

My dear Children,

Today you have exercised your free will. You have made a choice, a conscientious decision, based on your personal values and beliefs. If this is not an act of entering adulthood - then what is? I do not need to tell you how proud I am of your choice - it means a lot to me as a parent and as a Jew. But more than I am proud - I am hopeful that you will make many choices in your life that are thought-through decisions, based on your sense of right and wrong, your sense of belonging, and not influenced by crowd mentality. They may not always be the right choices, but they will be decisions you can be proud of because they were made for the right reasons.

I have always felt that the two of you have little in common.

Nicki - you are thoughtful, careful, and considerate. You have acute sense of family and loyalty to those you love. Once you are able to identify where you stand and what is the right thing to do, you never hesitate to act on your beliefs, sometimes unwisely. You have shown a remarkable ability to balance and prioritize everything in your life, never losing track of what's important and letting go easily of things that are just in the way. You have more strength in you than you think.

Martin - you are inquisitive, hard-working, and painfully direct. Your focus and desire to investigate the areas of your interests are contagious. You are able to accept responsibility easily if you can logically support its necessity, and you are not afraid to argue your point of view if you believe you have a point. As you are emerging into your adulthood, many of your decisions are guided by an overriding sense of fairness, and people respect you for this.

But the two of you have something you share: you make your own decisions, and those decisions are based on good reasoning.

There is also something else you share, being the children of Jews from Eastern Europe: in your blood, you carry all the resourcefulness, the will, and the luck of those who lived. And in your hearts, you will always carry an obligation to those who did not survive. As you are entering the "Jewish Adulthood", I hope that you will never lose track of that obligation - to be a good person in this world, to be generous with kindness and love towards people around you, and to enjoy life. How you do it - is up to you, for I know you can make good choices.

Nicki - thoughtful, cautious, loyal
Tough, demanding, yet unspoiled
Love, create, compose, and cook
Time to party, read a book
Pick a gift for dear friend,
Home for family event
Find your balance, right and wrong,
Speak your mind, and sing a song.

Martin - curious, responsible
trying, testing, all is possible
projects, books, computers games
friendships, biking,

Martin -