

A Bat or Bar Mitzvah Celebration



**The Birmingham Temple:
A Congregation for Humanistic Judaism**

Opening Song
Shalom L'Yisrael - Peace to Israel

SHA-LOM L'-YIS-RA-EL

שְׁלוֹם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל

SHA-LOM LA-A-DAM

שְׁלוֹם לְאָדָם

SHA-LOM LA-O-LAM

שְׁלוֹם לְעוֹלָם

Let there be peace for the Jewish People.

Let there be peace for humanity.

Let there be peace for all the world.

- Rabbi Sherwin Wine

Adolescence

The cycle of life is like the cycle of the seasons. It never stops. It repeats itself in the individual story of every plant, every flower, every bird, and every beast. People are no exception. Although wiser and more powerful than any other living beings, people are like all other creatures, obedient to an eternal rhythm. The winter of the womb is followed by the spring of youth, and the summer of maturity yields the autumn of decay. We cannot remain forever young. Whether we accept or resist reality, we must grow up.

To be thirteen is to stand between two worlds, the past of childhood and the promise of adolescence. The middle years of teenagers are often very hard to cope with. They are a testing ground for adult life. If we are too dependent on others we must learn to become more independent. If we think too little of our talents, we must train ourselves to respect them. If we are afraid of the future, we must grow accustomed to live with the surprise of challenge. Adolescence can be wasted in fear and in laziness, so that growing up is too painful to bare. Or it can be a time of happy excitement when new responsibility becomes a pleasure and new learning becomes our hope for success.

Song
Ayfo Oree? - Where is My Light?

AY-FO OH-REE? OH-REE BEE

AY-FO TIK-VA-TEE? TIK-VA-TEE BEE

AY-FO KO-KHEE? KO-KHEE BEE

V'-GAM BAKH

אֵיפֹה אֹרֵי? אֹרֵי בִי

אֵיפֹה תְקוּתִי? תְקוּתִי בִי

אֵיפֹה כֹחִי? כֹחִי בִי

וְגַם בָּךְ

Where is my light? My light is in me.

Where is my hope? My hope is in me.

Where is my strength? My strength is in me.

And in you.

-Rabbi Sherwin Wine



Honesty

Honesty begins with behavior. What we really think and feel is reflected in what we do. Too often we imagine that we know what we want and believe. We check our conscious mind and encounter numberless ideas and convictions which claim to be the essence of our being. But they are obvious frauds. Our tongue speaks love, but our hands speak hate. Our mouth exudes serenity, but our eyes exude fear. Our lips utter friendship, but our whole body screams anger. We feel sincere and imagine that we are sincere. We feel honest and imagine that we are honest.

If we listen to our hearts alone, we shall never discover the truth. It is only when we coldly watch our own behavior that we confront reality. Our deepest convictions about ourselves and others can never really be hidden. They boldly proclaim themselves through our actions. While our mouths spin tales of fantasy, our bodies speak with honesty. When we plead that we cannot act on our own beliefs, we are self-deceived. We always act on what we believe. When we run away from what we say we love, then our love is an illusion. And when we embrace what we say we hate, then our hatred is unreal. We simply are what we do.



Song

Hatov O Hara - Good or Evil

HA-TOV O HA-RA

ZOT HA-SH'-AY-LA

ZOT HA-B'-A-YA

LA-A-DAM HA-B'-RAY-RA

הטוב או הרע

זאת השאלה

זאת הבעיה

לאדם הבירה

Good or evil.
That is the question.
That is the problem.
The decision is ours.

-Felice Friedman



Self Respect

Self respect is never a gift. It is always an achievement. Neither the flattery of friends nor the reassurance of family will give us the feeling of self worth . Neither the counseling of therapists nor the comforts of religion will elevate our dignity. Self-esteem is the child of competence. It is the offspring of personal skill. The person who thinks that they are unable to help themselves or to help others cannot respect themselves.

People who like themselves believe that they have power. They believe that they have the power to determine the course of their own life. They believe that they have the competence to be useful to others. They believe that they have the strength to make decisions even when the consequences of their decisions cannot easily be predicted. They even know that when they give to others they do not threaten their own welfare. For their own security lies in no possession. It resides in their own creative skill.



Song
Hanaava - Fairest

HA-NA-A-VAH BA-BA-NOT

A-NA HA-EE-REE PA-NIE-YIKH EH-LIE

הַנְּאֻוָּה בְּכָנוֹת
אָנָּה הָאִירִי פְּנִיךָ אֵלַי

Fairest of women,
Raise up your face to me.

-Traditional

Commitment

Some of us hate to make decisions. Decisions are so risky. They may lead to failure. They may sponsor embarrassment. They may expose our fantasies. Decisions burden us with responsibility. They make us confront our freedom to choose. They make us shoulder the blame. They make us apologize for our mistakes.

Avoiding responsibility may be unattractive. But it seems so much safer than the risk of being wrong. It seems so much safer to find respectable ways to be irresponsible. Our genes, our social conditions, our helplessness are comfortable excuses.

Our life style is defined by the way we make decisions. Some of us prefer to be children, always pleading our innocence and dependency. Some of us prefer to be adults, taking responsibility for our actions and confronting other people with the dignity of our self esteem.



