

Shana Tovah

My name is Abigail Caine, and I am thirteen years old. As I became a Bat Mitzvah fairly recently, Rabbi Booth asked me to share some words of reflection with you all today.

It was the Thursday morning Minyan before my Bat Mitzvah. I had rehearsed my D'var Torah and recited the Maftir that I practically knew by heart. Pictures had been taken and breakfast and school would soon await me. I stood in the sanctuary, my family gathered around me, my hands shaking as beads of sweat slowly rolled down my back. Rabbi Booth turned from my parents to me, saw my trembling hands, gave me a smile, and said, "You know, the service will go faster than you imagine. A lot of people forget that and then it's over before you know it, so don't forget to enjoy the moment."

Enjoy the moment. It seemed a strange bit of advice to me at the time. I could hardly fathom the service going quickly. And yet, how right he was. It was only at the very end of my Bat Mitzvah, as the congregations' voice swelled around me singing the words of Adon Olam, when I had calmed enough to remember this advice, that I did just that. I took a minute just to enjoy the moment.

I am petrified for high school. The workload, the responsibility, the teachers, new kids coming and old friends leaving, all of it. It all just seems too soon. It was a sunny September afternoon when I found myself confessing these fears to my mother. She turned to me again with a smile and told me, "When the time comes, you'll be ready, but high school is a year away. Just stay in the moment and you'll be just fine."

I do not remember my first day of middle school in its entirety. I cannot recall every minute of Pesach with my family last year. I could not describe to you in detail the entire three hours of my Bat Mitzvah. What I do remember is walking through the doors of my school for the first time. I can recall singing the Ma Nishtana surrounded by cousins, grandparents, aunts, and uncles for what feels like the tenth year in a row. I can describe to you the feeling of relief and joy I felt when singing Adon Olam and knowing that I had worked so hard for something and I had actually accomplished it.

Becoming a Bat Mitzvah means growing up and becoming an adult. It means a connection with not only the community at Kol Emeth, but with Jews all over the world. It means responsibility and trust and a commitment to a culture and a heritage that my family holds dear. After months of work, my studying and singing had finally paid off in a moment, in that moment.

It has always puzzled me why we remember moments and not events, specks of time and not swaths of it. If only it could be different. But regardless of my pondering, this is something we cannot change. Our memories are made of moments. Moments that define us and moments that guide our thoughts and actions. I cannot imagine who I would be without my memories. But all too often we forget to enjoy these moments, to ingrain them into our memories. In this time of reflection, I hold these moments close and promise myself that I will make new ones next year, l'shana haba'a.

