

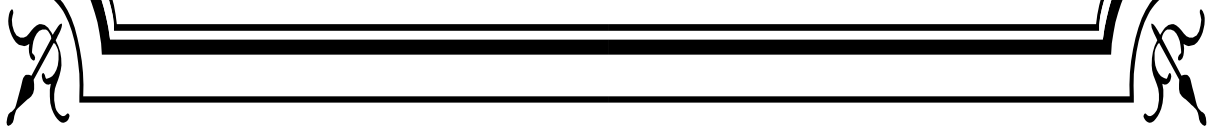


Aliyah: My Love for Israel



Amber Levitt

Record of Amber's Dvar Torah and
Dinner Speeches



Amber Levitt: Bat Mitzva, Shabbat 5 Tevet 5772 – 31 December 2011

Order of the Day

Amber's was born on 4 Tevet, 5760, 13 December 1999. Her Bat Mitzva was thus attained on Friday, December 30, 2011, and marked the next day, when the Torah Portion was Vayigash. This is a souvenir of that special day!

Shacharit Shabbat Vayigash, at which Amber's father, Michael, Saba, Moshe, and cousins David King and Nigel Moss received *aliyot*. Brother, Yonatan Mendel was honoured with *gelilah*.

Following the service, Rabbi Mordechai Wollenberg called Amber to the Ark where he presented her with a commemorative siddur on behalf of the Honorary Officers and Congregation of Childwall Hebrew Congregation.

The Congregation was then invited to hear Amber's Dvar Torah in the Ada Shifrin Hall, followed by a celebratory Kiddush.

In the evening, Motzei Shabbat, a Dinner was held for family and friends. After a brief reception, with music provided by local students Orian Peled and Yishay Igan, Amber's Mother, Riva, welcomed the honoured guests and asked them to take their allotted seats and Amber performed the Havdala ceremony. Michael asked guests to partake in Neteilat Yadayim, after which Rabbi Wollenberg made Hamotzi.

The meal then progressed interspersed with music and speeches. Michael introduced Amber who spoke between the hors d'oeuvre and main course, followed by Michael. After the main course Yonatan spoke, followed by best friend, Miriam. After dessert, Rabbi Avremi Kievman spoke before inviting the gentlemen to make Birkat Hamatzon.

Music and dancing continued until carriages at 11 o'clock pm.

Amber Levitt: Bat Mitzva Dvar Torah presented prior to Kiddush, Shabbat 5 Tevet 5772

Welcome to my Bat Mitzva to Rabbi Wollenberg, Honorary Officers and members of Childwall Hebrew Congregation, visitors and honoured guests.

Today we read Parasha Vayigash from the book of Bereshit (that is chapter 44 verse 18, to chapter 47 verse 27, of Genesis), as well as its related Haftara, chapter 37 verses 15-28 from the Book of the prophet Ye-chez-keil (Ezekiel). My Dvar Torah is about the relationship between the parasha and Israel. Israel is central to me both as a Jew and personally, because most of my family lives there, I am Israeli myself (as well as British), and we plan to make Aliyah in 2012.

The parasha begins at the point in the story of Yosef (Joseph) when he has been made Vizier or Regent of Mitzrayim (Egypt) and his brothers have travelled to Egypt in search of food. Years before, the brothers had thrown Yosef into a pit and pretended he was dead, showing their father his tattered coat, known in popular culture as the "coat of many colours," though it is not called that in the Torah. They haven't yet realised that the regent is their long-lost brother, Yosef.

At the beginning of this parasha, Binyamin (Benjamin), the youngest of Ya'akov's (Jacob) twelve sons, was accused of stealing Yosef's golden goblet, and Yehuda (Judah) went up to Yosef, who was now as good as king, and said, "Make me a slave instead of my brother, for our Father may die if he does not see him again." This shows the true brotherly love the brothers had. Now Yosef couldn't wait any longer and blurted out, "I am Yosef, the brother you threw in the pit, and sold to the slave-dealers."

The brothers were now frightened that Yosef may want revenge, but instead he embraced each one of them happily, crying for joy. He told them to go and get their father and bring him down from Canaan to Egypt to live in the Goshen (the finest part of Egypt) and that Yosef would provide food for the rest of the famine. When Ya'akov received the good news he could hardly believe that his son Yosef was alive and raced to Egypt to be with him. Paroh (Pharaoh) let them settle in the Goshen and Yosef's happiness was as big as his family.

