



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

“What My Bar Mitzvah Means to Me”

by Ben Farber

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When I was asked to think about what becoming a bar mitzvah means to me, I didn't have any answers right away. I know that becoming a bar mitzvah doesn't make me a man – I'll have to wait til I'm 21 for that. I do know that I become something today. I become a person who is responsible for passing down my family's history and values. In this way, I am carrying on the Jewish tradition of teaching and learning, “Talmud/Torah.” Because I am a cultural Jew, and I didn't learn Hebrew, I did not memorize parts of the Torah. Instead, I wrote about what I care about, my history, my beliefs and my actions, and I think these things will stay with me my whole life.

Through researching and writing these papers, I have learned a lot about other people, and also about myself. Even though at times I wanted to just quit and call the whole thing off, my Mom made me keep doing it. And despite some fighting – alright, a lot of fighting – we ended up doing it. And I am very proud of this accomplishment.

These papers help me understand who I am and where I fit in in our society. I don't know what I am going to be yet, but at least I know who I am. My background means a lot to me. I am proud to come from the family that I have – full of courage, hard work and overcoming hardships. A family that is not afraid to stand up for what they believe in.

Like Hank Greenberg, I am figuring out what place Judaism has in my life. For me, being Jewish is flexible. For example, this past year I did not go to Rosh Hashanah services. Instead, I chose to go to a baseball game with one of my friends who was having her birthday party there. My Mom let me go to this game, because she is encouraging me to learn how to make choices about what is important to me. Instead of going to the Congregation's services, I led our family service at home. This was a way of celebrating the holiday and keeping our culture, which is important to me, and I am thankful that my grandparents thought that it was important too.

There are many people who have helped me in this process and I would like to thank them all. I would like to thank my grandparents and great aunt Judy for having the lives that they had, and overcoming the challenges that they were faced with. Also thanks to Grandma and Grandpa for helping us have my bar mitzvah in this beautiful place.

Thanks to Cynthia for her help with these papers and for keeping me and my Mom from killing each other in the process.

Thanks to Aram and Rick for playing this great music. And thanks to all my friends and family for coming here today to help me celebrate.

I would like to thank Rabbi Peter for helping me figure out my major paper, and Rabbi Peter and Myrna for giving me ideas on ways to improve all my papers. Thanks to my mentor, Andy, for his guidance and for being my friend and a sports fan.

And lastly and most importantly, I would like to thank my Mom for her help with all aspects of preparing for this bar mitzvah. She was very patient throughout the project, and gave me a great deal of encouragement and support.

Without these people I could never have done all of this.