

Mitzvah Market

2018-2019

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Family Heirloom:*
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TO TREASURE**

**AN ISRAEL
BAR MITZVAH
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From the Desk of the **PUBLISHER**

Mazel Tov!

We're so glad you picked up this issue of Mitzvah Market Magazine. We are here to help, whether you are at the beginning of the planning process or dealing with all the details of your son or daughter's upcoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

For those who are planning ahead, we offer information and ideas for what's coming down the pike so you have a jumpstart on all the action.

For those who are in the midst of it all, we are here to provide last minute inspiration and encourage you to enjoy the moments as you and your family reach this amazing milestone.

In this issue, we feature the inspiring story of Sophie Glaser, a young girl who actually shaved her head on the dance floor during her Bat Mitzvah party in support of a pediatric cancer organization. Plus, the detailed planning of a mom who created an amazing trip to Israel for her son's Bar Mitzvah.

We've got the top songs for a candle lighting ceremony and the hottest trends to hit the party scene. We share the planning process of two very different parties – one for a girl who celebrated the night in black and white, and a Bar Mitzvah celebration for a sports-loving boy with a love of wrestling. We also have numerous checklists to make your planning a breeze.

Enjoy the magazine and be sure to check out our corresponding website, **MitzvahMarket.com**. It's updated weekly with new family spotlights, great party ideas, vendor resources and so much more. Sign up for our free email newsletters filled with tons of clever, useful and entertaining ideas to have a fun and meaningful celebration. And join our many private regional Bar Bat Mitzvah planning groups on Facebook that can offer you local tips from other parents and advice from the experts.

Please also join us for one of our free Celebrate! Party Showcases (**celebrateshowcase.com**). Bring the kids for an all-day celebration in your area, where you can meet and talk to the vendors themselves and check out their offerings while enjoying food, special deals and entertainment.

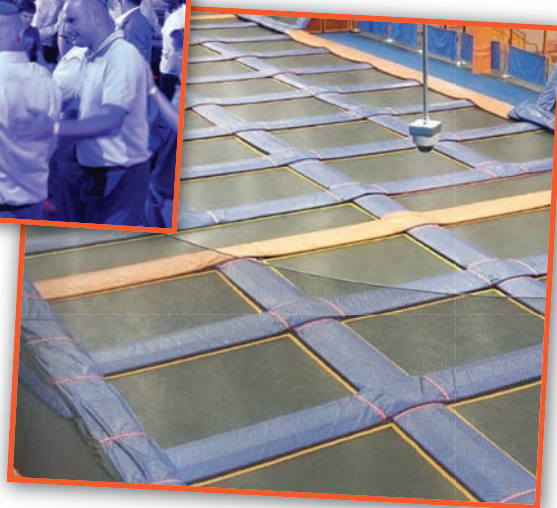
If you need assistance with the planning process, check out our web-based Mitzvah Organizer (**mitzvahorganizer.com**), a comprehensive, easy-to-use B'nai Mitzvah software to make your life easier. We created this after years of communicating with thousands of parents planning their children's simchas to help you keep track of the many details that come with party planning. The interactive software auto-updates all your information, tabulates expenses and can be accessed quickly and easily on cellphones, tablets and computers. Make table arrangements, compare vendor prices and share lists in a completely customized process.

We hope you walk away from all we offer at Mitzvah Market with lots of new knowledge and excitement for a wonderful event in your family's life. We are here to offer ideas, inspiration and cheers along the way.

Sheri Lapidus
Publisher



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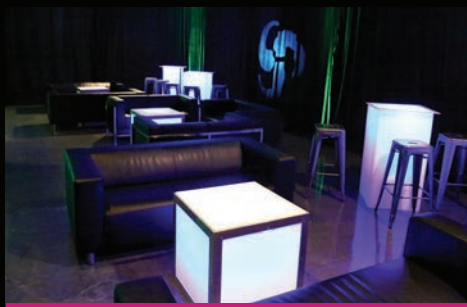
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Weaving a Family Heirloom **A TALLIT TO Treasure**

By Bethany Kandel



Jacob on the loom

When Jacob Solomon stands on the bimah to read from the Torah for his Bar Mitzvah on February 5, 2022, he will be wearing a very special tallit. In fact, although he's only nine-years-old, he's already helped design and weave it himself, with his siblings, parents and grandparents. Even his 92-year-old great grandmother wove a few lines.

The Livingston, N.J., family began creating this labor of love for Jacob, along with a tallit for

his 5-year-old brother, Liam -- who won't be Bar Mitzvahed until 2026 -- and a challah covering for his 7-year-old sister, Marisa. They started years in advance to make sure all their loved ones were able to participate.

"I felt it was important for them to have something to cherish forever," says Jacob's mom, Laurie Solomon, who came up with project. "I could have bought a tallit in the store and that

What is a tallit?

