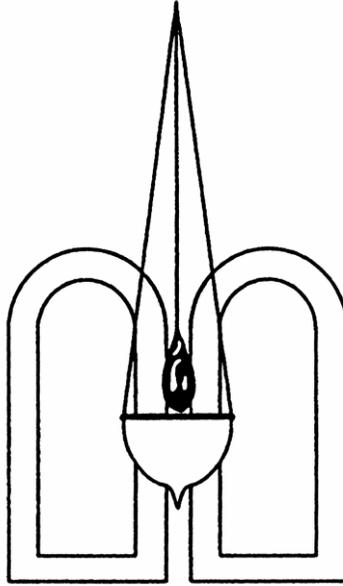


Temple Beth David Guide to Bar/Bat Mitzvah



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Mazel Tov! We are delighted that you, as a family, have chosen to embark on the exciting journey towards Bar or Bat Mitzvah! The following guide is designed to help you navigate the course.

What is a Bar or Bat Mitzvah?

According to the Mishna (compiled around 100 C.E.), when a boy turns the age of thirteen years and one day, or a girl reaches the age of twelve years, six months, and one day, he or she automatically becomes responsible for the observance of the Mitzvot (biblical and rabbinic commandments). Literally, Bar or Bat Mitzvah means, "Son or Daughter of the Commandments."

Notice, there is no mention of leading a service, chanting from the Torah, or, even, being able to read Hebrew. In other words, just being born and/or raised as a Jew and turning 13 qualifies you to become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. We point this out because we want you to understand that the ritual itself is not the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The ceremony is the means through which a young person expresses his or her commitment to becoming a Jewish adult. It is the process of preparation, and the life that is lived after the Bar or Bat Mitzvah, that matters most.

The ceremony marking the occasion of Bar or Bat Mitzvah, though not ancient, is at least 300 years old! Although the form of the ceremony has changed in many ways since its inception several key aspects of the rituals have stayed the same. More on this soon!

It's important to understand that there is no rush to have a Bar or Bat Mitzvah right when you turn 13 years old. Some of you may not be spiritually or mentally ready to have a Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony. The date might be an inconvenient time to celebrate. We support, and even recommend, that you plan the ceremony for a time that reflects your need and the need of your family.

Of course, in its most important sense, a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a Jewish rite of passage that provides you, your family, and community with the opportunity to rejoice in your growth as a "son or daughter" of our tradition entering Jewish adulthood.

So, if becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah doesn't require anything, are there expectations?

Just because there are no requirements for becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, other than being born or raised Jewish and turning 13, it doesn't mean that there aren't expectations. Though we don't expect you to spend three days by yourself in the forest, the Jewish rite of passage is a dramatic commitment.

Every synagogue community has its own set of criteria for what constitutes a "Kosher" Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Even still, the expectations, especially in congregations such as ours, usually share many similarities. It's useful to consider how these expectations came about.

Most Reform (and Conservative) congregations derive their expectations from three sources:

1. The inherited, existing norms of Orthodox practice (e.g., chanting selections from the Torah; reciting the blessings before and after the reading of the Torah or presenting a *D'var Torah*)
2. The inherited, existing norms that have evolved in the mainstream, liberal Jewish world, including innovations that have been added in recent decades (e.g. leading significant parts of the prayer service; passing the Torah on the Bimah from parent to child; doing a "Mitzvah Project")
3. The specific expectations of the individual community (e.g., a Bar or Bat Mitzvah agrees to attend Haskalah as part of their commitment to their Jewish education; preparing responses to prompts that are shared at the service).

We point this out because we want you to know how and why we do what we do. Ritual practices are constantly evolving and as a congregation that values creativity, as well as tradition, we encourage your involvement in the process. It is our intention to empower you to contribute ideas and energy so that the process and ceremony are relevant and meaningful.

You could, of course, have a very simple, independent Bar or Bat Mitzvah with just your family and friends, save lots of money, even skip the ritual, or just have a smashing party. But then you wouldn't have the benefit of reading this pamphlet, or experiencing the amazing sense of connection that being part of a Jewish community such as ours provides.

