

November 14, 2020 / 27 Cheshvan 5781
Parshat Chayei Sarah

פרשת חיי שרה

Bat Mitzvah of Shari Potasinski Mertzell

שירה בת נשה ויהודית

Shira bat Nesha v'Yehudit



Beit CONGREGATION
Simchat
Torah

קהלה קדושה בית שמחת תורה

Thank You from Shari

I'd like to thank the academy. Ok, ok seriously there are so many people I want to thank. I am 100% confident in saying that I would not be where I am today if it weren't for all the people who helped me. I want to thank Miya Rotstein. 8 months ago my parasha would've looked like a bunch of gibberish to me and now I can actually read it. She was so patient and helpful while I learned. I also want to thank Rabbi Rapport. The main reason my D'var Torah makes any sense at all is because of how she helped me edit it and make it how it is now. I want to thank Rabbi Kleinbaum. I've known her my whole life and I couldn't ask for a better Rabbi. Next I want to thank the CBST community. You've all been so encouraging. You've watched me grow up and it's an honor to be here with you all today as I become a Bat Mitzvah.

I especially want to thank my parents for being so supportive during this process. You are the people who taught me what it means to be good. I want to thank my brothers Aiden, Logan, and Eli for listening to me singing my Torah and Haftarah over and over again in the room next door. You were very patient and I'm grateful for that.

I am beyond grateful for all of you and I'm so glad to celebrate with you today.

Welcome and Thank You From Yolanda and Nancy

We are blessed today to share and celebrate Shari becoming a Bat Mitzvah in front of family, friends, fellow congregants, and colleagues. Many of you are Zooming in from all corners of the city, country and world. Despite our physical distance, we feel your presence and the joy, warmth, pride and love that you have expressed for Shari and us. Thank you.

Congregation Beit Simchat Torah (CBST), is a very special place – a progressive religious community dedicated to inclusion, resistance and love. CBST has played a significant role in our lives, as a spiritual home, community and source of lifelong friendships that began when Yolanda arrived in 1987, continued when Nancy arrived in 1993, and flourished as we became a couple and created a family. Our relationships with each other and this community have evolved over the past 5 years as we faced the challenges that come with divorce and learned to adapt and find joy in our redefined families and communities.

Through all these changes, CBST has provided a solid foundation and important community to Shari and Eli. Whether at Bethune Street or The Church of the Holy Apostles, the Jacob Javits Center or Town Hall, and now on West 30th Street, Shari and Eli's identities as Jews started and continue to flourish at CBST. This foundation remains with them as they cross the Hudson River and attend services at Congregation Ner Tamid, where Nancy and her partner Denise are members.

Shari was named by Rabbi Kleinbaum at Bethune Street, participated in Alef Bet Shabbat (who can forget There's A Dinosaur Knocking at My Door) with Rabbi Weiss, and continued learning at Limmud B'Shabbat mornings and the B'nai Mitzvah program. She also attended camp at Camp Havaya, the Reconstructionist Jewish Camp in the Poconos, which she hopes to return to as soon as possible!

Through these educational settings, Shabbat and holiday services and celebrations, annual synagogue retreats, Pride holiday celebrations, and social justice projects, Shari has developed deep connections to community, with other children, teens, and adults. She and Hannah Tauber-Weiss have maintained a very close long-distance relationship for all these years, speaking almost daily.

We are grateful to everyone at CBST who has been part of Shari's life since she came into the world and was named Shira bat Neshah V'Yehudit. We thank Miya Rotstein, our fabulous CBST B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator, for teaching Shari Torah and Haftarah trope and coordinating so many of the "moving parts" of preparing for this day. We thank Cantorial Intern Sam Rosen for working with Shari to prepare for the Shabbat morning service. Thank you to Principal Jennifer Kleinbaum, for strengthening the CBST Religious School that has now grown into a Teen Program for our B'nai Mitzvah graduates. We can't forget Julie Seltzer and Jonathan Schmidt-Chapman, and educators Cooperberg-Rittmaster Rabbinical Fellow Deborah Megdal, Nora Isacoff, Ernest Vener, Sharon Golub and Maya Orli Cohen, for teaching and nurturing Shari as she learned in community with her peers.

