

My gaze fixed on mother's dark brown eyes which drooped matching the corners of her pouted mouth. Her sorrowful voice was soft, my smile danced on my face with appreciation. "Thank you Ima."

Yosef's husky voice cut in.

"It will be another early morning for us if we wish to beat the crowds, so off to bed now everyone." As head of the family he could make such decrees—though he did not usually do so, this was a special occasion.

We bid our goodnights, and though I slept, my dreams were lively. I dreamt I was searching desperately for Matzah Bread but no matter how intensely I searched I could not find any. When I awoke with the sun I felt unsettled, even troubled, but did not know exactly why. I barely remembered the dream and the small amount I could remember was difficult to make sense of. I told myself the dream was obviously a reflection of the Passover festival we had journeyed up to the City of our God to celebrate.

With one hand, Shemreet busied herself with dressing her children, wrestled a tight tunic over Micah, and with her other hand she wriggled a sandal onto Korah's fat little foot. —and By the time she was starting preparations for the morning meal I was feeling useless, just standing around when I could be helping. But I was not allowed to help. I was unclean. Guilt for the lack of freedom to assist her swept over me and fogged my thoughts. Just then I noticed Yosef walking away from our little wagon and mother nodding for me.

"Tikvah," she said to me as I neared the back of the wagon. — "I will walk around the city with you tomorrow today so you will not be alone." I felt my heart plunge into her dark brown pools of concern, her mouth slightly pouting—reflecting my own sorrow.

"Thank you, Ima." I turned and studied Yosef's attempt at a half tent. It would afford me some privacy for certain, and I was grateful, but this was not home.

Mother nudged me inside the tent and lifted a blanket high above her head for me to change behind.

It took longer than usual for me to care for my wrappings because I did not have the privacy camping here that I did within the walls of our home. Yosef made a tent of sorts hanging from the rear of our little wagon, and mother stood in front of it holding a large blanket to form a dressing area for me. I hid close to the behind my curtain, knowing that just on the other side beyond it was a world of strangers who were passing by, and would pass their critical gazes. I could feel their critical gazes. They would wonder whether it were my parents or me who had excessive sin to bring this degree of judgment from the Lord. *This is too much to carry sometimes, Jehovah,* I wondered though, was this mother's fault? My father's? Had they sinned, and now I was paying for that sin? The thought repelled even me. "Forgive me, for thinking such a thing. But what have I done to deserve this judgment from You, Lord?"

I reached for my My dress-dres, folded neatly on the wagon seat. The fabric felt soft in my hands. I gathered the edges of its hem and slipped. I gathered the edges of the garments hem up toward its neck opening, and then slipped the it dress quickly over my head, fully aware of Mother's arms in the air, and pushing both arms through their side openings. I a. I let the material fall over my skin into place. So regally flowed the garment to fall over me to its place. The dress that had once fit my body so regally now swarmed around my skeleton frame it once defined my figure. Now it drooped unbecomingly. *I must look like a half-filled vegetable bag,* I tried fluffing the sides away from my bony hip. *When did I lose my fullness?*

"Tikvah! Aren't you finished yet?" Not since I was a child and had exasperated her had I heard that tone. Her arms must be aching.

"Yes, Ima. Please forgive me, you can drop the blanket now." Her arms fell to her sides. The groan and pinched brows more than conveyed her impatience with me.

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Comment [jh1]: This is your beginning

Comment [jh2]: instead of 'telling' the reader, 'show' Shemreet dressing her children.

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Comment [jh3]: Again, instead of 'telling,' show us what's happening.

Comment [jh4]: Let the reader know why

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Comment [jh5]: This appears to be Shemreet speaking but I see that it's Tikvah's mother. So let's add something here that you have further on down. It fits more naturally here.

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Comment [jh6]: this may come across as author intrusion. Why not have her question the facts herself?

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Comment [jh7]: let the reader see where it was

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Comment [jh8]: see how to get things moving quicker?

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