OUTLINE OF B'NAI MITZVAH EXPECTATIONS:

1. Regular Attendance at Religious School (or, in limited situations, working with an outside mentor)
2. Regular Attendance at Hebrew School (or, in limited situations, working with an outside mentor)
3. Ability to chant and read selections of the Friday evening service
4. Ability to chant and read selections from the Shabbat morning or afternoon service
5. Attendance at various meetings with Cantor and Rabbi beginning eight months prior to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony date
6. Attendance at weekly meetings with a B'nai Mitzvah mentor for a period of approximately five months prior to the ceremony date
7. Daily practice of assignments for a minimum of 15 minutes
8. Ability to chant or read selections from the Torah (and Haftarah)
9. Ability to compose and present a *D'var Torah*.
10. Completion, or semi-completion, of a "Mitzvah Project"
11. Attendance at a minimum of ten Friday evening and/or Saturday morning or afternoon services in the year prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony
12. A commitment to continuing religious education by attending Haskalah and Confirmation class.
13. If applicable, attendance at the B'nai Mitzvah Shabbaton
14. Fulfillment of the "Unique Expression of Jewish Commitment" assignment (Optional)
15. A joyful attitude

PREPARATION TIMETABLE FOR *BAR/BAT MITZVAH*

<u>Completion date:</u>	<u>Task</u>
12-18 Months	Attend orientation. Determine date and type of service (Friday evening, Saturday morning or Saturday afternoon).
8 Months	Meet with Cantor (together with parents) for a one-on-one orientation. Receive CD with all prayers to be learned Meet with Rabbi to select Torah (and <i>Haftarah</i>) and discuss ideas for a Mitzvah project.
6 Months	Begin meeting with B/M mentor. Meet with Cantor to ensure that major prayers are fluently read and/or sung. Begin attending and participating at Sabbath services.
3 Months	Meet with Rabbi to develop ideas for a D'var Torah and determine Mitzvah project. Meet with Cantor to review prayers.
2 Months	Present first draft of D'var Torah to mentor and Rabbi. Begin work on Mitzvah project Meet with Cantor to review prayers and evaluate progress on Torah (and Haftarah) portion.
1 Month	Present final draft of D'var Torah to mentor and Rabbi. Meet with Cantor to demonstrate completion of Torah and Haftarah portions. Provide mentor with list of Aliyah honors. Present draft of B/M brochure to Rabbi and Cantor for review.
2 Weeks	Meet with Rabbi and/or Cantor for a walk-through rehearsal.

IN THE BEGINNING: SELECTING A DATE

You've decided that your child will have a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. That was the easiest decision you'll make for the next six months. The first thing you'll want to consider is the date. Your child must be at least 13 years old to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Temple Beth David. Do you want the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to be close to your child's birthday or do you want to select a date that is the most convenient for your family (immediate and out-of-town) to attend? Only you can assess the importance of any particular date. The temple, the Rabbi, and Cantor will allow flexibility in this area. Once you've decided on the date and the Torah portion, you're ready for the next set of decisions.

Another important consideration is whether to have the occasion in the morning or afternoon. Whereas a morning is more "traditional," an afternoon service allows for an easier transition to the party following the service. The afternoon ceremony also usually includes Havdalah, the ritual that ends Shabbat and includes a multi-wicked candle, spices, wine and a pleasant prayer/song. Another option is to hold the service on a Friday evening. This is a good way to engage the entire community in the celebration and may be a more economical choice.

INITIAL CONSULTATION WITH RABBI AND CANTOR

Once the date is selected, an orientation with Cantor Schwartz and Rabbi Lachtman will be arranged. Cantor will assess your prayer skills and review the list of expectations; he will also give you a CD, Torah portion booklet, and an annotated service booklet with both the evening and afternoon (or morning) services. Rabbi will meet with you to discuss the themes of your Torah portion and help you determine which verses you will be chanting. He will also discuss your Mitzvah project with you.

