

Introduction

Mazal Tov on your child's upcoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah! Your simcha is a big day for your family, as well as a significant event for the entire congregation, and we look forward to sharing this day with you.

These materials have been prepared to assist you in planning and preparing for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Please read them carefully, as they will provide you with an understanding of the religious and ritual expectations for your child and will provide you with guidance for your entire family on this important occasion. There are also appendices with online resources, the specifics of the aliyot and other blessings, synagogue policies, Kiddush lunches and Social Hall use. We hope you will find this reference to be useful in understanding all aspects of the upcoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah event.

The best overall advice we can give you is to remember to savor this important and joyful event in your child's life. Try not to let the many details and decisions associated with this experience overpower the religious importance of this day for you and your family. We in the Beth El office are here to help you in any way that we can. We want all of your memories of your child's simcha to be happy ones.

What if I still have questions?

Whenever you have questions, please call the office at 203-838-2710 or email Rabbi Paskind at rabbipaskind@congbethel.org.

What do all these words mean?

If you encounter unfamiliar terms, please check the glossary provided in Appendix A. Call the office any time you need more of an explanation.

When do I need to do everything?

The following two pages provide timelines to help you plan for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The first provides you with a timeline relating to synagogue and ritual preparation requirements at Beth El. The other is a suggested timeline for planning your event, as dictated by your family's preferences and budget.

What services does the Beth El Gift and Simcha Shop offer?

Please remember that the volunteer-run Gift and Simcha Shop sells tallitot, tallit clips and yads (Torah reading pointers), as well as beautiful hand-made specialty women's headcoverings. All profits benefit Beth El. We encourage you to take advantage of their services and expertise.

Synagogue and ritual preparation

(Each of the preparatory and educational components in this timeline is discussed in the Standards and Ritual Customs section below.)

2-3 years in advance	Introductory group meeting with rabbi and receive a Bar or Bat Mitzvah date
5 th and/or 6 th grade	Learn Torah trope
12 months before simcha	Plan Kiddush with private caterer
9 months before simcha	Submit Kiddush and building-use forms
3 – 9 months before simcha	Family education seminars with rabbi
6-9 months before simcha	Begin working with Beth El tutor*
6 months before simcha	Consult with rabbi if you wish family members to read Torah
4 months before simcha	Ensure financial obligations are in order
4 – 6 weeks before simcha	Parents and child meet with rabbi to discuss D'var Torah*
4 weeks before simcha	Notify rabbi if any aliyot will be given to Kohen or Levi
3 weeks before simcha	Provide honors form to rabbi
1 – 2 weeks before simcha	Rehearsal in sanctuary
Week preceding simcha	Take photographs at synagogue (optional) Drop off optional personalized kippot and programs at Beth El office
Day of simcha	Arrive with family by 6:30pm for Friday evening and 9:30am for Shabbat morning service
Week after event	Pick up any floral arrangements or decorations

*The synagogue will contact you in advance of these dates to arrange scheduling

Personal event planning

12–15 months before event	<p>Decide on type of event, in accordance with family preferences and budget</p> <p>Decide if you will offer other events or meals over the weekend for visiting guests</p> <p>Estimate number of guests</p> <p>Reserve Beth El Social Hall for private celebrations, including Friday night. Be sure to fill out the building-use form (Appendix G).</p> <p>Reserve location for private celebration</p> <p>Contract with caterer, DJ, photographer</p> <p>Provide deposits as required</p>
6 months before event	<p>Develop guest list with current addresses</p> <p>Select and order invitations</p> <p>Decide on decorations, centerpieces, sign-in boards, party favors</p> <p>Arrange accommodations for out-of-town guests</p>
3 months before event	<p>Finalize menu for Kiddush lunch and any private events, decorations</p> <p>Make arrangements for clothing for family members</p> <p>Order kippot, flowers and or Jewish Family Service Food Baskets, tallit, decorations, and favors (optional: tallit may be purchased through gift shop)</p>
6 – 8 weeks before event	<p>Address and mail invitations (include directions, hotel information)</p> <p>Create candle-lighting ceremony (optional)</p> <p>Coordinate sequence of ceremony, ritual, meals and entertainment at your event</p>
1 month before event	<p>Confirm all arrangements with service providers</p> <p>If a Jewish holiday falls during the week before the simcha, discuss delivery dates with Beth El office</p> <p>Develop a seating plan for private party</p> <p>Arrange for local transportation of out-of-town guests</p>
1 week before event	<p>Confirm final guest count with caterer</p> <p>If you have ordered flowers for the synagogue, confirm that delivery to Beth El will occur before 12pm on Friday/designated delivery date</p> <p>Adjust seating plan as needed for private celebration</p> <p>Assure that your child is well-rested and that stress is minimized for all family members</p>