

## Bat Mitzvah D'var Torah Draft

Hello and **Shabbat Shalom**.// Thank you so much for coming to support me/ on this important and memorable day in my life.// Today, we are leyning all of Genesis Chapter Two. // My parsha is Bereshit,/ which is about creation,/ The Garden of Eden,/ Cain and Abel, /

**and making choices**. I am the one who chose this parsha for my Bat Mitzvah.// I have always imagined the Garden of Eden as a beautiful and trouble free place.// On my Bat Mitzvah invitation,/ I drew gorgeous flowers and plants, clear blue skies,/ and stunning waterfalls. // But,/ there are also two mysterious and intriguing trees: The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad. // For me, / the best part of this parsha is how Eve took a chance,/ made the choice to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad,/ and opened up a whole new unfamiliar door. //

She gained so much vital and important information/ that she never would have learned without taking/that/chance. // What really caught my attention/ was the theme of Eve, /and women, / **making choices**.

I know the story,/ you know the story,/ we all know that Eve is the one who ate the apple from the tree,/ against

**Adam's reinterpretation of G-d's words**. // Everyone knows that Adam and Eve got **kicked out** of the Garden of Eden,/ and there were many **consequences** / such as a painful childbirth for women,/ and the **punishment** that no humans will live for **eternity**. //

The thing I have always wondered was **why Eve got blamed**. // Why couldn't **Adam** have made the "**mistake**" of eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad? // Ever since Eve made that **supposed mistake**, it has been a **male-dominated world** / and **women** have been looked down upon. // The **patriarchs** always came **first**/ and are still honored in many prayers,/ yet the **matriarchs** were only **recently** entered into prayers/ in some of the more modern services and prayer books. In this country, / women didn't get the right to vote until 1920. // In fact,/ Judith, daughter of **reconstructionism's founder**, / **Rabbi Kaplan**, / **was the very first Bat Mitzvah**.

**Wait**. //// Lets go **back**.// To tell you the **truth**, // I never thought that Eve made a **mistake** by eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad. // Yes,/ she didn't **follow** G-d's warnings,/ (**at least according to Adam**), / but when **G-d** created humans,/ G-d was **obviously aware** that humans are **curious beings**,/ who may give into **temptations**.// When G-d made it clear,/ that no matter what,/ you **can't eat** from the Tree of Knowledge,/ it was as if **G-d knew** that either Eve or Adam were **too curious to not give in**,/ and that's maybe **exactly** what G-d had **purposely planned**.// G-d leads you in a direction/ and then lets **you** make your **own decision**.// G-d led Eve to the Tree of Knowledge / and let her decide whether she wanted to **give in** and eat the apple,/ **or play it safe**. //

Making **choices** is **taking risks**.// I think it is good to sometimes **let go**,// trust your instinct/ and your **faith in**

**G-d**, and just **go for it**. // Try something **new!** // Even if the decision you make isn't the greatest during that **certain period of time**,/ **who knows?**// Years later,/ everything could be **exactly** how **you** wanted it to be/ because you took that risk/ and made that decision./

Everyone makes choices,/ without always knowing the **outcome**./ // When I was nine,/ I participated in my first big soccer tournament/ with my team,/ the Dragonflies. We made it to the finals,/ but the final game came down to a **shoot out**./ // Everyone was **counting on me** to score the winning goal/ and I was **extremely nervous**./ // I sent the ball **flying** over the goal/ and the other team won./ // Everyone was extremely disappointed/ but very supportive of me. //

I learned that in order to **fully participate in life**,/ you **have to put yourself on the line**./ // You won't always **succeed**,/ but you will have achieved something by trying. // You become more confident/ and comfortable with yourself./ // Like **Eve** teaches us, **no one** is perfect and **no one will always succeed**,/ but I got out there and took a chance,/ and that's really all that matters./ // I also learned that when you take **action**/ there will be **consequences**,/ and that you have to learn to live with those consequences.-----

