

Parent Speech at Shelby's Bat Mitzvah

It's rare for us to have a special occasion when we can express how proud we are of you and how much we love you. We hope you know that in spite of the arguments about homework, friends, clothes, picking on your little brothers, groundings, instant messaging, and other typical kid stuff -- we love that you're an outgoing, personable, intelligent, compassionate and funny person.

You impress us with your awareness of the pressure kids face to dress, look, and act a certain way. We believe this quote from a former U.S. Vice President describes your attitude: "Sometimes you have to choose to do what's difficult or unpopular. Sometimes you have to be willing to suspend your popularity in order to pick the hard right over the easy wrong." We admire you for sticking to your beliefs and compromising without giving in.

Dad will recite the traditional blessing, which shifts the burden of responsibility for your actions from us to you.

*Baruch shep-pih-tah-rah-nee may-ohn-shah shel bee-tee
We thank you, G-d, for the privilege of raising our daughter to adulthood.*

Today you formally become a woman in the eyes of the Jewish community. You've already started accepting the responsibility of performing good deeds, and have shown sensitivity to the plight those in pain or in need. We know you'll do well in your new role.

I wrote a letter to you soon after you were born. Dad will read some excerpts: "I want you to be all that you want to be. I know you can do anything if you put your mind to it. Although there is much wrong with the world today, there is much to be grateful for and look forward to. You have a wonderful heritage with people like your dad, grandparents, and great grandparents as examples of good in the world today.

"Kids today are growing up much faster than in your parents' childhood and teen years. We hope you'll believe in yourself and not give in to peer pressure.

"I don't know what kind of person you'll be, but I'm confident that you'll be a wonderful daughter. There'll be times when we won't get along, but no matter what, we'll love each other." And here we are 13 years later -- we're looking forward to more adventures together although keeping the typical teen angst to a minimum would be greatly

appreciated. Considering you are staunchly independent, you won't have trouble controlling your own life and which roads you travel. We'll help along the way whether you want it or not.

You're passionate about helping people like those in Darfur, the homeless, and others in a crisis. You care about your friends and your family; you work to make a difference and you put yourself on the line. This quote from Winston Churchill nicely captures your current attitude and the one we try to follow: "We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give."

We love you, Shelby, and we're proud of you, who you are and what you've accomplished.

Text in blue: Shelby's father read.

Text in black: Shelby's mother read.