

Kehilat Nitzan B'nei Mitzvah

Thank you for your decision to celebrate the bar/bat mitzvah for your son/daughter at Kehilat Nitzan.

Becoming a bar or bat mitzvah is a very special occasion for the child and family (a simcha). Kehilat Nitzan is pleased to be able to provide a rich and meaningful way to celebrate this occasion.

The following provides information regarding the requirements and procedures for becoming a bar or bat mitzvah.

Membership in Kehilat Nitzan

The family (including both parents) of the bar/bat mitzvah child must be financial members of Kehilat Nitzan for at least full year prior to the date the simcha falls. Any financial difficulties may be discussed with our treasurer or executive administrator in strict confidence.

The bar/bat mitzvah child must be Jewish according to halachic (Jewish law) guidelines, meaning his/her mother must be Jewish by birth or by conversion (before having the child). Otherwise, the child must have converted.

The Date

In accordance with halachah, the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony must take place after a boy's 13th birthday and after a girl's 12th birthday. At the family's discretion, girls have the option of having their bat mitzvah after their 13th birthday.

Please contact the office to determine the intended date and the name of the parasha (weekly Torah portion). Please note that while we will make every effort to schedule a date as close to the birthday as possible, due to Jewish festivals or other events the date may not be immediately after your child's 13th or 12th birthday.

The B'nei Mitzvah Program

Kehilat Nitzan has a weekly program for its students which your child must attend for at least one year prior to the intended date of the bar/bat mitzvah. The office will give you advance notice when your child should commence. The program has a 'rolling intake', and your child may start at any time as long as it is at least a year prior to the date.

The sessions are on Wednesdays from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.

The program is informal and enriching. Sessions focus on the service and prayers; the weekly parasha; current events affecting the local Jewish community; Israel; the holy days; Jewish values, rituals, and more. The program is led by Zvi Civins, an experienced Jewish educator, with the participation and guidance of Rabbi Sadoff.

In addition, your child and you will attend two Shabbat services a month, usually the first and third Shabbat of the month. This will provide confident knowledge of the service, traditions, the meaning of bar/bat mitzvah, and an understanding of Masorti/Conservative Judaism. This will also help you become familiar and comfortable with the proceedings in preparation for the bar or bat mitzvah.

We acknowledge that your child may have several friends celebrating b'nei mitzvah throughout the year, which makes it difficult to attend the Kehilat Nitzan Shabbat services. However, we would appreciate your making the effort to attend as often as possible. Please let the b'nei mitzvah teacher know if you and your child will miss any of the first and third Shabbat services.

We are a warm and welcoming community, and as part of the b'nei mitzvah group, we encourage you to become actively involved in the community by attending services for the festivals and volunteering to help with the kiddush roster and/or other community activities.

What your child and your family will do in the service

In the Shabbat morning service, your son or daughter will (in order):

- Lead the 'Shema' and the two following lines while holding the Torah at the beginning of the Torah service (page 409 in Gates of Prayer)
- Present a d'var Torah (sermon)
- Chant the maftir and corresponding blessings for having an aliyah to the Torah
- Chant the haftarah and corresponding blessings
- Receive a presentation from the Rabbi or president

Further participation is always welcome, such as leading prayers and/or chanting additional aliyot.

You and your family's participation:

- When the Torah is removed from the ark at the start of the Torah service, it is the custom of Kehilat Nitzan to recognise the tradition of receiving and transmitting the Torah through Jewish history by physically passing the Torah from the grandparents, to the parents, and then to the child. Not all grandparents need to actually hold the Torah, and if it is too difficult a task they need not hold it, but we welcome their presence at the ark nevertheless.

- Family and friends may be honoured with being called up for an aliyah to the Torah. (Please note that at least one aliyah is reserved for a member of the congregation who is observing a yahrzeit).
- Other family members and/or friends of the family can lift the Torah (*hagbah*); young children may help dress the Torah; family and friends may read one of the five congregational readings: for the synagogue, for Australia, for Israel, for the Israeli Defence Force, and for peace.
- Kehilat Nitzan has baskets of lollies on hand, as it is traditional to throw lollies to ensure a sweet beginning to the child's life as a Jewish adult. We ask that you arrange for some children to hand out the lollies, which is best done once your child has begun chanting the blessings after the haftarah. The lollies are tossed once your child has completed the final blessing of the haftarah. Young children are welcome and encouraged to gather as many as they can!

Please note that traditional honours that are part of the Shabbat service are fulfilled by Jewish family and friends. We acknowledge that we all have non-Jewish friends and may have non-Jewish family members. The Rabbi will discuss with you possible ways for them to have meaningful role and presence in the service if you so desire.

Shabbat services commence at **9:30 a.m.** However, your child's active participation occurs during the Torah service which is at approximately **10:00 a.m.**. Therefore, you may wish to inform your guests that they are not required to come promptly at 9:30, and that it is acceptable for them to arrive closer to the anticipated time when your child will begin to participate in the service.

