

## Bat Mitzvah Speech

“Turning Points”

by Amy Hope Shapiro

March 25, 2012

Over the past couple of months, Mrs. Braun and I learned Migillat Esther and Migillat Root. I’ve learned that in every lifetime there’s a turning point, a time where someone changes---for instance, losing your first tooth, or maybe going into the king’s headquarters without being asked and thus saving an entire nation. On my Bat Mitzvah, I realize this is my turning point, where I change. Becoming a woman is one of the many turning points in my life.

Esther started off as a very shy, quiet girl. She was soon taken to the palace of Achashverosh. We understand she was very obedient from this because she was taken. She did not willingly go. The pasuk says **“ותלקח”** she was taken, instead of **“ותלך”** and she went. When she gets to the palace, she doesn’t ask for anything to make her beautiful. She only takes what she was offered (which also shows a lot of respect). When Achashverosh choose Esther, the Megilah states **“וישם כתר מלכות בראשה”**

Achashverosh placed the crown on her head. She did not take it, and it was not given to her. It was placed upon her head. A great example of restraint is when Mordechai tells Esther not to tell anyone her religion, and she doesn’t--even when she becomes queen, and she can make up her own rules.

**אין אסתר מגדת מולדתה ואת עמה כאשר צוה עליה מרדכי**

Around this point, a lot of people think that Esther’s turning point is when she tells Achashverosh that Haman wants to kill her and her nation, but actually it is when Mordechai tells Esther she has to go to Achashverosh and tell him about Haman’s scheme, but Esther is worried. She could be killed if she goes to the king’s headquarters without being called, but Mordechai pushes her by telling her

**אל תדמי בנפשך להמלט בית המלך מכל היהודים**

Meaning it’s either her or the entire Jewish nation. He continues that if she doesn’t save them someone else will, and she will be lost from the Jewish nation.

**את ובית אביך תאבדו**

Esther realizes what Mordechai is saying and commands him, and all the Jewish people, to fast for three days.

### **צומו עלי ואל תאכלו ואל תשתו שלשת ימים**

The Midrash says that it was Peasach at the time, so Mordechai argued with Esther that they couldn't fast but Esther fought back and she ended up winning. This Midrash helps give proof that, after Mordechai's speech, something clicked in Esther's mind, and now she is taking charge of her own life. Esther also came up with a brilliant plan to plant ideas in Achashverosh's head that Haman wasn't loyal, so Achashverosh was already suspicious of him. We understand this because when Achashverosh asks Haman what do for someone that the king wants to honor

### **מה לעשות באיש אשר המלך חפץ ביקרו**

He's asking for Mordechai but in a way that Haman will believe it's him, and when Haman answers the person the king is honoring should ride on the king's horse wearing the king's royal robes and crown, Achashverosh gets the idea that Haman might want to steal his throne. This was HER idea; it was also Esther's idea to throw the parties. These are the different changes we see throughout Esther. Now let's look at Root.

Unlike Esther Root started out very "strong" and adamant. She was stuck on the idea of going back to Israel with Naomi whereas her sister Orpah, after crying a little, goes back to Moav. Naomi loves her daughter-in-law, but they will be very poor, and the people won't respect them anymore after Naomi's family left during the time of famine, but Root is persistent she tells Naomi,  
**אל תפגעי בי לעזבך לשוב מאחריך, כי אל אשר תלכי אלך ובאשר תליני אליו, עמך עמי ואלקיך אלקי. באשר תמותי אמות ושם אקבר. כה יעשה ה' לי וכה יוסיך כי המות יפריד ביני וביניך.**

Meaning, entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD does so to me and more also, if anything but death parts you and me." Once Naomi and Root got back to Israel, they didn't have any food, so Root goes out to gather some (it was her idea) another example of being very headstrong. There, at the field, Root meets Boaz for the first time. A little while later, Naomi comes up with a crazy idea;

**ובאת וגילית מרגלותיו ושכבת והוא יגיד לך את אשר תעשין**

Root should go to Boaz in the middle of the night and lie by his feet. This way, Boaz will remember he has to marry her.