The tallit is a four-cornered prayer shawl with specially knotted fringes called tzitzit. The tzitzit are a visual reminder of God's commandments. Men and women are traditionally wrapped in the tallit when they pray or read from the Torah. Boys and girls usually receive their tallit in preparation for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah and often they are handed down from generation to generation.

Photos by Laurie Solomon

would be totally fine, but this adds another layer of meaning about the importance of Judaism and family, too.” Besides, she says, she likes the idea of giving her children a beautiful heirloom to which all the important people in their lives have contributed. “It’ll make them think of us when we’re not all around someday.”

Hand weaving a personalized tallit has been a tradition in Solomon’s family. She and her family wove a tallit for her older brother Carey’s Bar Mitzvah in 1986. The original weaver they worked with had since passed away. Another weaver suggested she contact Neve Shalom Synagogue in Metuchen, NJ, where three years ago, the sisterhood created a “loom room” with a donated loom. There, congregants, students and visitors have woven close to 100 tallit, tefillin bags and matzah and challah covers with the guidance of trained volunteers.

“The beauty of this is that you are creating a Judaica heirloom that is totally customized, will last a lifetime and that you created yourself,” says Cory Schneider, founder of the Neve Shalom loom room. She has personally created tallitot for her three sons, friends, other relatives and several grandchildren. “Every time a child puts on hand-woven tallit, they will remember the participation of their family members, living and passed. When you’re wrapped in it, it’s like being hugged by them.”

Solomon began making the three-hour round-trip to Neve Shalom several times a week to get the bulk of the weaving going. Soon she was spending up to four hours at a time working on the various projects. “It was relaxing. Some days I’d drop the kids off at school, drive there and spend the whole day weaving. The only reason I stopped was that I had to pick up the kids from school. I got in the groove.”

On weekends, she began bringing her children and various family members to weave so everyone was represented. Even her five-year-old would painstakingly add a few threads to his and his brother’s tallitots. The boys chose contrasting colors: Jacob’s tallit has a white background with five blue stripes representing the five members of their immediate family; Liam’s has a blue background with five white stripes.

In total, Solomon estimates, they spent more than 65 hours on the projects. “I enjoyed the process and was sad when it was done.”



Top: From left, Jacob’s Great Grandma Minnie, Grandma Pauline and Grandma Lois; Middle: Mom Laurie Solomon at work; Bottom: Liam’s tallit.





The Solomon family at the loom; parents Laurie and David, Jacob, Marisa and Liam

"It's so special," says Jacob's grandma, Lois Solomon, who loved being included. "Everyone had a hand in it. Laurie knows who did what lines; someday when I'm not here, she can point to them and say 'This was done by Grandma Lois.' That makes it much more significant. A piece of me will always be here with them."

Jacob agrees: "It's a good memory," he says. And of his treasured tallit, "I'll save it forever."

After removing the tallitot from the loom, they will each be attached to an atarah (neckband) embroidered with their Hebrew names and the names of their parents, and four corners with Jewish stars. The family will complete them by hand-tying the tzitzit, or knotted fringe.

Then the two finished tallitot will go into their matching woven pouches, waiting patiently for each boy's Bar Mitzvah day. •

Here are some ways to create your own hand-crafted tallit:

- To learn more about the Neve Shalom weaving program, contact Cory Schneider, 717-574-1807 or email, corstan65@gmail.com. neveshalom.net/sisterhood
- There is also a loom room at the JCC of Wyoming Valley in Wilkes-Barre, PA, 570-824-4656, ext. 237. jewishwilkes-barre.org/activities/programming/tallis-weaving-at-the-jcc
- Pennsylvania Rabbi Rayzel Raphael makes personalized silk-painted tallit. She also holds workshops where you can make your own. shechinah.com/shechinah-silks.html. For more information, call: 215-782-1221
- Look on Etsy.com for customized tallit. Many artists will incorporate your design, colors and materials to make a one-of-a-kind prayer shawl.



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What's *Hot?*

MITZVAH TRENDS FOR 2019

By Brynne Magaziner

When it comes to Bar and Bat Mitzvah trends, it's all about custom, custom, custom. There are so many ways to show off your child's personality and ensure that your guests are well taken care of. Adding some of the latest trends are sure to have your guests raving about your party for months to come. Here are some special touches that are HOT!



Custom Gaming

Rather than just having a random game or two, customize the games to fit with the overall event look. Customized gaming allows you to brand the entertainment with your child's colors or logo. "One of our favorite games to brand is our Urban Hoops because you have options for branding ball return and signs as well as the digital scoreboard," says Gregg Dukofsky of Interactive Entertainment Group. "We can display the names of the participants while they are playing and display a leaderboard throughout the night." Guests love to see their names, so check with your game provider to see if that is a possibility.

