BAT MITZVAH SPEECH

FOR

MYLES ZLEPPER

Hello everyone and thank you all for being here to share this very special moment with Rebecca. To celebrate a Bat Mitzvah is a very momentous occasion and although today is really Rebecca’s day, we’ve (**Do you feel a little** **more comfortable saying “I?”)** waited thirteen years to get up in front of a large group of people and (**Do you want to throw in a little Yiddish?” If so you can** **say:** “kvell” about my terrific daughter). (**If not you can say**: let you all know just how proud I am of my terrific daughter). I can’t believe the day is finally here and Rebecca, it is your time to shine!! One of the greatest adventures of my life is being your father and watching as you develop into a sensitive, caring, and decisive young lady. I am so proud of you and of everything you do. Your compassionate personality shows through in every gesture and whether you are rising to challenges like a pro in school or mentoring the neighborhood children, your considerate personality is a gift to all with whom you come into contact. I am inspired by your involvement at Friends with Wings (**BCJ wings Program? Not sure which is** **the correct name**) and your commitment to sharing yourself and your interests with children who are going through so much means the world to those kids and to the people who love them and you. You may not fully realize the power of your involvement in this cause right now, but as you get older and look back on this time, I know you will have a deep sense of what you have accomplished at such a young age. Right now it may seem like you’re just “helping out” or “volunteering,” but all of us that really know you know what a gift it is to have you in our lives….. including your brother!! More about him in a bit….

Rebecca, you’ve developed some unique preferences and tastes over the years. Some may **TRY** to call you picky, I think it’s better to say that you’re **particular**! And when it comes to food, to say you have a “refined palette” is an understatement… you know how to appreciate a good steak, a properly cooked piece of fish and some fine sushi, but I think your uniqueness is summed up by one little gesture that I found unforgettable… really…. I don’t know if you remember that time when you were just four years old…. you were holding a cookie…but you chose to put it down to pick up a piece of broccoli!!! You really do know what you like and you don’t like people getting in the way of discouraging your choices!!

And speaking of your brother…. (**Say that with exaggeration and** **wait for the laugh**) you and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ have a **very** special relationship. You fight. But you also love each other and that’s what brothers and sisters do. You may be competitive at times but you have each other’s backs. Always know that the two of you share a very special bond and although we never know what destiny has planned for any of us, there is room in this world for both of you to succeed in life in your own unique ways.

I think you did a particularly wonderful job today with your portion of the Haftorah. It is no accident that it is Tetzaveh and tells the story of Moses and his brother Aaron. While everyone might have expected Aaron as the older brother to be called upon to be God’s agent in liberating the Israelites, that was not the divine plan. The passage teaches us that although we never know what opportunities and challenges await us, we have our family to share and rejoice, strategize, and unite in finding our own way in the world. The Midrash teaches us to learn to deal with disappointments and unexpected success. It gives us a chance to examine reactions we have and why we react the way we do. It teaches us to be happy for others, especially our flesh and blood, and to believe in our selves as we fulfill our own destiny. It talks of sumptuous priestly robes but it also tells us that the children of Israel are commanded to bring pure olive oil for the ner tamid so that a constantly burning light can live above the sanctuary at the temple. Rebecca, I want you to think of that eternal flame as the light that burns within you. That’s the light that guides your way and brings joy to the kids in the neighborhood and to the children at Friends with Wings. That light begins to grow brighter every time you share a little bit of your self, your dreams, your talents and your joy and I encourage you to share your light more and more.

There’s a passage in “Winnie the Pooh” that says, “You’re **BRAVER** thank you believe, you’re **STRONGER** than you seem, and you’re **SMARTER** than you think.” With the milestone you’ve reached today, I want you to know the world is yours. You can be anything you want to be and you can achieve any goals you set for yourself. If it means anything, to me you are a champion, and if there were a Mirror Ball trophy for best daughter in the world, it would look just like the one they have on “Dancing with the Stars” and it would be all yours!!!! Congratulations (**Mazel tov?)** on doing a wonderful job!!! We love you!