**Skyler Damaghi,……**.fromyour father

 **Bar Mitzvah**

 **June 15, 2019**

**Ruben,…..This is a happy event, a joyous celebration, so your audience will be talking and laughing. So, it is important that once you are introduced, stand quietly with the microphone, smile, and wait a moment for everyone to settle down, turning their attention to you. Speak slowly and take your time. The person giving a speech sometimes speeds it up without realizing that they are going too fast. Just talk naturally as you would to your friends, your family, etc. No need to raise your voice, the microphone will increase the volume. If you can, make eye contact with people throughout the room as you speak. If that is difficult for you, (as it is for many of us), then there is another way. Pick a spot on the back wall, or a picture on the back wall, or even a door at the back. Then look at that object when you speak, and it will appear to the audience that you are making eye contact with everyone. This is a proud moment for you and Sanaz. Speak calmly yet speak with confidence. You will do just fine.**

Good Evening everyone,………………welcome,…….welcome, we are so pleased to have you as our guests tonight. All of you are family, dear friends, and business associates. And we also welcome the youngsters, Skyler’s friends, Sebastian’s friends, and all the children who are with us this evening**.**

And with all my heart and love I want to welcome my parents: my mother \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, my own *father* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, my dear *mother-in-law*, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and my *three sisters* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. As I stand here, I remember thirty years ago when I too had my Barmitzvah, that day is as clear to me today as it was back then. I want to tell my parents I will always remember that, and I pray that my sons, and tonight Skyler, will also keep this night close in his heart.

And above all else, my wife, Sanaz, her love and devotion has made our family what it is. She is our rock, our booster, and our inspiration. She is the light in our home, the ray of sunshine on a rainy day, the cheerleader during challenging times, our biggest fan, and my biggest fan. She is an amazing mother to our sons, and an even more amazing and loving wife to me. Sanaz deserves every accolade and acknowledgement for this evening. She outlined every detail,

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every nuance, with the graciousness of a loving mother and the congeniality of an elegant hostess. And she reminded me and Skyler, if we get sauce on our jackets, don’t blame it on Sebastian. **(laughter). (pause).**

Above all else in this universe Sanaz, you are the love of my life,..**(pause).**

I want to thank our hosts here at this legendary restaurant, in the heart of New York City, it is truly the perfect venue for our celebration tonight. The cuisine is exceptional, the service impeccable, and everyone here has graciously welcomed us.

We are going to adjust what some might refer to as the normal cadence and flow of an evening such as this. Instead of waiting patiently through all the inspirational keynotes, and *some that* *will undoubtedly be* ***less inspirational***, **(laughter),** we want you to enjoy your beverages and supper as we speak. We know everyone is polite and would want to wait until the talks, the stories, the comments, are finished before they eat and drink. But tonight, we will do this just a little differently, and who knows, the *drink* may even help getting through some of the talk, **(with that Ruben, raise your glass to the audience and smile)-(laughter).** Then when supper is concluded, instead of more chatter, we can cut a rug,….Isn’t that the term in your era mom and dad ?? **(laughter).** And as we are speaking, if you drop a spoon, or knock over a glass, do not worry, I will not stare at you,………….but *Skyler* might, **(laughter).**

A father’s speech at his son’s Barmitzvah has certain traditions, certain messages, certain historical expressions. As I thought about how I would spend a few minutes talking this evening, after some thought it became very clear to me. First and foremost, I am talking about my son, my boy, a child becoming a man. But what makes this a bit more dynamic to me as I look at this young man, is that Skyler is not only my son, he is my friend, my associate, and a youngster whom I truly respect. Now, before anyone, especially Skyler, thinks I have gone all soft and bought into that modern psychology on how a kid should be his parent’s best friend, you can dispel those thoughts, because I am still his father. And if he gets out of line, it won’t be his friend who sets down the law, it will be his dad, **(laughter).** But my point is that I look at this young man in more than one light, as more than just a youngster. I see him for who he is today,

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and what I am confident he will become tomorrow. And I must be careful to not embarrass Skyler in front of his friends, although I would bet Sebastian wouldn’t mind if I did, **(laughter).**

As a father, I can give advice, I can insist on his following my instructions, I can instruct him on behavior, I can steer him to a university and a profession. I can mandate manners, behavior, attitude, and even his future. But ladies and gentlemen, friends, and dear family, I don’t believe any of those requisites are going to be necessary with Skyler. Instead of me insisting, telling, ordering, instructing, and directing, it is my belief that my job will be to simply *coordinate* all theseareas for my son.I believe that he is prepared to make many of the decisions required of him by himself, with his mother and me there as a backstop, a safety net, and co-directors of his goals, ambitions, and dreams.

