

Let me begin by thanking everyone for coming today. These are challenging times, but we are together in the only way we can be and that is what matters.

Theo and Adilyah were born five months apart, in different homes but in the same birthing pool, with the same midwife to witness their first breaths. They went to the same daycare, attended the same schools and summer camps. They shared toys, snacks and friends. They have always taken care of each other.

Since 2008, Adilyah has been Theo's constant companion. From the very beginning, she was health conscious. She loved nothing better than a good, crunchy snack. At six months old, her favourite thing to do was crawl over to the cat dish, straddle and dig in.

She was a Purina fan, salmon was good but I think the lamb kibble was her favourite. Theo would crawl over to join her. I would find them both sitting in kitty water dish backwash, their diapers soaked, Adilyah shoving fistfuls of dry kibble into her mouth. Theo would be chewing slowly on one little piece. I think he was too polite to tell her he didn't like it.

Theo was always very protective of Adilyah. As toddlers they went to the same daycare. One day an older, bigger boy came over to Adilyah and ripped a toy out of her hands. She started to cry, but Theo wasn't having it. He toddled over to that kid, ripped the toy out of his hands, brought it back to Adilyah and said: "it's okay, Adilyah, I talked to him."

Choosing Theo's Hebrew name was easy. We chose Moses because Moses was fiery but he was gentle, he was pulled out of the water by his mother, he was shy of speech, and his first best friend was his sister.

Theo, I know how hard you worked and how hard it is for you to do this today. Since you were little, you have refused to sing or dance at school concerts. I have dozens of videos of you standing stubbornly beside your classmates, looking at them like they were idiots.

When you were six I tried to enroll you in an all boys choir to help with the shyness but you hid under a desk screaming “I hate music” until they let you out. Yet here we are.

I am very proud of you, and Abba would be so proud too. It was very important to him that you feel Jewish. He wrote you a letter for me to read to you on this day, in which he said the following:

...we earn our Judaism by refusing to take things for granted, by participating in the real world and engaging with our humanity and the realism of our existence. I am certain you did a wonderful job today. I am so sorry I am not there to hold you strong in my arms and tell you face to face how proud I am. I am sorry I haven't been able to show you with all my heart how much I love you and the man you have become. I am so honored that you kept going and working and accomplished so much. I am certain this is just the beginning of you living a truly inspiring life, one which I regret that I will miss. I love you so much. With you forever and always, -Abba

Adilyah:

Today is not the celebration it should be, but it is a day of achievement. You've earned your place in a different way from Theo; you could have done this for your father's sake without putting your heart into it. You could have chosen not to do it at all, to please no one. You did neither, and I know it was hard.

If you had never chosen to earn your place in the Jewish community, I would have stood by you. But I am happy that you did. Your father wrote you a letter for today, in which he said the following:

...

Know that wherever I am right now, I am very proud of you and unbelievably honored of all the work you've done. I know you did a wonderful job and my only regret is that I am not there next to you right now, my arm wrapped around you, telling you the following:

Adilyah, you are amazing. I believe in you and in all the things that you will accomplish. I love you so much and I believe in the relentless curiosity you've possessed since you

were born. I can't wait to see what other great challenges you will be conquering. Loving you forever and ever with undying love - your Abba.

This day is important for many reasons. It is a rite of passage, it formally recognises you two as members of the Jewish community, and it signals the end of childhood.

Abba would have helped you prepare for today in a way I never could. He would have nagged, guided, coaxed, lectured and bothered you to learn your Hebrew, study your parshas. And you might have resented him, like normal preteens, and slouched in here today wondering why you have to do this dumb ritual.

Cancer took so many things from us. It took your ability to take life for granted, and for that I am truly sorry. Instead of studying for your Bat Mitzvah in spite of your dad, you did it for him, and without him. I wish I could fix that, but remember who has been there every step of the way: the Jewish community.

They left food on the doorstep and money in the mailbox, they worried about us and came to see us even when they didn't know what to say. They mourned with us and cried with us and they are here with us today no matter what.

You may think we met, fell in love and made a family, but actually we met, fell in love and you made us a family. Parents cannot provide everything. You will need community and community will need you. That's what it means to choose to be a link in a chain that goes back 5,000 years. That is why this mitzvah is so important. There are no Jews unless Jewish people do Jewish things.

Thank you to David Mannes and Rabbi Gila and the people in this room, and not in this room, for being with us today.