

Checklist

Getting Ready for the Service

Though most of us know this already, it's helpful to remind yourself and your child that the Bar or Bat Mitzvah is not the party afterwards but the religious duties he/she performs during the service. Sometimes the emphasis can fall more on the celebration than the actual religious milestone. Here is a checklist to keep your family on track with the real elements of the big day.

ONE YEAR TO EIGHTEEN MONTHS BEFORE

- Meet with a member of the clergy.** You and your child will want to find out what your synagogue requires. Some require that the child attend a certain number of services and perform a mitzvah project.
- Your child will be assigned a Torah portion.** You may have known this years before if your synagogue assigns dates early, but now's the time to start researching the Torah portion to get familiar with the story.

SIX TO EIGHT MONTHS BEFORE

- Begin working on a mitzvah project.** There are many organizations that are happy to help your child put together a project. You may also want to discuss with your child the idea of donating a percentage of his or her monetary gifts to charity (sometimes a denomination of chai, 18).
- Learn the elements of the service.** If you are not a regular synagogue attendee, you may want to begin to attend Shabbat services as a family to get a feel for the service and understand what your child will be undertaking. Remember, becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a process and not a single day in your child's life.

SIX MONTHS BEFORE

- Start working with a tutor.** The synagogue may provide one or you can hire your own to work with your child (usually once a week) to learn the Torah portion and haftarah.

THREE MONTHS BEFORE

- Your child should begin writing his or her D'var Torah.**
- Decide who will receive aliyahs and other honors during the service.**
- Plan the siblings' role.** This event is so much about family, but siblings—particularly younger ones—can get lost in the shuffle. Be sure that everyone feels a part of this meaningful moment.
- Check in with your child's tutor and the clergy.** Make sure that your child is on track and that you know all your responsibilities for the day, including sponsoring a kiddush, ordering flowers, etc.
- Order personalized Judaica for your child.** A special tallis or kippah can add to the sentimentality of the day.

ONE MONTH BEFORE

- Coordinate a rehearsal with your synagogue.** This is also a good time to take a step back and revel in how far your child has come toward becoming a Jewish adult.
- Order tallit and kippot for celebrant.**
- Order personalized kippot for your guests.**