More importantly, these initial meetings, and the ones that follow them, are about getting to know one another, learn about your family, discuss your personal interests, and generate excitement about this process.

WORK WITH B'NAI MITZVAH MENTOR

Approximately six months prior to your Bar or Bat Mitzvah you will begin meeting weekly, one-on-one, with a mentor. She or he will help you prepare to chant your individual Torah (and Haftarah) portion, work with you to understand the Hebrew, and guide you in writing your D'var Torah. Typically, a total of at least,

twenty-two, 45 minute sessions are needed in order to properly prepare for participation in the ceremony.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah training requires an investment of time, effort and study. A student ought to spend **15-30 minutes daily** to adequately master the material. Parents ought to take an active role in seeing that the material is studied. Keeping extra curricular activities to a minimum is encouraged during this intensive course of study.

D'VAR TORAH

One of the oldest components of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony is the sharing of insights about the weekly Torah portion. The *D'var Torah*, literally, "Word of Torah," is a sacred opportunity to move and inspire your family, friends, and community. Working closely with your mentor, Rabbi, and Cantor, you will construct a speech that incorporates the Torah text, provides insights from other commentaries, and reflects your own ideas and heartfelt perspectives. The speech itself lasts about five to seven minutes and also includes ideas related to your Mitzvah project, Jewish education, family, community, what becoming a Bar Mitzvah means to you, and/or your sense of gratitude to God.

MITZVAH PROJECT

The word Mitzvah itself means "commandment;" but it implies more. "Mitzvah means doing something for someone else; feeling communal solidarity by imitating God's concern for the world," author Moshe Waldoks wrote. The Mitzvah project- an relatively recent innovation to B'nai Mitzvah- provides you with an opportunity to express your values and make a difference in the world. Guided by a mentor and Rabbi, you will identify a cause (e.g. poverty, ignorance, abuse), develop a plan, and follow through on a project that puts your values into action.

ATTENDANCE AT SERVICES

Attendance at, and participation in, Shabbat services prior to becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a way of not only becoming comfortable with the service and gaining self-confidence; it also serves to deepen your connection to God, family, members of the congregational family, the Rabbi, and Cantor. Families are expected to attend **at least ten services** in the year preceding the child's Bar/Bat/Mitzvah. This includes attending other B'nai Mitzvah services together to become familiar with the rituals of the ceremony.

FINDING AND EXPRESSING YOUR UNIQUE VOICE

It's interesting that the primary vehicle our tradition has prescribed for expressing the commitment to becoming a Jewish adult is the voice. Whether it be through chanting, reading, or delivering a D'var Torah, the voice is the primary means through which a traditional Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony occurs. To assist you in effectively using your voice, your mentor and Cantor Schwartz will work with you to use your voice as fully as possible whether it be by using your breath more effectively, engaging your body, or listening to pitches more intently.

Obviously, not every one is skillful at using their voice. Furthermore, chanting verses or reading a speech may not, indeed, sufficiently communicate your Jewish commitments. And although a Mitzvah project may allow you to put your values into action, it also may fall short in providing you with a means to express your unique "voice."

As a congregation that highly values each individual's Jewish journey we want to provide you with the opportunity to express your individual interests and talents with our community. By identifying your unique gifts and developing a plan to share them in a meaningful way, we all benefit. Some examples of this may include: designing your own Talit, doing the graphics for your invitation, dancing to one of the prayers, or composing a melody to a verse from your Torah portion.

"Finding and Expressing Your Unique Voice" will be worked on during the B'nai Mitzvah Shabbaton and is still being developed as a part of the ritual. It is currently an optional part of the B'nai Mitzvah curriculum.