During this parasha Hashem (G-d) makes a promise connected with Israel. After leaving his home to go to Egypt, Ya'akov stops at Be'er Sheva (Beersheba) to make sacrifices to Hashem. During the night Hashem came to Ya'akov in a

dream and said, "I am G-d, G-d of your Fathers. Do not be afraid of going down to Egypt, for I will make you into a Great Nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up. Yosef will put his hands on your eyes after you pass away."

Rashi, the Mediaeval French commentator on the Torah, clarifies that when Hashem says "I will also bring you up," this means that Ya'akov will be buried in Eretz Yisroel (the Land of Israel). The promise He makes echoes the promise He made to Avraham Avinu (Abraham, our forefather) in an earlier parasha (Bereishit 12:2). God considers, it seems, that we can also be a Nation outside the Promised Land because He says "I will make you a Great Nation there," meaning Egypt.

Nowadays this is still very relevant, the idea whether we can be a Nation in exile outside Israel in the Diaspora. On the other hand, others say that we don't need to live in Israel, so we can be a shining example to the rest of the world. We are a nation, either way, as Hashem made clear to Ya'akov. This does not mean that we do not wish to be in Israel. We learn that even if we are successful in exile we must always feel some pain that we are not in Israel.

The parasha lists all the descendents of Ya'akov that entered with him into Egypt and, since this is a Bat Mitzvah speech, I was pleased to note that women play an important part in the list. For instance Rashi says that Yocheved, Levi's daughter and Moshe Rabeinu's (Moses') future Mother, who is listed last, "completes" the total number of seventy souls that went with Ya'akov because the quality of faith is stronger in women than men.

The list also includes Serach, daughter of Asher. According to Sefer Ha'Yashar, when Ya'akov's sons returned from Egypt bearing news that Yosef lived, they said that if they tell Ya'akov straight away his soul will fly from his body. So the twelve brothers told Serach to play her harp and sing, "Yosef lives, Yosef is alive, and he rules Egypt," so that their Father could absorb the message slowly. Ya'akov said to Serach, "The mouth that informs me Yosef lives shall not taste death;" Hashem heard this and Serach never died but went to Heaven alive.

The Haftara, which is from the Book of Yechezkel, is of course connected in theme with the parasha from the Torah. In order to begin to see how, we must go back to the beginning of Parshat Vayigash. The parasha begins "And Yehuda approached him [meaning Yosef]". Yehuda challenged Yosef with harsh words: even though he did not yet know it was his brother. Yehuda was known as The Lion, and this moment marks the beginning of a rivalry which

will only end in our true unity when Moshiach comes. Hence the Haftara for this parasha is chosen because it describes the prophesy told by G-d to Yechezkel that the Jewish people will once again be united under Moshiach, our future King from the line of King David. So the parasha reminds us as we read of the first signs of division in the Jewish people that there will come a time of unity.

This all connects with my theme of Israel, because in the Haftara G-d makes His eternal promise of the land to the Jewish People after the kingdoms of Yehuda and Yosef are joined together in the Messianic era. G-d gives his message in two ways, first by a parable about two sticks representing the two kingdoms which will become joined as one stick, and then directly, when He says, "Behold! I will take the Children of Israel from among the Nations where they have gone and I will gather them from every side and I will bring them to their land...They shall dwell on the land I have given to my servant, to Ya'akov, wherein your forefathers lived; and they shall dwell upon it, their children and their children's children, for ever."

This shows that the Land of Israel is the inheritance of all the Jewish People and that we shall one day make a final Aliyah as it is said, " בשנה הבאה " בירושלים" – Next Year in Jerusalem!

And please G-d this will come true for me and my family next year – tomorrow, which is 2012!



Amber Levitt: Bat Mitzva Speech presented at Dinner, Motzei Shabbat 5 Tevet 5772

Michael: Rabbonim, family & friends, in short, honoured guests, it gives me great pleasure to present to you once again our dear Bat Mitzva, Amber Rachel.

-o-

Welcome again to my Bat Mitzva, Rabbonim, family & friends. I'm so glad that you are all here!

At lunchtime I spoke about my Bat Mitzva Parasha. Don't worry, this isn't a repeat performance!

I want to tell you a little about my Bat Mitzva project, from which I drew my Dvar Torah. I decided to do a project about Aliyah and Israel, and its place in my life as a Jew and as an individual, and connecting these topics to my parasha. The strange thing is that since I started, we have decided to make Aliyah, in the summer! Maybe Hashem knew that when he gave me the idea for the project – and I thought it was all my idea!

