



May our hearts be lifted,
Our spirits refreshed,
Our understanding deepened
By the study of Torah

Marcia Falk

יתרומם לבנו
תשוב נפשנו
עמ'ק הבנתנו
בעסקנו בדברי תורה

The B'Not Mitzvah of

Ellen Donen
Susan R. Greenwald
Linda Hempel Braun
Eve Kessler
Lise Mayers-Nieburg
Heather Robinson

Kelly Sabloff
Marge Shameer
Sherry Shameer
Barbara Smith
Laura Solomon
Harriet Weinstein

Shavuot, the Eighteenth of May, Two Thousand Two
יום ב דחג השבועות 7 סיון 5762

At nine-thirty in the morning

Temple Beth El
Stamford, Connecticut

Twelve women from various backgrounds, we have joined together with a commitment to Judaism and to becoming b'not mitzvah. That was our common bond when we first met as a group a year ago. Whatever our faith or denomination, from traditional to non-observant, we had each decided that, at this time in our lives, we were ready to take on a new challenge, a momentous step along our personal journeys. We chose to clearly define our values and goals as Jews. We chose to make a commitment to learn more about the Jewish faith, its language and its heritage. We chose to become b'not mitzvah.

As we raised our understanding of this vast topic, we learned about ourselves and about each other. We had moments of self-doubt and moments of personal triumph. It has been an honor to share this experience with each other and to reach this point of knowledge and understanding together.

Each week throughout the year, Rabbi Hammerman, Hazzan Rabinowitz and Barb Moskow increased our Talmud torah, offering us knowledge and new perspectives. Among other things, we learned the prayers and customs accompanying the wearing of tallit and tefillin, how and when to bow during the services, discussed the history and meaning of kashrut, Jewish beliefs about the after-life, the prohibitions and beauty of Shabbat, and what we might like to do differently for ourselves and families.

And we learned about Shavuot, the special day chosen for our celebration. Biblically, Shavuot was referred to as an agricultural festival, when the grain harvest ended and the People of Israel would bring two loaves of leavened bread to the temple, both as a thanksgiving to G-d and as a prayer for a successful harvest. Shavuot also marked the beginning of a new agricultural season, when farmers would bring their first fruits of the land to the temple.

But, following the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, when neither of those agricultural rites could be observed, the rabbis began to tie Shavuot to the revelation at Mt. Sinai, when G-d gave and we received the Torah. One of the most beautiful images of Sinai is that of the wedding anniversary of G-d and the People of Israel: G-d is the groom; the Jewish people, the bride, and the Torah, the wedding document. Shavuot is the celebration and renewal of those vows. Often chosen as a time to renew wedding vows, Shavuot is also a time for Jews to renew their commitment to G-d and to the Jewish people, as we do today.

As a reminder of the bounties of fruits and grains brought to Jerusalem in the time of the Temple and to conjure up aromas from the orchards, it is customary to decorate homes and drape sanctuaries with greenery and fragrant oils. Trees also evoke the image of the Torah as the *etz hayyim*, the Tree of Life for all who grasp it. The combination of growing plants and the fragrance of spices may awaken us to the idea of growth in the agricultural cycle as well as in our own lives.

It is traditional to eat milk products on Shavuot, in comparison to most holidays, which call for eating meat fit for the occasion. Explanations abound. Perhaps it was a purity ritual undertaken by the Israelites to ready themselves for the Revelation. Or, maybe, when the Israelites received the laws of kashrut at Sinai, they cooked dairy foods because they realized their pots were not kosher and they did not have time to learn all the rules of kashrut. Some see eating dairy dishes with honey as a connection to Israel, the Land of Milk and Honey, or to the Torah, which is also likened to milk and honey: "Honey and milk are under your tongue." (Song of Songs 4:11). Others suggest that, just as milk is life giving after the birth of a baby, so too the Torah is life giving after the birth of a Nation.

Lastly, on Shavuot, we read the Scroll of Ruth, which weaves together the themes of harvest and Revelation. The centrality of women in this story makes it all the more meaningful to us as a group. Many scholars have discussed the custom of reading Ruth and its significance. For Ruth's devotion to Naomi, she is claimed as a direct ancestor of King David, who, tradition has it, was born and died on Shavuot. We may analogize Ruth's conversion to Judaism to our voluntary acceptance of Torah and G-d's covenant at Sinai. Each Shavuot, we again embrace the covenant. It is also said that Ruth, Naomi and Boaz distinguish themselves by their *hesed*, acts of loving kindness toward others, which go beyond what the law requires. Perhaps reading Ruth on the day commemorating our receiving the laws of Torah teaches us that law is never enough without *hesed*.

We invite you to join us as we stand anew before Sinai, separately and together, renewing our faith in a G-d who has guided us throughout history and who expects us to live for generations in righteousness and kindness.

TODAH RABAH

As we are called to the Torah as B'not Mitzvah, we would like to thank the following people:

- Rabbi Hammerman, Hazzan Rabinowitz, and Barb Moskow for their encouragement, enthusiasm, insight, and confidence in us,
- Eileen Rosner and Roberta Aronovitch, for providing guidance and oversight as we planned a luncheon for our guests.
- Rosalea Fisher, for helping us read Hebrew more proficiently,
- Barb Moskow and Mindy Rogoff, for perfecting our invitations,
- Dr. David Greenman and Dr. Donald Yanell, for donating the toothbrushes, toothpaste and dental floss for the centerpieces,
- Adam Eitelberg for his involvement and assistance,
- Previous adult b'nai mitzvah, for inspiring us to follow in their paths, advising us along that path, and joining us at the bimah today,
- Our families, for their unflagging support,
- Our fellow congregants, for their support with our group mitzvah project and,
- Our fellow Jews in Israel, who are defending what was promised to the Jewish people.

We also remember those who were martyred for being Jews. We are here, holding our heads high with pride, because they did not abandon our faith.

B'NOT MITZVAH HONORS

Shacharit

Hazzan Rabinowitz

Hallel

Hebrew

Kelly Sabloff

Susan Greenwald

English

Lise Mayers

Full Kaddish

Heather Robinson

Service for Withdrawing the Torahs from the Ark

Hebrew

Sherry Shameer

English Prayer

Harriet Weinstein

Taking Torah from the Ark

Marge Shameer

Carry Torah I

Sherry Shameer

Carry Torah II

Laura Solomon

Torah Holders

Oliver Sabloff and Jimmy Presson

Torah Reading

Gabbaim

Herbert Nieburg and Seymour Weinstein

Olat

Baalat K'riah

1. Ellen Donen
Sherry Shameer

Karen Feinberg
Denise Greenman
Susan Eitelberg

2. Marge Shameer
Laura Solomon

3. Eve Kessler
4. Harriet Weinstein
5. Heather Robinson

Susan Greenwald
Marge Shameer
Linda Hempel Braun

- Kelly Sabloff
6. Susan Greenwald
Linda Hempel Braun
7. Barbara Smith

Barbara Smith

Denise Greenman

Chatzi Kaddish

Lise Mayers

Hamagbiah (lift 1st Torah)
Hagollelet (dress 1st Torah)

Rosalea Fisher
Ellen Donen

Maftir
Maftir Reader

Lise Mayers
Karen Hainbach

Hamagbiah (lift 2nd Torah)
Hagollelet (dress 2nd Torah)

