



Celebrating the Coming of Age during a Pandemic

GRJC B'nei Mitzvah Protocols and Guidelines During COVID-19

We Celebrate with you!

Our goal is to celebrate the joyous simcha of our b'nei mitzvah children and not even a pandemic will get in our way of that goal! We want to elevate their special day while acknowledging the sacred milestone of being an adult member of our shared, sacred covenant. We appreciate your cooperation and patience as we navigate how to safely and joyfully do this during the evolving pandemic.

Guided By Jewish Values:

During these extraordinary times, we are grateful to rely on the following Jewish values to help guide our decision-making as the pandemic evolves.

Pikuah Nefesh (“Safeguarding Life”): Supersedes most other obligations or mitzvot. Facilities and organizations must balance any efforts to reopen or resume operations with the obligation to preserve life.

Sakanat Nefashot (“Endangering Life”): No one should be placed in a position where they may place their own lives or those of their families or loved ones in danger.

She’at Hadehak (“Extraordinary Moment”): We must remain flexible and adaptive to the times we find ourselves in; the Jewish people have shown amazing resiliency; this will be required now to ensure continuity of Jewish life.

Kol Yisrael Areivim Zeh Bazeh (“All Jews are Responsible for One Another”): We have an obligation to look out for one another, regardless of circumstance, status or perception.

Chesed (“Profound Love and Kindness”): With many people feeling anxious, lonely, isolated or at risk, we must be guided in our actions with these factors in mind.

Friday Evening Services:

For Friday evening services, families will be given the choice between an outdoor service in the GRJC parking lot (socially-distanced and with masks) or a virtual service. If you choose a virtual service, the GRJC still may have community members gather in the parking lot and the student would lead services from his/her home. If you choose outdoors, please understand that in the case of inclement weather, the service will be moved solely online.

Shabbat Morning Services:

Currently, families will have three choices for the “location” of the Shabbat morning service. All services will begin at 9:00 am and end between 10:30 and 10:45 am. Your choices include:

1. Indoors: GRJC Sanctuary
2. Outdoors (weather permitting): GRJC parking lot.
3. Virtual

Notification of Selection of Location:

We ask that you notify us four weeks in advance of your simcha with your preferences by completing the online [“logistics form.”](#)

Protocols for Indoors and outdoor services:

- a. Please understand that although the state of New Jersey may permit us to gather in a certain way, the GRJC wants to do what is in the overall best interest of our entire community. We may have higher standards than what NJ requires. ***Adherence to the mitzvah of pikuach nefesh, saving a life, is paramount.***
- b. Should the state require a mandatory quarantine for out-of-state people coming into NJ, we will require that as well before attendance at the service.
- c. If you choose to have your simcha in the GRJC sanctuary or outdoors in the GRJC parking lot, you are welcome to select up to 20 people to attend this service in-person, which is inclusive of children. We ask that at least 12 of those 20 people are Jewish adults (post-b’nei mitzvah age – which includes your b’nei mitzvah child for the first time!) so that we can ensure a comfortable minyan. You need not count volunteers or other staff and the rabbi in your count.
- d. Please also ask your guests to arrive on-time so that we have a minyan secured from the beginning of the service and so that we can do proper health screening prior to the service.
- e. Everyone who attends (including children and the bar/bat mitzvah student) must wear a mask for the duration of the service and all those who will be in attendance will be asked to register and indicate their willingness to abide by our safety protocols.
- f. It is the family’s responsibility to ensure their guests are aware of these guidelines and to ensure that each adult guest completes the waiver for him/herself and any dependents or children.
- g. A security guard will be present.
- h. In-sanctuary and outdoor services will also include a virtual option for those who want to witness the occasion from afar.
- i. Siddurim (prayer books) will be provided and will be “quarantined” or sanitized between use.
- j. Chairs will be provided for all guests.
- k. Candy tossing will not be permitted.
- l. Tallitot (prayer shawls) will be provided for those who do not have one. Please ask your guests to bring one if they have their own.
- m. With the exception of the bar/bat mitzvah child, there will only be one Torah reader for the health and safety of all, which will be provided by the GRJC.

Protocols Specific for Indoor Services:

- a. Given the small size of our bimah, there will be a plexiglass safety barrier around the table and podium on the bimah so that the rabbi, student (and parents) can be on the bimah safely at the same time with a clear partition between them as much as possible.