If you wish to have a look at it, it's over there! [Point] And you can have an electronic copy if you email us!

I would like to thank my Mum, Dad, Brother Yonatan, Saba Moshe, Savta Bella, Grandma Valerie, great Saba Moshe and great aunt Muza who helped me create this "work of art," and also my Cheder teacher who have prepared me so well – Thank you, Mrs Wineberg! I would like to thank my Mum & Dad again for organising my Bat Mitzva celebrations.

For my project I found out about people in my family who have planned or made Aliyah, and this has helped me understand what Israel means to me & every other Jew in the world.

Israel means a lot to me, first as a Jew, because it is my homeland and it is where the Temple stood and where it will stand again when Moshiach will come; and secondly as an Israeli, because all of my mum's side and much of my dad's side of the family is there & it is my nationality.

Israel is central in every Jew's life whether they realise it or not. It is the only Jewish state in the whole world & many people have given up their lives so we can live there in safety & we are very thankful for that. In my project I tell the



story of individual members of my family, some are still with us and some are not and we truly miss them. I also wrote about Zionism and our strong connection to Israel. One of the stories, about my great great grandfather Menachem Mendel, a Talmid Chacham, ties all this together especially well because he made a very dangerous journey from Lithuania to Jerusalem in 1911 as a very old man of 71, in order that he might die in the land of our ancestors, and he is buried on the Mount of Olives.

One thing I wrote about which I haven't mentioned either this morning or now is about my name. My middle name, Rachel, was given to me in honour of my great grandma, my dad's, dad's mother. I was told by my grandma Valerie that if my dad had been a girl he would have had this honour, but instead he is named for Rachel's husband, Michael. Unfortunately Rachel died very soon after giving birth to her daughter, Mary Toby, when her son, my grandpa Mendel, was only 2 years old. In 2006 we visited South Africa, and I met for the first time my cousin Helene and her husband, Jack. She was the daughter of Ben, who was the brother of Rachel's husband, Michael.

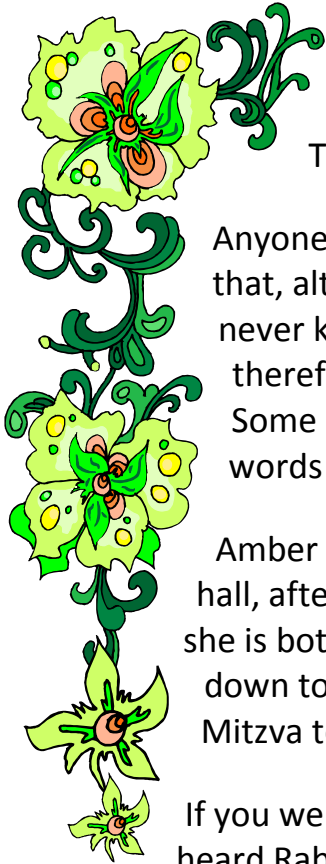
While we were there, we found and visited Rachel's grave. Because it is in a remote cemetery, and her family moved away, and travel was difficult in the old days, and the family later mostly emigrated or passed on, it is likely that her grave had not been visited for decades since she died in 1928, if ever. The visit was even more emotional because, when we finally found the cemetery (which was not easy!) Rachel's gravestone was one of only 5 or 6 that remained in one corner – the rest had gone. Even more miraculously, Rachel's was the only original gravestone – the few others had been replaced with new ones – and although it was broken in a few pieces, some unknown kind and thoughtful person (all we know is that no-one in the family had done it) had cemented all the jigsaw pieces together for her. There is a picture in my project book.

I also share my name with our Matriarch, Rachel, who was Ya'akov's true love. I write in my project about the modesty and self sacrifice Rachel showed for her sister, Leah, which is an inspiration for me.

I hope you enjoy the rest of my Bat Mitzva celebrations and I wish you a happy new year-tomorrow!

[THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!!!](#)

Amber Levitt: Bat Mitzva Speech presented by Michael Levitt at Dinner, Motzei Shabbat 5 Tevet 5772



Rabbonim, honoured guests, friends and relations, and of course, Bat Mitzva, Amber Rachel.

Thank you for coming and sharing Amber's Simcha with us.