Eve Kessler
Marge Shameer

Haftarah and Blessing

B'not Mitzvah Class of 5762

Prayers

Ellen Donen
Lise Mayers

Ashrei

Harriet Weinstein
Laura Solomon

Yizkor

Rabbi and Hazzan

Holding Torahs

Shirley Fish and Denise Greenman

Service for Returning the Torahs to the Ark

Y'hal'lu
Carry Torah I
Carry Torah II
Ark Openers

Eve Kessler
Heather Robinson
Ellen Donen
Judy Aronin and Eileen Rosner

De'var Torah
Dedication of Defibrillator

Susan Greenwald
Barbara Smith, Sharon Brender,
Roberta Aronovitch, Marty Israel
Rosalea Fisher
Ellen Donen

Remarks
Presentation of Gifts

Musaf
K'dushah
Prayer for Thanksgiving
Full Kaddish
Ein Keloheinu
Aleinu
Ark Openers

Barbara Smith
Linda Hempel Braun
Eve Kessler
Ellen Donen
Ellen Donen
Heather Robinson
Emily Friedman, Sam Lipson, Jake Presson
Zach Lipson

Kiddush
Hamotzi
Provider

Kelly Sabloff
Barb Moskow
Seth Greenwald

L'chi Lach

Hazzan

Birkat Hamazone

Joelle Braun
Benjamin Burstein
Shira Burstein

Randi Braun
Eitan Burstein
Alison Greenwald

B'NOT MITZVAH CLASS OF 5762

Our B'not Mitzvah class of 5762 (2002) has engaged in activities that reflect our studies during this demanding year. As a group, we decided to weave mitzvot into our classroom activities and, individually, we pledged ourselves to social action. Learning that *tikun olam*, repairing the world, was a key element of Judaism, we wanted to do our part through *gimilut hasadim*, acts of loving kindness, *mitzvot*, and *talmud torah*, learning.

The sages taught, "*The study of Torah leads to everything*" (*talmud torah keneged kulam*). Each of us came to class with her own reasons to study and become a bat mitzvah. Our teachers provided us with a framework within which we could gain a better understanding of many of Judaism's principles and sacred texts. We understand that today is one important milestone in a life's religious journey. We are grateful to have had this chance to study and learn.

Giving sustenance to the needy is an important mitzvah and some of us prepared and served dinner to local residences for the homeless on Christmas Eve. "*For Adonai your G-d...befriends the stranger with food and clothing. You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the Land of Egypt*" (Deuteronomy 10:17-19). In addition, we have filled the baskets you see on the luncheon tables with art supplies and toiletries to be donated to people in need in our community.

The Talmud tells us that visiting and giving comfort to people with illnesses and their families is a sacred act, that "*one who visits the sick causes them to live*" (Talmud, Nedarim 40A). Those of us who have had the opportunity to support individuals with catastrophic illnesses and their families have seen faith and courage in action. We also committed ourselves to leading Temple Beth El's Project Ezra, a long-standing program of support and caring for the bereaved in our congregation.

We have given a contribution in honor of Hazzan Rabinowitz to the fund established for his beloved daughter Ilana. If you wish to contribute to this fund, your check can be made out to Families and Friends Supporting Cystic Fibrosis Care or FFSCFC, Ms. Maria Constantinides, St. Vincent's Medical Center, Suite 509, 36 Seventh Ave. N.Y., N.Y. 10011.

We also spearheaded a fundraising campaign to acquire an Automated External Defibrillator (AED). Each year, sudden cardiac death affects more than 300,000 people in the United States alone. Cardiac arrhythmias are responsible for many of these episodes of sudden death. Usually this occurs because of a problem with the electrical impulses of the heart. Defibrillation is the only known therapy for this problem. The use of an AED can restore the heart's normal rhythm if it is done within minutes of the arrest. For every minute that passes without defibrillation, a victim's chance of survival is decreased by seven to ten percent.

We embarked on this project in memory of Danielle Brender, daughter of Sharon and Avi Brender, who died on April 15, 2000 from Long QT Syndrome (LQTS), a genetic abnormality of the heart's electrical system.

Guided by Beth El member and cardiologist Ed Schuster, we called out to you, the congregation, for donations, and you responded. We were able to acquire a defibrillator, which we are dedicating today, to honor the memory of Danielle Brender. Someday, it may help save the lives of others. We thank everyone who helped make this gift possible.

Because Shabbat is the heart of Jewish community life, we devoted much of our study to learning the Shabbat rituals and prayers. We can now more meaningfully participate in Shabbat services and can create personal traditions for our families and ourselves. These acts of learning and *tikun olam* have enriched our lives and our b'not mitzvah experiences.

ELLEN DONEN
אלכא בת הערש ושיינא

Several people have asked me why I decided to become a bat mitzvah at this stage of my life. I really have not been able to give them a definitive answer.

Although I went to Sunday school as a child, I never learned Hebrew. This was something that I always regretted. Although I learned some of the prayers by rote, I always wished that I could read along in the prayer book. I kept promising myself that I would take a Hebrew course, but it didn't happen until one day I realized that my grandchildren were all reading Hebrew so well and so fluently, that I decided the time had come!

I started taking Hebrew lessons intermittently, with Shirley Fish. There were three of us studying together, so we met when it was convenient for all four of us, which was irregularly.

I found it difficult to learn a new alphabet and a new language but I kept at it, and continue to do so, thanks to Shirley.

Shortly after my oldest grandchild's bar mitzvah last year, I saw an article in the Temple bulletin about a b'not mitzvah class starting. The classes, studying Jewish history, traditions and customs, prayers, learning about Shabbat and holiday services all sounded so interesting, that I decided I would try it, not necessarily going through with the bat mitzvah itself. My friend Sue Greenwald told me that she was joining the class and urged me to, as well. Sue's parents, Aaron and Gert Raikis were very good friends of ours and our two families were very close. I only wish her parents were alive to see this day. They would be so proud of Sue and her family.

I have enjoyed the classes with Barb Moskow and Rabbi Hammerman, immensely. They both made them so interesting and meaningful and I learned a great deal. Somehow, the more you learn, the more you realize how much more there is to learn and I definitely plan to continue taking classes. Meeting and getting to know the eleven interesting and diverse women in our class was another big plus for me.

Until very recently, I still wasn't sure that I would participate in the actual b'not mitzvah service. I wasn't sure that I had the time, patience, perseverance, and fluency in Hebrew.

However, it was the encouragement from Hazzan Rabinowitz that convinced me to continue. His unending patience and guidance as well as teaching have been an inspiration to me and have really kept me going. The Hazzan's voice has become a familiar sound in our house as well as in our car, when we recently took an extensive trip. My husband

Chuck is also studying with the Hazzan, learning Torah tropes in preparation for reading Torah in June to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of his bar mitzvah. Thank you for making those tapes, Hazzan!

“Thy children shall lead.” Unbeknownst to them, my grandchildren David, Josh and Shira did inspire me to this day. And I am grateful. I now feel more like a participant at services. I know that I have learned a great deal and that I will continue to study and learn. With a combination of trepidation and excitement, I am thankful to be sharing this special day with my classmates, family members and good friends.

