

BAR/BAT MITZVAH GUIDELINES



**Congregation Shir Hadash
Los Gatos, California
2018**

Mazel Tov!

You are entering a wonderful time. Preparing for your Bar or Bat Mitzvah provides a special opportunity to explore your family's Jewish values and practices. Together you will learn more about the Shabbat service, study the Torah portion, and make decisions regarding how you want to worship and celebrate this special day. Whatever you do will be made more pleasurable by careful planning. Hopefully this Guide will smooth the way.

The Torah is traditionally understood to contain 613 commandments or *Mitzvot*. Observance of these commandments, as set forth in the Bible and as reinterpreted in each generation, is an essential element of Jewish life.* The ceremony marks the beginning of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's road to maturity as an involved member of the community, able to lead services, performing acts of Tzedakah and continuing to learn. The Shir Hadash community looks forward to sharing this day and welcoming your student as an adult member of our community.

This guide focuses on the religious ceremony and details the preparation requirements specific to Congregation Shir Hadash. A detailed time line for planning the service and celebration is attached. We hope this Guide answers your questions and is a help to you. Your comments, suggestions, and updates will be greatly appreciated.

Five excellent resources for planning your service and your party are:

- *Putting God on the Guest List* by Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin, Jewish Lights Publishing.(adult and student versions available)
- *The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Survival Guide* by Randi Reisfeld, Citadel Press.
- *Bar/Bat Mitzvah Basics* by Cantor Helen Leneman, Jewish Lights Publishing.
- *Whose Bar/Bat Mitzvah is this Anyway* by Judith Davis, St. Martins Press. Provides excellent information about dealing with family issues that arise in the preparation process.
- *The Complete Bar/Bat Mitzvah Book* by Patti Moskowitz, Career Press.

Enjoy!

*A good guide to Reform Mitzvot is *Jewish Living, A Guide to Contemporary Reform Practice*, by Mark Washofsky.

The Reform movement also has a very helpful website: www.urj.org.

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THE B'NAI MITZVAH PROCESS

Religious School Requirements

All students must be enrolled in Religious School, either in the Sunday morning (grades K-6) or Tuesday evening (grades 7-12) program. Regular attendance (2/3 of the sessions or better) at Religious and Hebrew School is required. Students must complete Dalet Level Hebrew (fourth year) or its equivalent in a day school setting.

Worship Service Requirements

Attendance is required at **six (6) Shabbat services** at Congregation Shir Hadash during the preparation period. At least four (4) services are to be Shabbat morning services. Attendance at Shabbat morning services familiarizes the student and the family with the order and rhythm of the service and the prayers. Become familiar with the music so that you can select melodies for your service with the Cantor. We cannot stress enough how beneficial this attendance is!

Plan to attend:

- Two Friday night services to see how the family participates and what the oneg is like.
- At least three Saturday morning services to experience Mishkan Tefillah, or the Shir Hadash B'nai Mitzvah Service.
- One Saturday Shir Shabbat service. Parents are encouraged to ask for an aliyah. It's great to practice at least once in a real situation before you do it in front of all your friends and relatives!

If students finish Dalet a full summer before they will begin tutoring, going to services regularly helps to keep skills fresh.

Future Confirmation Commitment

Students are asked to prepare a statement of their intention to continue their Jewish studies through Confirmation. Bar or Bat Mitzvah marks the students mastery of basic skills which facilitate future learning; not an end to the process. Confirmation requires attending Hebrew High (Tuesday night), once a week, through the 10th grade. Where there is a serious conflict or Hebrew High is a poor educational fit, alternative educational experiences can be worked out.

Hebrew Tutoring

Weekly tutoring sessions begin approximately **24 WEEKS** prior to the B'nai Mitzvah service. Seven months before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah you will receive a letter informing you of your starting date. When you receive your starting date, please call the Cantor to schedule your individual weekly appointment instruction with her. During the tutoring the student will review prayers and receive and learn the Torah and Haftarah portions.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Family Orientation

Beginning 5 to 9 months before the Bar or Bat Mitzvah, a series of group meetings are held for all the families celebrating a Bar or Bat Mitzvah during a particular season. These meetings explore the historical and personal meaning of the ceremony, the concept of mitzvah, and the meaning of Torah for Reform Jews. The group also discusses the Shabbat service, options for creativity and for family input. Attendance at these sessions by student and parents is an important part of the entire Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience. These meetings usually occur once a month on a weeknight, or a Saturday morning (including attendance at Shabbat services) or on a Sunday afternoon. You will receive a complete meeting schedule before the first meeting.

Meetings with the Rabbis

Rabbi Aron will meet with each family **FOUR MONTHS** before the Bar or Bat Mitzvah date. Following that meeting, at least two meetings will be held with a rabbi. Typically these sessions are spent discussing the Torah and Haftarah portions and preparing a speech or introduction to the congregation. Rabbi Aron will meet with the family again one month before the ceremony, and the officiating Rabbi will conduct a rehearsal about two weeks in advance of the service. Our new Rabbi Educator, Rabbi PJ Schwartz, will be officiating some of the B'nai Mitzvah services throughout the year and will also be working with students and families in preparation for the service.

Speech Coaches

A Bar/Bat Mitzvah Speech Coach, a trained Shir Hadash volunteer, is available to help students prepare their speeches. At the first meeting with Rabbi Aron, families receive information about this coaching. Coaches typically meet with the students 2 to 5 times, as needed. In our experience, working with a coach rather than a parent on speech preparation can alleviate a lot of family tension. Some coaches prefer to meet in their home; others meet at Shir Hadash, often on Sunday mornings. At present only a few of the students request a speech coach.

