



CONGREGATION
SONS of ISRAEL
Celebrating 120 Years of Community

Mazal Tov! You are having a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Now what?



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Introduction:

It is hard to believe that your child will soon become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Mazal Tov! Congregation Sons of Israel wants this time in your and your child's life to be one of growth, excitement, and a positive learning experience. We hope that this milestone will be a beautiful event for your family and for the synagogue.

A mitzvah is a deed that connects us to each other, to God, to strangers, and to our communities. To become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah means to become responsible for fulfilling mitzvot for the rest of life. The Torah is one source of mitzvot (the plural of mitzvah). A girl becomes a Bat Mitzvah one day after her twelfth Hebrew birthday and a boy becomes a Bar Mitzvah one day after his Hebrew thirteenth birthday. It happens automatically. By recognizing this life cycle in the synagogue we take an ordinary moment and make a sacred ritual out of it. All dates should be decided by the family and the rabbi.

Mitzvah project: We believe that students should prepare for a lifetime of taking on mitzvot. Your child will choose a mitzvah project to demonstrate an example of taking on a new mitzvah and connecting with the community. The mitzvah project will be chosen in consultation and with the support of the rabbi.

What will my child do?

We want each child to develop fully according to his or her abilities. We strive for our children to be challenged without feeling overwhelmed. The rabbi and the hazzan will work with the family and the child to determine what the child should lead. Examples of what your child can do:

Kiddush - Blessing over the wine and Shabbat sanctity
Torah Service - Taking out and returning the Torah to the Ark
Shacharit - the morning service
Birkot HaTorah - Torah blessings
Birkot Haftarah - Haftarah blessings
Haftarah - Reading from the Prophets
Maftir - the conclusion of the Torah readings
Musaf - the last service of the morning

The child and family should plan on attending and participating in Friday night and Saturday morning services.

Rabbi's Role - The rabbi will meet with the family to go over the logistics and the choreography of the service. The rabbi will also meet with the student to work on his or her D'var Torah together.

Hazzan's Role - The Hazzan will tutor students in preparation for their mitzvah about six months in advance. He will help with the chanting of prayers, the Haftarah, and the Torah readings. Meetings and compensation are set up between the family and the Hazzan.

Education: We ask that your child have at least 5 years of Jewish education prior to their B'nei Mitzvah. It is important that your child feel connected to the experience through Jewish learning.

Honors: On the day of the mitzvah your family has the option of handing out ceremony honors. Two aliyot (not including the Cohan/Levi aliyot if you do not have people who fit that category) are reserved for the congregation. The remaining honors are used for people celebrating or marking something in the congregation and may not be used for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Only Jewish guests may get called up to the Torah. Other honors may be fulfilled by anyone. Please see attached Honors sheet. This sheet should be returned to the office at least two weeks before the Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

Kiddush: The family has the opportunity to sponsor or co-sponsor kiddush (with sisterhood) that day for the entire community. Please see attached list for kosher caterers. All food must be kosher, approved by the rabbi, and delivered prior to Shabbat. Food can be warmed on Shabbat, but not cooked on Shabbat.

Synagogue Decorum:

1. We pride ourselves on welcoming everyone in whatever fashion styles they are exploring. However, not everything goes. Jeans, sneakers, low-cut dresses, exposed mid-riffs, bare backs and shoulders are not part of our fashion code at the synagogue. Style is a personal preference as long as dignity and modesty are taken into consideration.
2. Men, and women who choose to do so, should wear a kippah while in the synagogue service. Women who choose not to wear a kippah should still cover their head while on the bima as an outward expression of Jewish identity and reverence for God.
3. We do not encourage gift giving in the synagogue. Please ask guests to give gifts at another time.
4. There is no photography or videography on Shabbat. You are welcome to take pictures or video during the week if you choose to do so. Photography should not take place on the Friday of the event as the synagogue will get cleaned and set up then.
5. There is a custom of tossing wrapped, soft sweets on the bima in celebration. Please plan on providing jelly (Starkiss), kosher candies to the community.
6. You may want to buy flowers for the bima. This is not necessary. It is a nice touch if you decide to do this.

7. All synagogue fees and balances must be paid prior to the mitzvah.
8. Written pamphlets to be distributed to guests must be approved by the rabbi.
9. It is a beautiful gift for parents, grandparents, or friends to give a tallit and tefillin to your child. Children are expected to wear a tallit during the Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

We are looking forward to sharing this special moment with you and your child. Our community wants to welcome you during this beautiful time. Please do not hesitate to ask questions and to arrange meetings with the hazzan and/or rabbi.