Dear Ellen,

On this special day of your bat mitzvah I want you to know how proud your family, friends, and I are of your accomplishment and your dedication to being more knowledgeable and committed to being a more informed and practicing Jew. I know your father and mother would be especially happy if they could be here to celebrate with you. They were very traditional.

You have been working diligently toward this day, sometimes very frustrated but determined. Today you have accomplished another goal in your life.

This past year has been intense for your studies and you were able to fit it in well among your many other volunteer commitments such as the Jewish Home for the Elderly, Hadassah, United Jewish Federation and others. You always had time for something or somebody. You never stop amazing us.

I have been watching you work on the bat mitzvah and sometimes you were studying in one room and I in another room. Sometimes we were at odds whose tape we would be listening to on the portable tape recorder or in the car on our long trips.

Today is your day and I'm confident you will do well as you do in everything else. We all sit and qvell as you become a bat mitzvah.

Love and Mazal Tov,
Chuck

SUSAN R. GREENWALD
סימה בת אהרן וגיטל

When I learned that the b'not mitzvah class was going to be offered at Temple Beth El, I knew that it was "my time." My commitment to Judaism had grown quietly and steadily over many years. A lifetime of Judaism bolstered by a year's focused study has brought me to the bimah today. I recognize that becoming a bat mitzvah is not an end unto itself, but rather one special leg of a lifetime's journey.

So here I am today, supported by family and friends I love and a caring congregation who have come to celebrate. I feel compelled to do two things—to give thanks and to remember loved ones...

GIVE THANKS/להודות

I thank God every day for life's blessings, especially for Art, Seth and Alison. Over the last year, they encouraged me, studied with me and believed in me. Sweet Alison studied the haftarah with me so many times; she could stand beside me on the bimah today and shine!

I am grateful to my mother-in-law, Claire Greenwald, for teaching me the true meaning of courage and grace. In my section of the Memorial page, you will see the Salpeter family—her entire family—who lost their lives in the Holocaust. She had the courage to go forward here in the United States, marry Bernard Greenwald and raise three terrific children, Bonnie, Art and Joyce. Her children married and have given her five grandchildren—five Jewish children who carry our faith into the next generation. What a triumph!

I would like to thank my teachers Rabbi Hammerman, Hazzan Rabinowitz and Barb Moskow for all they have given me. I appreciate all of my family and friends who have encouraged and inspired me, especially Marlyn Agatstein, Judy Aronin, Pamela Cohn-Allen, Eileen Rosner, Tracy Daniels, Aunt Abigail Ditzian, Ellen Donen, Rosalea Fisher, Debby Glasser, Eileen Goetz, Shirley Maslow, Sandy Rabinowitz, Amy SaNoguiera and Barbara Smith. Thanks also go to Rabbi Andrea Cohen-Kiener and Rabbi Bonny Gross for their wisdom and support.

REMEMBER/זכור

Remembering is bittersweet. How delighted my parents, Aaron and Gertrude Raikis, and my father-in-law, Bernard Greenwald, would be if they were here today to see Art, Seth and Ali, and to see me on the bimah becoming a bat mitzvah! Today I remember with love every person listed in my section of the Memorial page, for they are the roots from which I have grown, and I dedicate my reading of the Torah to Pamela Cohn Allen.

LINDA HEMPEL BRAUN
לאה בת דוד וחיה

Growing up an only child of only children, both of whom were Holocaust survivors, we had no family to celebrate Jewish holidays with, except for my paternal grandmother who passed away when I was ten. The few living relatives remained in France. We attended services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but I never felt any connection to the service or the religion. It wasn't until I was married with my own family that I began to think about how little I understood about my religion.

My children attend Bi-Cultural Day School. My daughter Joelle never had my help with her Hebrew homework. In 1999, I learned to read Hebrew during a one-day crash course at BCDS. Finally I could help my younger daughter Randi with her Hebrew reading. At services, I was starting to put together the words written in the siddur, and I was no longer bored. I began to look forward to attending services. Last year I joined Sisterhood Chorus, met Hazzan Rabinowitz and discovered the beautiful music of our religion.

What motivated me to take the next step and ask Hazzan if he would start another adult b'not mitzvah class was fear. Fear that when my daughter Joelle would become a bat mitzvah on May 4, 2002, I would be clueless. I felt that the only way to be comfortable with her rite of passage would be if I could experience it for myself. Little did I know that she would precede me!

For the past year, I, along with 11 others have been learning tropes, haftarah, blessings, the proper way to wear tallit, tefillin and even how to "daven". Joelle and I have practiced together many nights, and Randi has learned haftarah tropes from listening to us over and over. This has been a difficult year at times, but also one of the best years. A year of learning and connecting to my faith.

Thank you Keith, Joelle and Randi for supporting me in realizing my dreams. Thanks to Denise Greenman for always being there and giving me courage when I had none, to Morah Elisheva Kilner of Bi-Cultural for teaching me to read Hebrew. Todah rabah to my teachers Barb Moskow and Rabbi Hammerman and especially to Hazzan Rabinowitz, for your unending patience and dedication.

Dear Mom,

Wow, I don't know what to write. I guess I want to thank you for helping me with my bat mitzvah stuff, for the first few months anyway, before I started correcting you! But

we were able to study together, even though your bat mitzvah is on Shavuot, so the prayers are a little different. It's weird having a mom studying for her bat mitzvah while I study for mine. Everyone else thinks it's really cool. Such copycats.

I wish you had a bat mitzvah and "real Jewish experience" when you were my age, so you could help me with not only my bat mitzvah, but with school also, because I go to a Jewish school. Then again, Dad was bar mitzvahed, and he can't say a thing in Hebrew. Let's hope you have a bit more luck than that. Well, after a year of practice, it's finally here. You need a new hobby, especially since Randi and I are going to camp soon. Maybe you can join the choir again. That's how you got into all this stuff at shul anyway. I guess we'll just wait and see.

Love you SO much,
Jojo

Dear Mommy,

We have gathered here today to celebrate your bat-mitzvah on May 18, 2002 on Shavuot. Since I was born you took care of me when I was sick and on this day I want to thank you for all you have done for me. All the time when you are practicing with Joelle and doing the best you can do I listen and I learn from the words you say in your pasuks. I want to say if you were not born you would not have Joelle and me.

Love,
Randall

When I met you, I knew I would be in for some interesting times. To have seen how you have changed and been a participant in some of these changes, has been an honor I will always cherish. Back in 1984, you were a carefree dancer, working as a bookkeeper to make ends meet (and barely at that). I was a struggling, young professional with a really bad hairstyle and no knowledge of fashion. Somehow, we fell in love, married and brought into this world two fantastic young ladies.

Although you will never acknowledge it, I am so proud of your becoming a bat mitzvah. You have managed to overcome your fears and lack of Hebrew education to reach this goal. I know this is only the beginning, for I hear the joy in your voice as you practice your tropes. I know you want to learn and do more. I hope that each day brings you the happiness I see when you are practicing by yourself and with Jojo, and when you help Randi with her Hebrew and religious studies. Your happiness makes me proud that I can be part of this momentous occasion.

Love,
Keith

EVE KESSLER

חיה סימה

Some of my own very first memories are of snuggling with my grandmother and her teaching me the Sh'ma and Modeh Ani. "Before you go to bed, when you wake up, know that G-d is with you, Chavalah." I can hear her voice caressing me.

