

As I stand in front of all of you on the day of my bar/bat mitzvah, I am awed by the feeling of being a part of the extended family of the Jewish people. I am blessed with this opportunity to celebrate my *simcha* with all of you.

But, before we begin to celebrate, we must remember those who live among us who are not as fortunate as we are. In this country alone, there are 13 million children who wake up each morning and go to sleep each night without having had enough food to sustain them. And over 10% of Americans over the age of 65 live in poverty.

Historically, rabbis did not allow celebrations to begin until the community's poor were seated and fed. And so today, before I begin my celebration, I have chosen a symbolic way of inviting those who are hungry to join me in my celebration by contributing a portion of my bar/bat mitzvah to MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger.

MAZON, which means "food" in Hebrew, is a national, nonprofit organization that sends donations from the Jewish community to soup kitchens, food banks, multi-service organizations and advocacy groups around the country, as well as to Israel and the developing world.

At this time when my own heart is so full, I cannot neglect those whose plates and pocketbooks are empty. And as a bar/bat mitzvah, I now commit myself to the task of *tikkun olam*, of repairing our broken world.

Thank you for joining me as I share my *simcha*, and thank you for helping me bring hope to those who need it most.