Unique Montages

Montages have become standard at Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, so find a different way to keep them fresh and exciting. Shari Sollender of Images4ever reports that she is seeing more clients including video clips within their montages. "Kids love to see themselves in action when they were younger," she says. "And guests love how it adds another dimension to the montage." Who knew all those videos you shot of your kids growing up would come in so handy?

Another way to incorporate video is with a personal message at the end of the montage from parents, the guest of honor or even a celebrity or two. Surprise video clips from celebrities will give your guest of honor a real thrill -- whether it's their favorite sports star, a niche YouTube vlogger, a reality TV host or someone even more famous. Try reaching out to one of your child's heroes to see if they would send a 5-second video clip wishing them a mazel tov on their Bar or Bat Mitzvah and see what happens.



Glitter lips

Glam Bar

Having mostly female guests? Try a glam bar and pamper your guests during the party. "A glam bar gives guests of all ages a chance to sparkle with glitter lips, crystals and fun hair products," says Courtney Gotz of Glam on the Go. If you're looking for something more unique, try false eyelashes, colorful hair extensions, feathers or flowers in hair, a hair braiding station or mini makeovers. As a plus, your event photos will turn out even better because of how beautiful and unique your guests will look.

Having mostly male guests? Try Eye Black face stickers for a sporty look. These stickers are not only worn by the pros on the field to reduce the glare of the sun, but they are also fun party favors that can be completely customized. They're also a unique dance floor giveaway. "If you can dream it, we can do it," says Peter Beveridge of EyeBlack.com. "Event logos, colors, words, sports team logos, even glitter face stickers. They are safe and peel on and off for easy repositioning."

Colorful hair extensions



Eye Black face stickers



Dance Floor Footwear

Supply fun socks or slippers so your guests can kick off their shoes and dance the night away, too. "Personalized socks are great to give out during the party as they have grips on the bottom for dancing or can be used for party favor giveaways," says Stephanie Feldman of Cutie Patootie Creations. "It's an item that is practical as they can be used for kids or adults. Ever since guests at the royal wedding reportedly swapped their heels for slippers, we're hearing more and more clients exploring this fun option."



Edible Escort Cards



The sweetest way for your guests to find their tables is with personalized escort or place cards that are edible. It's the perfect way to seat your guests AND have a snack at the same time. "We've done soccer ball chocolate lollipops, chocolate bar football game 'tickets', Rice Krispie treats with coordinating sprinkles, dipped Oreos that match the client's invitations and more," says Alison Weinstock, owner of Sweet Ali Confections. "By tying in your logo or color scheme we can make branded place cards in a variety of treats that are 100% edible, unique and nut free."



Custom Kicks

To ensure your family stays on the dance floor all night long, wear comfortable shoes. But take it one step further by making your child's feet stand out with one-of-a-kind art on his or her footwear. "Sneaker art is highly customizable, because we can paint and style anything our clients are looking for," say Hilary Berger and Debby Rifkin, co-owners and the creative team at Re bootz. "Logo-inspired sneaks and bold typography are huge right now. Crystal bling is classic yet we make it fashion forward by incorporating it into the design work."



Andy Foster Photo



Chad David Kraus Photography

Dance Floor Giveaways

Branded Dance Floor Giveaways

In addition to the typical items that the DJ hands out, the hottest trend to make your party unique is to add a variety of branded items with your child's logo or tagline.

"I've definitely seen a rise in the importance of branded dance floor giveaways," says Melisa Imberman of The Event Of A Lifetime. "These items seem to motivate the kids to be on the dance floor and demonstrate their best moves in hopes of being given one of the coveted items. We typically do just 2-4 dozen of each, so there is a demand to have a 'rare' item."

The basic t-shirt and baseball cap have become staples, so why not try higher quality tees, tank tops, PJ pants, sweat pants, bucket hats, hoodies, beanies or socks? If you're looking for non-apparel items, consider customizing Swell or Gatorade-style bottles, personal message fans, blankets, gift cards, headbands and bracelets. Any cell phone accessories are off the charts popular. Kids love earbuds, carry pouches, stickers, PopSockets and selfie sticks.

Brynne Magaziner is the owner of Pop Color Events, a boutique event planning firm specializing in Bar Mitzvah & Bat Mitzvah event planning in Washington DC, Maryland and Virginia. Visit www.popcolorevents.com for more information.

Exit Treats

After a long night of dancing and partying, end your night with a little treat as a takeaway item for guests. "I advise my clients to color coordinate their exit treats to their theme/color story," says Amy Rubel, owner of Rubel Event Management. "This can be done easily whether you are doing a candy bar, logo cookies or the always popular water bottles. Over the past year or so, we have been doing a lot of popcorn, which is a great value item and super delicious. This has been a big hit especially with sports-themed events and it's nut free, so super safe for all guests to enjoy."