B/M SHABBATON

In order to better acquaint you and your family with the rituals, meanings, and details of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah, and develop a greater sense of community with other families celebrating at our congregation, we are in the process of designing a half-day workshop on a Saturday morning in the year prior to students' B'nai Mitzvah. The Shabbaton, to be attended by student and both parents, will likely include much of the following:

1. An overview of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony
2. How to prepare spiritually for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah
3. An opportunity to connect with our congregational family and its history
4. A *D'var Torah* writing workshop
5. Developing a Mitzvah Project workshop
6. Identifying Your "Unique Voice" (see above)
7. The opportunity to ask questions

ALIYOT

An *Aliyah* is an honor given to Jewish family members and friends in recognition of a person's significance or importance to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. It means "going up" to the *bima* and reciting the blessings before and after the Torah reading. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah usually reads the Torah portion. A knowledgeable Jewish member or guest of the family (if arranged early enough with the Rabbi and Cantor) can chant additional Torah reading.

The persons honored with an *aliyah* should be able to read or chant the blessings. It can be a meaningful family project to make recordings and send the blessings out to different family members or friends who will be honored. Contact the Cantor if you require a copy of the Torah blessings.

PARTICIPATION OF FAMILY AND GUESTS

Some families members like to say a few words to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah as part of the ceremony. Though it is not mandatory, it is meaningful when parents and siblings share their prayers and hopes for the child during the service.

Other ways for family and/or friends to participate include: presenting the Talit (if you choose to wear one), blessing the Shabbat candles (at Friday evening's service), holding the ritual items during Havdalah (at an afternoon service), lifting the Torah (*Hakafah*), singing a prayer or song as part of the service, reading a poem, leading a responsive reading, or chanting an Aliyah. Cantor Schwartz and/or Rabbi Lachtman will discuss this with you further in the month preceding the ceremony.

PAYMENT

A Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee of \$350 will be billed to each family and is due 4 months prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. This fee entitles you to the following:

1. Use of the sanctuary for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony.
2. Use of the sanctuary for photography prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah (must be coordinated with the office staff during regular business hours.)
3. Multiple meetings and conversations with Cantor and Rabbi
4. Materials, including: Torah Portion booklet, CD recording of prayers, annotated service booklet, service outlines, guides to writing D'var Torah, guide to writing "What I Stand For" and Original Prayer, TBD Guide to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, and Torah Blessing sheet for relatives
5. Assistance in speech preparation with Rabbi and Cantor.
6. Bar/Bat Mitzvah rehearsal(s) with Cantor and Rabbi.
7. Assistance with the preparation and proofreading of a service pamphlet (if you choose to prepare one)
8. Coordination with the mentor to discuss progress, etc.
9. Bar/Bat Mitzvah family workshops/Shabbaton.

General synagogue fees (such as dues and other obligations) must be up-to-date at least four months prior to the ceremony.

This fee does not include meetings with the mentor. Temple Beth David's mentor, Sondra Dreshner is paid directly for her services at an hourly rate of \$50 per hour. As stated above, students generally require approximately twenty-one, 45-minute sessions to master their individual portions and write a D'var Torah. (22 sessions x 45 minutes equals 16.5 hours x \$50 which totals \$825).

You are not required to work with Morah Dreshner. If you choose to work with a different mentor, he or she must first be approved to work with your son or daughter by Cantor and/or Rabbi. There will also be an additional administration fee of \$75 if you choose to work with an outside mentor.

Please note: If a student practices daily, as expected, 22 sessions will be enough to master the material. Rabbi and Cantor assess each student prior to assigning them their portion and though the length of each portion may vary from student to student, the approximate time needed to prepare does not. **If a Bar or Bat Mitzvah student does not practice consistently, more than 22 sessions may be required. The expense for this will be the parents' responsibility.** Similarly, if the student wishes to chant more than the assigned verses, more than 22 meetings with the mentor may also be necessary.

Traditionally a donation is made to the temple in the child's honor. It is also customary make a contribution to the Rabbi and Cantor discretionary fund.

Other Important Information

INVITATIONS

Invitations to family and friends should be sent six to eight weeks ahead so you can plan accordingly. In order to support your connection to our congregational family, we urge you to **please invite all your classmates from Hebrew and Religious School to the entire Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration.** (At the very least, please invite all classmates to the ceremony). It is customary to invite the Temple President, Sisterhood and Men's Club presidents, and your child's Religious School teachers to the ceremony, as well.

