died on his lips there and then.

"You cannot carry out that order! You cannot kill your friends—my people. Have you forgotten them so soon? You were **one** of us. You ate our food, joined in our celebrations, had your

own flock to herd, built your own tents! We welcomed you and trusted you. My father especially loved you! Is this your thank you? We'd rather not accept it if it is!"

"No, Zipporah, no." Moses said, shaking his head sadly, "God has told me; I must do so."

"Think Moses, think! If you betray us and kill your friends and advisors, who will ever trust you again? No one. You cannot kill simply because your 'God' commands it. What reason does your petty God have, I wonder? He has commanded you not to kill. He has commanded that you must kill. He is a bloody God, Moses. Do not trust him; do not do as he says! Even if you do not love my people, think of me, for I love them."

"I must do this, Zipporah. It is hard, but I must."

Then Zipporah said, "Hatan damim atah li." "Then you are a husband of blood to me!" Her dinner only halfway finished, Zipporah stormed off in a fury! Moses did carry out the order, but soon after, regretted it, for Zipporah had grown cold towards him because of it.

Many years passed. Moses was still leading his people through the desert. Zipporah was still with Moses, but she no longer loved him. While she was wandering in the desert one day she saw a rainbow. Zipporah had seen one only once before. She could not remember it now, but the image sparked something inside her, and she began to remember a time when she was happy. She remembered a bird and how she found a stranger in the desert. She remembered the devastation of the Egyptians. She remembered her own people, the Midianites. She remembered the man who had shown her the rainbow the first time she had seen one, but she could not remember his name, then it came to her—Efron; that was his name. She remembered! She remembered how to love.

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