So, think outside the box and try some of these latest custom trends to make your party the one that's talked about.



Carlos Aristizabal Photo

Venue Bathroom Decor

Add your event signage anywhere and everywhere! Amy Wohl from FabuDesigns.com tells us that families are asking for oversized logos and decals to decorate the bathroom mirrors at their venues; the one space where you don't want your party guests to spend too much time. "Why not surprise your guests and have ladies enter the bathrooms with a smile," she says.



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A Journey Through History, *Heritage and The Holy Land*

By Emily Ray Baraf

We live in an age of hyper-personalization, and yet, some of life's greatest milestones and rites of passage have become rote and even ordinary. This is just what Jacey and Daniel Taub, of Rye Brook, NY, wanted to avoid when planning their son Zack's Bar Mitzvah.

Having lived through the Bar/Bat Mitzvah scene a few years earlier with their daughter Lily, they wanted Zack's Bar Mitzvah to be more than just another party with dinner and dancing (though they wanted that, too). They wanted to find a way to make sure the religious and cultural meaning was paramount in the whole experience, truly forging the connection of what it meant to become a Bar Mitzvah.

So, mom Jacey, and dad Daniel, began to think about doing the Bar Mitzvah in Israel. It seemed like the perfect solution. And, while the initial thought may have percolated around the time of Lily's Bat Mitzvah, the real seeds were planted almost 20 years earlier when Jacey and Daniel ventured to Israel on a family trip. "I was young and had been working non-stop, and then all of the sudden I was part of this multi-generational group of people ages

8-80 for two weeks," recalls Jacey. "It just felt so special and incredibly meaningful. I wanted to re-create that feeling for my kids."

Once Zack was on board, Jacey began planning a trip that would be truly special. It needed to be more than just a vacation or a big tour, it needed to be a journey that would ignite a deeper love of Judaism and an appreciation of the values and history inherent in it. "We live in a very Jewish area, and I often worry that the 'specialness' of being Jewish is lost on my kids. They take it for granted. I wanted this trip to kindle a newfound love and appreciation for not only the religion, but also our family heritage and all that we'd overcome."

Planning the kind of trip that would check all those boxes was a huge undertaking and became Jacey's full-time job. "I think you get out of it what you put into it. ... Basically, I didn't sleep," she recalls. She talked to people, searched the Internet and put a lot of thought into what kinds of experiences would make a genuine impact. "I knew I wanted to support the Reform Jewish movement causes on our trip, so our rabbi suggested using ARZA

*From top right: Zack and family at the Wall; Zack and soldier;
Zack and family playing basketball with Brothers for Life*

WORLD and Da'at Educational Expeditions to help coordinate things on the ground."

Despite having a "team" helping her out, Jacey remained firmly in the captain's seat. She made sure she was an integral part of each and every detail. She Googled, brainstormed and brought her ideas to the experts at ARZA, hoping it was something they could execute. "I didn't want mainstream," she says. "I did have to accept that sometimes things wouldn't work out, but I also made it a point to be really explicate in what I had in mind. More than once, I found myself explaining and re-explaining until I was confident that my ideas had been properly communicated. In short, I made sure that I was creating the kind of experience I wanted, even if that meant a one-on-one with ARZA's CEO."

Though it was trying at times, the hard work paid off. From day one, the Taub's 10-day journey to Israel was unique, meaningful and imbued with spirituality and family history. The very fact of the trip alone was symbolic, creating another entry in the family history book. Almost 20 years to the day after Jacey and Daniel's first trip, there they were again with the whole family. "It was (basically) the same group, only this time the tree had changed; some of the leaves had fallen off but there were also new branches."

In many ways it felt like they had come full circle. Decades prior, Zack's great-great-grandfather had sought refuge in what had then been Palestine. Jacey couldn't help but wonder what he'd think if he could have seen this group of 26 -- including four generations of his family -- arriving in Israel to affirm their Judaism.

Rather than take the more common approach of starting in Tel Aviv and ending in Jerusalem, building up to a big Bar Mitzvah finale of the trip, they flipped things upside down. "I didn't want Zack to be nervous the whole trip," says Jacey. "I knew after he fulfilled his Bar Mitzvah commitment, he'd be able to more wholeheartedly enjoy himself."

So, they began in Jerusalem, had the Bar Mitzvah at Masada, and then made their way to Tel-Aviv. It unfolded like a journey; starting with religion and history, and culminating in the energy of everyday Israeli life in the city. Along the way they hit all the major sites, getting the full depth of experience in each location.