- b. Only those on the guest list will be allowed entrance to the synagogue. Seating will be assigned based on the b'nei mitzvah family's guest list and preferences for seating, as indicated in the [logistics form](#). Those in the same household will sit together and all guests will be spaced out in the sanctuary from other parties, with the partition open to generate more airflow. We will do our best to accommodate your seating requests.
- c. All attendees must go through a health/safety screening before entering the building by answering questions before entry. For this reason, for indoor services, guests should plan on arriving early to go through health/safety screening.
- d. To minimize our time inside the building together, we may ask guests to wait outside, even after health/safety screening, before we open the sanctuary to everyone. Please be prepared for inclement weather if this is the case.
- e. Temperatures will be taken before entering the building. Anyone with a temperature of 100.4 or higher will be asked to leave the premises.
- f. Bathrooms will be sanitized after each use. Only one person/household family will be permitted in the facilities at a time.
- g. Water fountains will be disabled.
- h. No rooms other than the sanctuary and restrooms should be entered or used for any purpose.
- i. The GRJC will determine who will volunteer as ushers, ritual volunteers, etc.
- j. Given the science around the increased likelihood of COVID-19 transmission while singing, ***no singing will be permitted in the building***, with the exception of the bar/bat mitzvah celebrant, the rabbi and the Torah reader, all of whom will sing at a subdued volume.

Length of Service:

Please be prepared that the length of the service will be shorter than our normal in-person Shabbat service for safety reasons. We also want to keep the length of the service down for those who are joining in a virtual space because we know Zoom fatigue is a real thing and we want our online viewers to be actively engaged. This also means that, while there will still be some honors for you to distribute to your guests, there will be fewer than normal. ***Please also note that the Torah service will be shortened to include three aliyot, plus the bar/bat mitzvah student.*** We have worked diligently to find ways of balancing the opportunities to let the child shine, with the honors and the length of service (see "Honors" below). As we learn from each service, we may adapt the content/length of the service for future services.

Siddur (Prayer Book):

Regardless of the location of a service, we will not share the pages of the siddur (prayer book) on the screen on days when there is a bar/bat mitzvah. If your guests would like to download the prayer book in advance, they can do so by clicking [here](#) and downloading the corresponding prayer books as outlined below.

Friday Night Prayers:

To download the prayer book we will use on Friday night, please click [here](#) and download "Siddur Lev Shalem: Kabbalat Shabbat and Shabbat Evening Service." If one chooses to print the prayers, the pages numbers we will use (as printed on the pages, which does not match the page of the PDF itself) will be: 5, 11-13, 21, 23, 25, 27-30, 39a, 40-42, 44-58, 62.

Saturday Morning Prayer Book:

To download the prayer book we will use on Saturday morning, please click [here](#) and select Siddur Lev Shalem: Shabbat Morning (with additions for Shabbat Rosh Hodesh). If one chooses to print the prayers, the pages numbers we will use (as printed on the pages, which does not

match the page of the PDF itself) will be: 101, 141, 120, 121, 148-149, 155, 158-168, 171, 175-176, 178, 180, 183-192, 203, 205-206, 207, 211.

Food:

No food will be served on Friday night or Saturday morning and we ask that no one eat in the building or outside for the duration of the service. The bar/bat mitzvah child or the rabbi, who may lead us in Kiddush on Friday night from the parking lot, are the only exceptions. If the bar/bat mitzvah leads this prayer, he/she will be given a new disposable Kiddush cup for their own safety.

Contingency Plans:

As you know, the landscape of this pandemic is constantly changing. Therefore, please understand that some b'nei mitzvah during the pandemic may look different than others. What we have described above is what we are planning on currently, but should anything change in the world around us, we know you will understand that we may need to adjust the plan for the safety and comfort level of all. Our contingency plan has always been and will continue to be a service that is completely virtual.

Torah:

Your child will be given the opportunity to read from the actual Torah scroll, regardless of how/when the service takes place. We will ask you to learn our guidance/instructions about how to safely handle a Torah, if the Torah needs to leave the GRJC building.

Rescheduling:

The option of rescheduling the service completely is available for each family. Families may also opt to choose a "back-up" date, while keeping their original date and seeing how the pandemic unfolds. To make this as fair as possible for all families, we will offer this opportunity to families in the order of the originally scheduled date, including the original dates of those upcoming 8th graders who already rescheduled. We will begin reaching out to individual families about this soon, in chronological order, but we ask that each family adhere to the deadlines for decision-making so that we can then reach out to the next family on the calendar. We also always offer you the opportunity to mark the anniversary of your child's bar/bat mitzvah on the Hebrew anniversary of their Torah portion with an aliyah to the Torah, but please note that this honor is limited to an aliyah and additional involvement in the service is subject to other previously scheduled occasions.