A special and warm thanks to Rabbi Yael Rapport for being Shari's chevruta partner, helping her write her D'var Torah, and supporting us through this process. Rabbi Rapport also skillfully guides the Children and Family Learning Program and the B'nai Mitzvah Family-learning Cohort, co-led by Miya Rotstein, in which we participated. And, to Senior Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, to whom we are so grateful for her determined vision of CBST as a place to teach and raise children as an act of radical faith. To past clergy who dedicated themselves to the CBST community, both children and adults, Rabbi Ayelet Cohen, Rabbi Rachel Weiss, and Cantor Steve Zeidenberg - we miss you all very much and treasure the memories of your role in Shari's development. And, finally, to the CBST Community- with whom we pray, sing, celebrate, march, retreat, mourn and comfort. Much love especially to all the regulars at the Shabbat morning Liberal Minyan, and to our co-coordinators, Liz Galst, Ilene Block and Mitchell Bloom and to Neil Hoffman and Andy Ingall. Thank you to Patrice Ruel, Religious Events Coordinator, for his patience and foresight in helping us with the details and logistics. And lastly, thank you to Jason Zivic from Better Events, who keeps us Zooming.

We Remember Them:

Erika Potasinski / Leah bat Golda v'Shlomo, z"l (Shari's Abuela)

Lee Potasinski / Eliezer ben Malka v'Sandel, z"l (Shari's Grandfather)

Leon Potasinski / Aryeh ben Leah v'Eliezer, z"l (Shari's Uncle)

Bert Mertzel (Shari's Grandfather)

George William Main IV (Shari's Bonus Uncle)

Max and Jean Frankle (Shari's great-grandparents)

Jerome and Nettie Mertzel (Shari's great-grandparents)

Sam and Nesha Frankle (Shari's great-great-grandparents)

Aliyot and Honors:

ALIYOT

Members of the Potasinski Family:

Mother Yolanda Potasinski, Aunt Susy & Uncle Alan Glassberg, Uncle Scott Harshman, Cousins: Jorge & Mireya Gugig, Alan & Louise Kent, Helene & Jay The Soifers Manny, Scott, Jennifer, Kyle & Rachel.

(This Aliyah will be blessed by Yolanda and Shari's Aunt Susy)

Members of the Mertzel and Main Family:

Mother Nancy Mertzel, Bonus Mom Denise Main, Brothers Eli Mertzel, Aiden and Logan Main, Grandmother Alice Mertzel, Aunt Melanie Mertzel and cousin Devon Mertzel, Bonus family George & Linda Main, Alysha Keyser & Brandon Main

(This Aliyah will be blessed by Nancy and Shari's brother Eli)

Additional members of the Potasinski extended family:

Cousins: Goldie Ghelman, the Ghelman Sanders: Sandra, Cody, Talia, Noa, & Adina; Avi, Teresa, Jules & Milo Ghelman; the Krakowers

(This Aliyah will be blessed by Cousin Sandra)

Additional members of the Mertzels Main extended family:

Cousins: Charlotte & Israel Kupiec, Great Aunt and Uncle Hilda & Joel Karp, Debra & Hal Skopicki, Jonas & Stephan Lehrman Karp, David & Patrice Karp, Lauren Levine, Nikki Mertzels & Jackie Helfgott, Samantha Mertzels & Kelly O'Halloran, Michael & Dana Volini; Aunt Cookie Volini

(This Aliyah will be blessed by cousins Debra, Hal and Madeline Skopicki)

Friends & Family of Choice for Yolanda, Nancy & Denise

Ellen Shapiro & Sabrina Farber, Hanna Gafni & Barbara Dolgin, Gail Winter & Jean Kirk, Shari Klugman & Debbi Berman, Sari Kessler & Erika Karp, Johanna Ginsberg & Mark Brownstein, Micheale Taylor, Gail Gottlieb, Beth & Bob Adleman, Lynn Mesuk

(This Aliyah will be blessed by Ellen Shapiro & Sabrina Farber)

READINGS

Prayer for our country will be read by Shari's cousin: Staff Sergeant Cody Sanders who is currently stationed in Afghanistan for one year

Prayer for healers will be read by Shari's grandmother: Alice Mertzels



The Helping Homeless Women Shelter Group, which Shari has co-chaired for the past 2 1/2 years at MS 114, East Side Middle School.

Thank you for refraining from applause, usage of phones, and photography during the service.



קהלה קדושה בית שמחת תורה

Senior Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, D.D.
Rabbi Yael Rooks Rapport ASSOCIATE RABBI
Rabbi Marisa Elana James DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL JUSTICE PROGRAMMING
Gregg H. Passin PRESIDENT
Yolanda Potasinski EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Joyce Rosenzweig MUSIC DIRECTOR

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