They didn't just go to the *shuk* and look around, they brought a chef, went shopping and then cooked a meal as a group. They didn't just venture into souvenir stores, they visited a Kabbalah jewelry store and got a taste of Jewish Mysticism. They didn't just visit war memorial



sites, they went to an active base and interacted with Israeli soldiers. In fact, they took this one step further and spent a day with Brothers for Life, an Israeli-based charity focused on helping injured soldiers reintegrate into everyday life.

They spent time with the Brothers for Life community and played a full game of basketball, with each participant playing seated, from a wheelchair, like many of the soldiers. Watching "our whole group, ages 3-73, sitting in wheelchairs, playing with these soldiers, was an amazing experience," she says. The soldiers thought so too. At the end of the day, they presented Zack with a *Tanach* -- a Hebrew bible -- with a heartfelt inscription.

Listening to the soldiers' stories, made Judaism, Zion-



Zack post basketball

ism, religion, history and the spiritual meaning of it all come alive, explains Jacey. The experience left an indelible mark on the group, especially Zack. "He left the base thinking, 'I want to fight for this country; I want to be in the (Israeli) army,'" says his mom.

The actual Bar Mitzvah ceremony took place on top of Masada. Like everything else, it was meticulously planned and entirely unique. When their hopes of having their clergy accompany them on the trip didn't pan out, Jacey's cantor in Rye Brook connected her with her cantorial teacher in Israel. The Taubs had a very specific idea of what kind of service they wanted. "I didn't like that my daughter's service felt somewhat 'off the shelf.' I wanted something more personal this time, so I actually wrote Zack's service," says Jacey. "The cantor was amazing at adding the musical element to the service, which is very important. She also put Zack at ease and conducted the service to match what we had in mind. The entire day became a beautiful celebration about welcoming Zack into the Jewish community. It incorporated family, felt relatable and utilized prayers that really meant something to us. Furthermore, we got to integrate pictures, quotes and family heritage. Zack read the *Shema* out of the prayer book my great-grandmother brought with her when she emigrated, and we drank wine made by her husband, my great-grandfather, that we carried in our suitcases. It was all just so meaningful."

Jacey also coordinated with a local photographer. "I really wanted a fantastic photographer to capture this once-in-a-lifetime experience so I asked a friend who had lived in Israel for a recommendation of someone great... and he was. He even used a drone!"

Capturing these moments was incredibly important, because ultimately, it was so much more than just a singular religious event, she says. "There are no words

that I can put with the image of Zack reading from Buby's prayer book. All I could think was how far we've come. We didn't just overcome, we've persevered and prospered. My great grandparents experienced such sadness and took so many risks to find a better life. They witnessed atrocities, left their home, lost many family members and had to say good bye to loved ones they knew they would never see again. Here we were, their living legacies, all together, freely celebrating everything they held dear and we were the fruits of their labor. I think they would have been kvelling if they could have seen their family now. I had a true moment of gratitude and appreciation."

Though the Bar Mitzvah ceremony took place in Israel, the family also threw a party to celebrate the event back home. "I wanted to bring some of our journey into the event," Jacey says. Again, it was all about the experience.

The day began with a service project in which Zack's friends and the kids from the boarding school he'd been working with as part of his Mitzvah Project, came together to clean up and enhance the school's gym. They painted bricks and fixed the muddy walkway that often made the gym's entrance impassable. This was followed by a group excursion to the Westchester Knick's final game and then later that night there was a party on the Westchester county basketball court. The theme, All-4-One -- was a nod to the final four basketball game, which also occurred that evening. It also referred to teamwork and working together.

"Because there wasn't a Torah service that day, we invited people to join us in doing a community service project," says Jacey. "It was important to bring in the idea of Tikkun Olam because this was a celebration of a major Jewish milestone, not a 13th birthday party."



To see more about Zack's New York celebration, visit MitzvahMarket.com



Zack during his Bar Mitzvah service on the top of Masada

They also weaved pieces of their Israeli experience into the event. Large monitors alternated footage of the basketball finals, with pictures of their trip. There was a table featuring images of the soldiers they'd met at the base where guests could write notes and/or thank-yous to them. The Havdalah service between the cocktail hour and the main event utilized the same candle they'd used in Israel and spices from various places in Israel including Yad Vashem. Jacey also made little spice bags so each person could take a small piece of Israel home.

Though mainly a kids' party, the adults in attendance all received little hamsa bags purchased at the Sarona Market in Tel Aviv, filled with Hebrew Bazooka Joe gum and a rubber bracelet symbolizing a donation made to Brothers for Life.

The party brought home the idea of getting outside

oneself and helping others. It wasn't just about Zack the Bar Mitzvah boy; it was about Zack as a leader who could bring people together, working toward a common goal and for a greater good, explains Jacey. "In the end, it was about creating a feeling and an emotion."