Rehearsals

During the month before the actual service, two formal rehearsals are scheduled. The officiating Rabbi will rehearse once with the student and parents. The Cantor will conduct the final rehearsal with the entire family. The last rehearsal is usually held the day before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, on Friday morning or early afternoon. The student will have additional opportunities to practice reading from the Torah during their lessons with the Cantor.

Videotaping your student reading from the bimah during a rehearsal can help them understand if they need to speak louder, read faster/slower or look up more often (this can also be done at home).

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Mentoring

A small group of parents who have celebrated their child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah are available as mentors to share their experience and expertise with you. Please contact Rabbi Aron for current references.

MITZVAH OPPORTUNITIES TO CONSIDER

Twinning

Twinning means symbolically sharing the Bar or Bat Mitzvah with a Jew from the FSU, a Reform Jewish child in Israel or an Ethiopian Jewish child. Twinning enables the student to perform many mitzvot helping others. Information is available from the Rabbis. Opportunities vary depending on political circumstances.

Tzedakah in Many Ways

Tzedakah, the giving of charity, is a sacred Jewish tradition. You and your child are encouraged to include this tradition as a part of your celebration. Your child might choose to physically embrace mitzvot by completing a project or by making a donation. For example, your child may elect to give a portion of gift money to a charity which reflects your child's interests or to one or more Shir Hadash funds. Many families donate a percentage of what they spend on the party to organizations such as Second Harvest Food Bank or MAZON (a Jewish organization dedicated to feeding people, Jews and non-Jews, in the United States and around the world). This donation reflects the traditional practice of inviting the poor to come and participate in the celebration. Information is available in the office. Donations to designated Temple Funds from family and friends are always appropriate and appreciated.

Other Mitzvah projects have included collecting books, art supplies or stuffed animals for a children's shelter, learning to blow the shofar, and visiting shut-ins who were unable to hear the shofar at High Holy Day services.

Another wonderful way to share the joy of B'nai Mitzvah is to donate extra baked goods or food to a hospital, homeless and/or children's shelter, senior home, or other recipients. They will be delighted, and you will truly be performing a mitzvah.

PLANNING THE SERVICE

A Community Event

This is not just the student's day or a family event. The participants in the service are God, the congregation, and the family. It is a day for all Jewish people to welcome the B'nai Mitzvah into the "Community of Israel". Celebrate with your student's community at Congregation Shir Hadash. Honor those who have participated in creating the Jew your teen is becoming by inviting them to the ceremony. Include teachers, tutors, Temple staff, classmates, and other Temple members who have been involved with your child's Jewish education. Especially include other students in your Bar/Bat Mitzvah family group.

It is not necessary to invite everyone in your teen's class to the private celebration. However, when sending out invitations to classmates, remember how you felt at 13. Try to invite either one or two best friends OR the entire class. The three or four who are left out often feel very bad.

The ceremony is public. No invitation is needed to attend your classmates' ceremonies to show support and encouragement and to share in the joy of becoming an "adult" member of our community. Inviting Shir Hadash friends to the service and Kiddush without including them in the private party is acceptable.

Inviting non-Jewish friends and relatives to see the Torah up close before or after the service is a very meaningful way to include them.

Choosing The Service

Families may use the *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur*, the *Shir Hadash B'nai Mitzvah Service*. Each prayerbook includes the core Hebrew prayers, transliteration and translation of the Hebrew prayers and thematic readings in English. Families using the *Mishkan T'filah* or the *Shir Hadash B'nai Mitzvah* service will need to prepare a program which includes the Torah and Haftarah portions and any songs not included in the prayer book. Additional information may be included at the family's discretion, e.g. names of participants.

Opportunities for friends and relatives to participate in services, the number of aliyot, and the opportunity to select music are the same for all three alternatives.

Mishkan T'filah

Mishkan T'filah is the prayerbook regularly used for services at Shir Hadash. Two morning services are included in the book. Shabbat Morning I provides alternative English readings for many of the prayers. For each segment of the service, either the traditional Hebrew prayer or one of the alternative readings may be read. Shabbat Morning II is a more traditional style service without alternative readings. The *Mishkan T'filah* includes notes which provide insight into some of the readings.

Shir Hadash B'nai Mitzvah Service

Like Shabbat Morning I in *Mishkan T'filah*, The *Shir Hadash B'nai Mitzvah Service* is a compilation of the core Hebrew prayers and alternative readings on associated

themes. For each segment of the service, either the traditional Hebrew prayer or one of the alternative English readings is read. This service also includes explanations of the prayers and an extensive introduction which provides information about becoming a B'nai Mitzvah, about Shir Hadash worship, and about the sanctuary.

Service Programs

If you are using *Mishkan T'filah* or the *Shir Hadash B'nai Mitzvah Service*, you will need to provide a program which includes the Torah and Haftarah portions in Hebrew and English and the words for any songs not in the prayerbook. Some families choose to produce a more elaborate program. A simple program template is available in the office. For typesetting programs, use a table rather than tabs to create columns. Microsoft Word for "Multiple Pages" has an option of reverse book fold which lets you type a page at a time and it will put the pages in order to print a brochure made of 8 ½ x 11 pages folded in half, paginated from right to left. Several congregants are available to mentor you if you choose to prepare the program yourself or they will do this typesetting for you for a fee. The office can provide current references.

