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**“Choosing A Hero and a Role Model:  
Reflecting on Various Possibilities”  
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December 20, 2008**

Identifying a hero/role model was the next part of this Bar Mitzvah process, because it helps you think about people whom you may wish to emulate and whose lives can help guide you. First, I had to think about what a hero and role model are. A hero is someone who you admire for doing something extraordinary. Their accomplishment may not be something you have done or even want to do. Martin Luther King Jr. is a hero because of all he did to help civil rights, but I am not sure I want to do what he did, or if I am even capable of doing what he did.

A role model is someone who is not necessarily famous but a person who you want to emulate. A role model could be a person like Jackie Robinson for breaking the color barrier, or your dad because he achieved a high level of education.

For me, a hero and role model must share my values and I believe that the hero and role model should use the traits I value daily. I do not want someone who just uses the trait in their careers. For example for a comedian to be a role model for me, he would have to be funny in his every day life, not just when he is performing.

I was not able to identify one person who lives my values. After much thought and exploring many different people, I came to realize that I can not pick one person as a hero or role model.

First, I realized everyone here has helped me become who I am. I incorporate into who I am, things I have learned from my family and from my friends. Also through this Bar Mitzvah process I have learned a lot about all of you. There are so many people that I think are great because of their values, how they treat others, and because they have had major accomplishments in sports like soccer and wrestling.

Another reason I could not identify one person to be a hero or role model is because I also am the kind of person that is always thinking, and questioning. Without trying, my brain is a little like a computer always processing. So when I think about people who have done things I admire or who have traits I respect, I think about them and fit them into who I am. It's less like I am following their lead, and more like I am reflexively incorporating what I admire about them, into who I am, adding the "*Gabe spin*" to make it unique to me. I don't feel the "step" between when I am admiring them to when I start emulating them. It's like ALL the math problems I do in my head, without showing my work.

Before I reached the conclusion that I could not select one hero or role model, I researched many different people. I thought you would be curious to hear who I explored. I got suggestions from my mother, father, Alan, my mentor and our friend Howard. The people who were suggested all have achieved accomplishments that are relevant to me, and some believe in the values that I do. But none fit.

One person suggested by my father was Josephus. We read that he was a famous mathematician known for the Josephus problem. Josephus was born in 37 BCE and lived in Jerusalem. He participated in the war between Rome and Jerusalem and assisted the Romans.

There is one story about him that may or may not be authentic but highlights the legacy about his mathematical skills, hence “the Josephus problem.” It is told that during one battle against the Romans he and his army were forced into hiding in a cave rather than be captured and enslaved by the Romans. Faced with death, his crew decided that they would rather be dead, so they made a suicide pact to kill each other. They formed a circle and planned that each would kill another in the circle. Josephus being a mathematician quickly figured out where he and the other should stand in the circle to be the last surviving men. He was successful. However, instead of killing himself he was captured and went on to assist the Romans.

Although he helped the Romans, he also became a famous historian of Jewish life and antiquities, trying to influence people to better understand and accept Jews.

That Josephus could figure out the math in his head so quickly interested me because I love math and do all kinds of problems in my head. Josephus was in a very, very difficult situation. I cannot imagine having to make such a decision. But I could not be disloyal to my friends. By not killing himself and by working with the Romans after leaving the cave, Josephus was disloyal, and disrespectful to those who died. Anybody who could do this could not be a hero or role model of mine.

Another person I considered was Moe Berg. When my mother was cleaning out my Nona's house she found an old article about Moe Berg. She and I had never heard of him. He was a Jewish man who lived in the 1920s. As a child he always loved to play baseball, and he played on a Christian team but got kicked off that later that year because he was Jewish. However, he continued playing and was drafted and to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers. He was a mid level player like I am, but excelled in bringing the team together and instilling team spirit. These skills help the Dodgers to succeed as I helped the Bulldogs to victories. Berg also received his law degree from Columbia University and became fluent in 7 languages.

Because of his diverse skills, Berg was asked to be the U.S. goodwill ambassador to Japan to spread baseball there. Berg's success at this led the United States to again ask him to be the ambassador for the United States to Japan in the 1930s as tensions were rising between Japan and the United States. After WWII began, the United States government recruited Berg to participate in spy missions in Europe. He became knowledgeable enough about nuclear physics so he could go undercover and sit in on a high level German meeting, to see if they had developed a nuclear bomb. After the war he lived in solitude and died in 1972.