HOSTING AN ONEG SHABBAT

Oneg literally means "joy" but is associated most with Shabbat and eating! All families are required to sponsor the Oneg Shabbat the Friday night before a Saturday Bar/Bat Mitzvah. There are four ways to sponsor an Oneg Shabbat:

Option One (Complete Self Sufficiency): You are in total control. You supply everything needed for the Oneg including food, set up, serving, and clean up. Instructions are outlined in the "Preparation for an Oneg Shabbat" section of this handbook.

Option Two (Assisted Oneg 1): You supply the food items for the Oneg Shabbat and pay for the services of a temple provided helper to set up, serve and clean up. The cost is \$60 for a small Oneg (50 people or less). Larger crowds may require paying for an additional helper. Tablecloths are also available through Sisterhood at an additional charge.

Option Three (Assisted Oneg 2): You pay TBD \$130 to provide the kitchen helper and the basic supplies and sweets for the Oneg Shabbat. Onegs larger than fifty persons will have a higher cost. Please contact office to discuss additional charges.

Option Four (Catered Oneg): You hire a caterer. They will work with you as planners to create your event, set up and clean up, stress free. Our in-house caterer is Loretta Vigil of Chefelle and can be contacted at 888-409-chef (2433) or www.chefelle.com.

There is an additional cleaning charge if the temple tablecloths are used. Please contact the Temple office to discuss this.

SERVICE PAMPHLET/BROCHURE

Service pamphlets (which are optional) are a great way to provide useful and fun information to your guests. It may include: a service outline, a list of service participants, photographs, poems, special messages, a glossary, or a copy of the Torah and Haftarah portion. Many families in our congregation have created nice looking brochures in the past and would be happy to share their templates with you. Please let Cantor or Rabbi know if you need a referral.

In order to make sure that what you print is accurate, we urge to have Rabbi and Cantor proofread your service pamphlet prior to printing them. Please do so in a timely manner.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Pictures are wonderful keepsakes. If you would like to make arrangements for formal pictures, please coordinate with the temple office. It is requested that no flash pictures be taken during the service. Video photography is welcome.

Please make sure the photographer is as unobtrusive as possible.

BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENT

In order to share the *Simcha* (joyous occasion) with our congregation, we request that you provide an invitation, biographical sketch and photograph with us to be shared with the community. This will be sent as a separate e-mail notice or put into *David's Word*, our bimonthly newsletter. (*David's Word* is currently not in print. This must be done six weeks before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

MUSIC

We encourage members of the family to enhance the service by participating musically. You are also welcome to hire additional musicians for the Friday evening and/or Shabbat morning or afternoon service. In all cases, Cantor Schwartz must be consulted about this at least two months prior to the service.

FLOWERS/PLANTERS

You will be responsible for two bima flower arrangements or other type of floral arrangement. They can be moved into the social hall for added use at the Oneg Shabbat. Planters are a good choice because they can be replanted and become something of a keepsake.

SYNAGOGUE GIFTS

Honoring your child on this special occasion with a permanent reminder of the *Simcha* at the temple is always appropriate. A donation to a specific fund are wonderful ways of expressing your pride in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's accomplishment. It is also customary to make a donation to the Rabbi and Cantor's discretionary fund.

PREPARATION FOR AN ONEG SHABBAT

Please plan to arrive to Temple Beth David **at least** fifteen minutes before the service is scheduled to begin. If you would like to deliver items for the Oneg Shabbat prior to Friday night, it is requested that you make arrangements with the office staff to drop items off during regular business hours.

When you determine approximately how many guests and congregants will be attending services the evening of your celebration, you will need to provide enough of the following basic food items:

Challah -one to two unsliced, available at Noah's, Whole Foods, Monrovia Bakery and Pavilions. Order ahead.

Cream Cheese-large size; soft kind is easiest.

Jelly-one to two 8 ounce jars.

