

B*Mitzvah of Naomi Blakeman and Casey Casas

נעמי בת אלכס ואינה רמון מבית אברהם ושרה



Rabbi Yael Werber

Cantor Sam Rosen

Rabbi Marisa Elana James, Director of Social Justice Programming

Joyce Rosenzweig, Music Director

Ivan Zimmerman, President

Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, Senior Rabbi Emerita

Thank You from Casey

First of all, I would like to thank my husband Jonathan Casas & my best friend/chosen sister Gwyn Gahagan. Thank you for putting up with the many hours of listening to me fumble through my Hebrew practice as well as my anxious ramblings about my drash. I love you both & wouldn't be here without y'all's support.

I would also like to thank the various people that have made such an impact on my spiritual growth (although not an exhaustive list). Rabbi Amy Bernstein, Rabbi Yael Rapport, Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, Rabbi Dave Yedid, Rabbi Heather Miller and the Keeping It Sacred community, Rabbi Elliot Kukla, Rabbi Lauren Tuchman, Svava, and CBST's Emet team.

Lastly, I want to specifically thank Rabbi Yael Werber and Miya Rotstein for their encouragement, patience, and kindness throughout this process. It wasn't easy coming to the completion of this part of my Jewish education while moving from North Carolina. You both gave me stability in a time where my life felt very out of control. It felt quintessentially Jewish to have our spiritual tradition grounding me and pushing me forward throughout everything.

Thank You from Naomi

When going into the adult B*Mitzvah program, my goal was to learn the Torah trope and be able to decipher the cantillation marks. I also was excited about the opportunity to dive more deeply into the Torah text and write my D'var Torah as an adult who is actually interested in this topic. When I had my bat mitzvah at 13, my Torah portion was Shabbat Chol Chamoed Sukkot – which nicely echoes some of the themes of my parsha now, Vahakhel-Pekudei. This is definitely not something that I would be excited about as a 13 year old, but as a 39 year old I think it's pretty cool.

This program has been a spiritually nourishing experience. Thank you to my teachers Rabbi Werber and Miya Rotstein for your patience and guidance throughout the adult B*Mitzvah program. The experience has made me feel more connected than ever to my Judaism and is also an exciting start to reading from the Torah on a more regular basis. Throughout the program, I loved being able to decipher the different Trope notes, which turned the Torah service into a logic puzzle for me.

Thank you to my family and friends who are here in person and online celebrating this milestone with me. My initial plan was that this be a private journey, but after encouragement from my partner, Ari, I extended the invitations to my loved ones. Huge thank you to Ari, who helped me edit my D'var Torah, listened to me practice the Trope, supported me throughout the journey, and encouraged me every step of the way.

Thank you to the CBST clergy and kahal for encouraging me and making this journey joyous.

YOU GET PROUD BY PRACTICING

Remember, you weren't the one
who made you ashamed,
but you are the one
who can make you proud.

Just practice,
practice until you get proud, and once you
are proud,
keep practicing so you won't forget.
You get proud
by practicing.

Excerpt from poem by Laura Hershey, Copyright 1991

Thank you for refraining from applause, usage of phone and other electronics, and photography during the service and while in the sanctuary. It is traditional to pass out candy during the service to shower Casey and Naomi with sweetness, so we ask you don't eat it immediately.