

Your Bar or Bat Mitzvah Experience at Temple Adas Israel

Our purpose in this document is to prepare you for the details of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah experience. Your child's learning is a major piece but not the whole of the experience. Below is an outline of what you can expect this year, from student learning to family learning, the financial and communal aspects of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the Tzedakah obligation and finally a few hints towards keeping your party meaningful. Attached is a draft checklist summary of these items. When you have checked them off, your child is ready and you probably need a vacation!

Despite our seriousness around the Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience, every child and family has very individual needs and issues. To make this a deep experience, you or your child may need flexibility on our part, or similarly, you may find yourself stretching beyond what you expected to do. Don't hesitate to ask any of us questions, and if you need help or special consideration, we are here for you. Your child is our communal future: within reason we will strive to meet both your family and child's needs.

The Learning Experience:

In the 12 to eighteen months before the Bar or Bat Mitzvah, children will be required to attend Hebrew school/ tutoring a minimum of twice a week. The goals of this period are:

1. To be able to polish and integrate Hebrew decoding skills, **and** to correctly pronounce Siddur Hebrew and Torah without transliteration.
2. To master basic Hebrew Prayer skills, and lead prayers at communal services before the Bar Bat Mitzvah event.
3. To attend services at all major holidays (Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, First Day of Sukkot, Shmini Atzeret, First Day of Passover, Seventh Day of Passover and Shavuot) and at least twice a month six months prior to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. (You can come more if you like!!)
4. To chant a given selection of Torah (between 21 and 40 verses) and the entire Haftarah, and to study its meaning.
5. To write a D'var Torah (speech), sharing with family and community what the student has learned about himself or herself during the year in the context of his or her Torah portion and Jewish living.

If a child has a special learning style or disability, we are happy to differentiate their learning plan in order to minimize student or family stress and maintain the joy and pride a child should feel during the process.

Family Learning

The Bar or Bat Mitzvah year is frequently a year of growth and change for the whole family. As your child enters their adult Jewish journey, you too may find yourself wondering about aspects of the religious experience that you may not have considered in younger adulthood. Often, an adult's continuing emotional and intellectual growth may track a parallel course to the child's: this might be a year to take a class, learn how to chant Torah yourself, take up a new family ritual, or look into your family's Jewish roots. Some families take their first trip to Israel this year.

We want to support you in your own growth: don't hesitate to ask the Rabbi, Dasee or Leah for ideas, support and nurture for your own growth at this time.

Please join your child in attending services, study at home or in developing new at-home rituals or a family Tzedakah project. No matter how old children are, or what they say, they still love and respect you as their first teacher. WE can't ever provide the sweet part of family living that you can: the feeling of having a particular and special Jewish family identity, only known to the dear ones within the family circle. This identity will carry your child into the future, even and especially when he and she are without your actual presence. This is *the* year for you to show your child how much that identity means to you.

Tzedakah Project

Becoming an adult Jew entails learning how to take up responsibilities in the larger community and world. This project should be a mutual project for parents and children. Although children can do many of the major pieces of a Tzedakah project, frequently the child's character or emotional development requires a good deal of practical guidance and support from parents, teachers and family friends. For example, making phone calls is

very difficult for some children- you make them, but let the child do follow up e-mails or face-to-face contacts.

Do choose a project that dovetails with the child's interests but is not beyond their capacities. Do choose a project that is more than check writing, and that takes time and sweat equity to complete.

Ideas of projects range from building a school library in Africa or fundraising for New Orleans post Katrina, to volunteering at the Hebrew School or ARF. Children have donated time and money for endangered species, or collected sports equipment for less fortunate communities. It is all good, or as the song goes – *Zeh tov Me'od!*

The Communal and Financial Piece:

This section in the details about money, but from a larger perspective it is about how the community has promised to nurture you and your child up to and including this year. Without the community's commitment to a Jewish life, there would be no synagogue, no services or school for you and your family. Without the larger Jewish community, there would be no congregation to support you, to kvell whenever your child leads prayers, or write a check for painting the synagogue or buying new carpet. We would all be pretty lonely Jews, and our families' lives greatly impoverished.

However, we are a small schul and need your help in meeting some of the costs of the Bar /Bat Mitzvah. We have kept them reasonable and expect you to tell us if they are more than your family can manage. Help is available with no loss of privacy or dignity to you. Especially in this difficult economy, no request for assistance will go unheard or unmet.

Temple Membership is an absolute requirement for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family.

Below are the fees for the Bar /Bat Mitzvah year:

- Flat rate tutoring fee -- \$500. For this fee, your child will receive at least once a week lessons with the cantor, on the phone or when she is at the synagogue.
- Cantor for Shabbat Morning Service -- \$250
- Kiddush following Shabbat Morning Services -- \$250, or to be provided

on your own (see our suggested menu) with \$100 fee for set-up and clean-up.

- *It is customary for families to sponsor an Oneg Shabbat on the Friday night prior to your son or daughter's bar or bat mitzvah -- \$250 (please refer to Oneg Shabbat menus)*
- *It is customary for families to purchase flowers for the pulpit (bima) - \$75 or provide your own.*
- *It is customary for families to make a contribution to the Temple in honor of their child's bar or bat mitzvah. These funds are applied to the building maintenance, Hebrew school, rabbi's salary, etc.*

The Se'udah Party

We have a few suggestions for the Bar/bat Mitzvah party. Although this is after the synagogue rituals, many families choose (and we urge you) to make a connection between the celebration and Bar/Bat Mitzvah ritual. You might have a poster describing your child's Tzedakah project, or centerpieces that continue or extend the project. Party favors might be part of the project as well. For example, one child who collected sports goods for the needy used soccer balls as her centerpiece. Someone who fundraised for Jewish Guide Dogs for the Blind put dog toys on her table with Guide Dog brochures.

There are rituals that are also a tradition at all Jewish festival meals- the blessing over Challah and Grace after Meals makes a beautiful link between home and synagogue. If your *Se'udah* is a Shabbat lunch, you should begin the meal with Kiddush. Congratulations!! Your child is entering Jewish adulthood!

The Integrated Checklist:

1. Family is members in good standing of Temple Adas Israel.
2. Child is attending Hebrew school 2x week when school is in session, tutoring during school breaks.
3. Family has paid Cantorial-tutoring fee.
4. Child has mastered the following prayers:
 - i. Aleynu
 - ii. Friday night Kiddush
 - iii. Avot of the Amida
 - iv. Shema and V'ahavta
 - v. Shabbat morning Kiddush
 - vi. Adon Olam
 - vii. Ability to recite the blessing of putting on a Tallit
 - viii. Ability to recite the blessing over fruit, crackers and bread
5. Child is able to decode and correctly read the Siddur in Hebrew.
6. Child correctly chants their Torah and Haftorah blessings and portions.
7. Child has prepared an appropriate D'var Torah
8. Child and Family have begun work on Tzedakah project, and have timeline for its completion.
9. Child has attended two services a month beginning six months before their Bar/bat Mitzvah and the major holidays (as specified above) in the year prior to their event.
10. Family/ Parents have participated in some Jewish learning during the year.
11. Family orders flowers for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Shabbat services.
12. Family chooses menus for the Shabbat Oneg Shabbat and/ or

Kiddush.

13. Family pays fees for those meals as appropriate.
14. The simcha after synagogue includes links between the Bar /Bat Mitzvah ritual and learning and the celebration.
15. Cantorial fee for Saturday morning paid.
16. Donation to Synagogue made.

Congratulations and Mazal Tov!!