

Timeline

Planning Your Event Month by Month

If it “takes a village to raise a child,” it can take at least that many people to plan that child’s Bar or Bat Mitzvah. It’s a lot to take on alone, so seek out help. Besides, it truly is more fun when you involve others. The following timeline should help you with your planning process and highlight how many villagers you may need to involve.

TWO YEARS BEFORE

- ❑ **Get a Bar/Bat Mitzvah date from your synagogue.**
- ❑ **Talk to friends who’ve already planned a Bar/Bat Mitzvah for ideas and tips.**
- ❑ **Go to a Celebrate! Party Showcase.** www.celebrateshowcase.com. There are seven locations in the tri-state area.
- ❑ **Formulate a realistic budget.** Have a budget in mind so you can decide where you want to spend your money and what type of event you will have.
- ❑ **Begin looking at venues.** You may not want to book two years in advance, but you can start looking at your options. Instead of a cash deposit, ask if you can put a soft hold on a space with a written agreement giving you the first right to that date. If you put down money, ask what the refund policy is.

EIGHTEEN MONTHS BEFORE

- ❑ **Decide if you want to hire a party planner.** If so, start interviewing. Understand their services and how their cost structure works. Remember: you can hire a planner just for specific tasks including running events the day of.
- ❑ **Start thinking about a party theme.** If you have a theme (even if it’s your child’s name or initials) then your invitations, décor, party favors, etc. may all be coordinated.
- ❑ **Brainstorm with your child about ideas for a mitzvah project.**

ONE YEAR BEFORE

- ❑ **If you are hiring a party planner, sign a contract.** Keep a folder with copies of all contracts, your notes and contact information.
- ❑ **Sign a contract with your venue and put down a deposit.** Confirm what will be provided, including feeding the outside staff you bring in, lighting, etc.
- ❑ **Interview and sign your band or DJ.** Now’s the time to check out a few recommended DJs/bands in person.
- ❑ **Interview and sign a photographer/videographer.**
- ❑ **Interview and sign a florist.**
- ❑ **Plan the extra entertainment you want and sign contracts.** Ask your DJ or party planner for recommendations.
- ❑ **Interview and sign a montage specialist.** Begin organizing your photos and videos for inclusion. If you are doing it yourself, start now.

TEN MONTHS BEFORE

- ❑ **Firm up your guest list.**
- ❑ **Book a block of hotel rooms for out of town guests.** You can often get a discounted rate if you guarantee a certain number of rooms. Do this even earlier if it’s over a holiday weekend or a busy time of year like June or December.
- ❑ **Set up a website with all the details of your party.** Go to mitzvahs.myevent.com to create a personalized site with hotel information, weekend events and details about your child’s mitzvah project. Include the URL on your save-the-date cards.
- ❑ **Set up a spreadsheet to keep track of invites, RSVPs, gifts, thank you notes sent out, etc.**
- ❑ **Send out a Save the Date card or email.** This is especially important if your event is over a holiday weekend and for out-of-towners who need to buy plane tickets in advance.
- ❑ **Choose and order invitations.**

Timeline

Continued

SIX TO EIGHT MONTHS BEFORE

- Begin planning/booking other weekend events.** These can include a Friday night dinner, Kiddush after services and Sunday brunch.
- Have florist or party planner show you a sample centerpiece.**
- Hire a calligrapher to address the invitations.**
- Begin shopping for clothes for the special day/weekend.**
- Begin thinking about what you want to do for a sign-in.**

THREE TO FIVE MONTHS BEFORE

- Plan the menu and do a tasting with your venue/caterer.**
- Get invitations to calligrapher and order personalized stamps.**
- Order party favors.**
- Order cake if you want a specialty design.**
- Arrange for buses to transport guests to events.**
- Plan the candle lighting ceremony.**

TWO MONTHS BEFORE

- Mail the invitations.** Traditionally this is done 6-8 weeks before the date.
- Make a play list of “must have” songs for band or DJ.**
- Make a detailed timeline of your event.** Work with the venue or party planner on this. Decide who will say the prayers over the bread and wine.
- Re-confirm all vendors and timing.**
- Make arrangements if you are donating your centerpieces.**
- Book a hairdresser and make-up person.**
- Write speeches.**
- If you are doing a program for synagogue, have it printed.**

ONE MONTH BEFORE

- Do dress/suit fittings.**
- Order personalized kippot.** Check first if your synagogue allows them.
- Purchase a tallit.**
- Call any guests who haven't sent in RSVPs and make a final seating chart.** Print out place cards or have calligrapher start doing it.
- Make a list for photographer of “must have” group shots you want.**
- Put together welcome baskets for out-of-towners.** Arrange to have these delivered to their hotels.

ONE WEEK BEFORE

- Have a dress rehearsal.** The synagogue will usually arrange this so you know the sequence of events.
- Have everyone in the family try on their synagogue/party outfits.** This is especially important with growing teens. Make sure everything fits and that you have all the parts (belts, accessories, etc.).
- Schedule a photo shoot.** Some families take photos in the synagogue during the week before if this isn't allowed on Shabbat.
- Give the final guest count to venue/caterer.**
- Finalize the seating chart.**
- Do a final re-confirm with all vendors, including hair and make-up.**
- Remember to relax, enjoy, and savor this special moment!**