Growing up in an Orthodox shul, I would sit with my mother and grandmother next to the m'chitsa. While Rabbi Yitz Greenburg, one of the great minds of our time, spoke, and Hazzan Martin Horowitz, one of the great voices, prayed, I would close my eyes and sway with the music coming from the Hazzan's soul. His melodies enveloped me. I would take them with me and feel their comfort throughout the day.

I missed out on a more expansive Jewish education, however. While my brother attended a Hebrew day school, I studied at the High School of Music and Art and spent Saturdays at Julliard with a very different sort of music and mindset. Nonetheless, the idea of being Jewish--having a Jewish soul--pervaded my life. Together, a combination of growing up in the '60s and the concept of tikun olam have fueled my core belief that I could change the world. It is said that if we all do our work in this world, we prepare it as a dwelling place for G-d.

Shavuot is a time to renew vows and to declare our dedication to the land of Israel and to our faith in G-d's promises. Not having become a bat mitzvah has been a missing piece for me in a full life. A recent series of illnesses has fueled my decision to take the time and opportunity now to renew my commitment to Judaism, to learning and to my own personal faith. I feel my grandmother's arms around me as I wrap myself in my new tallit and experience the joy of this day. Her voice encourages, praises. I know that G-d is with me.

Recalling the generations

I wrap myself

in the tallit.

May my mind be clear,

my spirit open,

as I envelop myself in prayer.

-Marcia Falk, The Book of Blessings



Dear Mommy,

We love you so much and are glad you have made yourself a "real woman."

Love, Jimmy and Jake

For my sons Jimmy and Jake, my love is with you as you take your first steps to become a bar mitzvot at the beginning of a long Jewish life. Thank you, my sweet boys, for your hugs and kisses of support; Mom, for always believing in me; Dad, for showing me that it's always possible, that you could chant your haftarah at 70, 80 and 82; to both of you for showing me dedication, persistence and perfection in all you do.

Be who you are
And may you be blessed
in all that you are.

Thank you Rabbi and Barb for the background knowledge you have imparted; to Barb for the special evening we wrapped ourselves in tallit and donned tefillin; and to the Hazzan for putting his heart and soul into helping us reach this place, a special and holy place of faith and love.

Dearest Eve,

In every room of our home, there is something of beauty that you have made or painted or photographed or your artistry has produced and you have given to us. There are reminders everywhere of you and your talents and your accomplishments, from your earliest crayon masterpiece, your Phi Beta Kappa honor, your Law and other Degrees, your music, to your adored children. You have dedicated your extraordinary talents as a lawyer and as a recognized member of your community to helping and benefiting the needy and less fortunate. As the devoted mother of Jimmy and Jake, you have lovingly guided and supported them on their journey through life, instilling in them *hesed*, a desire to treat people with love and kindness.

Our thoughts are of you and of the blessed family that you have given us, as you become a bat mitzvah and celebrate womanhood and a commitment to Yiddishkeit and values based upon the teachings of the Torah. It is our fervent prayer, our loving daughter, that you will go from strength to strength, in good health and with a peaceful heart, and continue to be a role model to Jimmy and Jake and all who have the pleasure to know you.

With love and all of G-d's blessings, Mother and Dad

Eve dearest,

How exciting and very wonderful that you are being "bat mitzvahed." That you keep achieving with all that you have to do in your daily life is a wonderment.

Always a hard worker--studying intensely at whatever interested you--you have become whatever you mastered: a musician, an artist, a photographer, an archaeologist, a lawyer, an educator and a benefactor of children with disabilities so that they may lead happier and more successful lives. And as a mother of two treasured ones, you have inspired and helped them to appreciate learning and all things beautiful.

You are the daughter of my dearly beloved brother and the only niece to carry on my dearest mother's name--Chava--who in her lifetime was a true woman of valor. You will be proud to know that her father was a scribe and when he brought his whole family to America from Russia, he donated a torah he had created to a school in NYC in honor of his oldest daughter's wedding.

Hopefully, this Spiritual experience will be a blessing for you and will lift and restore you physically and emotionally and give you back your beautiful, smiling face.

My dearest love, Aunt Glady

LISE MAYERS
אלישבע בת לב שלמה ואביבה

If I had thought about it five years ago, I would never have imagined becoming a bat mitzvah. I grew up always knowing I was Jewish/different than the other kids in the neighborhood. However, my family was unaffiliated and although some Yiddish words and traditional foods were part of our routine existence, I did not have a context for them. As a teenager we began to celebrate Jewish holidays more consistently, the local school began giving time off for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and I began to be aware of Judaism in a basic sense. As time passed, I learned bits and pieces of Jewish heritage and began to feel a little more comfortable with attending synagogue. My husband helped to increase my awareness of Jewish heritage and traditions.

Over the past few years, I have felt more positive about paying attention to the spiritual aspects of my life. In part, this has been due to the warm, supportive environment that my husband and I found when we joined Beth El (both in terms of clergy and congregants). Although I was hesitant to take the risk of becoming a bat mitzvah, I am glad that I did. The learning has been very rewarding and I have met many wonderful people in the process.

My parents have always encouraged independence and trying new experiences even if there is a risk. Therefore, it seems particularly fitting that we are becoming b'not mitzvah on Shavuot, which emphasizes learning through the giving of the Torah and tells the story of women functioning independently in a man's world. The book of Ruth, which is read on Shavuot, is the only biblical book besides Esther, which is named for a woman.

A modern interpretation that resonated with me because of my social work background is the following: Roberta Apfel's and Lise Grondahl's Feminine Plurals compares Ruth and Naomi's journey to psychotherapy: "In therapy and in learning to be a therapist in supervision, the process of looking at yourself, your pain, fears and woundedness, is terrifying... The journey often starts as it did for Ruth and Naomi at a time of utter darkness, a time of despair, pain and loss. The supervisor and therapist offer to walk beside you all along the way, holding the light, providing hope, which makes the journey possible. Ruth and Naomi embarked on a journey with the hope that as difficult as it might be, they would end up at a better place."

As we learned in class, Shavuot is a multifaceted holiday with many layers of significance and symbolism. It is unique as a festival in that it's focus changed when the original purpose as a spring agricultural festival became obsolete thousands of years ago after the destruction of the temple when Jews no longer came to Jerusalem to give thanks. The giving of the Torah and the importance of learning were later interpretations that were attached to this holiday.

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank my husband Herb for his support during this process. He has shared his in-depth knowledge with me, which has helped to provide a framework for my studies. The Rabbi and Barb Moskow have given me much to think about for which I am grateful. The Hazzan's encouragement and patience has been much appreciated.

Lise,

I am happy and proud to have shared this experience with you even if it was challenging at times.

Herb

HEATHER ROBINSON
חנה בת אברהם ושרה

I was raised a Quaker, or "Friend", in a religion whose central method of worship is meditation. While aspects of the faith were compelling, in my teen years I decided that I was not a Christian, and my search for meaning and a spiritual home began. Looking back, I suppose that my conversion to Judaism was inevitable; I was drawn to Jewish friends, rituals, holidays, and monotheistic belief. In 1992, prior to marrying Ira Friedman, I converted at Greenwich Reform Synagogue.