Song
L' M Tsappeem -
Ascending the Mountain

LA-M'-TSAP-PEEM HA-T'-HIL-LA
KEE LA-HEM HE-A-TEED
HA-O-M'-DEEM MOOL HE-HAR
V'-AY-NAM NIR-TA-EEM
YA-A-LOO EL PIS-GA-TO

לְמַצְפִּים הַתְּהִלָּה
כִּי לָהֶם הָעֵתִיד
הָעוֹמְדִים מִוֶּל הַהַר
וְאֵינָם נִרְתָּאִים
יַעֲלוּ אֶל פְּסֻגָתוֹ

The determined get the glory.
The future is theirs.
Whoever stands against the mountain without recoil,
Shall ascend its summit.

*-David Rokeah
(Hebrew Poet)*



Maturity

Many men and women are physical adults. But they remain spiritual children. They possess an insatiable need to please - fearful desire to win the approval of others - a persistent wish to conform to the expectations of their peers and superiors. They are the prisoners of their childhood. Hostility and disapproval terrorizes them. Public opinion fills them with dread. Self-respect eludes them. They become the perennial followers - who never create- who never resist.

Maturity is the power to control fear. When our fears and anxieties overwhelm us they paralyze our will. We cannot choose between alternatives. We cannot make decisions. As dependent children we seek the protection of a strong leader who will assume the burden of our will, who will tell us what to do. Tyrants may indeed be bossy. They may be pushy and oppressive. But they love to take responsibility. Rational fear is the fear of losing control. Irrational fear is the fear of being in control.

Song *Kamieyeem*

KA-MIE-YEEM HA-PA-NEEM LA-PA-NEEM
KAYN LAYV HA-A-DAM LA-A-DAM

כַּמִּיִּם הַפָּנִים לְפָנִים
כֵּן לֵב הָאָדָם לְאָדָם

Face to face
Each person reflects the heart of the other.

-- *Rabbi Sherwin Wine*

Love

Mature love is an art, a skill of the soul. Newborn infants come into the world in helpless dependency, with only the knowledge of how to receive. As they grow up, as they cease to be children, they sense a new power- not the power to demand love, but rather the power to express love. To sense that we not only need to be helped but also need to help, to feel that we not only require the care of others, but also are able to give care, is the beginning of inner security. We do not transcend our loneliness by only finding others to love us. We transcend our sense of separation by finding others to love. In the act of being useful, in the work of fulfilling the desires and needs of other human beings, we feel our creative power, and discover our strength. True love is an ironic deed, It binds us closer to other people while it awakens within us the thrill of independence. The more we help, the stronger we feel. The stronger we feel, the more secure we become.

Love is the developed art of expressing our human power through the act of giving to others. It overwhelms our fears and gives us hope through the promise of our own strength.

Song Sheemoo

SHE-M'-OO SHE-M'-OO O-HA-VAY A-HA-VA
KEE-R'-OO KEE-R'-OO MO-SHEE-AY Y'-SHOO-A
KEE AYN Y'-SHOO-A B'-LEE A-HA-VA
O A-HA-VA A-HA-VA KAYN T'-HEE

שְׁמָעוּ שְׁמָעוּ אֹהֲבֵי אֲהָבָה
קְרָאוּ קְרָאוּ מוֹשִׁיעֵי יְשׁוּעָה
כִּי אֵין יְשׁוּעָה בְּלִי אֲהָבָה
אוֹ אֲהָבָה אֲהָבָה כֵּן תְּהִי

Listen now, you lovers of love.
Hear this, you seekers of happiness
There is no happiness without love.

-Rabbi Sherwin Wine

Friendship

Family and friendship are like the air we breathe. We cannot really live without them. We are not designed for loneliness. We thrive on the opportunity of human response. We need to give our love. We need to receive the love of others.

Life is sustained by our will to live. It also finds its meaning in the affection of others. Parent and friend, husband and wife pay us the tribute of caring. Our pain is their pain. Our happiness is their happiness. Through their love, we come to love ourselves and to find our self-esteem.



Song

Hinnay Ma Tov - Behold How Good

HIN-NAY MA TOV OO-MA-NA-EEM
SHE-VET A-CHEEM GAM YA-CHAD

הִנֵּה מַה טוֹב וּמַה נְעִים
שֶׁבֶת אֲחִים גַּם יַחַד

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for
brothers and sisters to celebrate together

- *Psalms 133:1*

Creativity

Life without imagination is dull. People without imagination are boring. Imitation and conformity are necessary for survival. But they need to be challenged if life is to go beyond survival, if life is to yield the excitement of happiness.

Successful people are creative people. They refuse to accept the world as fixed. They refuse to believe that life offers only one script for living. They see old things and imagine new ways of putting them together. They see new things and fancy old settings which they will transform. They gaze at one scene and envision a hundred ways to describe it. They experience one life and imagine a thousand ways to live it.



Song

Ayfo Oree? - Where is My Light?

AY-FO OH-REE? OH-REE BEE

AY-FO TIK-VA-TEE? TIK-VA-TEE BEE

AY-FO KO-KHEE? KO-KHEE BEE

V'-GAM BAKH

איפה אורי? אורי בי

איפה תקותי? תקותי בי

איפה כחי? כחי בי

וגם בקך

Where is my light? My light is in me.
Where is my hope? My hope is in me.
Where is my strength? My strength is in me.
And in you.

-Rabbi Sherwin Wine



Mitzvah Presentation

Response

candle-lighting

Song

Hava Nagila

HA-VA NA-GEE-LA V'-NIS-MA-KHA

HA-VA N'-RAN-N-NA V'-NIS-MA-KHA

OO-ROO A-KHEEM B'-LAYV SA-MAY-AKH

הָבָה נְגִילָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה

הָבָה נְרַנְנָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה

עוֹרוּ אַחִים בְּלֵב שִׂמְחָה

Come let us sing and be happy!

