

XXX, you are a blessing in my life. Even though we clash a lot, I have come to understand myself better because of you. I see myself in you and I see myself through your eyes. I only wish my mother were still here to see you and I know she would have been so proud of you. You are a strong person and I know you will continue growing into a strong woman. You have clear preferences, strong opinions, and determination to do what you want to do. You are a natural leader, just like the Miriam in the Torah. Miriam's leadership role in the story of Exodus, helping the Jewish people find water and keeping their spirits high through dance and music, demonstrates that strong women with a sense of rhythm have always played a vital role among the Jewish people. Your Nana was also a strong woman leader. She was active in the Jewish communities she lived in, hosting havurah groups, welcoming to her table students, military servicemen, and other people without a place to eat. She was also a musician—she played the flute and sang. She even played the guitar—the Cat Came Back was her specialty. Before Nana died, she wrote a little message for me to read to you on your bat mitzvah. “My darling: as you grow up, I hope you will nurture your ability to pay attention to what’s going on around you. Pay attention to people, to events, to circumstances, to outcomes. Think beyond your own immediate self to the bigger picture. The most important things in life are relationships. People matter more than things. When we spend a lot of time focusing on what’s mine, what I deserve, what’s fair, we miss out on all of the richness that our interpersonal relationships can bring. You have a strong personality: you know what you want and it’s not easy to compromise. This is a good and bad quality. Our greatest strengths are also our liabilities. You’re good company, fun to talk to. You take an interest. You have a sweet smile, especially when you’re enjoying a secret knowing look with someone. Mazel tov and may you continue to grow into a beautiful Jewish woman.”