

Beth's remarks at Jacob's Bar Mitzvah:

To say that I'm proud would be an understatement. This has been a long journey to get to this point. Many may believe that it started in Hebrew School, but actually I believe it started in utero. I know you know this story but I'm not sure that everyone in the room knows it. I remember back in the fall of 2003 during Yom Kippur services, I turned to Daddy and commented that I had just figured out that the end of my first trimester was during the High Holidays, the end of my 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester was during Chanukah, and you were due at Passover time. "This baby is going to be a very observant Jew," I exclaimed. It's not clear to me if it was this early expectation or if this naturally came to fruition, but you are very observant. Last March, you came home and declared that our family was not observant enough. You said that when you were older, you would keep Kosher and wear your Kippah all the time. I remarked, "Ok, that sounds like a good plan." The next day you came home and announced that you didn't want to wait until you were older to be more observant – you wanted to do this now. We talked about guidelines and what this would mean to our family; and secretly Dad and I thought this would last a week, at max, especially since at that time your favorite food was a bacon cheeseburger from Five Guys. But you proved us both wrong. You have been diligent in keeping up with this observance and for this, I am again proud of you. But it's not only the observance of keeping Kosher and wearing your Kippah, but also your interest in learning about the Jewish faith, its culture and its traditions that impresses me. I love hearing about what you've learned and your interpretations of those lessons. Due to this passion, I believe that you will continue to pursue learning opportunities in the shul.

You have truly enjoyed Hebrew School and all of its wonderful teachers! There are many people who have helped you along this journey starting from Ms. Lila and the Story Hour, Ms. Diane and her geography books, Mora Chaia and her fun projects, Mora Miriam and learning Hebrew, Mora Leah and her ties to Israel and Jewish life, Morat Ya'Ashua and his ability to draw out your thoughts about Judaism, Rabbi B. and his guidance through this process and of course Nancy who has nurtured your Jewish education since you were just three years old. You have been very fortunate to have so many wonderful morot/teachers. I am sure they helped to influence your love of learning.

Your love of learning extends into secular school – you have many teachers here today that have witnessed this thirst for knowledge. Their support has also helped you thrive as an individual. Your decision to invite so many of them, from when you were four all the way to your current school, shows your appreciation for their dedication to educating you.

Finally, while this Bar Mitzvah may feel like "an ending" to your Jewish learning, I think that you are only just beginning. I hope you continue to want to learn, to research your roots, to learn to speak Hebrew fluently, and continue to ask questions. Always remember, we will support you in any of these endeavors and love you dearly. Mazel Tov!

## Neil's remarks for Jacob's Bar Mitzvah

So Mom has already taken all the good lines, not surprising. However, there is still a little left to say. We are extremely impressed with what you have already accomplished in this life. You have been resilient through a number of challenges at an early age, and at your school, you were the only observant Jewish child in your elementary years. You have been very courageous and have become a leader beyond those challenges. You have been recognized for that leadership by the teachers that Mom mentioned in her speech, but you have also been recognized by this Jewish community for your ability to lead. I remember how honored we felt when you helped dedicate the land right here to build this beautiful temple. However, we even feel more honored now that you are dedicating yourself to its practices through your Bar Mitzvah this date.

If you look out, you will see so many people who are proud to know you and how you live your life. However, I know that you have told us that you live your life based on what you've been taught by the people who care about you. We always thought that you just loved to travel (which you do), but I think that it is more than that now. I think that you have gone to places like Rochester to visit Grandma and Grandpa Matlin, to Middletown to visit Grammies Heiger, and to Georgia to visit Aunt Cindy and Uncle Chris by yourself because you want to be with your family to learn in their environments. You have already told us you wish to get on a plane for both North Carolina and California sooner rather than later. We hope we can make this happen too.

Also, as Mom said but I want to reiterate, I am so impressed with your passion for learning. I remember that since you've been able to talk, you have always been inquisitive to know as much about everything as you can. I sometimes reminisce that this behavior was likely at work even before you were talking. I say this because when we used to drive anywhere with you, even when you were an infant and toddler, you seemed to be focused on looking outside at the world to "take it all in". Even now, you have told us you try and keep informed through not only the Washington Post, but also the Jerusalem Post, to get a global viewpoint of events.

So what's next for our young man? I think that the world is your oyster, even though that may be a bad choice of words for a Kosher Jew. You are starting a journey this day that I think will take you from the ancient historical roots of Judaism to the far reaches of the globe to find if there is a Jewish influence in the aboriginal peoples of the Brazilian rainforest. I also believe that you wish to make people's lives better through your actions of Tikkun Olam, including your tie-ins of the Nobody Project last year and your Bar Mitzvah project this year. Your care for those less fortunate is something that I hope continues to be nurtured as you mature and make life decisions. Mom and I love you dearly. Mazel Tov.