Guidelines for using the *Shir Hadash B'nai Mitzvah Service* and creating programs are available in the Shir Hadash office. No matter which service you choose, please meet with or call the Cantor to discuss your musical choices.

Parent Remarks

During the Tallit Presentation, parents have an opportunity to give a short blessing or to comment about their wishes for their child on this special occasion. The speech is directed to the child, not the congregation. This is a time to share your pride and love and to express your desire for your child to become a responsible Jewish adult. You might emphasize some of the essential values you want to pass on to the next generation and to give an example of how your child has demonstrated an understanding of these values. Or, you might want to consider what positive message your child needs to hear at this time to support his/her continued growth and development, particularly in the context of the Jewish community. **The speech should be short, two or three minutes (1 page max, double-spaced).**

Suggested Outline:

1. The significance to you of your child becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah This can be especially poignant from a non-Jewish parent.
2. The values that you want to transmit for the future.
3. Your pride in your child and the joy your child brings to others.

(Please see Appendix A, Parent Remarks for more detail.)

Student Speeches

Students with individual services will write three speeches: brief introductions to the Torah and Haftarah portions and a longer speech on a theme related to the Torah or Haftarah portions or on a Jewish subject of particular interest to the student. Students who are sharing a service will write two speeches: either a brief introduction to the Torah or the Haftarah portion and a longer speech on a Torah or Haftarah related theme or on a Jewish

subject of particular interest to the student. The speeches are prepared in conjunction with the Rabbis and a speech coach.

Honors

You honor family members and friends by asking them to participate in the service. These honors can take many forms. Aliyot, Hagbah (lifting the Torah), G'lilah (dressing the Torah), opening and closing the ark are traditionally the most significant honors. They are usually given to grandparents, aunts, and uncles. You will need to give the Cantor the Hebrew names of these people.

English readings, often chosen for some special connection to the reader, are another way to include your family and friends in the service. You can involve from one to nine ark openers as your family size requires. The Cantor can provide CDs to assist family members in learning the Torah blessings. If you have close family or friends who you want to involve musically, PLEASE SPEAK WITH THE CANTOR.

For the service, it is helpful to tab (those little colored post-it notes) prayer books for readers and give them that prayer book when they arrive so they will be aware when their turn to read is approaching.

Including Non-Jewish Family Members

At Shir Hadash we encourage the involvement of the entire family. When asking your relatives to participate, let them know that their participation is important to you and welcome. Find out what they are comfortable doing within the Shir Hadash guidelines.

Non-Jewish parents are encouraged to speak to their child during the "Parents Remarks" and to accompany his/her spouse to the bimah to stand beside him/her for the passing of the Torah and for the aliyah. Non-Jewish parents at Shir Hadash also may bless the Shabbat candles and wine, observances which we encourage all of our Jewish families to perform at home.

Non-Jewish relatives are welcome to come up on the bimah and to participate in many parts of the service. Non-Jewish relatives or friends may lead an English reading, open and/or close the ark. Other honors that are more meaningfully filled by Jewish relatives are Hagbah (lifting the Torah) and Gilah (dressing the Torah). When there are no Jewish relatives to perform these last two honors, they may be performed by non-Jewish relatives.

A non-Jewish adult, someone who has not taken on the obligation of the mitzvot (Jewish commandments) does not wear a Tallit and cannot be called alone to an aliyah (blessing of the Torah).

Attire

Make sure everyone in the family has appropriate clothes for the occasion. Boys may wear a suit or slacks/shirt/tie or slacks/sweater. Boys' slacks should rest on their waists. Girls should dress modestly, in a dress, skirt, or dressy pants. Shoulders should be covered and skirts should be no shorter than just above the knee. Midriffs should be

completely covered. Students should sit as well as stand in their attire to ensure no surprises, and should break in their shoes ahead of time. Girls should practice walking in heels and sitting in skirts and dresses prior to the event.

Adults are asked to follow these clothing guidelines as well.

Try everything on two to three weeks before the event so adjustments can be made before the big day. Students grow rapidly at this age – what fit in December may not fit in June.

Judaic Items

Families may choose to use Shir Hadash tallit, kippot, and challah covers or to use their own. These items may have special family significance and will become part of the family's ongoing Jewish observance.

Tallit

Wearing a tallit is in many ways a metaphor for one's Jewish identity. Pick a tallit that the student will want to wear in the future. In fact, pick one that they will want to find occasions to wear! Keep the tallit where it is convenient to grab when attending Saturday morning services, High Holidays, and Simchat Torah. Join your student in wearing a tallit. If you don't have one, consider purchasing one or develop the habit of using one from the synagogue. If your student sees you wear a tallit and kippah, they will feel more comfortable doing the same.

You can make a beautiful tallit from a scarf, shawl, table runner, or any beautiful piece of fabric by adding tsitsit. Instructions for tying tsitsit can be found in *The First Jewish Catalog*. Just don't mix wool and cotton.

Kippot

Some families order personalized kippot/yamulkas. Consider your friends/family when deciding if or how many to order. Who will wear them? Will they keep them? Shir Hadash has a large supply of kippot available if you choose not to order personalized ones.

Challah Cover

You may choose to use a Shir Hadash challah cover or you may want to make or purchase one which will be a special reminder of the day. You can make a beautiful challah cover from a placemat or a piece of fabric. There are no rules to break – use your imagination!

Recording the Event

Many families plan to photograph or videograph the event. It helps if photographers and videographers have Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience so they can anticipate important moments to photograph. During Shabbat services, photographers and videographers are restricted to the rear left corner of the sanctuary and must remain there throughout the service. You may want to take some pictures **following** the dress rehearsal when the photographers movements are not restricted.