Anyone who has heard me speak at a meeting or publicly knows that, although I like to have a crib sheet to hand for comfort, I never keep to the script. I'm trying something new tonight therefore by speaking from notes rather than off the cuff. Some of you may think that makes a change from where my words usually emanate!

Amber has spoken about yesterday's parsha this morning in this hall, after Shacharis, and spoken very well and with insight. That she is both able and keen in her Yiddishkeit is in no small measure down to my dear friend Rabbi Avremi Kievman and her Bat Mitzva teacher, Mrs Rifka Weinberg.

If you were in Childwall shul the previous Shabbos you will have heard Rabbi Wollenberg speak about the message of Chanukah, which has recently ended. I'm afraid I'm going to borrow his joke, but then I'm not sure I haven't heard it elsewhere before. A man is driving down the M62 when he receives a call on his mobile from his wife. "Take care, Chayim," she says; "I heard on the radio there's a meshuggena driving the wrong way down the motorway." "Not one," says Chayim, "thousands!"

I think old jokes bear repeating, but maybe that's because I'm getting older! But joking apart, it is the Jew's lot to be swimming against the tide, to be different, to be the odd one out, and to do it with pride and purpose in order to be a light to his fellow Jew and unto the nations. This is what we have tried to teach Amber, and Yonatan, and it is difficult for any child to be different, but Amber has learnt to love Yiddishkeit with pride. She has already given us much nachas, or as Riva would insist, nachat!

But a Bat Mitzva is not the climax of Jewish education, but the beginning of religious obligations about which one never finishes learning. Amber has already realised this, having told us she has no intention of leaving cheder just because she is now Bat Mitzva. Some of you will know that, for the last six years I have been chairman of Amber's cheder. MATT – Merseyside

Amalgamated Talmud Torah is the very same cheder which, before its reincarnation, under the wonderful Kievman clan, in much loved form with an additional prefix to its name – Cheder Etz Chayim – I hated with a vengeance at Amber's age and swore I was finished with for ever. How surprising life is!

Amber, our beloved daughter and your grandparents' beloved granddaughter; I remember from the certificates I received 35 years ago that MATT's old motto was ... ושונתם לבניך [v'shinantam...] ("And ye shall teach them to your children..."), which is of course a quotation from the Shema, which we recite every morning and night, which itself quotes Devarim – Deuteronomy – chapter 6, verse 7, and reinforces the necessity of educating our children in our faith.

Amber, you know that the Shema is a prayer which has transformed my life and our family life practically, and I hope has therefore stood you, our precious daughter, today Bat Mitzva, in good stead, and will likewise secure our dear son Yonatan Mendel, a successful future. The phrase I quoted, "And ye shall teach them to your children... ("them" being the words which G-d commanded us that day at Mount Sinai, namely "Shema Yisroel adoshem eloheyenu adoshem echad" – "Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God! The Lord is One!") goes on to say that we shall teach those words to our children "דברת בם בשבתך ובקומך ובילכתך בדרך ובשכבך ובקומך" [v'dibarta bam...] "and speak of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk on the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up." In other words not just by delegation to Jewish Studies teachers, or to Rabbi Kievman and his wonderful cheder, but we ourselves as parents – and you yourself one day, please G-d, as a parent – must teach our children, and constantly. Judaism is not a sabbatical religion, but one which should imbue our whole lives. We must not just teach theoretically but also by example, and by avoiding giving a bad example. In November the Jewish Telegraph reported how in London and Manchester there was apparently an epidemic of bar and bat mitzvot being celebrated with treife simchas. Such an example to one's child would not fulfil the words of the Shema, and makes a mockery of the attainment of Bat Mitzva and sadly would bode ill for the child's Jewish future.

Although the prospect of your birth, Amber, started your Mother and I on our journey in Judaism, and galvanised me to increase my observance in order to teach you, and then Yonatan about it, it was Rabbi Kievman's eldest son, Mendel, unfortunately not able to be here tonight, who gave me a boost on my journey. In a speech he made at his Bar Mitzva in 2005, Mendel spoke with such personal conviction about the practical observance of another

aspect of Judaism referred to in the Shema, tefillin, those curious little black leather boxes containing verses of Torah which we men all learn to use when we prepare to become Bar Mitzva, but which we sometimes neglect thereafter. The Shema says immediately after the part I have quoted about teaching our children: “וקשרתם לאות על ידך והיו ללטטפת בין עיניך” [ook’sartam...] “And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for ornaments between your eyes,” which refers to the tefillin of course. This juxtaposition is in my opinion no coincidence. First and foremost do it for your kids’ sake, says the Shema. Then do it for your own sake. What happens next is that you realise this is one and the same. I will tell you honestly that I started wearing tefillin for my children’s sake, and some years ago realised when I found myself packing them for a business trip that I needed them for my sake too. The journey continues.

