

## TBE High School Graduates 2020

"I think photography is like life - if you make one adjustment, it changes the whole picture."

- [Carly Fein on Vayishlach](#)

"There's one more bit of advice that we have for Esau and Jacob, and it's really important. Never give up on your twin sibling. Even if it takes a long time, what you share will always be more important than what divides you."

- [Daniel and Elena Salm on Toldot](#)

"Lot's wife should have taken a cue from Elsa, to just 'let it go.' I know it's a lesson I've learned very well."

- [Leah Tuluca on Vayera](#)

"There are no shortcuts to becoming who you are destined to become. Abraham and Sarah learned the same lesson in my parsha. Sometimes when you are on a journey you stub your toe along the way. Well I certainly did that!!! About two months ago, I fractured my big toe."

- [Georgia Baer on Lech Lecha](#)

Another major challenge that I had to overcome to earn my black belt was breaking a brick. Now I know what you are all thinking, that's impossible, which is exactly what I thought. When the test came around I was confident about everything... except for the part where I had to break the brick... I broke the brick. It felt like I had done the impossible. This really showed me the power of the human spirit. I broke through barriers that I never thought were possible. The Tower of Babel story is about human tragedy caused by selfishness and greed whereas my black belt celebrates a triumph of the human spirit

- [Zoë Jaffe-Berkowitz on Noah](#)

I starred in the musical "The Addams Family" in what definitely was the funniest role. Yes, I played cousin ITT. Not that you could tell, since I was covered from head to toe with hair. It was a tough role, having to be a thing, or I mean an "Itt." An object, something that is looked down upon by society, something considered less than human. Today, I am not a furry, hairy imaginary creature. Today I am a man. Today I am playing the most difficult role of my life, the role of a mature human being....The idea that people are created in God's image is one of the most important Jewish values. When we look at another person, we are not looking at an object or an it. Unless of course you are watching me play "**Itt**".

- [Andrew Patashnik on Bereisheet](#)

Like our ancestors who spent decades trekking through the wilderness in search of a home, we sit in our homemade sukkas surrounded by nature. We sit in fascination of the Cosmos and all its inhabitants.... During Sukkot, we focus on the transitions that occur in nature. Some of them are seasonal and cyclical, but others involve changes that have occurred over a great amount of time. In fact, Connecticut preserves snapshots of these ancient periods in Earth's history, from when Mammoths roamed Cove Island 50,000 years ago to when the dinosaurs had just started to rule the Earth 195 million years before the rise of man, leaving traces of their existence throughout the Connecticut Valley.

- [Chase Brownstein on Sukkot](#)

Just as we put the Torah back into the ark, we sang the "Hashivenu" where ask God to "renew our days as of old." Does that mean to make today as good as the good old days... Or maybe that the memories we create today, as we become B'nai Mitzvah, be stories that we will tell again and again for the rest of our lives. Today will be remembered as the "good old days" as soon as the moment we wake up tomorrow. We are committed today to be a part of the change to make the world a better place and to stand for democracy and the State of Israel.

- [Douglas and Nathaniel Herman on Ha'azinu](#)

I think that taking on challenges plays a big role with the Nazarites because staying pure can be quite a challenge in my opinion. Back in the biblical times, I think I would be one of the best Nazarites, maybe even better than Samson.

- [Charlie Wallace on Naso](#)

My portion describes an ideal society, one where people help one another and take care of other people, even strangers and slaves. They also care for the land, even allowing the land to rest. And also the give special care to their animals. Everyone is included in the household.... I suppose that for me, the ideal community would be one that has the fun of camp, with lots of dogs and plenty of sports - and, oh, yes, where my mother is the nurse.

- [Justin Kaplan on Behar - Behukotai](#)

Although I've been told I have many talents, there is one small area where I fall a little short... (And it's not my height!!!)

...I am a procrastinator.

Yes, it's true.

For example - how do you think I did on the haftarah?

Well....I winged it.

This speech?

Wrote it yesterday

My dress? Also yesterday

My hair?

I woke up like this.

It sometimes drives others crazy. Like my parents, for instance.

My portion has something to teach us about procrastination. It says, "The wages of a laborer shall not remain with you until morning."

The Torah is teaching us not to procrastinate, because when we do, it doesn't just affect us, it affects everybody else too.

The sage Hillel said, "If not now, when." And I usually say, "If not now, later!" But I can understand where Hillel was coming from.

- [Morgana Knopoff on Ahare/Kedoshim](#)

My favorite site - -INSTAGRAM -- lets you post pictures and people get to comment on how you look, about what you are wearing, and even your shoes. You can comment on everything! While it can be a lot of fun, sometimes you may say things that are hurtful. When someone gets hurt, usually a mom will yell and say "GET OFF THE PHONE AND STOP LOOKING AT THAT SITE." If that happens then that kid is no longer in the group. In those cases, the Torah says you need to apologize, make the person feel better and include them back into the group chat...What all of this is really teaching us, is that as a community we all have an obligation to reach out to those who are troubled, the sick or poor, to those who are disabled, and those who are hurting. We have to find a way to bring them back into the community.

