Literacy Memoir

Reading plays such a big part in our lives these days, but I hate it. It isn’t that I don’t like the idea of reading, because I do. I constantly hear people telling me how much they enjoy reading. They love getting lost in a book and being “transported” to another place when they read, that in a way, it’s an escape from their world. I guess reading for some people is like music for me. I can get completely caught up in the moment when I’m playing my guitar, the way the strings resonate in harmony together, its breathtaking. I can easily play and sing for hours without realizing how much time has passed. Music is my escape from the world. I wish I could find the joy in reading that I find in music, but I cant. Part of the reason I hate reading so much is because it’s challenging for me. Most people can read something once and completely understand it. Not me. I have to read things three, four, sometimes even five times before I understand what’s going on, and it isn’t just things I need to read for school, sometimes it can be text messages, emails, and some Facebook posts as well.

Growing up, my mom would always try to force me to read, I would butt heads with her for hours because I didn’t want to read. It made me feel stupid. I couldn’t understand what was going on the first time, or the second time I read something. I would sometimes spend ten minutes on one page, and when my mom would come to check on me, she would ask me why I wasn’t reading because I would still be on the page I was on the last time she checked on me. I was reading, but I couldn’t understand what I read, so I would reread it until I did. It was extremely frustrating, it still is, but now that I’m older, a couple of things have changed. For one, I can’t argue with the person who tells me to read, I’m in college, and reading is inevitable and two, I understand that I have to have a little bit more patience with myself because I’m not as strong as other people are in reading.

Not being a strong reader can get annoying and extremely frustrating at times, but we all have things we have to deal with, thankfully I had help. My dad was always there to help me succeed in anyway possible. Not only did he read things to me to help me comprehend them better, but he would help me with whatever homework or project I had, even if it meant staying up late to get it done, sometimes even after I went to bed. Most parents don’t do that. I realize how fortunate I am to have had a father as amazing as him.

In fifth grade, I had an assignment to write a paper about my hero, I wrote about my dad, I am now a second semester freshman in college, and nothing has changed. He is still my hero, and always will be. On August 3, 2011, he passed away. It was sudden, and very unexpected. Not a day goes by that I don’t miss him, his horribly dry sense of humor, his love for knowledge, and the sound of his voice. My dad had so much love to give to my family, without any boundaries, he was incredible, generous, patient, genius, devoted, I could go on and on, but the words wouldn’t do justice to the man.

My dad was an avid reader, and that being said, no matter what was going on that day, my dad would somehow manage to read for at least three hours. He was so passionate about it, and it tears me apart that I don’t share his love of reading. I wish reading was easier for me, I wish I could appreciate it the way I appreciate music. I could easily spend three hours a day playing my guitar and singing when I was in high school, then again, I also had my dad’s help with homework and projects and whatnot. Now that I’m in college, I’m busier than ever! I find I’m struggling just to take time to eat during the day, nonetheless play music.

Thinking I could get by without music was a mistake, I need music in my life just as much as I need air to breathe. In fact, I wrote a song about my struggles with breathing. I have a condition called Vocal Cord Dysfunction, my sophomore year, I was hospitalized and told I couldn’t sing anymore. Nine long days later, Dr. Celia Santini walked into my room, told me she had a 99% success rate, knew what was going on with me, and that she knew how to help. It’s thanks to her that I’m still singing today. The song I wrote is called “Ani Ma’amin,” which is Hebrew, (I’m Jewish) and it literally translates to “I believe.” It’s all about believing in G-d, and how a little faith can go a long way. I entered it in the 2011 NFTY National Songwriting Competition, and it won! Here are the lyrics!

**V**. In the darkest night, when nothing’s going right

Ani ma'amin You are my light.

When I feel alone Your spirit is my home;

Ruach Eloheim comforts me.

**CHORUS**

Ani ma'amin, means that I believe

B'emunah shleimah, with perfect faith

Ani ma'amin, means that I believe

That with Your help, I can do anything.

**V**. I can sing, I can soar, I can open any door

I can dream, I can plan, discover who I am

**CHORUS**

**BRIDGE**

You are my rock, the hope in my song

Its You that gives me strength to carry on

**CHORUS**

Ani ma'amin, means that I believe

B'emunah shleimah, with perfect faith

Ani ma'amin, means that I believe

That with Your help, we can do anything!

NFTY stands for the North American Federation of Temple youth. It’s basically a giant Reform Jewish youth group; there are 19 regions all over the country. It is amazing how thousands of teens come together from coast to coast and form a Kehillah Kedosha, which in English means a holy community. There are really no words that can adequately explain NFTY and how much of an impact it has on anyone… NFTY is life changing. In fact, I wrote a song about how awesome NFTY is! Here are the lyrics.

**V**.NFTY’s the place where we all belong

Jewish teens, thousands strong,

Hand in hand from coast to coast we sing

Our voices strong anticipating…

**CHORUS**

N-F-T-Y is the place to be

Where friends we’ve just met

Become our family

It’s where we sing our hearts out,

We talk, learn and pray,

Make memories that won’t ever fade…

That’s NFTY

**V**. Instant connections to friends we’ve just met

Ruach filled moments we’ll never forget

Getting up early and staying up late

Just part of what makes NFTY great…

**CHORUS**

It’s who I am…

It makes me strong…

It’s where I’ll live

My whole life long…

**CHORUS**

N-F-T-Y is the place to be

Where friends we’ve just met

Become our family

It’s where we sing our hearts out,

We talk, learn and pray,

Make memories that won’t ever fade…

That’s NFTY

We’re NFTY

I will always carry the memories I made in NFTY with me, as well as some of the friends I made there. I had a lot of trouble making friends when I was younger, but some of the friends I made in NFTY, are truly my best friends. I honestly don’t know how I would be getting by without them. They are in a way, my rock, and my anchor. I lean on them, and they lean on me and together, we have created this never-ending circle of love, trust, and friendship.

There isn’t anything I wouldn’t do for my friends. When they are upset, I get upset, when they laugh, I laugh, if something happens to one of them, I worry like there is no tomorrow. A couple of years ago, one of my close friends got really sick. I quickly turned to G-d seeing how he had helped answer my prayers before, and prayed. I prayed for healing, and a speedy recovery. I wrote a song about it. Here are more lyrics!

**V**. The winds of time gently blow

Allowing healing, hope and strength to flow

Through body, through flesh, through mind and soul

G-d hear our prayer and make us whole

**CHORUS**

Mi she-bei-rach a-vo-tei—nu (Mi shebeirach i-mo-tei-nu)

Grant us each r’fuah shleimah (Hear our prayer)

Mend our bodies

Soothe our souls

And heal our hearts

We pray to You for a fresh start

**V**. May we be blessed with courage and with faith

To face what lies ahead on the path we take

And as we journey please keep our loved ones safe

Chazak chazak v'nit cha-zek

**CHORUS**

Baruch atah Adonai rofei hacholim