



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

BIGLAL NASHIM...

This was supposed to be last week's PTDT, but it fits for any week.

Women are the heroes of the story of the Avot, the foundation of what was to become the Nation of Israel.

And women were the heroes of the beginning of the Nation.

And they continued from there to play crucial roles in our history.

Let's start with the Avot.

Sara Imeinu tells her husband and our Avinu, Avraham, to get rid of Yishmael and his mother Hagar, because of the negative influence he could have on Yitzchak. Avraham doesn't like that idea; Yishmael is his son and Avraham loves him too. But G-d tells Avraham to listen to Sara, because the most important thing is that Avraham's descent will be through Yitzchak. The implication is that Yishmael's presence would, indeed, be detrimental to the development of Yitzchak.

Score one for the women.

Fast forward... Yitzchak loves Eisav KI TZAYID B'FIV. He is blind - physically and figuratively to Eisav's true character. Rivka Imeinu sees the

situation clearly. Inspired by Divine guidance, she engineers things so that Yitzchak receives both the GASHMIYUT, in addition to BIRKAT AVRAHAM, which Yitzchak was going to bestow on him.

Score two for women.

Fast forward to Yaakov Avinu...

He fell in love with Rachel. He desperately wanted to marry Rachel. Just Rachel.

But Rachel and Leah both knew - again, Divinely inspired, that Yaakov was to marry both of them and their S'FACHOT. They both cooperated with their father Lavan to arrange just that. Yaakov was the third Av to be blinded in some way - but not the women; not their wives.

Chalk another one up for the women.

It doesn't stop there. Next generation has two heroes (at least).

Yehuda "goes down" from his brothers. He marries, father's three sons. He marries the oldest one off to Tamar. So too, the second, after his older brother dies. He too dies (no reason to explain why each died). Yehuda does not arrange that his third son to marry Tamar. She takes the matter into her own hands, which results of her giving birth to twins from Yehuda - one of which becomes the sire of the future House of David.

Score four for the women.

Meanwhile in Egypt Yosef's life is on the line when Mrs. Potifar falsely accuses him of attempting to seduce her. We would expect her husband to simply have Yosef killed, as a result. But A-s'nat, adopted daughter of the Potifars, quietly tells her father that Mrs. Potifar was not telling the truth. Yosef is sent to prison, but A-s'nat saves his life.

Score five!

Which brings us into the Book of Sh'mot.

Very early in Sh'mot, we are introduced to the heroic midwives - Shifra and Puah, who may be Yocheved and Miriam, or possibly Yocheved and Elisheva, or possibly two unknown midwives - Israelite or maybe even Egyptian, who save countless baby boys who they were commanded by Par'o to kill.

Then Amram leads the other Israelite men to separate from their wives, because of the harsh conditions of servitude and oppression. Until young Miriam prophesies that his decree is harsher than Par'o's...

Amram gets back together with his wife Yocheved and baby Moshe is born.

At three months old, Moshe's mother Yocheved saves Moshe's life by placing him into a waterproofed basket and places him in the reeds at the shore of the Nile. And Miriam,

Moshe's older sister, watches over him.

And Bat Par'o saves Moshe's life once again.

Women, women, women.

Let's not forget Tzipora, who saves Moshe's life by circumcising their son. An enigmatic story, but she too is one of our heroes.

Which brings us back to the title of this PTD. BIGLAL NASHIM TZADKANIYOT NIGALU AVOTEINU MIMITZ-RAYIM, because of righteous women our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt. Not because of the men. The women carried the men through the tough times.

And the Egyptian experience does not end the heroism of our women. There is Devora, Yael, Esther... and many, many more throughout Jewish History, including our own time... and for sure, onward. **PTDT**