

Listening to all of you give D'var Torah here over the past several months has been very inspiring. Each one has been so thoughtful and unique. You also all sound very smart. The way you pull from all different sources and tie it all together. One of the things I love about Kol Sasson is that we don't rely on just one storyteller, one point of view. This format of taking turns and stepping up to share ourselves makes it feel much more like a discussion than a monologue. It is Collaborative storytelling.

So when Rebecca asked me to take a turn, I was deeply honored and horribly intimidated. I really wanted to be a part of this story but knew I would have to cover some distance and conquer some fear to get there. At least, this is the one part of the service that is in English. That part I felt confident I could do!

So I began. I read Bo very carefully. I read different commentaries. I tackled Aviva Zornberg and Rabbi Hirsch. I began to write.

It was a complete flop.

I realized as much as I would like to get down in the weeds and come up with something brilliant sounding, it wasn't gonna be me and it wasn't gonna work. I had to work my own system of putting the books away and listening to what comes from the heart. Then find the courage to share it.

When I put away the books, crumpled up my drafts and sat quietly, the first word that rose up was STORY

We learn through stories. We remember through stories. We heal through stories. We connect through stories. We create through stories. We ARE stories.

All our photo albums are an attempt to capture and remember our stories. When we sit together with friends over a meal we connect through trading stories. People come to me in therapy to heal their story.

Exodus is not just a powerful story. It is the greatest story of all time. It is the original story of Freedom. And it is OUR story.

This is so important that God takes great care to teach us how to create and tell this story as it unfolds.

God first shows us how to be intentional about our story. God tells us what he is going to do throughout Exodus and then he does it. The lesson I take from this, is that it is not enough to just think about my story and enjoy it for myself as a fantasy. I must set my intentions and then put them into action.

God teaches us is that we all have the right to a story of freedom. That oppression is created from fear and that story NEVER ends well. It may take standing up to bullies to defend that right. We may have to be fierce. For ourselves and others. It is never too late. Even if we are 80 years old, we have the power to stand up for freedom.

God shows us that when we create our story out of fear, we create the very thing we fear. Pharaoh was afraid of a leader rising up to free the Israelites, so he acted in ways that helped create that very thing he feared, within his own house.

The Israelites were a whole nation and complete generation of people who were raised with fear as their task master. They lost their gift of creating their story of hope and freedom. They could not remember how. So God had to come down and show them. God had to create and leave for us a lasting story. A guide how to create our story. One that would not be forgotten, but passed down for generations.

Even Moses, the hero in the greatest story of all time, was burdened with fear and doubt all along the way. Just when it seemed like fear and doubt would win the battle inside Moses, encouragement and support showed up. Either from Miriam or Aaron or God himself.

Before the locust plague Moses has doubts about how this story is going to turn out. God reassures him by making a distinction. It is here that God says, I have hardened Pharaoh's heart. He makes it clear that he is still the story teller. HE is in charge of this story. And where Moses's imagination for what is possible is limited, God's is not.

He explains that is important to imagine, intend, create and tell a story so powerful that it will be told and remembered for generations. It will serve as a lamp to light the way through the darkness.

We even get very explicit instructions on how to re-tell the story. Down to what to eat, how to sit and what to wear.

God is telling us, and at the same time showing us first hand the power of creating and telling our story. A story powerful enough to beat back slavery, fear, darkness and even death.

Do we contain this power? The power to create a story of miracles and wonders? A story that can overcome fear and oppression? A story that can beat back darkness and even death?

I would argue yes. We have a spark of God within us. Not only do we have the ability to create through story. But it is our right. It is our heritage. It is our responsibility.. And it is necessary for Tikkun Olam.

There are modern day stories all around us. Those who created their own powerful story. Nelson Mendella, Eli Weisel, Victor Frankle, Mother Theresa, just to scratch the surface. I am

sure you can think of several without even working too hard.

These people are not different from us. They are not figments of our imaginations. They are real. It is not that they are immune to fear, anger, hatred or doubt. What makes them the narrator of their story is that they took these enemies head on. They faced down fear with strength and faith. They conquered hatred with hope. They refused to be enslaved. They believed in the right to freedom. They created light out of darkness. Not just for themselves but for all of us. And that story is so powerful that it will be told for generations.

So how do we face our fears and find the path to freedom? How do we create our story and bring forth our miracles into the world?

I am still working on this piece myself. I am trying to hear the lessons given to us in Exodus. I am looking my fear in the face to find the clues to my slavery. To where I am not free.

I was afraid to speak to you today. But I decided to face down that fear and do it anyway. Every time I thought my doubt and fear would win, Rebecca was there to encourage me. I was afraid to go back to work after 17 years of being a stay at home mom. My imagination was limited as to what I could possibly create as a career for myself. Leah Rubin loaned me her imagination. She Believed in what was possible, when I could not. And then what was created was even bigger than that.

We all have the right to be free.

We have the spark of God within us to create our story of freedom and faith. To bring forth our miracles into the world.

We need to dream our story as big as we possibly can. Where our imagination is limited, God's is not.

It will require we look our fear in the face. It is the clue to where we are enslaved.

We must consciously set and share our intentions then enact them.

We may have to stand up to bullies. Even if we are 80 years old. It is never too late.

And when it looks like fear and doubt might win--we must encourage each other.

Shabbat Shalom