

November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**M**ark Merino. David Merino. Two very distinct people, two completely unique personalities, two brothers who have proven themselves to be worthy of a Bar Mitzvah- a passage to manhood.

It wasn't long ago when you were known more as "the twins", a single entity separated by different colored pacifiers. You even called each other by the same name- *Googie*. "*Hi Googie*", "*Hi Googie*". You really made it hard for us back then. As you've grown up, you've each developed personas that accentuate your strengths. Many people are characterized by their weaknesses. Those who personify their strengths are destined to do great things.

Mark, your compassion is the strength that defines you. You are genuine and caring. You look to help others before seeking help for yourself. You inspire confidence and exude leadership. You discriminate against no one, and share your compassion with all of those around you; unless they are a girl- you're still a little scared of them. Don't worry, that will change.

David, your spirit is what defines you. You share your spirit with your *Savta*. Everyone loved your *Savta*, and everyone loves you. You are a shining beacon of joy and exuberance. Your personality is a powerful tool that draws people to you and the more they get to know you, the stronger the bond you create. Your circle of friends grows with each adventure you have. I don't know if FaceBook can handle the exponential growth it will experience once you get to high school or college for that matter.

Besides the unique qualities you each possess, there are several strengths that you share that also define your character. You both strive for greatness. You not only desire to be the best at everything you do, you put in the work to achieve your goals. Whether it's Mark with your guitar, or soccer, or David, with your violin or theatre, or both of you with your school work. Both of you are diligent, enthusiastic, and thorough- all traits you get from your Mother. I guess all of my genes got passed to your brother. Good luck with that, Steven.

How lucky can a father and mother be to experience this special of an event for two of their children at the same time? I'm not just talking about the cost savings of the party, either- as good as that is... I'm talking about watching the growth and development of two men. From one set of *Googies*, to a Mark Merino, and a David Merino, all punctuated by today's event. I'm sure you will provide us with many more moments where we can feel proud and accomplished as parents. But this is one that will stand out. We are very, very proud of each of you, separately, of course, but equally.