

## Parent Blessing - Examples

This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice in it.

Today, standing before you, Noah, my dear son, I give profound appreciation for the privilege of sharing in the miracle of creation in bringing you into the world. I am deeply grateful for the years of nurturing you, for the numerous joys and challenges which bringing you up has brought to me. Over the past few months I have watched as you separate and begin your journey to adulthood, towards taking responsibility and building community. Today, my role as your parent changes so I pray that I will have the strength to guide and nurture you as you continue to mature and the wisdom to support your changing needs. I hope for the gift of helping you give birth to your dreams at every step along the way. I trust that I will be blessed in continuing the work of setting a meaningful, loving example for you.

Today, on your bar-mitzvah, I give thanks to God for your health and your many strengths: your thoughtful, perceptive mind, your bright spirit, your sweet, caring nature, your active body, your sense of humor and your deep emotions and intuition. I give thanks that you have not only been endowed with a strong sense of yourself and trust in yourself but also the incredible ability to both elicit and return love, a devoted friend, son and cousin.

Wherever you go Noah, and in all that you do, I pray that you are at ease and out of harm's way. May your life be rich and rewarding. I pray that Life continues to present you with the gifts of laughter, integrity, accomplishment and many authentic, loving relationships. May you be blessed with wisdom, mindfulness and compassion in your heart and in your deeds. May your hardships and hurts lead you to defend justice and may your goodness be a source of joy to those you touch. May God help you to become all that you are capable of being. May your hands construct and your heart look after all that is good and beautiful in our world.

May God watch over you Noah, on this special day and every day. May you cultivate a deepening understanding of the significance of bar Mitzvah and a loyalty to all which this day symbolizes. May the voices of the generations move through you and keep you connected to our people. May the ethics and rich heritage of Judaism be as a compass for you as you navigate through the complexities of life. Shechianu

Yonah,

There's a great line we've both enjoyed in the movie *Groundhog Day* in which the Phil Connors character played by Bill Murray is driving at breakneck speed through Punxatawney, Pa., and making increasingly dark and despondent mutterings to the two drunkards whom he has just picked up at the local bar. One of the drunks responds to the Bill Murray character and says through slurred speech, "The way I see it, there are two kinds of people in the world: You got your glass-half-full types and you got your glass-half-empty types. I'm thinking you're one of those glass-half-empty types."

Then, as you know, we get to watch this absolute jerk transform himself. He is forced to confront the same idiotic day again and again until he finally turns the corner and discovers how to be a mensch.

To shift gears just a little bit, just before Avraham sends Eliezer back to Avraham's ancestral home to find a wife for Isaac, the Torah says (Genesis 24:1) "Avraham was now old, advanced in years, and the Eternal had blessed Avraham in all things" (vadonai barech et avraham bakol)

The rabbis have grappled with this statement in various ways. The Lithuanian commentary *Or Li-Yesharim* says God blessed Avraham with the quality of "all, "of being content with whatever he had, and never feeling that he was lacking anything." Indeed, he perceives that he has "all." Seeing blessing in "all" shifts our focus away from possessions and toward our inner response to what life brings. Instead of seeing blessings only in the good things in his life, Abraham experienced blessing in the fullness of his life.

This is something we have seen grow in you, Yonah, as you have matured. When you asked us to reschedule your bar mitzvah, originally scheduled for two months ago, it was because you knew that you are surrounded by family and friends, a good many of whom would not have been able to attend at that time. That was a wonderful recognition that you are truly a blessed young man, and your response was exactly right: "I want to celebrate this day surrounded by *all* of the family and friends I cherish." You acted as one who has been blessed "bakol."

And to perceive the world in this way is an incredible blessing. May you carry that perception with you through moments of joy and moments of adversity, recognizing the blessings that surround you and the blessings within you. Preparing for today was certainly a big challenge and one you met with remarkable energy and focus. We hope it helps you prepare for the many challenges you will face in your life. May you be blessed with the inner strength to confront adversity with equanimity and hope, and to see God's presence within life's disappointments as well as its moments of satisfaction and fulfillment.

The Seer of Lublin takes the idea of Bakol one step further. He hears in this word, bakol, more than the imperative to find blessing in all things. In addition, all that we do, as it

says in the Shema, be-khol levavcha.....with our heart, our soul, and our might—should be directed towards bringing blessing into the world.

Yonah, in your life you have been blessed with much—with many possessions and many resources and you have shown great appreciation for those things. We pray that you will continue to be blessed with the capacity to recognize, appreciate, and bring blessing into the world.

Finally, Rashi comments that the word, bakol, has the same numeric value of ben – son. To have a son is to be blessed with all things. While this is true everyday of our life with you, Yonah, it's foremost in our minds at this moment. As you have grown you have blessed us in countless ways, with your curious mind, your creativity, your honesty, and your loving nature. As we have been blessed bakol, so may you be blessed bakol.

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