(See Appendix B - Guidelines for Photography & Videography in the Sanctuary.)

Please advise your guests that flash photography and video is not permitted from within the congregation.

SHIR HADASH OFFICE NEEDS

Shir Hadash THE REST Newsletter

Submit a photo with a light background, and a brief biographical sketch of your teen including a short paragraph about their portion to the Shir Hadash The Rest editor per the schedule below. The photo and article will not be returned. Please e-mail the text and a digital photo to office@shirhadash.org.

The paragraph should include the following information: the student's name, Bar/Bat Mitzvah date and time, the school the student attends, mention of a favorite interest and/or activity, a comment about what their Bar/Bat Mitzvah means to them or about their involvement in the Jewish community, and an invitation to the community to attend the event.

B'nai Mitzvah Date

January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
October
November
December

THE REST Deadline

December 15
January 15
February 15
March 15
April 15
May 15
June 15
July 15
August 15
September 15
October 15
November 15

Board Representative

At least two months before your child becomes a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, ask a current or past Board Member to present the gift given on behalf of the congregation to your son or daughter during the ceremony. Advise the office who will be the board representative. A list of current board members is available from the office.

If your board rep does not know your child personally, you might arrange a time for them to meet in advance of the event. Such meetings allow the board rep to personalize the presentation and will help your child feel more comfortable.

Hebrew Name

At your meeting with the Rabbi, provide the Hebrew names of student and parents so that they may be given to our calligrapher for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Certificate.

Hebrew Names for Aliyot/Torah Blessings

Please submit the list of Aliyot to the Cantor with complete Hebrew names. Each family will have three aliyot. One Aliyah is often the grandparents, one the parents, and the final aliyah is the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Additional honors include Hagbah (lifting the Torah), G'lilah

(dressing the Torah), and ark openers/closers. Honors will be discussed during your meetings with the Rabbi.

Facility Usage

If you wish to reserve the facility for a luncheon after the service or for an evening party, please contact the Events & Marketing Manager as far in advance as possible.

At least three weeks before your event, meet with or call the Events & Marketing Manager regarding seating numbers, prayerbooks, and Oneg arrangements. If your friends are taking responsibility for the Oneg Friday night, please advise the Events & Marketing Manager who will advise the Oneg chair.

On Friday night, Shir Hadash provides challah, wine and grape juice, and the Oneg Committee provides volunteers for set-up and clean-up.

For Saturday morning, the minimum oneg includes challah provided by the family, and wine and grape juice provided by Shir Hadash.

Shir Hadash provides a table with linens and coffee. Some families plan more elaborate Onegs.

See the *Facilities Guide*, available at the office, for more information.

**You must coordinate all Friday and Saturday plans with
the Events & Marketing Manager.**

Babysitting

If some of your guests between the ages of 2 and 5 years will require a babysitter on Saturday, please contact the Events & Marketing Manager who will refer babysitters for you to contact. Please be sure to allow plenty of time to make these arrangements; 3 weeks in advance is suggested.

Service Programs/Booklet

Please provide two copies to the Events & Marketing Manager for our files.

FRIDAY EVENING SERVICE

On the Friday evening prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony, the families participate in the service and sponsor part of the Oneg. Since Friday night services begin at different times, verify the time with the office.

Service Participation

Usually the student(s) will lead one Hebrew prayer during the service. The mother(s) will lead the candle blessing and the father(s) will lead Kiddush during the Oneg.

Friday Night Oneg Participation

The Congregation supplies wine, challah, juice, coffee, and hot water for tea. Tables with white linens are set up for food items, juice and coffee service. Utensils, dessert napkins, punch and coffee cups are supplied from the Oneg stock. Two members of the Oneg Committee will be present from about thirty minutes before services until everything is cleaned up after the Oneg. The Oneg members will arrange trays, pour wine and juice, and clean-up following the Oneg.

To make the Oneg more festive, you might choose to provide punch, matching dessert plates, napkins and cups, and centerpieces for the table. Non-floral centerpieces are recommended in respect of people's allergies. A colorful piece of fabric or additional table cloths can add a nice touch to the table.

Please bring your items to the Temple kitchen during your Friday rehearsal or **at least 30 minutes** before the service. It is preferable that items are brought to the Temple earlier—but call the office first to be sure someone can open the kitchen for you. Be sure items are marked with the name of the student.

If you are planning a special set-up for Friday, recruit helpers, friends or family to help with **set-up and clean-up, 30 minutes prior to the service and 30 minutes after the Oneg**. If you are planning an elaborate set-up, you may want to arrange with the Events & Marketing Manager to prepare the room and trays during the afternoon.

If your family and friends bring many items for the Oneg, there may be leftovers. Let the Oneg Committee members know if the leftovers should be plattered for a Saturday Oneg, frozen for future use by the Congregation, or boxed for you to take home. Please bring containers to take home leftovers if this is your choice.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah families are expected to provide **7-8 dozen Oneg items**, supplementing Congregation contributions. Fruits, cheeses, home-made cookies, brownies, and pastries are always appreciated. Finger foods are preferred. **Cake is not recommended**. If you are bringing more than a dozen people to services on Friday, please provide an additional tray for every 10 people.

