



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

“What My Bar Mitzvah Means to Me”

by Alex Rawitz

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Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, in their modern forms, at times seem to be little more than excuses for a party, and have little connection to a passage into adulthood. To me, becoming a Bar Mitzvah is a significant event indeed. It means acting responsibly in all situations. This maturing process must occur while I keep my family, my beliefs and principles, and the work that got me here in high regard, never forgetting the importance of each of these things and the effect they have had on me.

As I stand up here, it marks the end of a journey that I chose to undergo. My parents certainly didn't choose this for me; after all, they would have to pay for it. I chose to join this congregation and become a Bar Mitzvah. I did this because I wanted to get in touch with my roots, and become more of a man, with more responsibility. Plus, I would get to deliver a bunch of really neat speeches - and write them myself! However, I did not understand this at the start, and I did not realize how much introspection and self-examination would be required. I only knew that this would be a challenge, something I was a bit wary of, but something I had to do nonetheless. I figured that becoming a Bar Mitzvah would cement the values that I must have in my teenage years and help me become more of a man. And, I'll admit it the party is a pleasant bonus. My parents though initially surprised, were also initially supportive, and they have helped and guided me, all the while, footing the bill.

My family has been the single most important influence on who I am; if the way we are raised truly makes us who we are, then I can thank my family for helping me to turn out relatively okay. You have already heard about some of my family's values, so you know the kinds of things they try to teach me, as well as the values I try to incorporate in my everyday life. My family and I get along well, for the most part, and we are always willing to discuss the problems we face. One thing I like about my family is that we are all willing to learn from each other. My parents are always teaching me, even if I insist I already know everything. I feel that becoming a Bar Mitzvah will mean accepting more responsibility in my family, whether it is owning up to my actions or helping out around the house more, or combing my hair (my mother added that last bit).

I can also thank my family for helping me through the Bar Mitzvah process; together we have edited my papers, discussed the ceremony and party, and prepared each other for today.

That thanks, the first of many, goes out to my parents specifically. I would also like to thank my Grandmother Ann for all the wonderful stories and her even better love; and my Aunt Stella for always being a voice of kindness and reason. I would like to thank my Aunt Tina and Uncle Greg for coming up from Maryland to be here and being a great part of my life. I would like to thank my Aunt Marcy and Uncle Mitch for their constant hospitality and caring, and my cousins Andrew, Britney, Matt, and Alex for listening and being my friends. I thank Rabbi Peter and Myrna, for looking over my papers and leading this service and this congregation so ably. I would like to thank my mentor, Richard Mann, for always being there and working so hard to make this service and my papers as good as they can be. I would like to thank Aram and Rick for the wonderful music, and Rick especially for getting me up to speed on the year one program. And, last but not least, I would like to thank you all for coming and celebrating this special day with me, and staying awake for a good 90% of the service. Thank you.