We became members at Temple Beth El a few years ago. I have always enjoyed celebrating Jewish holidays, especially with my children, who are always delighted to prepare for another special event. Still, I longed for a better comprehension of the service and prayers. Spurred on by a wonderful friend and member, Marlyn Agatstein, I decided to enter the bat mitzvah class last May. It has been a challenging, but extremely rewarding experience!

My appreciation goes to each of our teachers, Rabbi Hammerman, Hazzan Rabinowitz, Barb Moskow, and Rosalea Fisher, for believing in our ability to accomplish this objective, despite a limited learning timeframe, and students with a wide range of Jewish knowledge and backgrounds.

I wish to thank my friends, for encouraging me on this path, and especially my family, Ira, Emily and Aaron, who have had to endure my Thursday night absences, as well as my mangling of tropes over the past 12 months.

I am humbled by the bravery of Ira's mother, Lilly, and her three sisters, Celia, Eva, and Ilona, who survived the Holocaust through will, wisdom, and unremitting commitment to each other. To them, and to the entire Friedman family, whose existence depended on that courage, I give thanks. Without them I would not have been inspired to pursue this goal.

My beloved "eishess chayil," today you are a Balabusta! Of course Emily, Aaron and I are very proud of you, but perhaps not as much so as Bubby! It is our fervent wish that you'll now walk that final step - by developing a taste for chulent. I know you've learned a great deal from this experience, and will teach us all by your example what it truly means to be a member of the Chosen people. You're in rather good company, having made the same choice as G-d. We love you, and Mazel Tov!

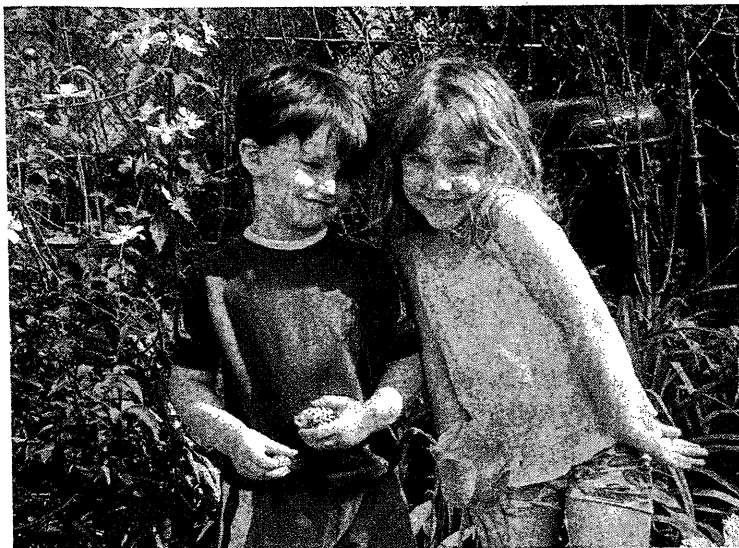
Your loving mishpucha, Yitzchak Ben-Aaron Yehudah, Davida Ruth Ben-Yitzchak, and Aaron Yehudah Ben-Yitzchak

Dear Mom,

I hope you don't feel too scared to go up on the bimah. I want to wish you good luck with your friends.

Love, Emily

I love you Mom. Aaron



In a single, powerful moment, you can remove the veil that blankets your perception of reality. You will see, in an unmistakable, unshakable flash, that you are standing in your place in the great chain of creation, among a huge camp of angels and holy beings. You yourself are one of them.

--Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, Conscious Community

KELLY SABLOFF
מלכה בת אברהם ושרה

The day I joined this class, I went home so excited. I was in awe of the strength of the women sitting around the table. I have learned much from these women, from this experience. I feel that it was very special and I would like to thank our teachers and my classmates for their knowledge and caring.

Dear Mom,

I think you sing very well, you're learning a lot and I hope you keep learning more Hebrew. I hope you have a good day.

Love, Oliver

To my best friend and dearest love,

Over seventeen years ago, when I decided not to invite you to my bar-mitzvah (we had met only a few months before and we were just getting to know each other), I certainly never imagined that we would both be celebrating your bat-mitzvah together all these years later. But here we happily are.

Of course, I am very proud of your accomplishments today; you have worked diligently and have done tremendously well. I am even more proud of who you are every day - a beautiful, wise, patient, compassionate and loving woman. AND you love me! How lucky am I!

I share your gratitude toward your teachers on this path: the Rabbi, the Hazzan and Barb. All have been great instructors, sharing much more than mere information. They, along with your classmates and other members of the synagogue community have welcomed us to our new hometown. We appreciate these efforts greatly and thank everyone graciously.

I look forward to all our joyful days together -- thanks for being there when I needed you. I have loved you for so long, I love you today and I will love you forever.

Matthew

We have come to know Kelly as sympathetic, caring, loving, intelligent and somewhat shy. When Matthew and Kelly had become serious about their relationship, Matthew was living and working in New York City. Kelly lived in Montreal and began joining us regularly for Shabbat dinner at our home. We usually served the traditional chicken (on the bone) dinner. We had Shabbat dinner together for months until we discovered that Kelly does not like chicken on the bone, preferring boneless breasts. She never said anything and always complimented us on the lovely dinner. When we questioned Matthew why he failed to inform us of this highly relevant information, he said, "She has to learn to speak up for herself."

We love you, are very proud of your accomplishments and are very happy to be here sharing this day.

Leonard and Libby

Hi Kelly,

I had my misgivings when you first decided to convert to Judaism. I wasn't sure you had fully considered what you were giving up. Although we were never a particularly religious family, we did observe all the cultural traditions that bring families together.

But over the past year, I've seen a new contentment in you, and realize that you're not so much giving up something, as reaching out and embracing a way of life that's opening up a whole new range of cultural experiences to you.

You've dedicated time and effort in preparing yourself and Ollie for this day - studying the Torah and learning the prayers, taking Ollie to synagogue, and practicing at home.

I share your happiness and your pride.

Love to all three of you,
Mom

MARGE SHAMEER
רות בת שמואל הלוי ואסתר

When I decided to become an adult bat mitzvah many of my friends and relatives asked me "Why?" I had a difficult time getting them to understand that although I regularly go to services for years, light Sabbath candles weekly, and celebrate the holidays in a traditional fashion, I really knew very little about our religion and the meaning of the services. I also wanted to be able to follow the (Hebrew) language of the prayers, be a part of the service, and understand the rituals involved. I wanted to learn more about the history and traditions of our people and be connected to our heritage in a meaningful way.

And so I stand here today, and as my late husband passed the Torah on to our son, Danny, at the time of his Bar Mitzvah, it is with great honor, pride and joy that I will be handing the Torah over to our daughter, Sherry, passing our heritage on "Mi Dor Le Dor."

Thank you, Rabbi Hammerman and Hazzan Rabinowitz for your patience and valuable teachings. Thanks also to Ben Soifer, Shirley Fish, and Rosalea Fisher for teaching me to read Hebrew.