SATURDAY MORNING SHABBAT SERVICE DETAILS

What to Bring

- ☐ Kippot for congregants to wear during service (Optional)
- ☐ Tallit for B'nai Mitzvah
- ☐ Tallit for parents (Optional)
- ☐ Service booklets or programs
- ☐ Bobby pin or clips for student's kippah
- ☐ Challah cover (Optional)
- ☐ Containers for leftover food

Greeters

Ask a few friends (the Board Representative will assist) to **arrive at 10 am** to help greet your guests, to distribute the prayerbook/service or program, and to encourage guests to take their seats by 10:25. These friends can direct guests to kippot and tallit. As Congregation members, these friends can help your guests feel at home. **If you have many teens attending, ask adult friends to intersperse themselves among the teens to model appropriate demeanor, and to distribute prayerbooks to teen students.**

Saturday Oneg

You are responsible for the Saturday Oneg. You will provide the challah on Saturday morning and arrange for the wine/juice to be poured. Kiddush cups, trays, challah covers and tablecloths are available for your use. A friend or relative (or two or three) will need to pour the wine and juice for Kiddush. It takes about 20 minutes to pour wine and juice for 125. Ask two or three friends (a great way to include students) to serve the wine for the Kiddush.

The Oneg may be as simple as wine/juice and challah or you may choose a more elaborate Oneg.

More elaborate Onegs and luncheons must be coordinated with the Events & Marketing Manager. When your Oneg is over, the kitchen must be restored to its original condition or you will lose your room deposit. If you use paper goods, all paper should be disposed of. Personal platters should be removed from the premises. If you use Shir Hadash serving items, wash them and put them away.

All leftover food items must be removed. You will need to bring storage containers.

CONTINUING THE CELEBRATION

Every family should choose to celebrate the Bar/Bat Mitzvah in a way that is consistent with their family values. Many families choose to host an event following the service to further enjoy the company of friends and family gathered for the occasion. At Shir Hadash, families have enjoyed a wide variety of events ranging from a home open house or BBQ, a day at the snow or at the beach, family trips, as well as parties with a meal and dancing.

Celebration planning should include:

1. What is your budget for this event?
2. Determine your audience. Who will be there? Mostly adults? Teens? Out-of-town guests?
3. Identify special concerns such as conservative relatives or rambunctious young children.
4. What type of event would your family enjoy?

Making your event special is a function of thinking about your guests and making them feel welcome. There are ways to do this on any budget.

Budget

A worksheet is provided for determining your budget. Investigate alternatives before making a commitment. When planning your party, consider:

- Lunch is often less expensive than dinner. If you have a luncheon, will you also want to provide dinner for your guests? If you have dinner, will you also want to provide some type of lunch?
- Some DJ's and bands may charge less for afternoon events.
- Favors are nice but not necessary.
- Centerpieces can be simple; balloons are inexpensive. You can recycle centerpieces from other bar/bat mitzvahs or events. Some families have incorporated their tzedakah project into the centerpieces, e.g. canned food, stuffed animals, books.
- Sometimes you can save money by doing things yourself, but not always. Consider if you will enjoy doing it yourself; is it really less expensive? Will doing it yourself add stress to **your** plans?

Research

Locations, DJ's, bands, caterers, photographers and videographers are often booked a year in advance. Research these alternatives in advance. Ask friends for recommendations and search the web.

Location

You may want to use Shir Hadash or another venue. Be sure to compare "apples to apples". Some facility rentals include the food, tables, chairs, linens, and decorations. This may or may not be less expensive than hiring a caterer and arranging for all of these items.

Entertainment

Choose entertainment that fits your family interests. If you have a band or DJ you may want to consider the following:

- Will the band/DJ have music for traditional Jewish dances (if desired)? Can they help lead dances? Some groups have staff to help teach, demonstrate, and get things going.
- If you have a lot of teens attending, what kind of activities will keep them engaged?
- If you have a dance, you may want some parallel activities to entertain adults/children who are not interested in dancing.

Including some mixers that relate to your student can be a fun way to involve guests. This could include a contest to see how many words someone can make from the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's name, trivia about the student, or simple craft or tzedakah projects.

Invitations

Invitations are usually sent six weeks before the event. You might choose to send a SAVE THE DATE notice up to a year ahead to those friends and family that are especially important to you. Communicate with non-Jewish family members in advance about the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and your desire for them to feel included. Let them know what to expect. (See Appendix C for Sample Letters.)

Invitations should include the invitation to the service/celebration and an RSVP card. Your invitation may include a separate invitation to a party, and special information for out-of-town guests, e.g. info on hotel reservations, transportation, schedule for weekend, map, suggestions for dress/demeanor.

You can save money on postage by using standard size invitations and/or postcards for RSVP's. Nice electronic invitations are now available from a number of vendors. Using electronic invitations can save money and facilitate the RSVP process.

Call people whose RSVP's you have not received; they may have been misplaced. You don't want your feelings hurt because someone does not attend, or their feelings hurt because they were not invited due to misdirected mail. "Gee, we haven't heard from you, I wonder if your invitation got lost in the mail?" has saved many relationships.

Be prepared for everyone who RSVP's to attend but expect 10% not to attend.

Jewish Content

Families may choose to incorporate Jewish content into the party in different ways. A basic Jewish value is that the celebration should not be excessive or ostentatious. Some possibilities are:

- Reciting Hamotzi (the blessing over challah) at the beginning of the meal
- Incorporating havdalah and/or birkat hamazon into the celebration
- Jewish dancing
- Incorporating acts of tzedakah into the event, e.g. donating leftover food or centerpieces to appropriate agencies
- Be earth friendly

Candle Lighting

Many families do a candle lighting as part of the celebration. The candle lighting can serve as a way to honor family and friends and as a photo op. However, when candle lightings take too long, you start losing the attention of your guests, taking away from the meaning of the event. Think about how you will hold the attention of everyone during this time. What is your purpose? These objectives can be achieved in many different ways.