// I think by **Eve choosing** to eat the apple,/ she opened up new doors that were scary,/ unfamiliar,/ and **exhilarating**. // She is the first woman,/ and the **roots** of our family tree/ as a **people**/ and eventually,/ as **B'nai Yisrael**./ // She opened up our eyes/ to the **real world**./ // After leaving the Garden of Eden,/ where **everything** is milk and honey,/ she entered a world/ where things **can/ and will/ go wrong**./ // The snake says in Genesis, Chapter 3, verse 5, "...G-d knows that on the day that you eat from it,/ **your eyes** will be **opened**/ and you will become like gods,/ knowing good and evil./" // I interpret this as a metaphor/ for making your passage from **childhood** into **adulthood**./ // Eve eating the apple is like a Bar or Bat Mitzvah / taking their first steps into the **new and frightening world of adulthood**./ // I think your eyes really open up to the challenges,/ responsibility/ and freedom of adulthood/ when you take your first step out of the **safe and comforting garden of childhood**. //

**\*Childhood is like the Garden of Eden.\*** Everything seems so simple when you are little./ // You don't have to worry about turning in your science fair forms **on time**/ and studying for that **extremely** hard test for math class./ // When I was little,/ I didn't have to go to school every day,/ I just got to play Barbies with my friends/ and make tiny desserts in my easy-bake-oven./

Now I have begun,/ just as **Eve** did,/ to make **new choices**./ // Eve's first choice/ was to take a **bite out of new possibilities**./ // The Torah explains what is happening in Genesis 3:6: "The /woman/ saw /that /the /Tree/ was /good for/ eating/and /that /it /was/ a /delight/ for /the /eyes,/ and the/ Tree /was /desirable/ to /contemplate./ // She /took /from its /fruit /and /ate./ // And/ gave/ also /to /her/ mate/ beside /her./ And /he/ ate./ The/ eyes /of/ the /two /were /opened /and/ they/ knew /then..." //

As a Bat Mitzvah/, my eyes have been opened to the fact that I am entering a new stage of my life./ // I learned that I will make mistakes./ // but they will enable me to learn from them./ // I have learned that with **age** comes **responsibility**. It is scary and unfamiliar./ // But,/ with guidance from G-d / and

confidence in myself/ that I can handle new challenges,/ I know that I will be able to get through these new obstacles.// I am reassured that my family and friends are always there to support me and pick me up if I fall.// I'm scared,/ excited, /and ready/ to begin a new stage in my life. //

While Adam and Eve had no one to reassure them that everything was going to be okay,/ they did have G-d watching over them.// and that was definitely enough support to keep them going.// Even though G-d was watching over them,// Adam and Eve still weren't able to return to the Garden of Eden.// In Genesis 3:24,/ G-d expelled the humans and placed "a flaming blade /of a flashing sword/ to guard the way/ to the Tree of Life." -----Well,// that's definitely not the way I imagined leaving childhood! //

The scary part of this whole situation/ of entering adulthood/ is that even if I really try,/ I can't go back.// That makes this journey even more unfamiliar and thrilling. You are out of your comfort zone/ and are forced to make your own decisions, for better or for worse. //

Adam and Eve faced troubling obstacles,/ but managed to get through them.// Eve is an inspiration!// She did something risky,/ and yet she kept on going and embraced the new challenges outside of the Garden of Eden.// Instead of Eve regretting or getting embarrassed by her choice,/ I think she confidently moved forward. // Adam and Eve were able to take their sweet memories from the Garden,/ which helped give them courage.//

All of our choices become part of our memories,/ and part of who we are.// As a Bat Mitzvah,/ entering adulthood,/ I will always have with me those meaningful and hilarious memories from childhood and will never forget them. //

I remember making many choices that have gotten me where I am today.// I have chosen to go to RMHA,/ which enables me to get a strong/ Jewish education.// I am one of the only Reconstructionists there.// I chose to be a Reconstructionist/ and I am proud of that.//

