UPSHERIN SPEECH

FOR

JUDY SCHULTZ

Hello everyone and thank you all for sharing this moment with us. On behalf of the entire Schultz family, we want to thank you for being here now and for the past 3 years. Today we are here to celebrate Eitan on the occasion of his Upsherin, and although every child’s first haircut has the potential to be a real “Kodak Moment,” this ceremony is even more special for so many reasons. As most of you may recall, three years ago, we, as a community and extended family, faced the possibility of losing our beloved Eitan. It’s hard to even talk about the sheer terror we faced when we learned about the complications surrounding Eitan’s birth and the challenges he faced fighting to survive in the earliest hours of his life. No one should have to face what we were challenged with, but every moment we are alive provides us with the opportunity for miracles to happen, and with the overwhelming support of friends and family, and by that I mean all of **YOU**, our community, Eitan survived and lives today to anticipate this joyous occasion! David Ben Gurion was right when he said, “Anyone who doesn’t believe in miracles is not a realist.” That time of our lives three years ago were some of the most “**real**” moments we have ever experienced, and we got through those times thanks to you.

The Spanish cellist, Pablo Casals, once said, “The child must know that he is a miracle, that since the beginning of the world there hasn’t been, and until the end of the world there will not be, another child like him.” Every child is a miracle of nature, and through that miracle of birth comes the affirmation of life and hope and promise for the future…and sometimes, G-d’s miracles are just a little more disguised than at other times. Life can be a mysterious and mystical puzzle and if we’re lucky, maybe someday we will be wise enough to figure out at least some of the lessons we are destined to learn during our time on this earth. I know that the experiences we all shared concerning Eitan’s birth, recovery and earliest stages of life are some of the greatest gifts and lessons I will ever learn. We never thought we would be faced with the challenges we had to endure, and we also know that we could never have gotten through those early days of Eitan’s life without the love, support, and genuine caring of all of you. Your concern and compassion taught us so much about what it truly means to be a part of something bigger than oneself. You held us and fed us and worried or us, and most of all, shared our faith and gave us strength when we needed it most; when our spirits threatened to be exhausted. But we were able to hold on, supported by the unbreakable bonds and bridges you all built to guide our path as we grasped and held tight to the bonds of life. Although we stand here and verbally express our gratitude, please know that our thoughts and prayers and wishes for each one of you go much deeper than words could ever express. Each one of you has been a part of this miracle, and miracles are probably the greatest and most elusive gifts we can ever receive.

(**If there are any individuals in particular that are present that you would like to thank, do so here**). As I said, everyone played an integral and essential part in the process that brought Eitan back to us, and in particular, there are some people we would like to acknowledge. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, who \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for his \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and of course, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for her \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Thank you all for your special caring and love.

And now it’s three years later, and we’re ready for a real **simcha**!! For those of you who may not know the origins and practice of Upsherin, I will explain. Although some may think any occasion is a good excuse to “Party” and the uninitiated may think of this as a “Pre-Bar Mitzvah,” let me share a little about this custom. As you may know, there are several references and passages in the Bible comparing man to a tree. Deuteronomy 20:19 teaches us, "A person is like the tree of a field...” In Leviticus 19:23, we learn, "When you...plant any tree...[f]or three years [the fruit] shall be a forbidden growth, and it may not be eaten." (Leviticus 19:23), Isaiah 65:22 and Jeremiah 17:8 tell us, "For as the days of a tree, shall be the days of my people," and, "He will be like a tree planted near water..." As a tree emerges from a tiny seed and grows its roots and spreads its branches, so do human beings. The Torah requires that newly planted fruit trees remain unharvested for the first three years of life, and as such, the Jewish male child shall not have his hair cut for the first three years of his life. Just as the tree is ready to begin to fulfill its destiny with its first harvest, so is the young Jewish boy ready to inherit the symbols and traditions essential in beginning his life with regard to his Jewish education. Some say the first cut shall be made in the spot where the tzitzis will be placed, and once the haircut is complete, Eitan will wear his yarmulke for the first time. He will soon begin his formal Jewish education as he learns his Hebrew alphabet and prepares to take his place in the chain of tradition in Jewish life. Although the custom of Upsherin has only been practiced for the past 200 or so years, it is another beautiful example of our celebration of life and is a symbolic connection to the heritage we receive from our Jewish ancestors.

Although the Schultz family has never really participated in Upsherin before, Eitan has had such an “auspicious” life up to now that his brothers and sisters all wanted to make sure he had some “extra special good luck.” On that note, I would like to acknowledge our six other children for their love, support and caring for their brother Eitan. (Name your six other children) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Daddy and I are so very proud of each one of you and we thank you for encouraging us to participate in this wonderful ceremony. You are all very special to Eitan and each one of you is our blessing and shining light.

Eitan is a beautiful and special little boy and if I may extend the fruit/tree analogy, he really is the “**apple”** of everyone’s eye. Maybe I’m a little prejudiced because he’s mine, but please indulge a nice Jewish mother if I tend to “Kvell”-just a little! The meaning of the name “Eitan” is strong and firm. Eitan has shown his strength and has inspired all of us with his innate courage, even at his tender young age. He is sweet and smart and somehow manages to bring out the best in everyone. Every mother wants to think that her children will remain young and innocent forever, but I know that as Eitan grows and spreads his wings, he will inspire all with whom he comes into contact.

Once again, we want to thank all of you for being here with us. We want to thank you for your generosity of spirit and love. We want to thank you for being there when we needed you the most, and we want to thank you for sharing our joy with us on this happy occasion. I know that the Schultz family will be forever indebted to all of you and I also know that by sharing this moment, we can all attest to the fact that **miracles do happen**. I also want to encourage all of you to acknowledge the miracles you’ve created and experienced in your lives and give thanks for all you have. We are all so blessed. Here’s to sharing and dancing at many more mitzvahs as friends, family and community. Thank you all!