

**Special Bar Mitzvah Speech
By a Young Man With Down Syndrome,
Written With the Help of His Parents**

I do not like most labels,
most of all this term: DD.
I am not some developmentally delayed creature today.
Today I am a full-grown Jew.
Do not reach for your Kleenex;
be no more moved to joy for my Bar Mitzvah moment
than for anybody else's with a quicker mind.
There is nothing special about me today.
I came of age.
I recited my blessings.
I joined the congregation.
It is all natural,
though I would not have known this
without my teachers' and my parents' help.

Expect no less of me than of yourselves,
and no more.
My genes specialize in open love and kindness.
For this, do not admire me from a distance.
Do not wish another chromosome for yourself.
All is not beautiful,
even to me,
but it is more beautiful than you allow yourselves to see.
This face, distinct and smiling, feels pain,
but I can manage.
You, with your own, do the same.

Triumph.

My message: Be like me if you can.
Hug.
Smile at the dumbest things.
Give, and do not ask so many questions.
Be good Jews.

I need you; you need me.
If I am out, you are no-one;
in, we are The People God chose when He chose Abraham,
all Jews.

No one is special.
Everyone is special.

Now let us hurry up and finish
so we can get to the Kiddush.
It's been a long morning,
and I am getting hungry.