My son is a young man who is always moving, always planning, and always learning. From excellence in advanced placement curriculum, to showing signs of becoming a burgeoning entrepunuer, to artistic creativity, even to language arts, he is developing into a very comprehensive and talented adolescent. And I can tell you right now, he has saved both his mother and me from serious embarrassment more than a few times when we order take-out. When we are in the mood for Mandarin or Italian, it is Skyler who politely takes the phone out of our hands, then places our orders perfectly in that language before I say or pronounce something so incorrectly, that the police show up at our door instead of our take-out. **(laughter).**

All the accomplishments, all the successes, all the positive attributes, don’t just show up one day in a kid. These moral traits, these instincts to success, come from not only a parent, but from generations before. I cannot speak for other families, but for myself, I can look directly to my hero when I was a kid, my inspiration when I was a youngster, and that person is my father. So, I am confident that my son will no doubt be a result of may influences, some of his own, and some from his heritage. And he could not have a better donor of good choices, good decisions, and good moral character, than from my dad, my hero, my champion. And, all my father’s good sense and good lessons, would never have registered in me if it wasn’t for my *mother’s* steady hand in our family. She was and is the safe harbor, she was the hub from where we all went forward, she was, and is, ***mom***.  *Dad and Mom*, I am *your* son, Skyler is *mine*. He is what you

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have taught me, and what his mother and I have taught him. Thank you both, your grandson loves you, and so do I. **(pause).**

As adults we become composites of many teachings, many influences, and many experiences. So, Skyler, allow me a moment to speak directly to you. Hear my words, hear my tone, and hear my heart. As you grow into manhood, you can take two roads. Both roads can and will lead to success. But only one of those roads is the correct one. Only one of those directions shows your faith in God, and your understanding of humanity. And that road is the one of ***Decency and*** ***Goodness***. You can be a rich man and still be *decent and good*. I know you have this in you already, your mother, brother, and I see it every day. As you grow through high school, then university, then out into your professional world, be a man of conviction, be a man of your word. Set your moral compass on a course to **good choices** and **right decisions**. Live with **integrity** and **honesty**. Treat **all** people **equally** and with **fairness**, until they prove otherwise. **Build** a reputation that if you offer **your hand**, and **give your word**, then whatever was the agreement, it **will be done**, and **be done when you say it will**. When someone refers to you one **thousand miles away**, let **them say:** *“OH!, Skyler, you’re in good hands with that gentleman, he* ***will do as he promised****”.* To those who are less fortunate than you, treat **them with dignity,** empathy and encouragement. To your professional competitors, be **ready** for the fight, but **always** play by the rules. It takes **years** to build a good reputation, but **only minutes** to ruin it. So, think before you act, and then act properly. **I know you will.**

And remember above **all** else, **family comes first,** ***always first***. Take care and provide for your family. Protect your family from harm no matter what, **no matter what**. When the time comes, show your wife love, and total **respect**. Treat your spouse with the **same** courtesy and care on your fiftieth anniversary as you did on **your first**. And then teach and lead your own children by example, by **your actions** and your words. Be their light in darkness, be their place for safety, be their inspiration. Then by **their** own lives, how **they treat** others, they will **become** your legacy.

And always, **ALWAYS**, keep your faith. Never waver, **never** doubt God. Your faith keeps your character **firm**, your faith is what **gives you** strength. Your faith in God will **always, … always, protect you** through life’s challenges.

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Then, equally important as you grow, expand your own *world*. Take your family, your children, *Travel* and **learn** from other people and **other** cultures. Sit on mud floors and **listen** to indigenous weavers. Stand next to a Sherpa and **hear him** tell stories of treks to the sky. Even as close as Cambridge, upstate here in New York, go and learn from the monks of New Skete. It is from opening our eyes and especially our ears, to humans from the whole world, we, and you son, will come to understand that while there are so many differences in cultures, there are **so many** similarities in **each of us** as human beings. That broader understanding, that lesson in humanity, will add a rich and deep texture to your lives.

Finally, son let me say that **I respect you,** **I myself learn from you**, and that I pray you’ll fulfill all your dreams and goals. If what you have accomplished so far is any indication, then your professional future will be exceptional, and your personal life will be **fulfilled with happiness.**

 **(pause)**

The evening is just **getting started** everyone. But when you do leave us tonight, **please** be careful on your way home.

**Now**, let’s see some **dance moves**, but remember this is a **family** get-together, **(laughter).**

**Thank You. (applause)**