

Words for Obed on the Occasion of His Becoming a Bar Mitzvah

By Emily Lewis

Obed, at this important moment in your life, I invite you to reflect on the fact that you are the inheritor of a wondrously rich heritage. You are, in a sense, quadruply parented. But before I explain, there is something to say first, something that does not “go without saying” –and that is this: as a child who almost did not arrive, you should know first that the Lord God of Hosts had to have had a hand in your creation; therefore, God is your primary parent, for out of famine, death, wandering, and fear, God created in you what is certain to be a kingly line.

God’s hand is obvious, but let us look at the human level. There we see that your parentage is a marvelous fourfold blend of inheritances.

Your mother Ruth bore you. She gave you many things: tenacity; a knowledge that bonds are strong and should not be set aside lightly; a knowledge of covenantal relationships; a willingness to branch, to be daring, to create your own destiny – all of these came from Ruth.

But Ruth bore you so that Naomi would have a son. You have two mothers, one initially from outside the people, one from inside—both blending to love you and nurture you. From Naomi too you gained much: an openness to possibilities in adversity; a love for the stranger; and ability to begin anew; an ability to find emotional riches where others would see only barren poverty.

You are also doubly fathered. From your father Boaz you gained an ability to see the dignity of the vulnerable and the wisdom to let kindness ripen into love.

But Boaz also stood in both for Naomi’s husband and for Naomi’s son Mahlon. By marrying Ruth, Boaz brought the heritage of the departed back into the picture. From his act you learned that we choose to remain linked to our past generations and that we remember and honor the sacrifices of our ancestors.

Thus, Obed, you are no upstart, you are no weed who happened to spring up by chance. Rather, you are a wonderful creation grafted four times over into the people who claim you.

Congratulations, Obed.