



Shabbat Vayigash 5777 /January 6, 2017

Dear Shir Tikvah:

This past Shabbat morning, as the sun shown through the windows at First Universalist like a coat of many colors, Noa, our daughter, chanted Torah as a Bat Mitzvah. It felt like the High Holy Days in winter: overflowing with awe and inspiration.

Surrounded by more than 550 family, friends, and community members, Michael and I felt radiant as parents; my heart felt as if would explode with joy.

We have so much to be grateful for:

To Wendy Goldberg, who tutored, nurtured, and mentored Noa like she's done so beautifully with so many of your children;

To Rabbi Rappaport, who lead the service, guided Noa in her D'var Torah, and answered her question on theological skepticism with compassion, tenderness, and integrity;

To John Humleker, Crystal Cochran, Forrest Yesnes, Julie Jacobs, for schlepping, setting up, and cleaning up to make our second home feel like our home;

To Sara Lahyani, assisted so ably by David Raskas, Angie Vindedahl, and their amazing team, who coordinated with Michael and worked so hard to make the luncheon feel loving, beautiful, delicious, and abundant;

And finally, we are grateful that our daughters have the opportunity to grow up in a synagogue community like Shir Tikvah, which encourages them to love boldly and courageously, live their faith in the streets fearlessly, and strive for such potent kindness that it makes the world shift on its axis.

Three moments shine particularly brightly:

Noa's first aliyah included Michael's dear friends who belong to an Orthodox synagogue in Toronto. They shared with us how honored they were to be on the bimah together as husband and wife, with their daughters-together for the first time-to bless the Torah. That Shir Tikvah created a spiritual home to observant Orthodox Jews-wow!

To have Noa's four grandparents-two of whom survived as refugees from Nazi Germany and two of whom grew up here in Minnesota-hand her the Torah was awe inspiring!

And finally, as so many of you have known before us, to have a child rise before you-once so tiny and fragile-and chant the ancient words scribed onto the parchment is holy and beautiful, stunning and miraculous. Being a dad is simply the best job in the entire universe.

Every cell in my body reverberates in gratitude.

Michael, Noa, and Liat join me in expressing a heartfelt, "Thank you."

Shabbat Shalom,

Michael