

V. Celebrations

The most essential aspect of the B'nei Mitzvah is the spiritual step forward by the Bar or Bat Mitzvah to assume his/her role and responsibilities as a Jewish adult. The community's welcoming of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah as a Jewish adult is also important, and for that reason it is our custom and policy for the family to host the congregation at a celebratory meal, the Kiddush, immediately following the service.

How do I sponsor a Kiddush?

The Bar or Bat Mitzvah family is responsible for sponsoring the Kiddush for regular Shabbat morning attendees as well as for guests of the family following Shabbat morning services. Currently, there are 30 regular attendees every Shabbat, even when there are no special occasions being celebrated.

Sponsoring the Kiddush means that you select the caterer, menu, style of service, and all the decorative aspects ranging from centerpieces to the plates, flatware, table cloths, and so on. It also means that you pay for the Kiddush. We urge families to keep this financial responsibility in mind when making plans for the simcha.

Who comes to the Kiddush?

Your family, friends, invited guests, and everyone attending services that morning share in the same Kiddush. The Shabbat morning Kiddush is a Se'udat Mitzvah, a meal celebrating a life cycle milestone, and is essentially a continuation of our morning worship. (That's why we say Kiddush over wine and Hamotzi over bread in the sanctuary before going into the social hall).

The simcha family is required to pay for the Kiddush for regular attendees and their invited guests whether or not their guests stay for the Kiddush. Conversely, the synagogue does not permit sponsors to provide for only their guests, since the Kiddush following services is a Se'udat Mitzvah and a continuation of the service. Just as we worship together during the service, we celebrate together as a single congregation at the Se'udat Mitzvah that follows.

What if there are other s'machot?

There will be one Kiddush for everyone, regardless of the number of s'machot or guests. If there is a second simcha, such as a baby naming or aufruf, occurring on the same date as the Bar or Bat Mitzvah, the Bar or Bat Mitzvah family chooses the caterer and the menu. The other family will be required to pay for their invited guests. This is extremely rare, and in such a scenario, the office will contact you to learn the details, which they will share with the other family.

Who can provide the food?

The simcha family must use an approved caterer. See the list below of approved caterers. You must also submit the Caterer Contract to the Office, found in Appendix E.

Approved Caterers

The following caterers are approved to provide kosher food services at Beth El. Please check with the Rabbi if you have any questions about using these or other caterers.

Abel Caterers
Meredith Abel *owner
203.389.2668
800.942.2235
www.abelcaterers.com
info@abelcaterers.com
70 Bradley Road
Woodbridge, CT 06525

Food Glorious Food
Jodi Przybisiki
203-629-3342

Beth Torah Glatt Kosher Caterers
<http://www.bethtorahcaterers.com/>
Aodi@aol.com
718.261.4607
106-06 Queens Boulevard
Flushing, New York 11375

Garelick & Herbs (be sure to ask for
Kosher Division)
Gina
203-972-4497
gina@garelickandherbs.com
New Canaan, CT

Fairway Stamford
Jack Wasserman
Cell 201-304-5559
203.388.9815

Joy of Food
Website: <http://www.joyoffood.net>
Paul Bettan
860.231.1861

If you have another caterer in mind, you must get approval from the Rabbi before booking your event.

Friday Evening Oneg Shabbat

The Bar or Bat Mitzvah family is responsible for sponsoring the food for the Oneg Shabbat for regular service attendees as well as for guests of the family following services. Currently, there are 15 regulars every Shabbat.

The Oneg Shabbat must include:

- Kosher wine
- Grape juice (Kedem brand)
- 2 challahs
- Fruit and cookies (or other sweets)
- Vegetables or crackers and dip (or other savory foods)

How else can I celebrate my child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah?

Any celebration in addition to the Kiddush is “icing on the cake.” A family should not feel pressured to focus solely or primarily on a party beyond a Kiddush lunch. The child's step forward into Jewish adulthood is what truly matters. However, everyone loves a party and the opportunity to celebrate with family and friends, and we would like to make your planning for your event as uncomplicated as possible.

There are many other sources from which to gather creative ideas and suggestions, such as online, one's friends and fellow congregants, and individual books on the subject. As a starting point, however, the following are examples of what might be considered:

- Saturday evening party, either beginning with Havdalah or starting one hour after sundown
- Party anytime on Sunday
- Shabbat morning kiddush at Beth El and an informal party at another time for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah and his/her peers
- Sunday brunch for family and friends
- Friday night dinner for family and out-of-town guests
- Afternoon luncheon following Kiddush

Some families have questions about whom to include on their invitation lists. A helpful rule of thumb is to determine whether the invited persons are a part of your child's religious life or whether the persons are an important part of your child's life in other significant ways. You might want to think about those who will best appreciate your child's efforts and religious accomplishments and commitment as you make up your guest list. *We strongly encourage you to invite your child's entire Bar/Bat Mitzvah class—regardless of which school they attend.*

Are there guidelines about using Beth El's facilities?

The Social Hall is a wonderful venue for celebrating a Bar or Bat Mitzvah party. The synagogue has policies in place to address all aspects regarding use of the building covering conformance with Halakhah (Jewish law) such as Shabbat observances, kashrut, and maintaining the sanctity of the building; safety and security; and multiple demands for space allocation. Social Hall rental forms are found in Appendix G. Please check with the office if you have any questions.

See the section on Sponsoring the Kiddush, above, for details about circumstances when there is more than one simcha occurring at the same time and how the Kiddush is to be handled.

