

It's Time Now

Received and Transmitted by Rabbi Hanna Tiferet Siegel

“And they sat down to eat bread, and they lifted up their eyes and looked and behold a caravan of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spices...And Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother, our flesh.” And his brothers listened to him. And there passed by Midianites, merchants, and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver...And they brought Joseph to Egypt.” Genesis 37:25-28 Vayeshev

It is said that each of the sons of Jacob had a twin sister.

Yosef's twin sister, Yosefa, followed him on that day when he went to Shechem and then Dotan, to join the other brothers who were tending the sheep. She brought fresh pita that she had baked to feed her brothers. As she sat outside their circle, she witnessed their anger and jealousy and how they wanted to kill Joseph. She heard the firstborn, Reuven, suggest that they shed no blood but, instead, place Joseph in a pit. And she saw the Ishmaelite spice traders passing through. This was her opportunity. “If you sell my brother, sell me too.” Suddenly the **Midianite** traders also appeared and the brothers made a deal with them. They knew that Yosefa was a liability so they offered her as a gift to the **Midianites** in exchange for taking troublesome Joseph away. Thus their hands were clean and they were rid of the dreamer, Joseph, and his meddling sister.

Joseph the dreamer, was taken to Egypt, and Yosefa, his twin sister, was taken to **Midian**. The first born of Rachel were sent into exile. Separated from their family and each other with larger destinies in store for each them.

The **Midianites** adopted Yosefa as their own. She was wise beyond her years. She knew the language of her people, which was valuable to them as merchants. And she knew the wisdom of her mothers, which she shared with the women of Midian. She was given priestess status and married into the lineage of the priesthood. She named her daughter, Sophia, “YaH is my destiny.” And Sophia named her firstborn daughter, Yosefa. And so it went through the years. Yosefa taught her daughters and granddaughters about her people and thus the lineage was kept alive and was respected.

When Moses was born to Amram and Yocheved, a daughter was born to Reuel and Yosefa, priest and priestess of Midian. She was their seventh daughter and they named her Tzipporah for she was born at dawn, just as the birds were singing their glorious welcome song to the new day. Tzipporah too was beloved for the beauty of her song and she blessed and encouraged everyone she met with her innate wisdom and depth.

The seven sisters went every day to water their flock at the well and every day the local shepherds teased them and took the water that they had drawn for their own flocks. One day, an unusual looking man, dressed like an Egyptian, appeared at their well. He had kind eyes. Tzipporah sang as she drew the water from the well and the local shepherds rushed forward to steal it from her. The stranger stepped forward and with a fierce and determined motion, chased them away. He said nothing, but

his eyes met hers, and their souls acknowledged their connection. That's why Moshe wanted to stay in Midian! His heart was opened and he was comforted for the first time in his life. He soon discovered that she knew the language of his mother and the ways of the people who had been and would soon be his again. He had been a stranger all his life but with her, he felt that he belonged. They called their first son, *Gersham*, "A stranger in a strange place?" Perhaps. Or maybe *Garsham*, "There I could finally live." He embraced the shepherd's path, as he tended his flock and felt the earth beneath his feet. His father-in-law guided and instructed him, a father and a friend.

Tzipporah was pregnant with their second child when Moshe went out with his flock to the sacred grove that she had revealed to him. She knew the place, the voice, the song, but he had never experienced it directly. This day was different. He noticed the bush that burned but was not consumed. He felt the holiness. He took off his shoes. He heard the voice and the song. "**Zeh shemi l'olam v'zeh zikhri l'dor vador...Eheyeh Asher Eheyeh**"

The time had come to return to his people, to reclaim his heritage, to fulfill his purpose. She knew this time was coming. When he returned to her and revealed the story of his experience, she asked him to wait until the child was born, and he did. It was only a few days before their second son came into the world. They packed their belongings and headed out. But danger was in their way. The life of her entire family was threatened. She grabbed a flint and circumcised their new son, naming him Eliezer, "God is my help." She proclaimed, "You, Moshe, are my bridegroom of blood. Together we will find our place among the people of Israel, the children of Avraham v'Sarah."

But when they met up with Aharon, Moshe's brother, he sent Tzipporah and **her sons** back. Why? He said it was too dangerous, too distracting. And Moshe needed to claim the Hebrews as his own, win their trust, and defeat the Pharaoh. They cried, but knew he was right. They each found a rock and exchanged it with each other, vowing that the time would come when they would be reunited.

Tzipporah waited with her sons, with her father and mother, with her sisters. They heard about the plagues, the Exodus from Egypt, the crossing of the Reed Sea.

"It's time now," said Tzipporah. They packed their camels and began their journey to integrate themselves as part of the Israelite family.

When Moshe saw them, he wept and they embraced. He invited his wife and **his sons** into his tent and he told them about his journey and all that had occurred. He felt comforted by their presence but he knew he could not return to what was. He had changed. His heart was filled with God's Presence and he was barely in his body.

She listened and understood but decided to remain with **her sons**. She would rejoin this people, this lineage, this story, and continue to sing her songs of healing and peace.

She gave him the rock that they had exchanged which had been filled with such great hope and love.

Several days later, Moshe ascended Mount Sinai, carrying the two rocks in one hand. The entire world was pregnant with stillness, except for the little bird that led the way, singing.ββ