Kipot and Tallit

Wearing a tallit (prayer shawl) is a very meaningful aspect of the bar or bat mitzvah. Many children choose their own tallit from a local supplier or from Israel. Others wear one that has been passed down in their family. Some have a matching kippah.

Putting on the tallit and saying the blessing is not part of the actual service. Parents and the Rabbi usually find a quiet moment prior to the start of the service for the presentation of the tallit, putting it on the child as the child recites the blessing.

Kehilat Nitzan is a Masorti (Conservative) congregation and is egalitarian. We encourage a bat mitzvah to wear a tallit just as a bar mitzvah does. However, while boys must wear a kippah, girls have the choice to wear a kippah.

Kiddush

Families celebrating a bar/bat mitzvah are expected to sponsor a kosher kiddush (post-service food) sufficient for the regular Kehilat Nitzan attendees and for your family and friends, including grape juice for the conclusion of the Shabbat service on the morning of

the bar/bat mitzvah for the congregational blessing over wine. A list of kosher caterers is available from the office.

Tutor

A tutor is required to teach your child the maftir (final Torah section read), haftarah, and corresponding blessings. Weekly lessons are essential.

If your child attends a Jewish day school, the school will have a tutor on staff, and they generally offer weekly individual sessions during the school day. The tutor will contact Kehilat Nitzan to confirm the parasha, the maftir, and haftarah.

This aspect is particularly important as Kehilat Nitzan observes the triennial cycle of Torah reading. This means that over a three-year cycle we read the first third of a parasha in the first year, then the second third in the second year, and the third and final part of the parasha in the third year of the cycle. Further details of the triennial cycle can be found on our website.

If your child does not attend a Jewish day school, Kehilat Nitzan will provide a tutor, either our Rabbi, another skilled member, or an external tutor, and together we will discuss a mutually convenient time for a weekly lesson.

The D'var Torah

'*D'var Torah*' means 'words of Torah', that is, a sermon or speech related to the weekly parasha. The typical d'var Torah that is written and presented by a bar or bat mitzvah follows this structure:

- A brief summary of the parasha
- An interesting aspect of the parasha. This can be an ethical issue, a confusing or unclear passage, an event, a particular mitzvah, a question- just about anything. This is accompanied by the child's explanation or response to whatever the interesting aspect is.
- Then, the most important aspect: What is the relevance of these interesting aspects to the child, to the congregation, to the broader community? What message or lesson can we find here? How does this relate to what is happening in the child's life, or in the world?

The d'var Torah should be 600-700 words. The tutor may also help with the d'var Torah. If not, the Rabbi or the b'nei mitzvah teacher from Kehilat Nitzan is available to help.

We encourage you to ensure that your child practices reading aloud the final draft to you, clearly and slowly, with proper emphasis and pronunciation. The final draft should be printed in a large font for example, 14 pt, and double-spaced for easy reading from the bimah ("stage").

The Rabbi, your child and final preparations

The bar/bat mitzvah together with his/her parents, are required to meet with the Rabbi at least nine months prior to the bar/bat mitzvah date to discuss the ceremony and process. About three to four months prior to the day, there will be subsequent meetings with the Rabbi to prepare the d'var Torah. There are usually between two and four meetings, though much of the work is done at home.

The week of the bar or bat mitzvah there will be a dress rehearsal at Kehilat Nitzan, usually on Friday before the bar or bat mitzvah Shabbat. At this rehearsal, the Rabbi will run through the overall service one last time; listen to your child chant the blessings, maftir, and haftarah; listen to the d'var Torah; and review with you any other questions you may have.

Because photography is not permitted on Shabbat, you might want to organize a photographer to take pictures at the rehearsal. Grandparents and others you want to be photographed, or who take part in the service, are encouraged to join you at the rehearsal.

Kehilat Nitzan has a professional sound system. Because b'nei mitzvah children are still relatively young, their voices often need the assistance of this system. This can be discussed prior to the day, and at the dress rehearsal with a proper sound check will be done to ensure that all your guests will be able to hear the service.

Your guests

Around one month prior to the date, please inform the office as to the number of guests you expect so that we can put out any extra seating if necessary.

You will also be asked to provide the office with the English and Hebrew names of the various family and friends who are receiving honours during the service.

Booking details

Enclosed is an application form together with the student and parent contracts for you to complete and return to the office at your earliest convenience.

There is a b'nei mitzvah booking fee of \$720 to cover the educational program and administration expenses. Due to the costs involved in processing this booking, the fee is non-refundable. An account will be forwarded upon receipt of the enclosed forms.

If you have any queries regarding the program, please contact Zvi Civins on 0423 169 695 or contact the office on 9500 0906.