The philosophy of Reconstructionists is,/ to quote my rabbi,/ Rabbi Steve,/ "Reconstructionists don't view each other as the chosen people,/ we view ourselves as people who make choices."// This relates to my parsha perfectly because Eve taught us that we are people who can and will make choices for ourselves,/ and those choices can lead us in a whole new direction. //

Adam and Eve also made many choices in their Garden of Eden.// One of the choices that Adam had to make was what to name every animal.// Like Adam, my parents had to make a huge choice when it came to naming me.// As you all know,/ they chose to name me Isabel,/ after my great grandfather,/ Israel.// I chose to go by the name Izzi or Iz, just as my great grandfather chose to go by the name Iz.// In Hebrew,/ Israel means "G-d wrestler." // Like my great grandfather,/ Israel,/ I too wrestle and challenge many things.// I like to think of it like this:

\*I am taking on the Torah just as Eve took on the Garden of Eden.\* I am challenging the Torah/ and questioning other's views/ as Eve challenged Adam's reinterpretation of G-d's words/ by eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad. //

Even though Eve made one **major choice** in the Garden of Eden,/ that isn't the only major choice she would ever make// Like Eve,/ I have many more choices to make between **entering adulthood** and **leaving childhood**// One of the choices I have made/ is that I want to **continue being socially active**/ in my many different communities/ and even **expand** on how active I am. //

Another important choice I am making is to **engage** more in **Tikun Olam**,/ repairing the world// Along with one of my best friends,/ Olivia Dansky,/ we are helping at an **urban school** with **underprivileged children**// A good education is **very important to me**/ and I feel so fortunate to go to a great school/ with **amazing academics**// I loved being able to work with children/ and teach them some of the **valuable lessons** I have learned at Herzl/RMHA//

**Continuing** to take part in community service projects/ **after** my Bat Mitzvah/ is **very important to me**. // One of these is to collect new and gently used soccer balls// and send them to an underprivileged community in **Africa**. // This project means a lot to me because I absolutely **love soccer**/ and want to share one of my **favorite hobbies** with other children// I am so **fortunate** to be able to constantly play soccer on a **great team** with the **right equipment**// and I want other kids to **experience** the joy of playing this **universal game**. //

I am also **participating** in the **B'nai Tzedek Program**,/ which **enables** me to learn about **philanthropy**/ by donating money to **causes I care about**//

At RMHA,/ one of my favorite teachers,/ Sarah Kornfeld,/ has started a **community service project**// This Tikun Olam project is called **"Change The World, It Just Takes Cents."**(c-e-n-t-s)// Students at RMHA raise money to build community centers for Darfurian refugees// We have learned about the **terrible genocide** that is going on in **Darfur**/ and Sarah Kornfeld/ has taught as that even the smallest act can make a **huge difference**// This Tikun Olam project has taught me that it's important to make the **choice to take a stand**,/ **fight** for what **you believe in**,/ and **help others**. //

"Change The World It Just takes Cents" is **exactly** what Eve did// She **changed** the planned route of what would become the Jewish people,/ and used her **sense** to make the **choice** to eat the apple. //

Today,/ **beyond** the time of Adam and Eve,/ we have the **Torah** to **help guide our decisions**// I think Torah and the commentaries are the **basic foundations of making choices: learning the nature of asking questions/ and questioning other's views with our own opinions**// There is a Jewish folktale that says/ **true paradise**/ is spending **eternity** sitting under the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden/ **learning Torah**// And by learning Torah,/ we can **gain the knowledge to make wise choices**// **Thanks, Eve!!!**-----

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In addition to Eve,/ I would like to thank the following people who have helped to prepare me for this day;/ my tutor,/ Risa Aqua;/ Cherie Karo Schwartz/ for her amazing knowledge and help with my D'var;/ Hal Aqua and Carla Sciaky/ for the beautiful music;/ Rabbi Steve/ for his great suggestions and support;/ B'nai Havarah/ and Havarah Hamakor. I would also like to thank all of my great teachers at Herzl/RMHA and my awesome soccer coaches. It's very special to have many friends, relatives, and teammates here today and I want to thank you

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*\*Shabbat Shalom!\**