

HOW SHALL THEY HEAR?

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SHARING OUR BLESSINGS

One never knows what blessings each new day will bring.

In October 2003 I was asked to provide captioning services for the family members of a young Jewish girl who was to celebrate becoming Bat Mitzvah. A Bat Mitzvah celebration is a religious occasion and literally means "daughter of the Commandments". It is a time of simcha (joy & pleasure) with your family, friends and community and is an opportunity for the Bat Mitzvah child to publicly state her commitment to the Jewish heritage demonstrating that she has the necessary skills and maturity to face the challenges of Jewish adulthood and fully participate in Jewish traditions and mitzvot (commandments).

I was raised in the Catholic religion. In my adulthood, I studied with a learned rabbi and converted to Judaism. For the past five years, along with other members of a captioning team, I have provided captioning services on a pro bono basis at a Pentecostal church in Milton, Ontario. Because I am of the Jewish faith, I also hoped that one day I would be able to provide my captioning services in a synagogue, but the opportunity had never previously presented itself until this time.

Although I was familiar with Jewish traditions, the pronunciation and understanding of some Hebrew terminology, and the ceremony at a Bat Mitzvah, it would still be prudent and necessary to prepare as fully as possible. This included reviewing the parshah, or portion, of the Torah (the five books of Moses) which would be read aloud, along with a corresponding selection from the Haftarah (the Writings and Prophets) and the B'rit Hadashah (Renewed Covenant or New Testament). It is customary for the Bat Mitzvah child to compose and deliver a Dvar Torah, an interpretation or speech, on some aspect of the parshah. Requests were immediately made for a copy of this, along with the names of everyone participating in the service. An extensive job dictionary was created by reviewing glossaries of terms from religious textbooks and by searching the world wide web on Bat and Bar Mitzvah celebrations. I included every possible misstroke that I could imagine striking, along with life-saving shortforms, and I practiced, practiced, practiced my fingerspelling in the hopes of capturing any unfamiliar Hebrew, Jewish, Yiddish terms/phrases or biblical references that may be spoken. And last, but not least, I prayed that G-d would watch over me and guide my fingers on my steno writer when in difficulty and to

keep me focused on what my true purpose was for this important and joyous occasion.

Upon arrival at the synagogue, one notable difference was the fact that every person was checked and interrogated prior to entering the building to ensure that they did not carry any weapon or explosive. I learned that in the past this particular synagogue had been targeted by acts of anti-Semitism and hate crime. If I was not nervous before, I certainly was now. Preferring to focus on the positives, I thought, well, if they were not pleased with my services, I had back-up with security and could make an expeditious and safe escape!!!

Providing captioning services for this religious event not only challenged me, and took me out of my comfort zone as a communication access provider, but it expanded my knowledge and experience which I believe ultimately makes you a better writer and better person.

If I have one message I wish to impart with you, it is this - never underestimate the value and the long-lasting impact that your captioning/CART services have on deaf, late-deafened and hard of hearing individuals. To demonstrate this point, I share the following comments by the mother of the Bat Mitzvah child:

'Last October on the occasion of my daughter's Bat Mitzvah, a most special gift was given to some friends and family attending our simcha. These guests all had some degree of hearing loss and would have had difficulty following the services were it not for the services of a real-time captioner. This gift of accessibility is actually a human right and a wondrous opportunity for all persons with or without hearing to participate fully in a lecture, discussion, political assembly or religious celebration. My daughter has a hearing loss herself, as do I, her grandmother, uncle, cousins and some family friends. It was important and meaningful to her to be the 'star' of a celebration where no one would miss out. It was a stepping stone to the many occasions in her future where she would have to advocate for herself: in high school, college or university, and someday in the workplace.

In two years time, her younger sister will also be Bat Mitzvah, and many of the same relatives and friends will be in attendance. Although her younger sister has normal hearing, captioning services will once again be in use to provide full accessibility to all our guests. We have experienced with wonder the opportunity to 'hear everything' and we like it.'

All too often we coast through life without focusing on the reason for our existence and, therefore, we fail to give meaning and purpose to our lives. Make the most of each day and each experience by living your life with richness, fullness and purpose. Consider sharing your blessings by offering your talents

and skills as a captioner/CART provider to people with hearing loss in their place of worship.

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Below are suggested Hebrew, Jewish and Yiddish terms, phrases & expressions that you may wish to use when providing communication access services in a synagogue.

Aliyah (pronounced ah-lee-YAH) (Written au/laoe/au)

Aron Kodesh (ah-RON KO-desh) (Written au/ron/koe/derb or au/raun/koe/derb)

Bar Mitzvah (bar mitz-VAH or bar MITZ-vah) (Written bar/mits/vau)

Bat Mitzvah (baht mitz-VAH or baht MITZ-vah) (Written baut/mits/vau)

Baruch Adonai (Bar-RAOUK or Ba-RAOUK) (Written bar/raouk/au/doe/ni or bar/raouk/aor/doe/ni)

Berakhah (B'RUHKH-khah; b'ruhh-KHAH) (Written brau/kau)

Bimah (bee-MAH or BEE-mah) (Written bae/mau)

Daven (Dauv-ven) (Written daufrb/yen or dau/ven or daufrb/ven)

Dvar Torah (duh-VAR toe-RAH or duh-VAR TOE-ruh) (Written Dau/var/toe/rau)

Haftarah (hahf-tah-RAH or hahf-TOE-rah) (Written Hauf/toe/rau)

Kashrut (Kash-RAOUT) (Written karb/raout)

Kiddush (Kid-DUSH) (Written kid/dirb)

Kippah (kee-PAH) (Written kaoe/pau)

Kosher (Kah-SHER) or KO-sher) (Written koe/sher or koe/shur)

Mazel tov (Mauz-zel/tauf) (Written maus/sel/tauf or Mauz/sel/tauf)

Minyan (min-YAHN or MIN-yahn) (Written min/yan)

Mitzvah (mitz-VAH or MITZ-vah) (Written mits/vau)

Sephardic (Se-FAR-dic) (Written Sae/far/dik or saoe/faur/dik)

Shul (SHOOL) (Written shaol)

Siddur (SID-r; sid-AWR) (Written sid/aur)

Tallit (tal-LEET) (Written tal/laoet)

Talmud (tahl-MOOD or TAHL-mood) (Written taul/maoud)

Tefillin (Tuh-feel-EEN or tuh-FILL-in). (Written tau/faael/-n or tau/fil/-n)

Torah (Toe-RAH or TOE-ruh) (Written toe/rau)

Tzedaka (tsi-DUH-kuh) (Written saoe/dau/kau)

Yarmulke or yarmulka (YAH-mi-kuh) (Written yau/maoe/kau)

Yasher Koach (Yau/shur-koe/ekk) (Written yau/shur/koe/ek)

Shabbat (shah-BAT; SHAH-bis) (Written Shau/baut or Shau/bis)

Shabbat Shalom (shah-BAHT shah-LOHM) (Written Shau/baut shau/laum)