

**QUOTABLE** The Blogs

**On God & Social Justice:**

“When we talk about God lifting the fallen or feeding the hungry...it is we who do [these acts]. God acts through us.”

—Rabbi David Kaufman,

<http://www.rabbiontikunolam.blogspot.com/>

**On Consumerism:**

“We may put our stuff in cloth bags, but are we buying less stuff? We may be building greener homes, but are we building fewer and smaller homes? We may be using more fuel-efficient cars, but are we driving less?...The [label] Ponzi scheme....seems applicable to the entire consumerist system—we keep distributing dividends to ourselves by taking more from the next wave of investors, who in this case happen to be our children; when the oil/water/open space run out, we won’t be around to suffer the consequences.”

—Marc Rosenstein, [rj.org](http://rj.org)

**On the Torah portion Chayei Sarah in Genesis:** “The Life of Sarah” / Is the name of this portion / Which starts with her death. / Could that be because / Our lives are reflected in / Those we leave behind?

—Anonymous, [theTorahinhaiku.com](http://theTorahinhaiku.com)

**On Transformation:**

“Do you remember paint-by-numbers...? The task was to apply the right number paint to its spot on the canvas, and take care to keep within the lines....But Judaism is an art...We learn to paint from paradox rather than from certainty, to reveal the beauty, the meaningful, the good and holy that emerge from our challenges...”

—Rabbi Elyse Frishman, [rj.org](http://rj.org)

**ACTION** A House of Prayer for All Children

→ *The Blessed Holy One minted all human beings with the same stamp with which the first person was made, yet not one of us is like anyone else. Therefore, we are each obligated to maintain, “On my account the world was created” (Mishnah Sanhedrin, 4:5).*

One Shabbat eve last year, Netta, born with agenesis of the corpus colosus (a congenital brain condition), stood proudly on the *bimah* of Mount Zion Temple in St.

Paul, Minnesota (<http://www.mzion.org/index.cfm>) with the other kindergartners and first graders. The seven-year-old—sporting a new turquoise polka dot dress with a bright yellow bow—did not join her classmates in song, but she used her hands to motion the meaning of the lyrics. She also beamed boldly at her mother each time their eyes met. “We can live with that!” says her mother, Allyson Perling. “At the beginning of the year, Netta could not even sit in music class because the noise bothered her. But she’s had a team behind her, supporting and coaching, teaching and redirecting, cajoling and applauding... that night, she was loving it all: the music, the movement, and the people.”

At Mount Zion Temple the message is simple: “Every child, regardless of abilities and needs, deserves a quality Jewish education, with the goal of total inclusion with the mainstream population, [allowing for] appropriate assistance and modification,” says Stephanie Fink (photo #1 from previous page), former director of education. “We’re proud to tell parents, ‘Of course your

child can participate. We can help your child succeed within his/her abilities.

We just need to figure out how.”

To achieve that goal, KULAM (Kids Understanding and Learning at Mount Zion) offers an individualized inclusion program in which a trained educator interfaces with families; develops and communicates learning plans; trains the staff advocates who work with students with special needs in the classroom; checks

in with the staff, children, and parents frequently; and makes mid-course corrections when necessary.

Brandon (photo #2), 15, does not speak—but that didn’t stop this *Mishpacha* Family Learning student at Congregation Or Ami in Calabasas, California (<http://www.arami.org/>) from becoming a bar mitzvah. To communicate, he used a modified version of American Sign Language, signing the *Sh’ma*, the *Ve’ahavta*, “Thank You, God” (his favorite Jewish song), and, following his father’s and grandfather’s *aliyot*, the *maftir aliyah* (the last *aliyah* which, in some congregations, is reserved for a bar or bat mitzvah).

“I never expected my son to have a bar mitzvah,” says Dina Kaplan, “but Brandon found a spiritual connection at Or Ami and loves being part of the congregation,” participating in the congregation’s *Mishpacha* sessions with his father, as well as in plays, cooking, games, and crafts with students his age (assisted by one of his parents or a specially trained teen volunteer); joining his family for Shabbat and holiday services; and, several times a year,



NETTA AT HER CONSECRATION, MOUNT ZION TEMPLE, ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA, 2008.