Cake, cookies, fruit, nuts, etc.-Whatever treats you care to supply. You'll find it easiest to stick with foods that do not require utensils.

Kosher Wine-1 or 2 bottles of Manischewitz, Carmel or any other sweet wine for Kiddush to be poured into individual 1 ounce cups.

Juice or Punch-at least 2 gallons.

Tea and Decaffeinated coffee-There is often coffee and basic tea bags in stock in the kitchen. Check with the Oneg chairperson to determine whether or not additional supplies are needed. If you prefer to use herbal tea, you will need to provide it.

Creamer, Sugar and Sugar Substitute- There are usually enough of these items in the Sisterhood cabinet. Half & Half or milk is preferable to creamer. Check with office to determine whether or not additional supplies are needed.

Paper Goods-Unless you want to use special colors, the temple will provide the paper goods.

If you are hosting an Oneg Shabbat for a Family Night or other special service you should plan for additional food since then services are generally well attended. A large sheet cake decorated for the occasion and/or a fruit platter would be attractive and enable you to serve large numbers of guests more easily.

A kiddush cup, challah cover, cutting board and knife are available but you may wish to bring your own from home. Sisterhood has tablecloths available for an additional fee (to cover cleaning costs).

If you would like the custodian to set up the tables and chairs for you, you will need to provide him with a diagram to follow. Be sure to provide at least one week's notice. On your diagram, place the date and time that you will need the set up. The diagram should be provided to the office staff no later than the 10 days before the service.

If deliveries are to be made to the temple for the *simcha*, be sure to coordinate the times with the office staff. If you need to come to temple to supervise, set up and make other arrangements, check that someone will be available to open the facilities. The temple office is open from 12:00-4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The temple office will be more than happy to assist you in your plans and answer any questions you might have. Don't wait until the last minute to ask!

SHABBAT DINNER

Some families choose to provide a Shabbat dinner for immediate family, out of town guests, etc., usually a smaller, more intimate evening than the reception will be. This can be done at a local restaurant, or can be hosted here at the Temple with our caterer, ***Chefelle***. For information and prices, please contact the temple office.

THE WORRY FREE BAR/BAT MITZVAH

(Prepared by Cantor Mimi Haselkorn)

The Party

I. In The Beginning

- A. Plan ahead.
 - 1. Get the date.
 - 2. Determine your budget.
 - a. Budget (and personal taste) dictates style and size of the party.
 - b. Select the time of the party (Friday Oneg, Saturday luncheon, Havdalah dinner, etc.).
- B. Be in agreement
 - 1. Family harmony is important.
 - 2. Just whose party is this anyway?

II. The Search

- A. A Party place
 - 1. Where to look.
 - 2. When to look.

III. Good Help Is Hard To Find

- A. Who do you need to hire?
- B. How do you decide?
- C. Can you find it all yourself?

IV. Keeping Your Perspective, Sense of Humor and Dignity Intact

- A. That's what friends are for.

DETERMINE YOUR BUDGET

Both financial and personal considerations will play a major role in deciding the type of party you want to have. Unless you are in the delightful position of not having to worry about expenses, a budget is a very important thing. As the big day draws nearer, unexpected expenses will add up. You don't want to worry about whether you can afford that one more guest or one more bottle of champagne. There is an entire spectrum of suitable celebrations following a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Choose one you feel comfortable with, remembering of course that you will be the one left with not only the bill, but also warm, lasting memories. Families should not incur excessive financial obligations to provide an extravagant reception or party.

BE IN AGREEMENT

When making the decision as to what kind of party to have, talk with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child! While you may not agree as to what is cool, his or her feelings are

very important in this matter. The family needs to reach an agreement together as to when, where, and what kind of party is desired. Compromise may be necessary. Perhaps just explaining your expectations, limitations, and desires to your child may be all that's necessary to bring everyone together in the decision-making process. Remember, compromise works both ways. After all, this is not your Bar/Bat Mitzvah, it is your child's and he/she needs to have a hand in decisions, and has to know that his/her views are important too. An elaborate party is not always necessary, affordable, or appropriate. Some families have very simple lunches or dinners, or just an Oneg after a Friday night service.