Most of all, I want to thank my children, Danny and Sherry, for their love, endless support, encouragement and belief in my ability to achieve this goal.

~~~~~

Mom,

Congratulations on your bat mitzvah. Had you gone through it as a 13-year-old girl, I would not have had this chance to see it -- let alone experience it with you in the months you spent learning and preparing for this special day.

As you prepared, I remembered my Bar Mitzvah. You and Dad helped me study. I hope, in some small way, I have been as supportive and helpful. This is an exciting day, and I am proud of your accomplishment. May the lessons you learn from this experience stay with you forever.

Your loving son,  
Danny

Dear Mummie,

I am so thrilled that you're doing this with me and so proud of you for reading Torah. I know lots of women are doing that today, but you are doing it with less training and doing a fine job. Can you imagine what the Chief Rabbi in Germany who converted your mother would say if he could see you now? Or the rabbi in Israel who married you and Daddy? You've been the first in your family to do many things, but I don't think anything beats this!

All my love,  
Sherry

**SHERRY SHAMEER**  
**שרונה בת אליהו הכהן ורות**

My decision to become an adult bat mitzvah was a very personal one. I feel blessed that I have taken on this commitment with my mother. It adds more meaning to the words, from generation to generation. I just wish more than anything else, that my father, who lived the words of the Torah and taught us its message, were here to see me become an adult bat mitzvah.

I am very grateful to Rabbi Hammerman and Hazzan Rabinowitz for helping to appreciate the Jewish approach to life and make me realize that our religion is not just about sorrow, but love and celebration.

Many thanks to Ben Soifer and Shirley Fish for teaching me to read Hebrew and to Rosalea Fisher for helping me reach a higher level of Hebrew literacy. I also appreciate Paul Bashan's synagogue lessons, which made me feel more comfortable with the service. Karen Feinberg and Denise Greenman's enthusiasm about their adult b'not mitzvah inspired me to pursue this opportunity to become an adult bat mitzvah.

Mostly, I am eternally grateful to my family for having the courage and conviction to live proudly as Jews.

---

Sherry,

Congratulations on your bat mitzvah. When you told me you planned to have a bat mitzvah, I was very pleased. You have learned a great deal, and I trust these lessons will help guide you through life.

As you prepared for this momentous day, I overheard you practice on occasion, and it brought me back to the time when I, too, prepared for my Bar Mitzvah. This is an experience that will stay with you forever, and I am proud of you.

Love, your brother, Danny

Dear Sherry,

When I mentioned my desire to become an adult bat mitzvah and you told me that you shared this interest, I was delighted. You are not just my daughter, Sherry, but also one

of my closest friends, and to be able to share this experience with you adds another dimension to the bond between us. Our family has always been very close, and just like your brother, your father would have been so proud to share this moment with you. Congratulations, and may you always be blessed with love and peace on earth.

Love,  
Mom

**BARBARA SMITH**  
**צביה באשא בת דוד ליב ומלכה**

My journey as a religious seeker began many years ago and although this journey has taken me on many divergent paths, it has ultimately led me back home. Through my wandering, I came to understand that the truths I was seeking as well as my need to grow as a Jew and as a citizen of the world were inextricably bound in the basic tenants of our faith.

As a seeker, I yearned to understand the insights and the spiritual practices of our people. These are the same practices that have sustained us for thousands of years. I felt that my search for the deeper meaning that lies buried beneath the framework could be discovered if I went through the process of becoming a bat mitzvah. To explore the practices of our people as well as develop a personal history with the practice motivated me along the way. I believe that through this process each one of us becomes a strong link in the chain that joins one generation to the next.

The process of learning opens our eyes to the wonders of faith and our hearts to feel the truth in the truest sense of the word. Learning engenders greater respect and understanding in the student for the subject. The task of study, with its attention to details, is a meditation in action. This meditation trains the mind to focus and opens the heart. The emotions and the intellect are nurtured and can grow through this effort. It is through this study that we find that the greatest of revelations are there to be found in everyday life. The ability to transform the mundane into what is beautiful is made easier through study and prayer. It is with these tools that I can design the blueprint to create my own sacred space. It is powerful to know that the tools I am working with are the very tools that our ancestors have used to build their connections with G-d.

My bat mitzvah training has provided me with the map as well as the compass to continue my journey. The great Talmudic sage Simon the Just taught that the world stands on three things: Torah, Avodah and Gemilut Chasidim. The Torah is the book of instruction, it is the road map that guides our minds and our souls. By adhering to the commandments, mitzvot, we can grow as human beings. It is through the discipline of work, Avodah, that we can actualize our fullest potential. Discipline gives our lives direction and focus. We can often be liberated from the drone of our inner discomfort when we add the comfort of discipline. The remaining foundation of the world, Gemilut Chasidim, acts of loving-kindness, are central to all of Jewish life. It is only by doing for others that we can alter the course of our own lives. It is through a selfless attitude that we can achieve real harmony internally and create the balance that we all long for.

Becoming a bat mitzvah is another step along the endless journey called life. It is with great joy, appreciation for all of my teachers and admiration for those who have taken the journey before me that I take this step today.

## LAURA SOLOMON

### לאה בריינה

#### My Reasons for Wanting to Become a Bat Mitzvah

For me, wanting to become a bat mitzvah has been about knowledge. To understand the history of the Jewish people and why we do things on certain holidays. To be able to answer questions from my non-Jewish friends and colleagues rather than guess or admit that I don't really know the answer. To be able to explain to my children, rather than ask them, the meaning behind certain practices. To carry on traditions with a sense of purpose. To be able to read Hebrew - - finally, after two attempts at crash courses. To be able to sing along when I go to synagogue. To know what page we're on without having to ask the person next to me. To understand the intent and messages behind the prayers.

Growing up, I never attended Hebrew school and only went to Sunday school for two years. This became my standard excuse for not having the answers or understanding what one would expect from someone Jewish.

Sitting in a circle last May at our very first session, and taking turns explaining why we decided to become b'not mitzvah, I realized the intensity of my desire to "finally know." I wasn't doing this to stand on the bimah or read from the Torah. It wasn't about the service, the celebration or proving that I could do it. It was, and still is, about knowledge.

And through this knowledge, I hope to feel more connected - - to the Jewish religion, to the Jewish people, to the history and the traditions and to synagogue. Beyond feeling Jewish because I was born and raised a Jew, I want to practice being Jewish, more fully and consistently. I want to do this for me and for my children.

One year later, I am not where I thought I'd be. I thought I'd know more about Jewish history, prayers, holidays, etc. I'd thought I'd be almost finished making up for what I never learned. I thought I'd be done with what I needed to know to feel smart about being Jewish.

Now I know how unrealistic my expectations were. Of course, after only a year, I still have much to learn. Of course, I still can't answer many questions about why Jews do certain things. And it makes sense that I am still unable to read Hebrew fluently. I can sing only a handful of songs and am not sure of the meaning behind many of the prayers I learned to recite.

But what's important is that I know a great deal more than I did a year ago and I am on my way to knowing a whole lot more a year from now. And rather than feeling discouraged that I am not where I had hoped to be, I am actually looking forward to the

learning that is ahead of me. "The meaning of life is the journey and not the destination" is a saying that helps to remind me of this.

---

Messages from my family:

Sam (10 years) "I hope you know everything you should and I hope you don't feel pressured."

Zack (6 years) "I hope that I will get to light one of the candles."

Gary (husband) "I'm very proud of you."

**HARRIET S. WEINSTEIN**

**חנה שרה**

**My Bat Mitzvah**

The bench opposite the Hazzan's office at Temple Beth El where I'm sitting is not uncomfortable. My discomfort comes from within me, trying to accept my role as a student receiving bat mitzvah tutoring.

I'm nervous as I sit at the Hazzan's desk. "I practiced, but the work doesn't reflect my study," I say to him.

"Begin," the Hazzan says.

I'm a member of an adult 12-woman b'not mitzvah class. We have been studying for a year, and now that the event is fast approaching, many of us meet with the Hazzan during the week. On this evening, a young boy is practicing prayers with the Hazzan. After my session, a young girl will be getting ready for her bat mitzvah.

Those 13-year-olds and my class are connected, seeking to take an active role celebrating the traditions and rituals of Judaism. For my part, I have been relearning the core beliefs of our religion and struggling to learn the Hebrew I had once practiced in Hebrew school. (I had been confirmed).

My husband and I have enormous differences in our religious backgrounds. He is proficient in Hebrew and has a wonderful insight into the rituals of the religion. We had a difficult time finding a synagogue that would accommodate both our needs. When we joined Temple Beth El several years ago, I began to attend services.

I joined the b'not mitzvah class because I want to participate more fully in the Temple services, either as a member of the congregation seated in the sanctuary, or on the bimah. This is an exciting time to join or rejoin Judaism. Temple Beth El and other conservative synagogues are seeking to include congregations in a more participatory type of prayer and song. I look forward to reading and singing the prayers with joy and understanding.

During Passover, my two grown children read several Hebrew selections from the Haggadah. Their reading is better than mine will ever be, but I am pleased that I have started to study, and hope that I may become more proficient in Hebrew.

Thank you Rabbi Hammerman, Barb Moskow and Hazzan Rabinowitz for the energy, knowledge, and good humor you have shared with our class.