That's what the Taubs did at every turn. They fostered an energy, set a tone and then leaned into the experience. "I like to think we planted seeds that will blossom into an even greater love for Judaism. My kids always tease me that I'm 'super-Jew,' but I feel like throughout this experience we were successful at creating a new family folklore and fostering experiences and memories that will remain etched into our minds, hearts and souls. I remember as we left Israel, my daughter had a ring engraved with the Shema on her finger and my son had a mezuzah around his neck and I just felt like they got it." •

BAR/BAT MITZVAH CEREMONY SITES

There are many wonderful places to choose from to have your Bar/Bat Mitzvah services and celebrations in Israel. The most popular days for services are Monday, Thursdays and Saturdays. Make sure to confirm that the location of your choice is open on the day you wish to have your ceremony. Go to bar-and-bat-mitzvah-in-israel.com to view the different locations. Here are some of the most popular ones:

The Western Wall, known also as The Kotel. The Western Wall Heritage Foundation offers a free service to help families with everything from initial planning of the event to helping conduct or explain the service. Additional assistance is available, including lending Tefillin (phylacteries), or Talitot (prayer shawls), and organizing a tour of the Western Wall tunnels for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child and family following the service.

The Southern Wall, Jerusalem, is no less holy than the Western Wall, for it is part of the remaining Southern enclosure of the Temple Mount. Unlike at the Western Wall, ceremonies are held according to your and your Rabbi's traditions – so men and women can celebrate, sit and pray together.

Neot Kedumim: The Biblical Landscape Reserve in Israel is located halfway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. This unique recreation of the physical setting of the Bible in all its depth and detail allows visitors to see life as it was lived by our ancestors 3,000 years ago.

The Western Wall Tunnels, (Strictly Orthodox), is one of Israel's most splendid archeological discoveries.

The Tower of David Museum of the History of Jerusalem: Private ceremonies may be held in the historic courtyard and gardens at the ancient citadel.

The Hurva Synagogue: Destroyed in the War of Independence in 1948, it is now a simple and elegant memorial. It has become a symbol of the Jews' return to the holiest city.

Synagogues around Israel: A synagogue in Jerusalem, or anywhere in Israel is an ideal location, especially if you wish to hold the service on Shabbat.

Masada: Ceremonies atop Masada are held in the remains of the Zealots' Synagogue, said to be the world's oldest Synagogue still in use. Services are conducted by a rabbi of your choice, according to orthodox, conservative, reform or reconstructionist tradition.



Jewish National Fund Remembrance Wall

RESOURCES FOR BAR/BAT MITZVAH TRAVEL TO ISRAEL:

- Tova Gilead, Inc.,** tovagilead.com
 As a tour operator since 1982, Gilead operates small, upscale and unique tours. Three-generation family trips are her specialty.
- ARZA World,** arzaworld.com
 ARZA World creates 9, 11 and 13 day comprehensive tours of Israel with local reform rabbis performing the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony in Jerusalem at the Southern Wall at the Davidson Center, The Goldman Promenade, Mt. Scopus, or on the rooftop of Hebrew Union College.
- Israel Discover Tours,** israeldiscoverytours.com/israel-tours/family-bar-bat-mitzvah-tours
 This company is family owned and operated for 25 years, offering three different tours (12 day Deluxe, 14 day Deluxe or December Deluxe), with options for different budgets. The ceremony is at Masada and presentation of certificates is in front of the Menorah outside the Knesset (the Israel Parliament).
- Authentic Israel,** authenticisrael.com
 Find a wide range of programs including family and celebration experiences and custom private tours. They arrange the tour, ceremony and celebration. On the family tour, they provide a tour leader and a youth counselor.
- Travel and Events in Israel,** travelandeventsinisrael.com
 Custom tailored for your family, they help with your itinerary, book hotels according to your budget, connect you with a rabbi who will assign the Torah portion and make all necessary arrangements. They also offer custom special events at unique destinations in Israel.
- Mabat Platinum, LTD.,** mabat.com
 Designs a tailor-made trip for you and your family.
- Gil Travel,** giltravel.com/israel-tours/tour/bar-bat-mitzvah-in-israel
 With over 40 years of experience, Gil Travel can help you plan a private tour or organize a group tour, while arranging all of the touring details.
- Jewish National Fund Travel and Tours,** jnf.org/travel/BnaiMitzvah
 Join a Bar/Bat Mitzvah tour or plan a private one and have your service at the Southern Wall in Jerusalem or other sites throughout Israel. JNF also provides other opportunities including planting trees in Israel, coordinating a mitzvah project and participating in the B'nai Mitzvah Remembrance Wall.
- Keshet,** keshetisrael.co.il/barbatmitzvahinisrael
 The Center for Educational Tourism in Israel helps you create a tailor-made Bar/Bat Mitzvah trip to Israel that introduces your family to the land and history through youth centered programming, hands-on mitzvah projects and encounters with local people.

