**BARMITZVAh**

Skyler, this is only a rough draft, a partial draft, an incomplete portion I told your father I would send before I completed his speech. I wrote this before I spoke to your father on Thursday. This will be a very special occasion. Remember, everyone here is understanding and wants you to be relaxed. You are among friends and family. Wait until everyone is looking in your direction before beginning. Speak slowly, and take your time, there is no rush to finish. If possible make eye contact as you speak. Practice your speech several times alone, then practice it in front of perhaps your father or mother, (even your brother!). Make sure those friends understand how important it is for them to be quiet and listen, not joke around. The important message here is what you want them to know about you and your thoughts on the future. Your thoughts as an adolescent who is becoming an adult. Your thoughts on what you want to contribute to your community and your faith. You will do fine, just relax and let the words flow.

Hello everyone, welcome, welcome. Thank you for becoming part of my Bar Mitzvah, becoming part of my life, and assisting me in my growth into being a man and learning how to live life through my religion. As I speak, please continue to enjoy the evening, the meal, the refreshments.

(This is where you’ll acknowledge your family, sibling, grandparents, and others. I will detail this in the final content).

Then you continue:

As we mature we can do one of two things spiritually, we can practice, or we can live. I choose to live. When we practice we segment times and locations to participate? We practice choir, we practice medicine, we practice our faith. But faith should not be part time, faith should not be segmented, faith should be lived, should be total, should be life every day. We should not rise in the morning and say: “I think I will devote two hours today to my faith”. Or think: “I’ll think about my faith later after school”. We should not put our faith into a box to be pulled out when it fits our schedule. We should not think of our faith as a section on the calendar or daily-planner. That is not

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what faith is, that is not what we worship, that is not what our creator had in store for us.

At my age I don’t profess to have wisdom yet, but I sure will do what is necessary in my life, and through my faith, to earn wisdom. And even at thirteen, I understand, and I happily accept, that my faith is my life, and that my life is my faith. Not when I decide it is, but every living, breathing, hour of every day. And to some extent so goes wisdom, patience, and understanding. I do know from my family, my grandfather, and my father, that these traits are not picked off a shelf, not ordered from Amazon. They come from time, from observations, from listening, and from being very, very, engaged in life’s goodness, as well as its challenges. How can we know how to heal, if we aren’t wounded? How can we forgive, if we ourselves haven’t made mistakes? How can I sit with a thirteen-year-old, twenty years from today and dispense wisdom, if I do not allow myself to learn by trial and sometimes, error? None of this is possible without living my faith and staying true to its teachings.

Like a fast-forward camera, the world changes so rapidly. And along with it so does culture. I refer to the cultures of society, the cultures of education, even the cultures of parenting. And while there is always good in change, there is sometimes less than good. So, we as a nation, we as a faith, must try and determine what differences are good for all, and what differences weaken moral and traditional fabric. And to do that, to examine what changes may or may not benefit us, we need to, we must, be true to our faith, our teachings, and our history. That faith, that brick support, has always, and will always, be the strength, the wisdom, we need to allow only the best of new ideas into our lives. That same faith will give us the ability to reject what is not in the best interest of us as a people, and us as a faith. We don’t profess, or demand others follow what we do, what we worship, what we believe in. Tolerance to others has always been a tenant of who we are. Let them live and worship in their own secular way, and we expect the same from them.

I hope and pray that I can grow, learn, and become the man who my parents, my grandparents, and all of you here, want me to be, and that my faith expects me to be. I will have my struggles, my times when I think things are too difficult. I hope at those times I can hear my words today, and then become resilient and persevere through whatever that challenge might be.

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What and who I am today, this very minute, is the result of my parents, my grandparents, and my Synagogue. I intend to continue to represent both my family and my faith as I enter this very important period of my life. From now until my mid-twenties, is who I will be for the rest of my life. These next years will formulate and set the foundation for who I become as a man, as a parent, as a professional in my work, and even what type of grandfather I will be myself.

So even though I am still a ‘KID”. Even though I will do some things for which I will be scolded. Even though I will forget some of what I am saying right now, I hope and pray to come out of the other side as a good human, a decent adult, and as a man who lives, not practices his faith. As a man who can pass on wisdom, and as a man who grows and matures while still learning how to be wise. Now, mom and dad, the next time I do something you have explicitly told me not to do, the next time I get a grade that isn’t up to par, and the next time you get a call from the assistant principal, before you get out the paddle, or take away my phone, remember how thoughtful my words were today, and cut me some slack, **(laughter).**

……………………….to be finished later.