

Whether we like it or not, complain about it or not *"barmitzvahed"* is an experiential verb for our people. We are symbolic exemplars of the God who is the source of Mitzvah. As Gods representatives we need to be comfortable with that power and the priceless opportunity to build Jewish life that the experiential verb *"barmitzvahed"* gives us. Our discomfort with the "fact" that we *"barmitzvah"* them is another area in which we shy away from the power that we are vested with, a power which is an indispensable part of our rabbinate. We all know what an experiential verb means. I had a wonderful Jewish education. Ramaz, Massad (a Hebrew speaking camp for those too young to know.), yet experientially it was Rabbi Joseph Spevack z'l who *"barmitzvahed"* me on that Shabbat Shuvah, Parshat Haazinu, many years ago. I know that I could have married my first wife, by doing one of a variety of things in the presence of two witnesses. Experientially I was married by Rabbis Abraham Halpern, z"l and Bernard Lipnick, assisted by Rabbis Neil Gillman, Alexander Goldstein z'l, Shelly Schiffman and Moshe Tutnauer. That it only held for 22 years is not a comment on them or the Halachah. The second time around Rabbis Joseph Glaser z'l and Alan Lovins married Ingrid and myself. Those are experiential facts we all experience in our lives. We are not living in 19th century Eastern Europe when all that was needed was for a child to be called to the Torah to mark his new legal status in a community in which everyone shared a common religious and cultural heritage. We are not living on the lower east side in early 20th century America, where one was called to the Torah on a Thursday morning in recognition of having passed ones 13th birthday, said the b'rachot, had a piece of herring and then headed to the sweat shop to sew on shirt collars. The experiential fact that we as rabbis *"barmitzvah"* our young, offers us a number of priceless opportunities. Among these are; conducting an induction ceremony to Jewish adulthood; setting standards for that induction; using our pulpit presence to make the ceremony a community of Israel celebration which the family celebrates because their child has been inducted into the community of Israel; rather than a family celebration only; using the leverage on the Bar Mitzvah and the attendant congregation to persuade toward further adult Jewish education;

blessing our young people; making a lifetime mark on them by creating a synagogue experience they will never forget; and yes, though it is