

Kol HaRav

This will be a very personal message.

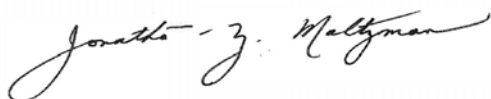
A few weeks ago our grandson was born at George Washington University Hospital, dutifully on time and very punctual like his grandfather. Max Rafael Maya was named for two great grandmothers, Julie's mother Marianne Strauss and my mother Ruth Maltzman. Both women were great role models and left behind remarkable and memorable legacies. Along with these two English names, Max was also given the Hebrew names of Moshe Rafael at his brit milah which was held at the 6th and I synagogue in downtown Washington. All four of Max's grandparents were present and participated in the simcha. I had the great honor of blessing him and announcing his names. It was a moment of great joy and great poignancy and in many ways for us it was a taste of immortality as we watched a new generation emerge even as time inexorably passes for us all.

My memories of the birth of our children are murky after all these years. Certainly it is a wondrous and peak moment in life. And yet, in a sense, so much energy is expended on the daily tasks of caring for a newborn that the meaning of the moment only truly occurs gradually and over time as we watch our children grow and mature and establish lives of their own. But in the case of a grandchild, the impact and joy and the miracle of the moment is instant, impactful, even miraculous beyond all comprehension and explanation. (plus when he gets fidgety he goes back to his parents!).

When I look at the little guy I understand the meaning of the Hebrew phrase: "One generation comes and another one passes." I sense the unfolding of a bright future which ensures the continuity of a family and of sacred traditions. I marvel at the equanimity and calmness of Max's wonderful parents as they assume the most important responsibility of their lives. I see the child grow more alert daily and I look forward to the simple acts of watching him eat and sleep and grow more active daily. I sense the presence of God in his face and in the simple tasks he performs at any given moment.

I cannot truly explain my joy or my instant love for Max but it's real and it's palpable. I pray that he grows to be a blessing to his family, his people, and to all humankind.

Julie and I express our heartfelt thanks to all of you who have shared in our joy and to the many expressions of congratulations that you have so lovingly bestowed on us.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jonathan Z. Maltzman". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Rabbi Jonathan Z. Maltzman