

The Female Heroes of *Parashat Shemot* - Developing an Internal Moral Compass

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Heroes Inspire us. They move us to action when we might rather remain stagnant. Heroes are especially important for children, who need role models, to figure out how they want to live in the world. Adults need heroes as well. Heroes can be found everywhere, not only in the usual places like history and story books. Heroes can be found in our extended family or neighborhoods. It is possible to find heroes just by opening one's eyes and ears to those who are standing up for what's right.

Look around us today, as we celebrate and honor the women of our community for Women's League Shabbat. The women of our sisterhood are heroes!

Our Torah reading today, *Parashat Shemot*, is filled with heroes. All the heroes who sprinkle the beginning of the portion, are women; mostly ordinary women, who display extra courage. Pharaoh, the evil Egyptian King, orders the midwives to kill every male child when they deliver Israelite babies. The midwives, Shifra and Puah, disobey Pharaoh, who then orders every male Israelite baby to be thrown into the Nile. Yocheved, Moses's mother, hides Moses, and then his sister Miriam, and Batya, the daughter of Pharaoh save his life. Batya, the daughter of Pharaoh, adopts him as her own son, and raises him in the Egyptian Palace. Shifra and Puah, Yocheved, Miriam and Pharaoh's daughter, all used their strength to disobey an evil decree, and therefore perpetuated the life of the Israelites. As far as we can tell, they were not encouraged to do what they did, from an outside source. These brave women had an internal moral compass, telling them that what Pharaoh wanted them to do was immoral. These courageous women had a strong sense of right and wrong.

The women of our generation, as seen through their dedication and work for Women's League for Conservative Judaism, also guide through a moral compass of doing acts of kindness, *Chesed*. So much so, that the theme of our Women's League Torah Fund campaign this year is *Chesed*. Just as the women of *Parashat Shemot*, may we all serve as role models to those in our community, living our lives always using our internal compass of performing acts of *Chesed*, kindness, every day.

Shabbat Shalom!