

With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility

Sam, May 2026

I like Marvel. I've watched more Marvel movies than there are words in my parashah. So, when I was told I could talk about Marvel in my Bar Mitzvah speech, I knew I'd hit the jackpot.

For those who don't know, the proverb, "*With great power comes great responsibility*," was Uncle Ben's advice to a young Peter Parker, also known as Spider-Man. These words were written by Stan Lee, born Stanley Lieber, who I only recently discovered was Jewish. Whether he intended it or not, he captured an idea that appears throughout the Torah; it just doesn't usually wear a red-and-blue, spider-like costume.

Take Adam, for example, the very first person. G-d places him in the most extraordinary garden imaginable and gives him one job: to look after it. Power and responsibility, simple as that.

Look at Esther: a hidden identity, an unexpected mission, and she saves her people from a villain with a rather unusual hat. That's practically a superhero origin story.

And Abraham? He argues with G-d Himself to try to save complete strangers in Sodom, knowing the city's reputation for wickedness. And that's the thing: it's one thing to be responsible for yourself and your family, but something far greater to feel responsible for others, even when it's difficult. That's proper main-character energy.

In Hebrew, the word for responsibility is *achrayut*. And tucked inside it is a smaller word, *acher*, which means "other." So Hebrew is essentially telling us that being responsible means

thinking about someone other than yourself. That's the whole idea. Forget the cape; the real power is noticing the person next to you.

Today I become a Bar Mitzvah, which technically means that, according to Jewish law, I now have power. Not web-shooting power, and not Mjölnir-lifting power (tragic, I know), but the power to speak up, the power to make my own choices, and the power to take responsibility.

I hope to use it the way Abraham did: not just for myself, but for others. Because unlike superheroes, we don't get our powers from accidents or from being born different, but from the choices we make every day.