A short word to the party-wise here, if your social conscience is bothering you by the thought that you are being too social and not conscious enough of the problems in the world surrounding your family, good for you! Many families are now taking at least five percent of the cost of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and donating it to a favorite charity. Sharing your joy in your child's accomplishments with those who are hungry and in need can bring more than a soothed conscience, it teaches your child another important aspect of Judaism (and perhaps sets the tone for a lifetime of awareness). Donations of 5% of your party and catering fees to the Temple Beth David Food Bank or your favorite charity are important reminders of our obligation to share our good fortune with others.

THE SEARCH

Here in the San Gabriel Valley there are many suitable places to hold the Bar/Bat Mitzvah party. Begin by looking close to home. How about Temple Beth David? Our social hall will hold about 130 people comfortably seated at round tables, including a small dance floor. The outside patio can be utilized certain times of the year as can the lobby area.

If you plan to use the temple social hall, you must fill out a facilities rental form and there is a charge; if you do not plan on using our in-house caterer, Chefelle, you will be required to pay a charge to have a staff person here to monitor the kitchen use.

If you want or need a larger facility, or just a different atmosphere, the following are a few suggestions:

Private clubs (faculty, etc.)	Country clubs
Restaurants	Halls (Elks, Odd Fellows, etc.)
Hotel banquet rooms	Parks and recreational facilities
Private homes	

Remember, many facilities will book up to a year before the event, so you need to plan in advance to get your choice of locations.

Be aware that if you choose a site for your party that does not have a kitchen or its own catering department, you will have to hire a caterer, possibly bring in your own tables and chairs, etc. This generally does not pose any great problem, but it does mean that there will be more people for you to deal with and more expense.

If you are planning to serve any alcoholic beverages, you should also inquire as to the policy of the place you have booked. Can you bring in your own liquor? What will they charge to serve your liquor as compared to their own?

WHO DO YOU NEED TO HIRE?

If you have elected to have a large Oneg Shabbat at temple, you may want to hire a caterer to provide the food. If you choose to have someone come in and do all the set up and clean up, and provide the food, then you truly will be able to enjoy the evening along with your guests. This is however, the most expensive route to go, and you should weigh the costs compared to the convenience. Another way to cut down on your personal workload is to bring in already prepared food from a deli or bakery, usually they are already arranged attractively on platters and are ready to set out. Then you may want to hire a clean up person only. The Sisterhood is extremely helpful in getting names for you of people who will do set up and clean up. Another option is for you to do the entire Oneg yourself. There is real satisfaction in baking, displaying and serving your Oneg yourself. However you should keep in mind the added pressure this puts on you at a time when you may need all the composure possible.

If you decide to have a party at a hotel, banquet hall, or restaurant, you have no need for a caterer. However, if you've chosen a facility that does not provide food and service, you will need to find yourself a good caterer.

How you decide whom to hire is a prime question, not only for a caterer, but for the photographer, the music or entertainment, the florist, the rental company, and if necessary, the party coordinator.

If you hire a party coordinator, you have chosen the easiest route to take and the most costly. That person will guide you in all further selections. Sometimes the coordinator will have a specific business they want you to use in all the categories of services. Other times the coordinator will give you a few names for you to choose from. In both cases, if you trust your Coordinator, you can feel at ease with any of the people he/she recommends, as this is his/her business. So, how do you choose a party coordinator? Ask around, ask friends who have been through the process, look in the yellow pages and call a few people. It's amazing how much you can learn about a person by the way they speak to you

on the phone and respond to your various questions. Ask for references. Another way to find some help is if you have one service person that you know and trust, like a florist that you have used in the past and will want to use for this occasion. Ask them if they know a reliable party coordinator, or if they, by chance, do it themselves. Many times people in the business know enough about all the related businesses and can give you some very helpful leads.