- If you do a candle lighting, you will need 14 candles, candle holders, and matches.
- Either include everyone or include few enough people that it is obvious that these are VERY special people being honored.

Sign Board/Guest Book

You may want to have a guest book or an autograph item for guests to sign. Often it is a large photograph of the child on mat board and guests sign the mat. Families have also used pillows (use it to sleep on or for Passover), quilt squares, autograph animals, or surfboard covers. Find something that reflects your child's interests and will be used. Many autograph pictures end up tucked in the closet after the event.

LET FRIENDS HELP!

As you prepare for your event, friends and family will ask to help. Friends can: help address invitations (especially if they have nice handwriting), help with errands the week before, e.g. pick up programs at the printer, pick up challah at the bakery, assist with decorating for celebrations, act as greeters for the service, host a meal or help provide a meal and transportation for your guests.

Assisting with Oneg preparations can be a great help, relieving you of responsibilities. Ask one friend to phone other friends or family to bake or buy Oneg items. Instruct them to leave their items on the kitchen counter or in the refrigerator before 4:00 p.m. on Friday.

Friends can:

- bring food items and paper goods for Friday night and/or Saturday.
- help with set-up and clean-up Friday night and/or Saturday.
- pour wine Saturday morning.
- serve kiddush Friday night and/or Saturday.

Be creative! Using your friends' energy and talents can relieve some of your stress and increase the community feel of the event.

RELAX AND ENJOY THIS SPECIAL DAY!

HUG EVERYONE AND CELEBRATE!!!

THANK YOU'S

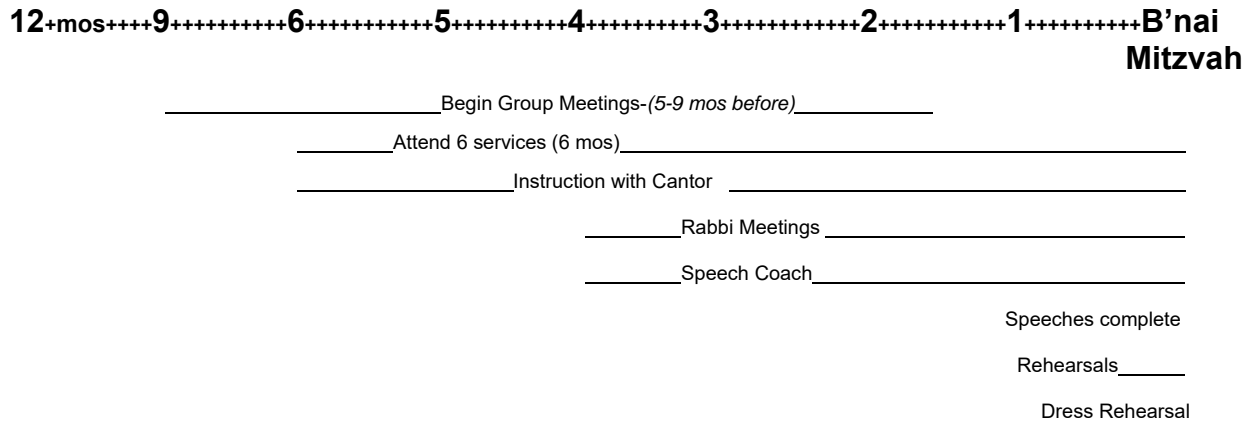
Individuals may assist you whose services are not paid for directly by you. Their help is often essential to your child's success. Family members and friends are often very helpful during this time. Keep a list of those who deserve a thank you. They can be remembered with a note, small gift, centerpiece, contribution, etc.

NOTE: The Rabbis and Cantor do not feel comfortable accepting personal gifts. It is traditional to express your gratitude through tzedakah such as donations to the Rabbis' and Cantor's discretionary funds. These contributions are always appreciated and are used to help members of the community in need with privacy and dignity. Donate what you can afford. Typical contributions range from \$50-\$500. Families often tip the Custodial Staff. The amount depends on how much assistance is provided; tips are often in the range of \$50-\$100. You may want to make a donation to the Shir Hadash General Fund in appreciation of a speech coach, special help from the office staff, or to honor others who have been of assistance.

TIMELINE AND CHECKLIST

As soon as you have established the date, begin to consider the services you will use for this occasion. Remember these are just suggestions. Keep a notebook. Talk with friends. Phone, visit, interview. Don't PANIC but START PLANNING. Starting your preparation a year in advance is much easier than if you wait until six months before and then have to do everything in a very short time.

B'NAI MITZVAH TIMELINE OVERVIEW Months Before Date



COUNT-DOWN TIMELINE AND CHECKLIST

WHEN

24-12 months before

From: _____
To: _____

THE CEREMONY

- ☐ Attend services
- ☐ With Cantor, determine special tutoring needs
- ☐ Start a binder with contracts, estimates, etc.
- ☐ Research Torah portion

THE CELEBRATION

- ☐ Read SH Facilities Guide
- ☐ Prepare tentative guest list
- ☐ Research celebration alternatives: locations, photographers, videographers, caterers, entertainment
- ☐ Research hotel group arrangements
- ☐ Reserve room at Shir Hadash

11-6 months before

From: _____
To: _____

- ☐ Begin tutoring with Cantor (6 mos)
- ☐ Begin group meetings (9-5 mos)
- ☐ Attend first 2 of 6 services
- ☐ Talk to important family/friends about date/expectations

- Select/confirm/contract as needed:
- ☐ Photographer/videographer
 - ☐ Reception site
 - ☐ Entertainment
 - ☐ Make hotel arrangements

Contracts:

All contracts should be in writing, be signed, and contain all of the important terms. Mark your calendar with balance due dates, confirmation dates, and delivery dates.