Amber, each new aspect of your Judaism which you learn takes you further on your Jewish journey. Never be seduced by those who would persuade you that, because you do not keep every law, you are a hypocrite for keeping any. This is a Greek idea not a Jewish one, and although Chanukah is over for another year we must continue fighting the Greeks. There is no hypocrisy if you are honest with yourself and others and do what you do to the best of your ability and with conviction.

Going back to cheder which you love so, Amber, you may remember that MATT now as its motto a verse (6) from chapter 22 of the book of Proverbs, which says in one succinct line what I have been trying to say to you tonight:

גַּם כִּי-יִזְקִין, לֹא-יִסּוּר מִמֶּנָּה, עַל-פִּי דַרְכוֹ-- [chanoch lana’ar al pee darco, gam ki yazkin lo yasoor mimenah] “*Educate the youth in their way; even as they grow older, they will not stray from it (Proverbs 22:6)*”

So now, Amber, I think we may all agree you have just demonstrated by your speech, by your wonderful and thoughtful Bat Mitzva Project which I encourage everyone to take a look at, by your behaviour which is, hormone-permitting, full of chessed – lovingkindness for your fellows, and through your increasing knowledge and understanding of your faith, that you are a worthy Bat Mitzva. Amber, this day is not the culmination but the mere foundation! With this firm foundation you will achieve whatever you want and, please G-d, grow into a fine young Jewish woman and continue to bring your grandparents, mother, brother and I and all the family unending nachas – pace my Israeli family – nachat!

Yonatan's Speech

To my sister Amber that I love the most,
more than a soldier, a ninja or even a ghost.

I would like to say for her Bat Mitzva-
that no one could wish for a betterer sister.

She's been with me many years,
since I was born.

Through laughter, love and tears,
I was never alone.



So after a decade of being her brother,
I say from experience, Amber is like no other!

Amber Levitt: Bat Mitzva Dinner, Motzei Shabbat 5 Tevet 5772

The menu was:

Here are the guests who attended.

<u>A</u>	Table No.		
Emily & Phoebe Ablett	4	Lucy Ettinger	4
Karen & John Ablett	9	<u>G</u>	
<u>B</u>		Gordon & Maxine Globe	6
David Barnett	4	Galit Gregory	3
Rob Barnett	9	Daniel Gregory	4
Nigel & Rebecca Bennett	6	<u>H</u>	
Isabella Bennett	4	Sue & Jade Hadden	7
Daisy & Jacob Bennett	5	Laith Hamid	9
Natalie and David Bor	2	<u>K</u>	
Shmuli & Tziviva Brown	7	Avremi and Golda Kievman	8
Ian & Jenny Brown	6	<u>L</u>	
Sam Brown	4	Michael & Riva Levitt	1
Ben Brown	5	Amber & Yonatan Levitt	1
Moshe & Bella Burshtein	1	Valerie Levitt	1
<u>C</u>		<u>M</u>	
Adam Cailler & Elissa Small	7	Miriam Makin	1
Gemma Cailler	7	Robin Makin	8
Gary & Judy Cailler	9	Vivian & Mal Morris	3
Ian & Sarah-Jane Cohen	6	Ben Morris	1
Lily & Marcy Cohen	5	Shirley Moss	2
<u>D</u>		Jo Moss & Simon James	2
Neil & Julie Darlow	9	Nigel & Claudia Moss	2
<u>E</u>		Benji Moss	4
Michael & Michele Ellenbogen	8	<u>P</u>	
Hanna Ellenbogen	4	Manni & Yaffa Polak	6
Hadassa Ellenbogen	7	Orian Peled & Yishay Igan	3
Caroline Ettinger & Howard Lisberg	3	<u>R</u>	

Evie & Lucinda Ross 7

Felix Ross 4

S

Kristof Seaton 9

Yonit , Rafi, Ben & Edden Sharabi 3

Gina & Mike Stubbs 2

Saskia & Lola Stubbs 5

W

Justin Walton 9

Rifka Weinberg 8

Mordechai & Blima Wollenberg 8

Mendel & Chaya Wollenberg 8

Eli, Ber & Yisrolik Wollenberg 5