The deposit must be paid in full before the event is reserved on CBE's calendar. You will receive a confirmation in writing at that time. If you cancel more than nine months prior to the date reserved, the deposit will be refunded in full. If you cancel less than nine months in advance, half of the deposit will be returned if the room is rented to someone else. If the room is not rented to someone else, none of the deposit will be returned.

Can my guests and I spend Shabbat afternoon at Beth El?

If you plan to spend the afternoon with your guests at Beth El after the Kiddush lunch, you are required to provide the office with a deposit of \$250, to be returned provided no damage occurs.

When can deliveries be dropped off at Beth El?

All deliveries to the synagogue (food, flowers, balloons, etc.) must take place before 12:00pm on Friday. Please check with the office for specific delivery times, especially if there are Jewish holidays during the week before your simcha. If you wish to provide kippot and programs to congregants and guests, you are encouraged to bring these by Thursday before the simcha.

Due to Shabbat observances, you may not carry out any items until after Shabbat is over. This includes leftover food (if you have arranged for any with your caterer), which may be stored for you in the synagogue refrigerators, flowers and other decorations. You are required to remove all leftovers by Tuesday afternoon. If not removed by then you will be charged a fee of \$25.00 per day.

Do I need chaperones for my party?

If you are holding your private party at Beth El with 50 or more guests, you are required to arrange and pay for security to be in the building for the entire event.

Can I have a bus pick up my guests?

If you hire private transportation such as a bus or shuttle van to bring your guests to or from Beth El, please make sure the bus company makes plans to park the vehicle away from Beth El. Buses and large vans may not park in the parking lot during services; they may not stand at the curb in front of the synagogue except for immediate drop off or pick up. Please arrange for any buses that will pick up guests after services to arrive at Beth El at 12:15pm or later. If you do plan to hold a private party on Shabbat afternoon at another venue, we suggest you set the start time at 2:00pm or later, and to

arrange for transportation accordingly. Buses must turn off engines while they are in front of the synagogue.

Do I have to provide flowers, kippot, or programs?

Several common expenditures are optional. Among these are decorations such as flowers or food baskets to donate, personalized kippot, and event programs.

Families may supply floral arrangements or potted plants in the sanctuary and/or Social Hall for s'machot. For reasons of safety and visibility during Shabbat services, floral arrangements and potted plants in the sanctuary are limited to the base of the 2 lecterns on the bimah. Floral arrangements and plants may not be placed in any other locations in the sanctuary.

The office will be able to recommend florists who are familiar with Beth El. Note that some types of flowers have a very pungent smell and can be overwhelming for the congregation, please do not use Starglazer lilies. Floral arrangements must be delivered before 12:00pm on Friday and may not be removed from the building until after Shabbat.

Jewish Family Service (JFS) can provide customized baskets of food which you can donate to their food pantry after the simcha. This is a wonderful mitzvah to include in your celebration. Order at <https://jewishfamilyservice.wufoo.com/forms/jfs-mitzvah-baskets/> or call JFS for details, (203) 454-4992. Please note that JFS' small arrangement fits the space well, but the large arrangement is too tall for the space in front of the lectern.

Personalized kippot may be ordered from many sources, including online. Most families order them, but this is purely optional. Please allow ample time for your order to arrive.

Some families choose to prepare a program or pamphlet describing the synagogue, sanctuary and the order of service and sometimes listing the names of those given honors. This is optional and is the responsibility of the family to prepare and duplicate if desired. Sample wording for a program can be found in Appendix D. There is also a template on the Beth El website, <http://www.congbethel.org/bnaimitzvah>. If you want to provide other explanations of our customs, you must check with the rabbi to verify accuracy. Please note that if you list honors on a program, there may be last-minute changes to the order of Aliyot depending on congregational needs. Also, please only list the honors that are outlined for you on the Honors Form. You must submit your program to the Rabbi before you print them to avoid complications.

If you provide kippot or programs, please provide an adequate number to the office by the Thursday before the simcha. The office will make sure they are put out on Shabbat morning.

Can I take pictures of my child's big day?

There are several ways to preserve the Bar or Bat Mitzvah memories for your family through photography, videos, taping, and other media. However, no taping or photography of any kind may take place on Shabbat.

What are the Shabbat photography and recording guidelines?

Please be sure that your guests are aware of these rules, so as to preserve the atmosphere of Shabbat.

1. Carrying and placing equipment onto or within Beth El premises to prepare to perform photography or other visual or sound recordings is prohibited at any time during Shabbat (all references to Shabbat begin Friday at sundown and conclude with the end of the recitation of the *Amidah* in the evening service on Saturday). This includes cameras, tripods, cables, any electrical equipment, storage boxes, etc.
2. Operating cameras, including cell phone cameras, and/or using or testing equipment is prohibited on Shabbat.
3. Preparations to perform photography on Saturday night should be completed no later than 2:00pm on the Friday immediately preceding the beginning of the Shabbat on which the equipment is intended to be used. Once any equipment is in place, it may not be moved until Shabbat has concluded.
4. Photography at your event occurring on a day other than Shabbat is generally unrestricted.

When can I schedule photo sessions?

Please contact the office if you want to schedule a formal photography in the sanctuary on a weekday afternoon or evening preceding the simcha. Pictures and video may not be done during the final rehearsal. This is the time for you and your child to concentrate on final preparations for the big day. If you want to include the Rabbi in a photograph, you will need to contact her directly to coordinate a time.

Will the restrooms be cleaned before my simcha?

Our custodial staff cleans the restrooms on a regular basis. If you prefer for the office to arrange for a heavy-duty cleaning company to clean prior to your simcha at a cost of \$200, please contact the office.