



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

“What My Bat Mitzvah Means to Me”

by Rebecca Goldin

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This essay is not the usual:

“First I did it for the presents.

It was harder than I thought.

But now I’m glad I did it.”

Instead I truly believe that having a Bar or Bat Mitzvah shows your family’s and your own commitment to the community and the process of creating the ceremony. Getting to this point takes lot of effort. I believe that is how a rite of passage should be.

Rites of passage demonstrate achievement and maturity. This is something to strive for, not just something to get. As I said in my values paper, I strongly believe in hard work. I wouldn’t have enjoyed this process and the end product if it had been easy. Of course this process has to do with being Jewish. It has been a tradition for many many years. Yet within the tradition we, as Humanistic Jews, have shaped it to be more our own.

I remember Joseph’s Bar Mitzvah and how hard he worked. When he was almost done, I noticed the family plant had an old yellow branch with just one leaf. I thought how this symbolized the end of Joseph’s process. I rooted the one leaf and started my very own path, a course from the family plant to Joseph’s branch to my one leaf. Now I have a wonderful Bat Mitzvah I share with you as well as a wonderful plant. Having a Bat Mitzvah takes hard work and you grow up as you are doing it. And as they say, it takes a village to raise a child (or make a Bat Mitzvah). I also feel part of a larger community, the Jewish community, from which this tradition has been passed.

This is a tradition from the past, yet I feel we are also moving forward by being part of **this** congregation. In the **new** tradition we look within ourselves instead of just studying the Torah. Following traditions without changing and innovating them has some drawbacks. After all, if we did not change anything, I would not even have this ceremony because I am a girl and traditionally only boys could have a Bar Mitzvah

I would like to thank my mom who helped me through when I thought I would never finish and was my cheerleader all the way. Thanks to Mama for understanding that all the work and tears and screaming were necessary and for not losing her temper (as I would have in her place). Thanks to my brother with all his experience and for entertaining me when I was completely worn out. Thanks Rabbi Peter and Isabel Kaplan for making this all happen and of course my mentor, Marty, who was my brother’s mentor before mine. He is not only a mentor but a good friend. He showed me that some of the things I said wouldn’t make sense to anyone else besides me. And yet he knew what I was thinking and had ideas for better ways to say what I meant.

This has been a wonderful experience although at the end it got pretty stressful. This event and practice leading up to it showed me that I have so much love and support from my friends and family and the work made me grow as much as it showed my growth. Everyone who stays for the party will take home their very own rooting of the family plant because I love you all as family. Even if you never had or will have a Bar or Bat Mitzvah you can still be proud of your work and things that are important to you.

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