WHEN

6-3 months before

From: _____
To: _____

3-2 months before

From: _____
To: _____

2-1 months before

From: _____
To: _____

THE CEREMONY

- ☐ Begin speech research
- ☐ Attend 2 services
- ☐ Rabbi meetings begin (4 mos)
- ☐ Child's Hebrew name to Rabbi
- ☐ Select tallit
- ☐ Order kippot (optional)
- ☐ Get quotes for service booklet layout and printing
- ☐ NOTES article and photo to office
- ☐ Arrange for Board Rep
- ☐ Prepare service or program
- ☐ Discuss music selection with Cantor
- ☐ Review COMPLETE service with Rabbi and Cantor
- ☐ Prepare speeches
- ☐ Attend 2 services
- ☐ Hebrew name to Cantor for Honors
- ☐ Meetings with Rabbi
- ☐ Select service participants, mail portions
- ☐ Make lists of thank-you's – purchase cards, gifts
- ☐ Letter to guests about what to expect

THE CELEBRATION

- ☐ Plan weekend meals, etc.
- ☐ Pick out and order invitations
- ☐ Establish menu with caterer
- ☐ Do room plan
- ☐ Plan decorations
- ☐ Order items not provided by caterer/ friends for weekend
- ☐ Verify delivery schedules
- ☐ Special reception touches: sign board, candle lighting
- ☐ SEND INVITATIONS
Include: map and other instructions
- ☐ Buy clothes
- ☐ Compile final guest list
- ☐ Send special instructions to out-of-town, non-Jewish guests
- ☐ Arrange for extra meals
- ☐ Call if RSVP's have not been returned
- ☐ Delegate responsibilities to family and friends: phoning, Oneg, transporting out-of-town guests, Shabbat dinner

ON GUEST ACCOMMODATIONS:

Send map, directions, brochure, and reservation instructions (include toll-free numbers) to guests coming from out-of-town.

WHEN

4-3 months before

From: _____

To: _____

2-1 weeks before

From: _____

To: _____

FINAL WEEK

B'nai Mitzvah!

THE CEREMONY

- ☐ Attend services
- ☐ Practice Aliyah at minyan service
- ☐ Arrange for help for day of service
- ☐ Call office re: babysitting, other special needs

- ☐ Attend services
- ☐ Finalize participation in service
- ☐ Print service booklet
- ☐ Rehearsal

- ☐ Rehearsal:
Take speeches, service, tallit, shoes for girls, etc.
- ☐ Attend Friday service
- ☐ Leave at Shir Hadash:
service books, pamphlets, kippot, hair clips (optional)

- ☐ Get up early, have breakfast
- ☐ Plan to arrive at the synagogue with time to spare

THINGS TO BRING WITH YOU:

Student's service copy
Tallit
Challah and challah cover
Tissues
Boxes/bags to bring home gifts and food

THE CELEBRATION

- ☐ Confirm EVERYTHING
- ☐ Finalize music list
- ☐ Write candle lighting (optional)

- ☐ Make packets/gifts for out-of-town guests. Arrange to place in rooms or at check-in.
- ☐ Head count to caterer & office
- ☐ Review details
- ☐ Keep daily list – and look at it!
- ☐ Try on clothes, including shoes. Make adjustments, if necessary.

- ☐ Ensure celebration facility has all final details for set-up requirements
- ☐ Finalize seating arrangements
- ☐ Make place cards

THINGS YOU MAY NEED BRING WITH YOU:

Sign board/easel
Guest book
Check book
Candle lighting candles, holders, matches
Boxes/bags to bring home gifts and food

BE KIND TO EACH OTHER...SMILE AND ENJOY!

BINDER ORGANIZATION AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK

Current List of Things to Do

- Calendar/Timeline: have a calendar that visually shows the time frame for different tasks.
- Guest List: Name, Address, Invite sent, RSVP received, Table #, Gift, Thank you sent
- Contracts
- Budget/Expenses
- Service or Program
- Current materials

Suggested Budget Items

<u>Item</u>	<u>\$ Est. / Quote</u>	<u>\$ Due</u>	<u>\$ Due</u>	<u>\$Paid</u>
Tallit				
Kippot*				
Invitations				
Postage				
Oneg Friday				
Oneg Saturday				
Thank You's				
Print Layout Service*				
Program Printing*				
Photographer*				
Videographer*				
Facility Fees				
Party Meal				
Entertainment*				
Centerpieces*				
Favors*				
House cleaning*				
Additional Meals*				

*Optional items

Controlling Expenses

You can reduce some expenses by doing things yourself. Decide if it's worth it. Your sanity may be worth the extra expense. Some ways families limit expenses include:

- Use Congregation tallit and kippot
- Use *Mishkan Tefillah* or *Shir Hadash B'nai Mitzvah Service*
- Do your own program layout, minimize the program information, and print the program in black and white
- Simplify meals
- Make your own invitations/purchase simple invitations; use standard sizes

APPENDIX A - GUIDELINE FOR PARENTS' REMARKS

During the Tallit Presentation, parents have an opportunity to give a short blessing or to comment about their wishes for their child on this special occasion. This is a time to share with the Congregation your pride and love for your child and to express your desire for your child to become a responsible Jewish adult. You might emphasize some of the essential values you want to pass on to the next generation or give an example of how your child has demonstrated an understanding of these values. Or, you might want to consider what positive message your child needs to hear at this time to support his/her continued growth and development, particularly in the context of the Jewish community. **The speech should be short, two or three minutes** (1 page, double-spaced).