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pop-a-shot, foosball, air hockey, etc.)
- SIGN-IN BOARD
- 1 PARTY HOSTESS
- 2 SECURITY GUARDS

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HIP MITZVAH VENUE IN NYC HOUSTON HALL



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By Madeleine Deliee

When the WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment) came to Freehold, NJ, on February 10th, 2018, the crowd went wild. Matt Schwartz's high-energy and high-impact Bar Mitzvah event took place at iPlay America's Event Center, with creative touches from the "wrestling ring" VIP section for the kids to a stadium-inspired menu served from a built-to-scale concession stand. Talk about some serious wow!

Taking her cues from the technological flair of the real

WWE, MattMania was the brainchild of Jessica Schwartz, Matt's mom and VP of Sales and Marketing for iPlay America. Jessica really pulled out all the stops in designing a custom-themed stage and backdrop as the focal point of the celebration.

Drawing on the talents of the experienced AV and production staff at iPlay America, Xplosive Entertainment added the WOW factor and brought in a two-tiered 24-foot long LED illuminated stage and set up a 16-foot long rear





projection screen flanked right and left with twin 10-foot LED video walls. Emphasizing the industrial feel of a wrestling event, Xplosive built a 12-foot tall bare metal exposed goal post truss to surround the video screen and to mount an array of moving head light fixtures, which resembled the famous WWE Titantron.

With the mood set, Iris from Debbie's Designs built the concession-styled food stand and kids' VIP ring to continue the WWE motif. Her team also provided centerpiece décor and affixed printed vinyl decals to bars and other acrylic accents throughout the room. The on-site fixtures, which include lounge-style furniture, concert-grade lighting, light-up bars and large LED screens, made the atmosphere a true main event.

The kids also enjoyed the theme park at iPlay America during cocktail hour, playing games like Hot Shot basketball and lining up for carnival rides. Meanwhile, the adults enjoyed sushi, pasta and passed hors d'oeuvres. Dinner kept to the WWE theme, with sausage and peppers, a wing stand and a hotdog stand, all serving "concession style." Sweet treats including fried Oreos, churros and ice cream sandwiches made a tasty transition to the Bar Mitzvah cake, which promised something for everyone with red velvet, dark chocolate and vanilla.

The Schwartz family truly went to the mat to provide a no-holds-barred good time for their guests. A personalized "merch station" offered guests hats decorated with the MattMania logo. Dana Kaufman from by dana created eye-catching and witty touches to accent the event, from amazing invitations, themed sweatshirts and photo booth props. Mom Jessica added a special touch with delicious "come celebrate s'more" parting gifts of packaged campfire

treats after the service and custom popcorn containers to take home after the evening event.

Jessica was thrilled with the way it all came together, but she admits it was a lot of work—even for someone who regularly supervises such big events. She says to "plan, plan, plan." She suggest locking in vendors, themes, logos, etc. as early as possible. "Anything you can do ahead of time, do it." She started working on Matt's celebration as soon as they set the date. "About 18 months prior, we settled on the theme," she recalls. "By about 15 months out, I secured the venue, DJ, party décor person, photographer and videographer so all were locked in and it was one less thing to worry about."

She used a checklist to maintain organization and provided each vendor with a binder containing reference pictures of likes and dislikes. Communicating through pictures is a great way to avoid confusion, she says.

Even though she had lots of her own ideas, she acknowledges the importance of listening to your vendors because they have done many similar events many times. "Their advice is priceless," she says, "even if it contradicts some of your plans." You will, inevitably, find that you must let some ideas go.

Plus, she says, "Don't get too caught up in the little details. Something will happen that you didn't expect—just go with it." After all, the day is really about family and celebrating the joyous occasion together. Although it may be easy to lose focus, what's truly important is the day. "Everyone is there to celebrate your child, and these are all of your friends and family," Jessica points out. "No matter what you do, in the end it WILL be a success; enjoy the moment." •

The following vendors helped to make the celebration special:

Venue: iPlay America, iplayamerica.com, 732-577-8200

Party Planner: Mom

Entertainment/Music/MC/DJ: Xplosive Entertainment; Jordan Marshall & Mike Langsner, xeevents.com, 732-866-1620

Photographer/Videographer: Matt Kirchof Photography, kphotovideo.com 732-966-4340

Favors/Invitations: by dana, Dana Kaufman, bydana.net, 732-625-1471

Décor/Flowers: Debbie's Designs, debbies-designs.com, 973-696-7930

Cake: Cakes by Libby, cakesbylibby.com, 848-233-9709

Sign-In Board: Custom Shoe Box, boxurkicks.com

Special Touches: Entrance video Dan, Yellow Five Studios, yellowfivestudios.com, 908-783-7941

