



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

“What My Bar Mitzvah Means to Me”

**by Isaac Mann
January 17, 2010**

When I talked with Howard, my mentor, he told me that this was the least formal, and the most personal paper I had to write. I read some other of these bar and bat mitzvah papers to get a better sense of what was involved.

This was when I realized that a big part of this bar mitzvah experience and what it means to me is that through writing these papers, I get to know myself better and better. Some of the bar or bat mitzvahs admitted that they had trouble writing these papers, saying that they couldn't always concentrate or saying they were afraid their peers and relatives would interpret what they said as being strange. Others were very independent 13 and 14 year olds. Some of them wrote their papers all on their own. They sounded so mature, and I felt afraid that my papers wouldn't seem legitimate or meaningful in comparison. Then I realized that I shouldn't distract myself with comparisons. Instead I would figure out what this experience means to me.

I want this speech to be truthful and personal at the same time.

I definitely did not have the focus to do this all on my own.

Yet this process has given me a sense of my own identity, and perspective by having to choose topics and people to write about. I've learned about my family origins, values, and philosophy through interviewing grandpa, my great uncle Mike, and my parents, and hearing and reading memoirs of much more distant relatives, some of whom died a while ago. I've learned about serious environmental dangers by reading Al Gore. I'm getting more aware and taking responsibility more and more actively. Towards that end, I've asked my parents to convert from gas energy to windmill energy in order to heat our home, and I am giving two hundred fifty dollars to them from my Bar Mitzvah gifts to cover the extra cost over the next year of using the cleaner energy. I've learned about the Jewish tradition of folk tales. I read many golem stories and I became part of that tradition by writing my own Golem story. I was planning on reading you a version of it that is six pages longer than the one you heard, but my dad is an editing monster, and he just kept snipping away at it. At first I hated him for doing that but now I figure it was OK. My favorite version of the story might be the better one to read but I think this version was the better one to listen to. And besides, we'll get to the party ten minutes sooner.

Peter and Myrna, thank you for making a great program and providing me with the opportunity to make stories, study films, research family history, and learn about the environment.

Thanks to Isabelle for editing my papers, and also for reminding us of the importance of a schedule. Even though we couldn't always meet the deadline, it was good to have a reminder that Jan 17th was sooner than I thought it was. Thank you Aram for letting me star in, write, and direct my own Passover movie in 5th grade and for being an awesome teacher.

Thank you Rick for all of the interesting assignments in 6th grade, and making me more aware of the larger community that I am a part of. A special thanks to Howard, for setting reasonable guidelines, helping me express my own bar mitzvah experience, and making it easy for me to run the final mile.

Thank you Zooza, my dog, I wish you were here. Thank you for being adorable, fuzzy, and a good therapy dog for me and for all of the senior citizens.

Thank you students of Saint Ann's, P.S. 261, and Children's House

Thank you for being awesome.

Thank you Jake for being a great brother, a good role model, sharing the pleasures of performing with me, and thanks for the entertaining me and everyone, and for all of the exclusive brother moments.

Thanks mom and dad for raising me, discussing philosophy, and giving me your great traits.

And thanks to everyone for coming to my Bar Mitzvah.