Root listens to what Naomi says. This is her turning point--listening, being patient, and understanding someone else's point of view.

After Root's "change," she really is easier going. She listens to other people and isn't as headstrong. She soon goes off and does what Naomi said to do. When Boaz tells her there is someone else who is closer to her, she listens and lets him work everything out.

Although Esther and Root sound like totally different stories, they're really kind of the same. In both stories, there is a crazy plan. In Root, she had to go to Boaz, and Esther had to walk into the king's headquarters without being called. In both of these, the women have something at risk; Root could get a bad reputation and lose her dignity, and Esther could be killed even though she personally wasn't involved. As well as they both had mentors, they didn't have to face their risks alone; Root had Naomi and Esther had Mordechai. Mordechai protected Esther and then pushed her to her full potential, and Naomi protects Root by telling her not to come with her and how it won't be good for her, and then pushes her to go to Boaz. We learn from both of these amazing women we are always growing and changing, but they teach us when to be strong and when to let others take control.

Of course, both stories had a lot in common, but they also shared many differences. Root was very strong and adamant on going with Naomi, but Esther was quiet, shy, meek, and even a little weak. Root's story was a very personal story and really only about a couple people, whereas Esther's was about an entire nation. The setting was also very different. Root took place in a grassy field and maybe one or two homes. Esther's story took place in a palace.

What a lot of people don't realize is these stories are somewhat like our own lives. I can see myself with the same characteristics of both of these incredible women. I'm shy but strong, I am meek, but I speak my mind. Sometimes I even come up with crazy plots and schemes that always seem to work out in the end. Of course none of this could be possible without my mentors in my life.

Daddy you are a lot like Mordechai. You always seem to know what to say, and you always push me and make me strive to do my best. You helped make me the

woman I am today, and I love you and respect you for that. Thank you for everything including the Sundays we went ice skating, the evenings you drive me to and from dance, and especially the daddy daughter days. Your grasp of technology is superior, but can you explain why I need a file server in my room?

Mommy, like Naomi, you help me understand things I might not see yet. You are always there for me and ready to catch me when I fall, but not just that; You also help me get right back on top. You are always ready to mentor me on any topic, and watch me excel at what I do. You're the only person I know that thinks cardio is pushing a cart around Wegman's.

Brynn, when I found out my only child status was about to end, I must admit I was not overjoyed. But once I met you I couldn't be happier that you're my sister, I love you so much. All I ask is you stay out of my room.

Grandma and Grandpa, you always seem to be there when I need you most. Being able to see you every Shabbat really makes me feel joy inside and out. I look forward to having your potato latkes and hamantaschen.

Mr. Uncle Pauly, although I don't see you as often as I wish I could, it just makes every visit even more special. I'm so glad you could be here today, if not every day. I especially liked the time we went to Barnes and Noble and discussed where you think I should go to college. I'll keep your advice in mind as I finish 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

Uncle David, you have been my buddy since I'm ten days old. We spent a lot of special time together, and I cherish every moment of it. I love our handshake and if anyone wants a demonstration we will be showing it later.

Rabbi Braun, you opened your home to me since I was six years old, and especially these past couple of months, you've not only made me feel welcome but like part of your family.

Rabbi Tuchman, as the first student enrolled in YJS, I have seen the school grow from the day it opened with the four of us to what it is today. Yeshiva at the Jersey Shore is like my home for five days a week. Ever since coming in first grade, my knowledge in Judaic and Secular studies has begun to soar, and I truly have a love for learning. Thank you to you and all my teachers throughout the years.

I also wanted to thank my entire class for being here, not only to support me, but to be here on such an important event in my life. It means a lot to me that you could be here to celebrate my simcha with me. Thank you to everyone.

Mrs. Braun, for months we studied together from reading the pisukim to understanding the midrash and everything in between. I want to thank you for being patient and allowing me to come over when needed, even on short notice. I really had a great time learning with you.

I want to thank everyone, family and friends who traveled from near and far to join me today on this turning point in my life. There is only one thing left to say, take your best shot!