

President's Message March 2014

The weekend of February 21, 2014, was a joyous one for my family and me with the bar mitzvah of my son, Andrew. The Saturday morning service was attended by over 100 people, including 50 or so of Andrew's middle and Sunday school classmates, camp friends, hockey teammates, and many young cousins. The table was set for potential mayhem and mischief to be delivered by the many 12 and 13 year olds, as well as younger children who I thought would never be able to sit patiently through a two hour service.

However, my belief could not have been more wrong nor my concerns more misplaced. Because our b'nai mitzvah students conduct nearly the entire service with limited assistance from the Rabbi and Cantor, the young attendees, the majority of whom were not Jewish, were captivated by their friend addressing them from the bima. As I looked at the kids, I saw many of them sharing prayer books and following along. I think I even saw many of them chant, or attempt to chant, some of the prayers. They were completely mesmerized by Andrew's command in leading the congregation from the Shamah, through the Torah readings, his haftarah and sermon, Rabbi Zamore's response to his difficult question of why bad things happen to good people, and through the conclusion.

It was a true joy to watch Andrew lead the service for the many members of our congregation who attended. I was approached by some congregants who had never attended a bar or bat mitzvah at our Jewish Center. They told me that they couldn't believe that our students were trained and capable of leading the entire service. I responded by telling them that it is a testament to our community's efforts, from the Hebrew School instructors to our Rabbi and Cantor to our music teacher and PTO members who create special memories on Sundays, to teach our children and prepare them for this important part of their Jewish lives.

Andrew made my family and me very proud. The fact that many shared their observation that becoming a bar mitzvah was evidently quite meaningful to Andrew, that he wasn't just going through the motions and following a script, brought an endless smile to my face. This milestone could not have been achieved without the dedication to our children by the JCNWJ family, preparing Andrew for this day. Thank you to those who were able to attend our congregational pre-Shabbat dinner and the Friday night and Saturday morning Shabbat services. Thank you JCNWJ.

Mo Bauer