~~~~~

Harriet, your bat mitzvah is to me
Like those ancient songs of yore
The preparation of which
Frequently brought melody to our shore

No more the weekly tune
Return to daily themes
A new moon
Has arisen it seems.

Play it, Sam and here's looking at you, kid.

Sy Weinstein

MEDITATIONS

Torah

By Barbara D. Holender

*Even when you hold it in your arms,
you have not grasped it.
Wrapped and turned in upon itself
the scroll says, Not yet.*

*Even when you take them into your eyes,
you have not seen them; elegant
in their crowns the letters stand aloof.*

*Even when you taste them in your mouth
and roll them on your tongue
or bite the sharp unyielding strokes
they say, Not yet.*

*And when the sounds pour from your throat
and reach deep into your lungs for breath,
even then the words say, Not quite.*

*But when your heart knows its own hunger
and your mind is seized and shaken,
and in the narrow space between the lines
your soul builds its nest,*

*Now, says the Torah, now
You begin to understand.*

*When a person is singing and cannot lift his voice, and another comes and sings with him,
another who can lift his voice, the first will be able to lift his voice, too. That is the secret
of the bond between spirits.--- Martin Buber*

Sh'ma: Personal Declaration of Faith

From The Daily Cycle: Blessings for the End of the Day

Hear, O Israel—

*The divine abounds everywhere
and dwells in everything;
the many are One.*

*Loving life
and its mysterious source
with all my heart
and all my spirit,
all my senses and strength,
I take upon myself
these promises:
to care for the earth
and those who live upon it,
to pursue justice and peace,
to love kindness and compassion.
I will teach this to our children
throughout the passage of the day—
as I dwell in my home
and as I go on my journey,
from the time I rise
until I fall asleep.
And may my actions
be faithful to my words
that our children's children
may live to know:
Truth and kindness
have embraced,
peace and justice have kissed
and are one.*

*May the blessings of peace and kindness,
Graciousness, goodness, and compassion
Flow among us
And all the communities of Israel,
All the peoples of the world.*

--Marcia Falk

DEDICATION

On this special Shabbat we recall the memories of relatives who live in our hearts today, and dedicate this booklet to them.

Linda Hempel Braun

Chet Braun
Sophie Brownstein
Salomon Cynamon
Pauline (Pesa) Hempel

Rose Brownstein
Blanche (Blima) Cynamon
Ela Hempel

Ellen Donen

Jean Krakower (mother)
Helen Donen (mother-in-law)
Louis Baer (uncle)

Harry Krakower (father)
Fanny Schram (great aunt)
Elaine Leibowitz (cousin)

Susan Greenwald

Irving Ditzian
Bernard Greenwald
Morris Greenwald
Gertrude and Aaron Raikis
Sarah and Samuel Raikis

Eva and Oscar Garten
Esther and David Greenwald
Saul Maslow
Meyer Raikis
Bronia, Oscar, Rika, Doris, and
Lotte Salpeter
Irving Schattner
Rosalind and Henry Vogel

David Schattner
Steven Schattner
Pamela Cohn Allen

Eve Kessler

For my grandmother, Rose H. Weseley Yarmark, and my great uncle, Dr. Louis B Weseley. Their love of life, knowledge and Judaism, and their love for me have helped shape my life and give it meaning.

Lise Mayers

Ruth Nieburg
Bess Finkelstein
Rachel Tanur

Ralph Nieburg
Charlotte Conklin
Ed Mark

Heather Robinson

Max Trager
Ludwig Friedman

Louis Slomovitz
Celia Rutner

Kelly Sabloff

Gary Norman

Marge and Sherry Shameer

Alan E. Shameer
Esther and Israel Menachem Stosser
Golda Stosser
Yoel Stosser
Zipora and Zvi Rottelman

Liselotte and Lothar Simenauer
Lucie and Joseph Simenauer
Mark Inger
Richard Inger
Nitza Rottelman

Barbara Smith

Bella Steinberg
Max Steinberg
Joseph Steinberg
Pamela Cohn Allen

Esther Smith
Abraham Smith
Danielle Brender

Laura Solomon

Samuel Solomon (father)
Regina Klurstein (grandmother)
John Fredericks (friend)

Ethel Solomon (grandmother)
Leon Solomon (cousin)

Harriet Weinstein

Hilda and Joseph Lerner

Goldie and Adolph Weinstein

L'CHI LACH

Music: Debbie Friedman
Lyrics: Debbie Friedman & Savina Teubal
Based on Genesis 12: 1-2

Gently, slowly

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is composed of eighth and quarter notes, often beamed in pairs. Chords are indicated by letters above the staff. The lyrics are written below the staff, with some words hyphenated across lines.

Chords: D, A, Em7, Asus4, A7, D, A, Em7, Asus4, A7, F#m7, Bm, Em, Asus4, A7, D, G, A, D, G, A, D, Bm, Em7, A7, D, Em, A7, D, A, Em7, Asus4, A7, D, A, Em7, Asus4, A7, F#m7, Bm, Em, Asus4, A7, D, G, D, G, D, Bm, Em7, A7, D, Em7, A7, D, Bm7, Em7, A7, D.

