

Sample Blessings to Students and B'nei Mitzvah

- Rav Ammi (Third Century, Tiberius) said this to his students (in 79 words):

May you live to see your world fulfilled.

May your destiny be for worlds still to come, and may you trust in generations past and yet to be.

May your heart be filled with intuition and your words be filled with insight.

May songs of praise ever be upon your tongue and your vision be a straight path before you.

May your eyes shine with the light of holy words and your face reflect the brightness of the heavens.

May your cherished hopes be fulfilled in your lifetime;

May you be worthy of life eternal;

And may your ideals persist throughout the generations;

May your heart be filled with understanding;

May your mouth speak wisdom;

And may your tongue give expression to song;

May your eyes direct you straight forward; May they shine with the light of Torah; and may your countenance be as radiant as the bright firmament.

May your lips speak knowledge and righteousness;

And may your feet swiftly take you

To places where the words of God are heard.

- Samuel (Third Century Babylonia) said to Rav Judah (42 words):

Open your mouth and read the Torah

Open your mouth and learn the Talmud

That your studies may be retained and that you may live long, since it is said:

'For they are life unto those who utters them with his mouth'.

- Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (Indianapolis, 21st Century) (160 words)

What I Wish for My Daughter I wish for all our children. I wish for you to be a person of character strong but not tough, gentle but not weak. I wish for you to be righteous but not self-righteous honest but not unforgiving. Wherever you journey, may your steps be firm and may you walk in just paths and not be afraid. Whenever you speak, may your words be words of wisdom and friendship.

May your hands build and your heart preserve what is good and beautiful in our world.

May the voices of the generations of our people move through you and may the God of our ancestors be your God as well. May you know that there is a people, a rich heritage, to which you belong and from that sacred place you are connected to all who dwell on the earth. May the stories of our people be upon your heart and the grace of the Torah rhythm dance in your soul.

Emanu-El parents spoke the following blessings on our Bimah before the Congregation

- Emanu-El Sample #1 (77 words)

As a Child, I told you we both had a job to do. Your job as the child was to grow, learn and have fun. My jobs as Dad was to love, nurture and protect you. Today our jobs are changing, your job now is to make the most of your life, and take responsibility. Mine is to support and love you in your endeavors. I love you. My only advice is to be true to yourself.

- Emanu-El Sample #2 (95 words)

May you be like women of Torah: Patient as Sarah, gracious, like Rebecca, nurturing as Leah, loving, like Rachel. May you be like biblical women: Devoted as Ruth, dignified like Naomi, faithful as Miriam, determined like Tamar. May you be like post-biblical women: Heroic as Judith, wise like Bruria, generous as Gracia Mendes, compassionate like Emma Lazarus. May you be like 20th Century women: Responsible as Lillian Wald, assertive like Golda Meir, courageous as Hannah Senesh, hopeful like Anne Frank. And most of all may you be your own 21st Century woman, true to yourself.

- Emanu-El Sample #3 (274 words)

In the years ahead as you hit the various bumps in the road of life, just try to follow your natural instincts and remember there is someone who could not be more proud of you or love you more. And I hope we have many more years of snowboarding together.

This is the part of the service when I am to give you a blessing. And it seems to me so very natural to bless you, you who have been a source of my truest blessings. This is also the time, now as you become a Bar Mitzvah, to look at the blessings that God has given you. How will you use them in your widening world, your gifts of wisdom and insight? How will they help you to make the decisions that will carve your future? Will you listen when your instincts guide you toward the more difficult path? Your wonderful sense of humor, which brings us all laughter and perspective. There are so many that will need to share that gift with you, your generosity of heart. When you came into this world, you arrived with a spirit that gives without question. Let this be the blessing that guides you as you grow.

My wish for you on this day is that as you are cherished, so will you cherish the path you have chosen as a Bar Mitzvah. Always remember to keep your mind and heart youthful and fully engaged in the wonders of our tradition and keep close to your heart our reverence for Torah. It is the tree of life. May God continue to bless you and keep you.

- Emanu-El Sample #4 (57 words)

We can't recall a day we haven't been proud of you. You're an old soul with a quiet but energetic tranquility. Continue to embrace this world, even with its contradictions. Continue to be kind and loving. In challenging yourself, expect to trip and fall. Let your Jewishness be an anchor and arbiter of balance. Trust your instincts.

- Emanu-El Sample #5 (250 words)

We stand here today to celebrate your becoming an adult in the tradition of Judaism. What does it mean, "to become an adult"?

That's a hard question worthy of a long involved answer. Fortunately, I am not going to try to answer it at this time. But one thing it does not mean is that you are on your own. Far from it. You will always have the love and support of your family and friends. As you mature you will continue to depend on all of us for help and guidance. What changes is that we will begin to depend on you as well.

As part of your Torah portion, you discuss the priestly blessing. While I am no Cohen or rabbi, I have some blessings for you.

I wish for you love and happiness, health and wealth.

I wish for you to be able to be satisfied with yourself and to acknowledge that you are worthy and deserving of everything good that happens in your life.

I hope for you to be flexible in your thoughts, using your wonderful creativity to accept change when it is inevitable.

As we know, life is a journey. Along the way, we meet many people, see the ordinary and extraordinary, have occasion to be celebrated and maligned. I wish for you to appreciate your opportunities, accept responsibility and that you always have a sense of humor, and are able to laugh with others, and at yourself. I love you.

