



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

“What My Bat Mitzvah Means to Me”

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October 21, 2006

When I first decided to have a Bat Mitzvah, it was because I wanted to understand my Jewish roots and learn where my family came from. I wanted to connect with being Jewish because up until this Bat Mitzvah preparation I had no formal exposure to Judaism.

I learned a lot about my family and where we came from. And from interviewing different members of my family I learned that the values I have are similar to those of my ancestors.

My dad wanted me to have a Bat Mitzvah for the same reason I did. He wanted me to get in touch with the Jewish part of me and to understand my Jewish identity. He was very pleased by the guidance I got from this Congregation and how the focus was on family values. He also wanted me to see that education in any form helps you to become a better person. So he thinks I learned a lot about myself by doing the different papers and by doing community service.

My mom didn't have a strong opinion about whether or not I should have a Bat Mitzvah, but she was very happy when I chose to have one. She thinks it is good to identify strongly with something and was glad that I wanted to learn about Judaism.

One thing I learned from interviewing my parents was that both of their families were not religious. In fact, my mom was raised with no religion at all.

My dad was raised as a secular Jew. He remembers asking his father if they believed in God, and his father said that as far as religion and God goes, no one should make up my dad's mind for him. My dad's parents were not raised religiously.

My mom's mother, Grandmother Helen, was raised with religion, but when she got older she started to question it.

The only members of my family that seemed to be religious were my Grandfather Daniel's parents. They were born and raised as Jews in Russia. My Great Grandfather went to temple often and my Great Grandmother kept a kosher home.

My Grandfather Daniel rejected religion at a young age, but he once told his cousin that he was proud of his Russian Jewish roots because there were a lot of outstanding Russian Jewish mathematicians, and that he was glad to be among them.

As far as my religious values go, I don't think of myself as religious. The City Congregation provides a way for me to learn about and understand my background, but I'm not obligated to believe in God. In other congregations there can be an expectation or obligation to believe in what they believe. This congregation helps people realize they can have their own beliefs and opinions, while still being connected to their Jewish culture.

Even though no one was telling me that I had to have a Bat Mitzvah, I felt like it was an important part of my education. And it is even more special to me because I made this decision myself.

I am also the only grandchild in my family to have a Bat Mitzvah, and I would like to thank my Grandmother Helen for her generosity in helping to make this day possible. I would also like to thank my Grandfather Sam for his love and support, and I am so happy that he is here today.

I want to thank my parents for all their support and hard work. My dad guided me with the research of my major paper and made great comments throughout this Bat Mitzvah process. And my mom spent hours at the computer helping me edit these papers. And thank you, mom & dad, for always being there no matter what.

Next, I would like to thank my wonderful mentor, Isabel, who invited me to her house many weekend mornings, no matter how early. Isabel talked me through this Bat Mitzvah process and helped me shape these papers, which have gone through many, many drafts.

Also, I would like to thank Myrna for spending hours with me trying to make these papers as perfect as possible. And thanks to Rabbi Peter for making suggestions along the way and for being the rabbi of our congregation. Thank you also to Anne Shonbrun and Maxine Feldman for the beautiful music.

Finally, I am grateful for all my family and friends who are here to celebrate my Bat Mitzvah with me.