Lyrics:

L' - chi lach, to a land that I will show you leich l'-cha, — to a
place you do not know L' - chi lach, on your jour-ney I will bless you
and you shall be a bless-ing, you shall be a bless-ing, you shall be a bless-ing l' - chi
lach L' - chi lach, and I shall make your name great
leich l'-cha, — and — all shall praise your name L' - chi lach to the
place that I will show you l'-sim-chat cha - yim, l'-sim-chat cha - yim,
l'-sim-chat cha-yim l' - chi lach you shall be a bless - ing,
you shall be a bless - ing, and you shall be a bless-ing l' - chi lach

A MUSICAL TRIBUTE TO HAZZAN

Dedicated by the class of 5762
(sing to the tune of "My Favorite Things")
music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Sue Greenwald

Not a bris or bar mitzvah, it is a bat,
Eager we are, but true mavens we're not-
A tune we can't carry, we can't even sing,
But Hazzan's there to take us right under his wing!

We cannot help it, we feel like a dope,
Explain it once more, tell us, what is a trope?
Remember our places and be there on time,
It's getting too crowded inside of our minds!

Chorus:

WHEN SHABBAT COMES, WHEN IT'S OUR TURN,
WHEN WE'RE FEELIN' SAD, WE LOOK AT HAZZAN AND HE PROMPTS US
AND THEN, WE DON'T FEEL-SO-BAD!

The dog ate my tape and my notebook is gone,
Is it a parsha, haftarah or song?
Hazzan, he just smiles 'cuz he's heard everything,
"Come on," he says, "ladies, now let's start to sing!"

We know he would like for our voice to go higher,
We need a new tape; that one went through the dryer!
Is that a chet or a tet or a pey(pay)?
These are the things that we study today!

Chorus

When we made the decision to follow this path,
Hazzan was so kind, at us he never would laugh.
Week after week, he would help us to learn,
Treated us special, we each had our turn-

We think we get it; we feel elation,
Wait—is it an accent or just punctuation?
To learn with Hazzan was an honor, it's true,
We still can't believe what he always would do!

Final Chorus:

THEN SHABBAT CAME, IT WAS OUR TURN,
WE WERE FEELIN' SAD- WE LOOKED AT HAZZAN;
HE SMILED BACK-AND THEN— WE ALL FELT SO VERY GLAD

PUTTING ON TEFILLIN

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to wear tefillin



Meditations on the Morning Blessings

Note: The following meditations (*kavanot*) on the Morning Blessings ("*Birchot Ha'Shachar*") were composed by Beth El congregant Pamela Cohn Allen. Pamela has long inspired us in life, most recently through her overcoming severe illness, and now she inspires us in prayer. I thank her for the permission to reprint this, and I hope that it will enable all of us to gain from all our prayers the type of sanctity, gratitude and serenity Pamela gained from her experience of living the Morning Blessings. The Blessings, by the way, are located on page 10 of the morning minyan prayer book (where Frank always begins), and page 14 of the Shabbat morning book (where our Morning Meditations almost always begin, each Shabbat at 9:00 a.m.). Feel free to join us anytime, although these blessings can also be recited on one's own.

JH

To my dear family and friends,

Friday morning was another turning point along this road. My morning prayers (*birchot hashachar*) had been recited or meditated upon, during those weeks in hospital, either prone, or propped up in bed, or in my most upright position in the pillowed chair overlooking the hospital entrance.

Since coming home, I usually wake around 4.30 a.m. with the first tentative chirping of cardinals and parrots (yes parrots, whose ancestors escaped some time ago from the Bridgeport Zoo), as they rub their eyes sleepily with their wings. That is the time for Shacharit, as pre-dawn peers through the blinds in the bathroom, lighting up the leaves on the windowsill.

Until Friday.

That beautiful morning I felt strong and inspired. Up early - and off I drove to Westport, CT. Sites first on the Captain's Table, a tiny nook on a side street which brews the best soups and bakes the best scones this side of Devon, England. It was a blueberry scone I chose, hot out of the oven, crusty on the outside, softly melting on the inside, with some steaming decaf - and I continued on to Compo Beach, exhilarating in my tasties en route.

Parked the car, and started to WALK! (My legs, arms and head are strong. My tummy, welllllll...) And walking, recited the Shacharit prayers - *Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam asher natan lesechvi vina l'havchin bein yom uvein layla*.

Praised are you, Adonai our God, who gave roosters the wisdom to distinguish between night and day (I love this prayer with the deepest delight! And if any of you read Hebrew, please treat yourselves to a book called *Binat Hasechvi* - a pearl of all pearls). It is only we who need alarm clocks. The rest of God's creation knows, in every season, when daylight emerges from night's blanket.

She asani betsalmo. Who created me in the Divine image: literally, in God's shadow. (What an extraordinary concept; and how enormous our responsibility.....)

She asani Yisrael. Who made me part of the people of Israel. (There was not a day, living in Jerusalem in the days when I was not consciously reciting the morning prayers, when I didn't look out over the Judean hills and feel overwhelmed at the knowledge, and implications, of standing in that place.....)

She asani bat-horin. Who made me free.

(This, and most of the other prayers, are usually universalist for me. But Friday morning, what freedom I felt in being able to walk along that sparkling seashore: I was flying with the seagulls, being cleansed by the salt water washing gently over the rocks.)

Pokeach ivrim. Who gives sight to the blind.

(We are surrounded by such incredible beauty, if we would only open our senses and our hearts to receive it!)

Malbish arumim. Who clothes the naked.

(Again, this I've always applied to others rather than myself. I have, after all, always been blessed with having clothing for my body - though often I wish we would uncover, rather than clothe our souls. But Friday - I gave thanks for the new hair which frames my face now, short (brown!) wavy hair, which I shyly and with amazement inspect in the mirror periodically throughout the day. I don't, however, take it for granted - I see it as being on loan, and if I lose it again, I know there will be new growth. I am a gardener, after all.....)

Matir asurim. Who releases the bound.

(Freedom! We need to think more about the meanings of this word. Friday morning it meant, for me, freedom from pain, which allowed me to see these wonders, to hear, smell, touch. To be alive!)

Zokef k'fufim. Who raises those bowed down.

(Each day a little, each day a little, until one morning you feel you are flying.....)

Roka ha'aretz al hamayim. Who sets the earth upon the waters.

(When we were in Oregon at the end of May, at the Sea Quest B&B Neach Yachats, I would recite the morning prayers standing on the field outside our window, surrounded by the opening petals of tiny yellow flowers. This field ran for about 50 yards, ending on the wild, tree trunk strewn beach of the turbulent Pacific Ocean - (why was it ever named the "Pacific"?!) Who sets the earth upon the waters. Friday morning I walked along the calm Atlantic shore, soft sand ending in the gentlest of waves.....)

She asani kol tsarki. Who provides for all my needs.

(My soul, my soul is overflowing. And I believe that the greatest need, and the greatest gift a human being can experience, is love.....)

Hamechin mitsadei gaver. Who guides my steps.

(Each step, along this Friday morning path, and along the other mysterious road whose twists and turns lead inexorably on.....)

Ozer Yisrael b'gvura. Who strengthens the people of Israel with courage.

(Each moment, some long and some short, I give thanks.....)

Ozer Yisrael b'tifara. Who strengthens the people of Israel with glory.

(This comes toward the end of this prayer. The glory can envelop us only if we're aware, at our innermost core, of what comes before this.....)

Hanoten leya'ef koach. Who gives strength to the weary.

MODAH ANI LEFANEHA - I give thanks before God, whose creation I acknowledge with love.....

