

SUMMARY OF SIMCHA POLICY RE: BAR/BAT MITZVAH BOOKINGS

This is a summary of the major provisions of the new Congregation Ahavath Torah Simcha Policy. Please contact the synagogue office for further details. To reach the synagogue office by email, please use catering@ahavathtorah.org.

New Approach and Existing Bookings

A major change in the new policy concerns when a family can reserve a Shabbat for a Simcha. Unlike the old policy, pursuant to which a Shabbat could be reserved at any time, from this point forward, a family can reserve a Shabbat for a Simcha no earlier than 4 years prior to the requested Simcha date.

Smachot that were already in the synagogue calendar as of May 15, 2018 are "locked in," except in the following cases: (1) a Bar Mitzvah that is not scheduled to take place the Shabbat following a boy's 13th Hebrew birthday (with certain dispensations made for Bar Mitzvahs that would have fallen out during the summer or on Yom Tov) and (2) Bat Mitzvahs that were scheduled to take place on a few enumerated Shabbatot. Even with respect to these limited exceptions, no already-scheduled Simcha can be "bumped" if the scheduled date is less than 4 years away.

Scheduling Your Simcha

Following May 15, 2018, the synagogue office will book a Simcha no earlier than 4 years prior to the requested date. All requests for a particular Shabbat made during the first eligible week will be viewed as if they were made at the same time. Consequently, there is no need to rush to your computer the moment that Shabbat ends to request a date. Priority is given to Bar Mitzvahs that are scheduled to take place the Shabbat after a boy's 13th Hebrew birthday. The rabbinic staff will certify your priority Bar Mitzvah date.

Concurrent Smachot

The new policy clarifies that there can be Smachot in different minyanim without limitation. For example, there can be a Bar Mitzvah in The Katz Auxiliary Sanctuary on the same Shabbat that there is a Bat Mitzvah in The Straus Main Sanctuary and a Bar Mitzvah in The Benaroya Sephardic Center/Chetrit Sanctuary.

The policy also makes clear that with the exception of a few enumerated Shabbatot, a Bar Mitzvah and a Bat Mitzvah can be scheduled for the same Shabbat in the same minyan. However, two Bar Mitzvahs (or two Bat Mitzvahs) cannot take place in the same minyan on the same Shabbat except with the consent of both families. And there cannot be a Bar Mitzvah, a Bat Mitzvah, and an Auf Ruf in the same minyan even with consent.

If there are multiple requests made during the first eligible week by families in the same minyan with the same priority level, a coin flip or lottery will take place to determine who will receive priority. After the first eligible week is over, the scheduling of Smachot will be determined strictly on a first-come, first-served basis.

Kibbudim

In addition to scheduling, the policy describes how many Aliyot the family making a Simcha is entitled to receive. Bar and Bat Mitzvah families typically receive 5 Aliyot while the family making an Auf Ruf receives 4. However, the number of Aliyot may be reduced if there is more than one Simcha in a minyan. A Bar Mitzvah boy is entitled to daven either shacharit or musaf for the amud. All other prayer requests for a Simcha must be cleared in advance with the Gabbaim.

Use of Social Halls

The policy with respect to the booking of social halls generally follows the policy for the booking of sanctuaries. Reservations made as of May 15, 2018 are “locked in,” and reservations otherwise may not be made more than four years in advance of a Simcha. All reservations will be subject to the catering arrangements in effect at the time of the Simcha. Going forward, room reservations will require the completion of a form and a non-refundable security deposit. “Locked-in” reservations now require a non-refundable security deposit as well. Since members may not book more than one social hall for any given time slot, the office will be contacting families with “locked-in” reservations for the deposit and their room selection. Those with locked-in reservations may not be “bumped” out of their social hall in any circumstance. In the case of Smachot sharing a date (assuming the reservations are made after May 15, 2018), priority is given to an on-time Bar Mitzvah, and in the case of multiple on-time Bar Mitzvahs reserved during the initial week, a coin flip or lottery will determine the outcome.