Although Moe Berg did things I enjoy doing and we have some things in common, I cannot choose him as a role model or hero. I don't see myself as a professional baseball player or spy, even though I like baseball and even though I love to read spy books and see spy movies.

As you heard music is an important value of mine. When Alan Siegel, the "family" Bar Mitzvah mentor, he was Kyra's mentor too, learned at one of our sessions that I love rock n roll music, and drumming in particular, we googled drummers to see what we could find, in our quest to find “my hero/role model.” We came up with people like Keith Moon and Ginger Baker. We also got some books on drummers and the biography of Keith Moon. I learned that Keith Moon joined The Who in 1964 and then learned that sadly he died of an overdose when he was 32 years old. This made him less appealing to me. Maybe I can just learn to drum as well as he did, and not overdose.

Among my goals is to become an engineer, so as I continued my journey for a hero/ role model, I learned about Ben Rich, and Peter Carl Goldmark, who were 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish engineers. Ben Rich was born in the Philippines in 1925. He received his undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering at UC Berkeley and his master's degree in thermodynamics from UCLA. After receiving his degrees, he was hired by Lockheed and developed many different heating and cooling systems. He created the U-2

spy plane, worked on other secret projects, and helped design the SR-71 Blackbird. He won several awards. He died in 1995.

Peter Carl Goldmark was born in Hungary in 1906. He worked for Columbia Records for many years. He was key in the development of the 33-1/3 rpm LP records. In 1940 he began to work on a system to introduce color to television, and also worked at CBS laboratories and developed the EVR (electronic video recorder), which was the basis for the VCR players. In 1977 he was awarded the National Medal of Science by President Carter.

Rich and Goldmark worked hard and accomplished a lot professionally, and I hope I can make great engineering contributions like they did. However, the traits that overlap and their accomplishments were not enough for me to view them as role models.

For my major paper I will talk about the boycotts and the role of politics during the 1936 Olympics. My mother had collected a bunch of articles for my Bar Mitzvah, one was a review of a book about Jesse Owens and the 1936 Olympic games. We got the book and that is when I first heard about Marty Glickman, an American track athlete who went to the 1936 Olympics to compete.

Marty Glickman was born in 1917 to a Romanian immigrant family who lived in the Bronx and then Brooklyn. He was a great athlete from the time he was young. In 1935 when he was 18 years old he tried out and made the Olympic track team. He was to compete in the 4 x 100 relay with a fellow Jewish teammate, Sam Stoller. The night before the games Glickman and Stoller were told they would not be allowed to participate in the event. The coaches said that they believed that the Germans had some super fast athletes competing in the event who could beat Stoller and Glickman. The coaches said they needed to have Owens and Metcalfe to win.

Glickman always believed he and Stoller were benched because they were Jewish and Avery Brundage, the head of the AOC did not want to make Hitler stand on the winning podium with two Jews. Glickman's dreams had been shattered. After the Olympics went on to become a radio and television broadcaster. When I think about him, I hope that I have the determination and courage to stick with a field I love even if it's in a different way. Also, I hope that I do not have to face the injustices that he had to put behind him. But again the "fit" was not right for him to be my hero or role model.

So after exploring all these people I was still unable to pick one person to be my hero/role model. I want to live true to my values. Who am I is for another essay at another time. Let's just say that who I am, and will become is a compilation of everyone I spoke about here as well as many others. The people I researched had something in common with me, or some qualities I appreciated. It's those attributes that I will incorporate into making the "Future Gabe" as Howard called it. Marty Glickman maintained his love of sports and became a sportscaster. Importantly, he did not become bitter. Moe Berg used sports to spread goodwill and his brains to help spy for our country. Goldmark and Rich invented things that won awards.

And I hope that I never have Josephus's problem: to choose my life over some one else's. I hope that whatever choices I make I can use my quick mathematical skills to assist me. Finally I hope that I too can pursue my dreams as an engineer and a drummer, matching the rhythmic beats of music and the methodical steps of engineering. If I achieve these goals then I will find a way to use the strengths of others to forge my own path and my place in the world.