Suggested Outline

- The significance to you of your child becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah This can be especially poignant from a non-Jewish parent.
- The values that you want to transmit for the future.
- Your pride in your child and the joy they bring to you and others.

Write it down. Even the most eloquent parents can forget what they want to say at this emotional time. Type it double spaced, 14 point type or larger, so you can read it through the tears.

Remember the context. This is a religious service to celebrate your child's new status as a Jewish adult. Praising all of his or her talents and accomplishments is tempting, but dwelling on unrelated subjects, e.g. sports or music, may detract from the religious nature of the event. Such a speech might be more appropriate at a reception following the service.

Remember the congregation. This is not just a gathering of your family and friends, but of the community, and some things are better said in private. Thirteen-year-olds are notoriously sensitive to embarrassment. Funny stories about their early childhood can be perceived as cruel when retold in public.

Keep it short. You can and should tell your child how proud you are at other times. You do not need to explain all the details in this setting. No more than 1 page double-spaced.

Don't focus on your child's "accomplishments". By focusing on the student's accomplishments we inadvertently give them the message that they are loved for what they do, not who they are. This message sneaks in when you least expect it.

If what you wish to say does not fit these guidelines, then perhaps the service is not the right place for your words. Perhaps a toast at your oneg or reception is more of what you would like. Take advantage of that opportunity!

If you are concerned if your words are appropriate, please leave your text with the officiating Rabbi at least four days before the ceremony. The Rabbi or Cantor will be happy to review your remarks to ensure that they are fitting for the occasion.

APPENDIX B - GUIDELINES FOR PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY

In order to allow important life cycle celebrations to be captured for posterity while maintaining the sacred, religious character of the events and maximizing the enjoyment of those in attendance, the following restrictions have been established:

1. Do not use flash photography or artificial lighting during religious services or ceremonies at Congregation Shir Hadash.
2. Those who wish flash photos may arrange for posed shots 60 minutes - 90 minutes before or 30 minutes after the Service. If you wish to have photographers taken on the day of the rehearsal, please arrange to have them taken following the dress rehearsal.
3. Still photography, without flash, is permitted from the rear of the Sanctuary.
4. Please set up all photographic equipment before the service or ceremony begins in order to avoid noisy distractions. Don't block the doorways and passageways. If you wish to use our photographer's platform, include this request as part of your set-up instructions at least 15 days prior to your event.
5. Video taping is permitted, as long as no artificial lighting is used. Set up the video camera at the rear of the sanctuary. Set the equipment to the side of the doorway so people can still enter and leave through that doorway with ease. We will provide a small elevated platform for the camera if you include this request as part of your set-up instructions at least 15 days prior to your event.
6. Questions concerning these restrictions should be referred to the Office Manager.

Please make these rules known to your photographer or videographer well in advance of the event.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

APPENDIX C - SAMPLE LETTERS

Save the Date!

Dear Family and Friends,

We are very excited. Our son/daughter, Name will become a **Bar/Bat Mitzvah** on Date. This ceremony is an important event in our life, marking Name's entrance into the adult Jewish community. At the age of thirteen, he/she becomes ethically and morally responsible for his/her own behavior. Name has already begun preparing for this day through her studies in religious and Hebrew School. In the coming months, Name will learn to read special texts in Hebrew, study them and develop his/her own understanding of the texts. The service culminates this period of study. Following a tradition linking generations of Jews, Name will take an active role leading the service read from and explain these texts to the congregation. We will conclude the day with a special celebration.

This is an important day for our family and we hope you will plan to share it with us. Please put the date on your calendar now. In the months immediately preceding the event, we will provide you with details of the weekend.

We can't wait to share this special time with you.

General Information about the Service

You might want to include something like this with the invitation. Modify information about the celebration to fit your plans.

We hope you will join us for Name's Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony and celebration.

The service will last approximately 1 1/2 hours. Prayers will be recited in English and in Hebrew from a prayer book. Name will read from a special scroll, hand-written in a special Hebrew print, using melodies which are centuries old. He/She will give several speeches related to his/her studies in preparation for this day and will be honored by the Congregation for this accomplishment.

Parents are encouraged to join their children/teens for the service. Please remind children/teens to participate in the music and readings but otherwise to sit quietly during services so they do not disrupt others. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will look to friends for support during the service. Seeing friends pay attention and participate will make the day more meaningful for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Girls should wear skirts, dresses or nice slacks. Shoulders and midriffs should be covered. Boys should wear slacks and shirts. Please do not wear jeans.

The celebration, beginning at Time, includes dinner and dancing. It will last until Time. When dressing for the party, pick something you would wear to a very nice dance. Formal dress is not required.

Please pick up your child promptly following services and/or the party.

Participation Request

You might want to send something like this after you receive the RSVP; about 15-30 days before the bar/bat mitzvah.

Dear Name,

We are so glad that you will be here for Student's Name Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration! We can hardly believe that it is only a few weeks away. At our synagogue, friends and relatives are often asked to participate in the service, reading selected prayers or poems.

We would like you to join Student's Name on the bima and read the attached poem. Please let us know if you will accept this honor by Date so that we can include your name in the service booklet.

We can't wait to see you!