Deliveries:

Bimah arrangements (floral or food basket or other) can be dropped off at the synagogue by appointment only. Programs may be used at the service and delivered prior to Shabbat as well. Please clear the text by Rabbi Schlosberg at least 3 weeks prior to your simcha before printing. Only new kippot or head coverings can be distributed at the in-person service. Please indicate which items you will delivery to the synagogue on your [logistics form](#). We ask that you contact Michelle at office@grjc.org to arrange a time to drop off all of these items at the synagogue in advance of your simcha.

Sanctuary Photos:

We will continue to offer you the option of scheduling photos in our sanctuary with your family in the presence of the Torah. We may ask that everyone in attendance, including your photographer, sign a waiver. Everyone is asked to wear a mask during the duration of the shoot, except when photos are being taken of them. To begin scheduling these photos, please reach

out to Rabbi Schlosberg. Advance notice is greatly appreciated so we can do our best to accommodate your requested times.

Rehearsals:

While tutoring will continue online, we are planning on offering you rehearsals with each of your teachers in the sanctuary, provided that everyone present wears masks and maintains distance that is comfortable to each teacher. Please coordinate with Rachel Blumenstyk, Ira Frankel and Rabbi Schlosberg individually to arrange for a rehearsal time with each of them. Typically, you will need one rehearsal with Rachel, one with Rabbi Schlosberg, and two with Ira.

At rehearsals, we will limit the time spent together in the sanctuary so that we cover things that need to be done in the sanctuary, while reserving information that can be explained outside of the sanctuary for our virtual meetings.

Busing from the GJRC:

We will not permit buses to pick-up or drop-off guests at the GRJC during the pandemic.

Ritual Protocols for Service:

The only people permitted on the bimah (or in front of the parking lot for an outdoor service) are the bar/bat mitzvah child, his/her parents when invited, Rabbi Schlosberg and Ira Frankel/our Torah reader. All other guests are kindly requested to stay in their seats. With the exception of parents, all in-person honorees will take their honor from the foot of the bimah, rising if they are able. We will have a podium and a microphone for use by our in-person honorees. Virtual honorees will also be welcomed and will be "spotlighted" on the screen.

Parent Participation/Honors:

None of the parent parts will be cut from the service, but they may look different. If they so choose, parents are invited to continue taking these honors during the service, which were the same honors pre-pandemic:

- (1) Tallit Ceremony: Parents present the tallit to the child at the beginning of the service and recite the Shechechyanu prayer.
- (2) Aliyah: Parents will take an Aliyah from the Torah, if they so choose, on this day, although the Aliyah will likely be taken from the foot of the bimah at a podium.
- (3) Parent/Child Blessing: Parents may offer their child a parent blessing in both Hebrew/English, as is our GRJC custom.

In addition to these honors, parents will now be invited to take on some honors that would ordinarily be given to other guests. We do this to reduce the number of people from different households on our small bimah. More specifically, we invite the parents to be involved in the service with these additional honors:

- (1) Opening the Ark (may also be given to a sibling or siblings who live in same household).
- (2) Removing Torah from Ark & Passing Torah to Child
- (3) Dressing Torah before it is put away

A separate honors sheet will be distributed for you to complete. This will allow a select group of people who attend your simcha to participate in the service. Honors can be given to those attending in-person or those attending online. For those attending online, we ask that they have a good internet connection and they accept the invitation to unmute themselves at the appropriate time. We also ask that they put an (*) in front of their name so we can easily identify

them on Zoom and that their name on the screen matches the name that you have given us on the honors sheet. If their internet connection is not secure, the rabbi will lead that prayer in their stead. An alternative is to have your guest pre-record their honor and we will take care of inserting the recording into the stream at the correct time. A TV will be positioned in the sanctuary so that those in attendance in-person can view those taking honors virtually. **We have also added two English prayers as honors for our Friday night service.**

Logistics Form:

We will ask you to complete this online form no later than 4 weeks prior to your simcha. It will give us important information such as your preferences for location, any necessary deliveries, names of your guests, sanctuary photo requests and more.

We look forward to celebrating your simcha with you! If you have any questions, please reach out to us:

Rabbi Jennifer Schlosberg (rabbi.schlosberg@gmail.com)

Dr. Mark Silk (hsdirector@grjc.org)

Michelle Strassberg (office@grjc.org)