



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

“What My Bar Mitzvah Means to Me”

by Sam Lewis

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If I had not joined the City Congregation I would probably not be having a bar mitzvah or even a Jewish education.

My mom was really into the idea of joining a very secular congregation but my dad wanted something more traditional, or at least a place that was Reform where I could learn Jewish history, values and Hebrew, since he believed it was a valuable language. At that point I couldn't care less. My dad had a better Jewish educational experience growing up then my mom did so their opinions on what to do were different. Meanwhile I didn't care.

While my mom looked into temple after temple saying they were either too conservative or way too expensive or exclusive, she found whatever excuse she could to not put me in a religious one. By this time I had been to a few bar mitzvahs and instead of not caring, I really wanted to have a bar mitzvah, but I didn't care what kind. Eventually the search was narrowed down to any temple that wasn't all about god.

My mom's cousin Isabel told us about an open house at the City Congregation so we decided to check it out. I thought it was pretty cool, not only because of the stuff we learned, but because of the kids and the teachers. They were awesome. One last thing about Kidschool that I liked is that my cousin Abby was in the same class as me and she just had her bat mitzvah in April.

Then a year and a half ago, as any advertiser would put it, the road to Bar Mitzvah '07 began. That road was covered with potholes and detours, but I finally reached my destination today and it feels good. Now rewind back to '06 when I met my mentor Kim Fader and from then on there were interviews, meetings, readings and plenty of typing in order to prepare for my bar mitzvah.

I am glad I am having a Humanistic Bar Mitzvah because it really has taught me about my connection to Jewish culture, a lot more than I expected it to.

And now for the Thank- you's,

My first and greatest thank you goes out to my mom, who sat with me at the computer day after day helping me focus on my paper, and plotting to kill me. She withstood my constantly going off course and acting like someone who escaped from the loony bin. We also shared quite a bit of laughs and jokes, especially for the major paper.

Next in line is my dad, sorry I couldn't put you first but don't feel bad, you're just as good as mom. My dad was the brain and library of this operation, the wise man that I looked up to for answers, historical facts, or tips for writing my paper, and a lot of moral support when my mom was nervous out about what would happen next.

Kim Fader, my mentor, has helped and guided me every step of the way. My mom, dad. Kim and I met at least once a month at the Dobbs diner discussing the current papers and what new angle I should think about. I also received lots of email

As is essential to every Bar mitzvah a rabbi was there for me. Rabbi Peter helped me with the backbone of my papers. When the major paper loomed overhead we weren't sure where the project was headed, he met with us and helped guide me with all his knowledge and really set me on course.

And of course Myrna Baron started me on this road and the entire way was my map not just for the papers but for everything after them like how to prepare by reading the papers, and how the actual event would work.

Thanks to Aram for his musical talent and being kind enough to lead the music in this celebration. And also to Rick who did just the same. Thanks to both of you for teaching me in Kidschool.

Thanks to all of you for showing up and witnessing this event, and to all of those who have not had their bar mitzvahs yet, mazel tov.