- Emanu-El Sample #6 (183 words)

My dearest daughter, on your own, you decided to become a Bat Mitzvah. Take a deep breath, you have made it and you should be proud of yourself, as all of us are. There are those who say that a child's spirit chooses her parents. I would like to thank you for honoring me with your choice to be your mom.

You are truly one of the most amazing people I know. Your love for life and the everlasting smile in your eyes radiates and transfers to everyone around you. In return, many people who truly love you surround you. At this special time in your life, I wish for you health, happiness, and success at anything you wish for. May the tree of life be filled with the fruit of your labor. I'll end by quoting my favorite poet:

May God bless and keep you always
May your wishes all come true
May you always do for others
And let others do for you
May you build a ladder to the stars
May you stay forever young.

I love you.

- Emanu-El Sample #7

Miriam, you often roll your eyes in disbelief when I cry during the parent blessing at a Bar or Bat Mitzvah—even when I don't know the parent or the child. I become overwhelmed by the strong connection between parent and child and cannot help but think of my connection with you. And so, here we are at this powerful moment.

You selected this date to become a Bat Mitzvah based on Emor, the special reading of the Torah for Sukkot. You were struck by the call to social justice, or Tikkun Olam. Our Temple Emanu-El family trip to Israel last December left a strong impression and gave you the opportunity to explore Tikkun Olam in a very real and meaningful way. For two weeks you participated, observed and listened to stories of people doing their part to repair the world.

You have been exposed to the call of social justice through many organizations—through Temple Emanu-El, school, Girl Scouts and your own sense of responsibility. Judaism teaches us that each child has a responsibility to Tikkun Olam. May you continue the commitment you have made to repair the brokenness in the world in search of wholeness. May the generosity of your spirit and your desire to help others move you to social action. May you encounter sparks of holiness with each good deed. I love you.

- Emanu-El Sample #8

In preparing for the long road to your Bat Mitzvah today, you have spent years in Hebrew school, attended Shabbat services, learned to read Hebrew, traveled to Israel, and became familiar enough with the liturgy to lead the congregation today in prayer. You have also spent a considerable period of time performing mitzvahs.

When you look back on your Bat Mitzvah 10 or 20 years from now, I'm not sure you will remember the meaning of your Torah portion, D'var torah or your speech. You may remember the party or the DJ, or the friends that were present. But that is not what your Bat Mitzvah is about. It is about the mitzvahs, about remembering that you are coming of age to the point that you are responsible. You are responsible for tzedakah or charity and for tikkun olam or healing the world.

So my prayer and wish for you today is that you keep your eyes and ears open for opportunities to do mitzvahs. That you exhibit compassion, generosity, acceptance and tolerance of others. That you understand the pleasure and beauty of a life of wisdom and positive actions. I hope that you will translate becoming a Bat Mitzvah into a life-long commitment to Jewish living and Jewish values. Your contribution is a sacred element of our Jewish tradition.

- Emanu-El Sample #9

May the one who blessed our ancestors Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob, Leah and Rachel, bless you.

I bless you saying, a little over 13 years ago you were born, and in that moment, my life was blessed and changed forever. I became a mom. What a gift. Of course, I wanted everything to be perfect for you. But as we know, life is not perfect and it is in the watching of you navigate and overcome the challenges that life serves up that has been much more gratifying to witness. It is the moments that I have watched your strong character develop. I have seen your devotion to your family and your love of your brother and sister that fill me with pride. It is the moments when I have learned from your ability to democratically choose friends based on their character. It is the moments of your deep sense of justice and loyalty which are the attributes we only read about in stories of long ago that are awe-inspiring.

It is these moments that have brought us here today. Today, you have chosen to take your place in continuing the Jewish tradition of your ancestors. Be mindful of the hard work and commitment that lead up to this moment. Open your heart and have security in the love and pride that surrounds you. So breathe, and grab this moment. It truly belongs to you. I love you.

- Emanu-El Sample #10

May your dedication and determination lead you to passions which are rewarding and fulfilling.

May your instincts, intuitiveness and Jewish studies guide you safely and happily throughout your life.

May your kindness and caring continue to help others and characterize you.

May your huge reservoir of energy and innate passion for learning be used for personal growth, love of family and the betterment of community.

May your love for your family and friends bring you joy and happiness, strength and security, warmth and tradition.

May you one day enjoy your grandchildren's Bar and Bat Mitzvahs as your grandparents are today. Maybe, even at this temple, as Papa is, having been Bar Mitzvahed here 60 years ago.

Most of all, may you always know, whatever doors you walk through and wherever life leads you, I am so very proud of you. You are one of the greatest and truest blessings of our lives and that no matter what, you always have your mom and Dad's love and support.

May the Holy One guard you and sustain you, helping you to be whole-hearted in your faith, studying Torah and fulfilling Mitzvot. May you find favor before God and all people. And let us say: Amen.

When you were born I remember yelling "it's a boy".

Today marks a courageous moment in your life. I am very proud of the hard work you have put into preparing for this magical day. Three generations of our family are here today to wish you good luck on your journey through life.

You are such a special little man. Kind, caring, loyal, affectionate, strong, and happy.

Good luck on your path.

I love you more than anything. You are everything to me!