

## MY CONNECTION WITH GOD

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Throughout my entire life I've always been an active community member at Beth-El whether it be going to services, going to classes, or even volunteering at the medical setup for the clinic. I've never viewed God as a real physical person but more as a spiritual presence that looks out for people. However, I've always felt a connection with God whether things are good or bad.

I've been going to temple since I was young, but I never felt a real connection to God until I was older. It had always just been an idea to me, but eventually it felt more real -- more specifically, after my Bar Mitzvah. When I had my Bar Mitzvah it sparked a period of change in my life. All the preparation that had been put into that one day felt worth it at the end. I was told this day would change my life and the way I viewed my community. At that moment I felt a sense of belonging and a part of something bigger than just myself. It was humbling but great at the same time. That was the moment in my life when I felt a true connection to God. I felt as if there was somebody there for me, and from that point there was always going to be somebody there for me. Having my whole community, friends, and family around me made me feel comfortable and gave me the idea that all these people were there for me.

Having my family and friends around me at the moment when I stood in front of the whole community gave me a pure feeling of joy and a connection that had never felt so strong and real. When growing up and going to temple I saw God portrayed as a greater being that we all wished to please, but at my Bar Mitzvah after I finished my Torah portion it all changed. My whole perspective about God changed from what I had been taught up to this point in my life. It felt more like a mutual relationship where we both could be happy. Whether it be praying or even just going to temple, it felt as if I were doing it not only for myself but as if God knew that I was keeping my faith. This whole perspective gave me a positive attitude towards my life, and I enjoyed going out more and being a more active community member.

This feeling has been with me ever since, but there have been times in my life when I've questioned my connection to God, especially when going through tragic events. When I tore my ACL during soccer season this fall I felt as if it challenged my belief of God and commitment to the community. I was depressed and was confused as to why something so terrible has to happen to somebody like me when I had always felt as if God was there for me. As a result, I had a lack of interest in going out and doing things while injured which restricted me tremendously.

This event and period in my life showed me how quickly people's lives can change for better and for worse. I realized this when I wasn't able to continue playing with the varsity soccer team, but I also realized that my attitude and determination were so important. Most of all, I knew that having a strong connection with God and having faith would help me through the long recovery to come. This had always been reinforced in my life by family, and I believed that having a connection to God would mean more than I had once thought. But this realization didn't

come easy. Through the first few weeks I felt miserable and I lacked any motivation to better myself through physical therapy or seeing people I cared about.

Although at that point I felt closer to God than before, there were still times when I questioned my faith and real belief in God. I mainly came to this view after tearing my ACL. I questioned how something like this could happen to somebody like me. It had felt as if God wasn't there for me as He once was and things had changed. I started to think that I had done something wrong. I used to think that when things would get bad for me they would soon change for the better, but now I felt down and helpless about the long recovery to come.

But throughout my recovery things changed over time. I could see that I was progressing very well and just seeing results and the doctor telling me so meant a lot to me. My attitude changed regarding what had happened to me. I started to notice little things that were going my way. My recovery was coming along faster than expected, and the injury wasn't as bad as I first thought. Even my school and social life just felt easier and better. It's hard to explain but I noticed a difference and it made me think: I realized God was still there with me and would help me through my recovery and throughout my life. For some reason, a thought came to me that there are things in life that I can't control. I knew this wouldn't be the only time in my life where I would be going through a rough time, but I also knew my connection with God and faith would always be there with me.

These events in my life got me thinking about my future when I will be responsible for my commitment to my faith and how it might change. I know that I will change over time, but I hope my connection with God doesn't. I'm willing to be committed to my religion, and I want to be active in a community when I'm older and still have the same real belief that I have now. Although I say this now, I know at some point in my life my faith will be tested. But having gone through a test of faith, I feel more comfortable knowing I'm able to get through tough times. I know it will be hard to find time for everything in my life, but I want my connection with God to always be strong because it gives me a sense of comfort, and I feel as if I'm always going to have someone there for me.

I also want my connection to God to stay strong so I can continue practicing my religion when I'm older. For me my religion isn't only about my spirituality and beliefs but it also gives me a sense of belonging as part of a community. For me this feeling has always been important and probably one of the reasons I'm so committed. Having structure in my life has always been important to me and now after being committed for so long I feel it's a part of me and I want it to stay part of me for the rest of my life. Going to temple where I can be myself and meeting new people just like me is something I find special. With my time at Congregation Beth El I've made lifelong connections and friendships that I don't ever want to lose. Whether it be the memories of an early Sunday morning class or going to retreats with friends they have all helped guide me into an understanding of who I want to be as a person.

In conclusion, my connection with God and my faith has been tested throughout my life,

but at this point I've never felt as close to God and my community, and I'm happier than ever. I look forward to my future with my religion and what's to come. I want my children to experience what I have through my early stages of life because having a connection to something and having faith especially in today's world is more important than people think. I think that people take that for granted. Why do what I do and go on with my life if I don't believe it has a purpose and some bigger meaning? For me God will always be part of my life no matter how old I get or whatever happens to me.