

Dear friends of Hillcrest Jewish Center,

Last Sunday, June 12th, I was invited to attend the Boy Scout Eagle Award Ceremony of Dylan Katz. Eagle Scout is the highest achievement or rank attainable in the Boy Scouts of America. Since its inception in 1911, only four percent of Scouts have earned this rank after a lengthy review process.

It was my first experience with the Boy Scouts of America organization, and I was positively impressed by the organization, camaraderie, and sense of friendship prevalent in the room. Like any award ceremony, it had the usual speeches, rituals, and recognitions.

However, one aspect of the award ceremony was unique and different from any other graduation ceremony I had attended in the past. After receiving the Eagle Scout badge, the two recipients, a Jewish boy and a Muslim boy, were invited to present their respective parents with a pin of appreciation for everything they have done for them. Afterward, both Eagle Scouts were given the opportunity to present two mentorship pins to two people who have made a difference in their arduous journey. Each young man chose two adult leaders who have been instrumental in their Boy Scout formation throughout the years.

For me, it was the most moving aspect of the entire ceremony.

If we recognize that Eagle Scouts are leaders, we also must recognize that leadership doesn't happen in a vacuum. Each person who achieves a position of honor or who is successful in anything they do, owes their success both to family and mentors who were there for them along the way.

Being a leader requires above all other character traits, the humility to recognize that we are all shaped by meaningful people in our lives who gave their time, knowledge, and wisdom to bring us where we are today. A self-made person - I wrote about this in the past - is a myth. Nobody is self-made, even though many people like to believe they are. We all ought to look back to find those special people in our lives, including our parents, teachers, and mentors who were instrumental in bringing us to where we are today, and we should make sure that we thank them for what they did, and continue to do, for us.

Last, but not least, perhaps the greatest tribute to those who shaped our lives is to be mentors and good influences to other people, hoping that our good will inspire and create further good in the coming generations.

Rabbi Manes Kogan