If you have decided to hire each service business individually, the way to go about it is the same as the coordinator. Ask people you know and trust to make recommendations, make phone calls, and follow your instincts. If you speak to a photographer who doesn't know what a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is, chances are he/she won't know when the important moments will be and when to take the must-have pictures. Look for a professional approach in all the people you consider hiring. Look for experience, understanding of the event, appropriate suggestions and creativity in presentations. Ask for an estimate in writing and after making your selection, make sure you have a written contract. Read the fine print and ask questions like, what happens if this person does not live up their end of the bargain? Is there any guarantee? Are there any hidden costs, like rental fees or damage control fees? If so, how much are they and when do they apply? Once you have made your selection and have booked all the various service people, you can relax for a while and bask in the knowledge that the hard part is done.

CAN YOU DO IT ALL YOURSELF?

Can you make the invitations, cook the food, serve it and clean up, decorate the room, take the pictures, play the music, bake and serve the cake, be hostess and make sure all the guests have a good time and live to tell about it? Hah! If you can then you'll go down in history. The trick is to know your limitations. Everyone needs some help when undertaking a project like the Bar/Bat Mitzvah party, even if it's small and you're super-organized. Enjoy the opportunity to work with others and let some professionals help you.

KEEPING YOUR PERSPECTIVE, SENSE OF HUMOR AND DIGNITY INTACT

It's more important than anything else that, after the party is over, you and your family are still on speaking terms and can look back with a happy and warm feeling of that big day. You must all keep your sense of humor and if some things don't turn out just the way you planned, O.K. Make the best of it. Take a long walk together, or do anything to get away from party planning sometime close to your date, and you'll regain any sense of perspective that you may have lost in the preceding few weeks.

Remember, you are not alone. Now is the time to call in all the friendship markers you may have out. Chances are your close friends would be honored and excited to do anything they can to help you at this hectic time. (After all,

they know that their time is coming!) Let your friends pick up Aunt Effie at the airport, or put up Uncle Max if he refuses to go to a hotel. Crisis and celebrations bring people closer together.

RECOMMENDED READING

Prayer books

- ◆ **Mishkan T'fillah** –published by U.R.J.

The Torah

- ◆ **The Torah, A Modern Commentary**–edited by Gunther Plaut
- ◆ **Tanakh** – The Holy Scriptures. A copy of a new J.P.S. translation of the Jewish bible published by Jewish Publication Society, New York
- ◆ **A Torah Commentary for our Times** – Rabbi Harvey Fields, URJ Press
- ◆ **Teaching Torah** by Sorel Goldberg Loeb and Barbara Binder Kadden
- ◆ **A Torah Commentary For Our Times** by Harvey J. Fields
- ◆ **Torat Hayim** – U.R.J. weekly Torah interpretation found on the U.R.J. website (www.urj.org)

Other Recommended Readings

- ◆ **Putting God On The Guest List** – how to reclaim the spiritual meaning of your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah, by Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin
- ◆ **The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Plan Book**, by Jane Lewit and Ellen Epstein
- ◆ **Jewish Literacy** – the most important things to know about the Jewish religion, its people, and its history, by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin
- ◆ **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Basics** – A practical family guide to coming of age together, by Cantor Helen Leneman
- ◆ **The Jewish Holidays** – a guide and commentary by Rabbi Michael Strassfeld
- ◆ **Coming of Age** – your Bar/Bat Mitzvah, by Benjamin Efron and Alvan Rubin
- ◆ **What Is A Jew?** – a guide to the belief, traditions and practices of Judaism that answers questions for both Jew and non-Jew, by Rabbis Morris N. Kertzer, revised by Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman.
- ◆ **Bat Mitzvah** - A Jewish girl's coming of age, by Barbara Goldin

SOME IMPORTANT FINAL THOUGHTS

The birth of a child, as most of you would testify, is a miraculous event. As amazing as it is, what matters most is the life that is lived after that birth. In the same way, as much as the "birth" of a "Son or Daughter of Mitzvah" is a wonder to behold it is the life following the experience that matters most. May this experience be all that your heart longs for, and as stress-free as possible!