- [Shayna Finkel on Tazria-Metzora](#)

Becoming a Bar Mitzvah is a lot like becoming a superhero. The world needs a lot of help. Our task as Jews is to help to repair it - we call that *tikkun olam*. It's no surprise that so many of these superheroes were created by Jews. I know that although I'm now a bar mitzvah, it may be years before I really know what my place is in the bigger picture. But when that time comes, I hope to be ready.

- [Noah Weinberg on Shmini](#)

In Jewish tradition, Rosh Hodesh is like a mini Rosh Hashanah. Every month we get to start over again. Just as the moon starts again from scratch, on Rosh Hodesh we start with a clean slate. We get to practice being nice all over again.

- [Rebecca Friedlander on Rosh Hodesh](#)

About 10 years ago, Maggie came into my life. Maggie is a black lab who didn't pass her Seeing Eye dog test. But although she is not a service dog, and so she couldn't come to services, I've come to see how caring she can be. Instead of sacrificing animals to God at the temple, I've learned how animals interact with people, and how they are capable of making great sacrifices for one another and humans, everywhere and all the time.

- [Hannah Bushell on Vayikra](#)

Interestingly, while some commentators see fire as a symbol for anger, one particular commentator sees it very differently. And he happens to be my great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great uncle, a very well known Hasidic rabbi named Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter, who was called the Sfat Emet. When he looked at flames, like the fire on the

sacrificial altar - flames that never went out - he said that they represented a raging fire of love that must always burn in the heart of every Jew. So when we are told not to light a fire on Shabbat, it means that we shouldn't argue, but we also should be careful not to extinguish the fire that already has been lit - the flame of love.

- [Sarah Broder on Vayakhel - Pekuday](#)

So why is the Golden Calf like a car? The calf was worshiped as an idol by the Israelites when Moses didn't come back to them quickly enough from Mount Sinai. Some people think that people worship their cars in the same way - as a symbol of money or status - almost like an idol. But when I look at cars, don't see something that should be worshiped. I see something that can be appreciated because it has a special beauty - and some very special qualities... Cars can be appreciated because they are like a portable home on wheels - just like the sanctuary that was built in the wilderness, which is described in great detail in my Torah portion. That was the world's first assembly line.

- [Sam Teich on Ki Tissa](#)

This afternoon's Torah portion, Ki Tisa, describes a veil that Moses used to wear because his face glowed after his encounters with God. The Torah does not tell us whether the veil was hot pink. But I figure there is a fifty percent chance it could have been, because it had to be a color that would distract people from that glowing face. If I were designing an outfit for our ancient leaders, I would include platform shoes to give them height, a cool shiny gold vest, and of course, I would *never* design an outfit without throwing in a hot pink scarf. Clothes can often tell us a story about who someone is. For example, people who wear bright colors seem to be more cheerful. As a cheerleader. I know that most cheerleading outfits tend to be bright and colorful, which matches our spirit....And today, my dad, who was unable to celebrate a bar mitzvah back when he was growing up in Kiev, is wearing my grandfather's tallis. So I can appreciate the fact that I have the freedom to be able to wear this today, knowing what my family has been through.

- [Emma Ostrovsky on Ki Tissa](#)

I've been amazingly accurate this winter in my predictions... Yes, I did predict a 2-foot snowstorm before the "Historic Blizzard," but I downgraded my forecast as models trended toward a less snowy storm. My Torah portion is called Tetzaveh, and it focuses us on how technology can help us to make the right choices.... There is a Jewish side to technology. Rabbi Avraham of Sadigora, who lived in the 1800s, once told his Hasidic students that they could learn something from everything: "Everything can teach us something, and not only everything God has created. What man has made has also something to teach us."

- [Ben Goodman on Tetzaveh](#)

One of my favorite series is the "Divergent" series, the first of which has come out as movie. It turns out that "Divergent" really ties into my portion of Mishpatim. In fact, it also has a "bat mitzvah" ceremony. It's called the "Choosing Ceremony" and is very similar to today, minus a few details. Don't worry, no blood will be drawn! But when you get beyond those details what's happening? Teenagers are deciding their future, and starting to make choices for themselves. It's the first time they are really responsible for those choices. Also, the Choosing Ceremony, like the Bat Mitzvah is the moment when they start

to become independent of their family. Today, I am making my choices, although thankfully I won't be becoming fully independent and I have a lot more freedom to decide than most people did in the book.

- [Emily Marrinan on Mishpatim](#)

And finally, from [Mary Harrison's comments at Jewels' Bar Mitzvah](#):

Jewels loves to sing, and from time to time I would recognize the tune. He would memorize songs from the radio, songs heard on the streets etc.. A couple of weeks ago, I heard him sing a song he had heard on the radio. He'd been singing it A LOT. In fact, it's not unusual for him to start a piano lesson with a tune in "his head". His teacher recognized the song, and gave me the words, the following week. It goes like this:

***There's Hope in front of me; there's a light, I still see it, there's a hand that's holding me, even when I don't believe it.***

There's hope in front of our kids: for Will, Alex, Elizabeth, for Cos, Michael, and Brandon, for Johnny, Joey, and Jewels and for all those names not mentioned but are on the heart of God. My Dad used to tell us, the importance of trusting God's heart when we cannot trace His hands. Now as an adult I understand. The children of Israel had to first step into the Red Sea (or the Sea of Reeds) before God did the awesome act of parting the waters.