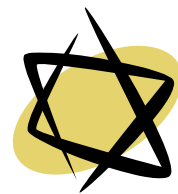


*Hillel Torah Parent
Bar- Bat Mitzvah
Resource Booklet*

בת מצווה-בר מצווה





Mazel Tov on the upcoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah of your child. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah marks a very special moment in your lives. Planning for this simcha is a wonderfully exciting time that can be filled with both anticipation and anxiety. This booklet is meant to serve as a resource once your planning begins. It offers insights and suggestions concerning issues that may impact some of your very important guests: your child's peers.

All sections marked with a ★ should be read and shared with your child at this time, as well as prior to each simcha.

In The Beginning ...



Make sure to clear the date with the school calendar. Please call Morraine Sweer at 773-743-3525 to avoid conflict of two smachot.

A great resource for ideas and suggestions is your child. What your child likes is very likely to be a good indicator of what his/her peers will like. Consider involving your child in planning the simcha to the extent that he/she feels comfortable. To avoid hurt feelings, if you are inviting more than a few close friends, either 1. the entire grade or 2. all children of your child's same gender, are to be invited to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Also, during the weekend, do not invite "most" or half of the kids to a luncheon, and leave out others. We ask that you encourage your child to attend both the Tefillah services and the parties of all of their classmates. This is important for building class unity and spirit, as well as enhancing the simcha of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

★ The school policy is **NO MIXED DANCING**. Please respect this Halacha, as well as the feelings of students who will be uncomfortable attending a mixed dancing affair. The school will not endorse the attendance of our students at any parties that will not follow this rule.

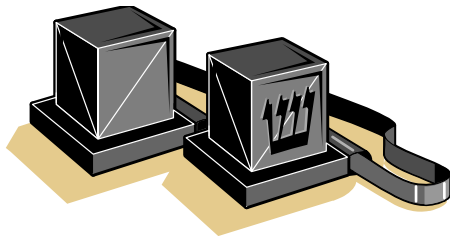


Learning

In preparation for the “learning” aspect (Dvar Torah, Laining, Haftorah, etc.), decide early on who will study with your child: you, a friend of the family, a teacher, your Shul Rabbi, or any combination of these. Take into account the relationship between your child and his/her tutor. This learning relationship often goes on for a long time and is very important. The person you choose should not only be well versed in the subject matter, but should be someone with whom your child is comfortable. Consider not only a one-on-one encounter, but one that includes one or both of the parents learning together with the child and tutor. Boys are



encouraged to “lain” at the school Minyan on the Monday or Thursday before their Bar Mitzvah, as well as mark the day a month earlier, when they put on Tefillin for the first time.



Housing

★ Housing Arrangements

The children usually make these arrangements on their own. While this process generally works well, there have been times when a child has been left out.



It is important that we as parents acknowledge, together, that we must take care of our children, not only physically, but also emotionally. It can be very upsetting to a child when he/she is not included. All parents are encouraged to keep their eyes and ears open regarding the well-being of their child and his/her peers. If accommodations are not available, some families have offered to host children from other neighborhoods for Shabbat Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrations. If you can host a child from the class for Shabbat, please contact the sixth grade parent representatives to add your name to the hosts’ list.



Note to parents of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah:

Families who host your child’s friends are important partners in your simcha. It is important for them to know your simcha’s schedule so that they can provide meals, when necessary, supervision, etc. for the time periods when the children are not occupied by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah activities. Also, consider calling or sending a note to the hosting families thanking them for hosting the children.



★ Note to Hosting Families:

Please make every effort to have the children at shul on time for davening and to hear their friend's laining, speech, etc. Also remind them of appropriate behavior at shul. On Friday nights and Shabbat afternoon children often socialize informally by visiting and walking from house to house. At these times it is important that you know where the children are going. Chaperoning the walk is imperative to ensure each child's safety. When they are in your home, make sure that appropriate activity and adequate supervision is provided at all times.

★ At Shul

Before a child participates as a guest at a Bar/Bat Mitzvah of a friend, it is imperative that parents take time to discuss in detail appropriate behavior for shul and the party. Children are expected to stay in shul throughout the services, Torah reading, and speeches. They are to actively participate in the davening, avoid talking or playing so they properly represent their family and school, and do not disrupt the simcha.

Remind your child that they are not only guests of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah child, but also represent the school in public. Their behavior should make us all proud. You may wish to ask friends of the family to keep an eye on the children and to patrol the halls outside the sanctuary to ensure that they are not "hanging out" there.



The Kiddush or Luncheon

Space: It is vital that space be adequate for the number of guests. Shoving and fighting can erupt if children feel they are being too crowded.

★ **Food:** Needless to say all food should meet kashrut guidelines. Please be aware of the possibility of children's special needs – cholov yisroel, allergies, etc. Please speak to your child in advance about the importance of waiting to hear Kiddush from the Rabbi before starting to eat, as well as not pushing or grabbing for food. As hosts, think about serving "kid food" to the children, because they don't necessarily like fancy adult food. Consider serving them the types of food they'll happily eat. Ask your child and his/her friends for their suggestions. **We strongly advise vigilant supervision over access to alcoholic beverages at the Kiddush table!**



Speeches: Limiting the number and length of speeches helps curb children's talking and restless behavior. If you are having a luncheon, consider having the speeches at the beginning of the luncheon when children are most attentive, or spread them out throughout the meal.



Shabbat Afternoon Activities

Parents have found that the children enjoy having a Shabbat afternoon activity and/or a Seuda Shlishit for their friends. This need not be extravagant or overly burdensome.

If it is too difficult to add yet another event to an already busy and exciting day, consider exchanging hosting duties with the family of another child in the class: you host an activity or Seuda Shlishit for them on the Shabbat of their Simcha and they in turn do the same for you.

Instead of having a full meal at this time, consider serving a light meal.



Bnei Akiva can be a resource for afternoon. Please call the Lishka at (847) 329-8682 to make arrangements. The children enjoy preparing and presenting songs and skits for each other.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah is given kavod and positive attention by his peers, while the children find the skits meaningful and entertaining. Adults, on the other hand, are not always an enthusiastic audience for this type of entertainment; therefore, an excellent time for the presentation of such songs and skits could be while the children are together at the afternoon activity or Seuda Shlishit.



A Bar/Bat Mitzvah Party

If you choose to have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah party, set a time frame with a reasonable start and finish. Parents should either know in advance what time children are to be picked up or know that the children will call when ready for pick-up. If parents are to await a call, make sure a telephone is available at the party location. The first option of having a set pick-up time avoids having children "hanging around" unsupervised while waiting for pick-up.



Make sure the activities are age-appropriate and of interest to your child and his/her peers. (Consider asking your child for his/her input and suggestions.)

Make certain that the children are adequately supervised and kept interested and involved in the activities. Depending on the type of party, consider hiring high school or Bnei Akiva students to help supervise the children and keep them involved. Parents have reported that this works especially well with Simcha dancing. If you choose to use the services of a D.J., please advise him of the **No Mixed Dancing Policy** of the school.



Seat some of your friends, (parents) who are familiar with the children in the class near the children's tables. Ask them in advance to keep an eye on those tables and "shush" them if necessary. Also consider spreading children's tables out rather than having them all together in the same area.

Problems can occur during "down time" – e.g., when guests are first arriving, while children are waiting to be served, etc. As you plan the party, mentally picture the event step by step, identifying any points of potential "down time". Try to fill these time slots with some type of supervised, engaging activity.

Consider the best way to serve the food you have chosen: buffet-style, served at the table, etc. If you are serving buffet-style, take into account that children often hesitate to make their way to the food on a table surrounded by adults, even it means missing out on the meal. An easy solution is to serve the children from a separate buffet table.

After Your Simcha

Please inform one of us about the children's behavior and any tips for future smachot. In this way, school will keep track of problems and take action if necessary.

Giving children a place and meaningful activity at the simcha makes them feel that they are important. When children are treated with respect and their needs are addressed, they will respond with respect. Children rise to the occasion; just give them the opportunity.

We hope that you view this material as a "work in progress" and contribute to its development. If you have thoughts on this subject, relevant issues to consider, pitfalls to avoid, planning tips, success stories – we would like to hear from you and incorporate your ideas and suggestions into future editions of this booklet.

Rabbi Dr. Yaacov Dvorin
Principal

Mrs. Helene Levine Mrs. Tamar Friedman
Educational Directors

A yasher koach goes to previous classes and the parent committees who have contributed to the ongoing development of this resource booklet.