Dresses: Lola's, lolasnj.com, 732-972-5222

Suits: Nita Fashions, nitafashions.com, 852-2721-9990

Hair/Makeup: Andrea Angelotti (makeup); Lisa from Act III Hair in Freehold Mall 732-303-9696

Logo: Rocket9 Creative Marketing Group, rocket-9.com

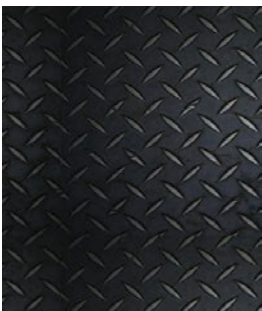
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CELEBRATE
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Celebrate THE NIGHT IN BLACK AND WHITE

By Madeleine Deliee



Eliza Garmise had a couple of aces up her sleeve when she was planning her Bat Mitzvah: experience.

Her older sister, Hannah, was Bat Mitzvahed three years before, and her mother is an event-planning whiz. (Mom, Jessica Garmise, is the owner of Out of the Box Creations, a Long Island-based event décor company that specializes in unique and creative events). This made planning her big day as simple as, well, black and white.

The striking color theme evolved when mom and daughter fell in love with a black and white invitation. Older sister Hannah summed up the overall mood with the line “Celebrate the Night in Black and White.” Once that was set, the Garmise family knew they had a winning concept and ran with it.

The invitation also featured a silver glitter heart and guests were instructed to dress in black and white. To stand out, Eliza chose a silver sequined ballgown that made her a sparkling visual focal point.

“We were looking to have an elegant, modern and (most important) FUN celebration that aroused the senses at every turn,” Jessica says. The bar was high, given her professional background, and she wanted to create an extra-special experience for her daughter’s big day. “My guests would be looking for something new and innovative, so my team spent a lot of time brainstorming ideas and coming up with all of the creative touches, big and small.”

Jessica carried the black and white motif throughout, nailing the impact of the highly graphic visual. The contrasting colors dominated the setting, from the ombre balloon wall that greeted guests when they entered the synagogue, to the big punch of the black and white dance floor; the graffiti wall for the photo booth and the three-tiered cake marking the occasion.

And they kept it going. Black and white echoed through the smaller elements as well, in the patterned lampshades, floral arrangements and the black and white candy in apothecary jars. There were also many striking pops of vibrant pattern—zig-zag, polka-dots and hearts on everything from the cake to the pillar candles and floral-patterned baubles in the table centerpieces.

“We had a lot of fun designing the logos for the favors and swag to really personalize the event for Eliza,” Jessica says. One unique touch was creating a spin on the Gossip Girl logo. “We changed it to ‘Garmise Girl,’” Jessica explains, acknowledging that it was a “cute take” to identify

everything as uniquely Eliza’s. Her first name prompted a party choice as well. “Many people call Eliza by her nickname ‘EJ,’” so we had shirts made that say ‘Yo EJ Pump this Party,’” she says, pointing out the kind of detail present everywhere.

The Garmises also focused on their guests’ knowledge of Eliza to distinguish many of the elements that went into creating her special day. “Eliza is a very petite girl with a HUGE personality,” her mother says. “So, on each adult plate we left a little box of black and white candy that said, ‘Good Things Come in Small Packages.’” The hosts made sure that the party-goers were taken care of from start to finish, sending them off with black and white branded water bottles and a food truck in the parking lot with some final goodies for their departure.

Ultimately, Jessica handled the experience with the confidence of a veteran, having planned dozens of parties for others, as well as her own older daughter’s event.

“Since this was my second Bat Mitzvah, I definitely approached it with a more relaxed attitude and tried to enjoy the process,” she says. “I knew little things would go wrong (because they always do) but I knew if my daughter had an amazing night none of that would matter.” While she admits that it’s sometimes easier said than done to remain cool and organized, she believes strongly that perspective is what matters most. “I always tell my clients that the BEST part of the entire day or weekend by far is going to be sitting there and watching your child up there on the bimah and the immense feeling of love and pride that follows. There really is nothing better than that moment -- at least there wasn’t for me. This helps put all the party planning and details in perspective and focus on what really matters.” •



The following vendors helped to make the celebration special:

Entertainment: EJ the DJ, ejthedj.com, 800-358-4335

Photography/videography: Stephen Andrews Photography, stephenandrewsphoto.com, 516-780-9100

Party Planner, décor, sign-in board, special touches: Jessica Garmise, Out of the Box Creations, outoftheboxshop.com, 917-518-9389

Invitations: Jodi’s Gifts and Events, jodisgifts.com, 516-662-2137

Eliza’s dress: Designing Dreams, designingdreams.co, 516-248-1988

Venue: Temple Sinai of Roslyn, mysinai.org

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Find a meaningful MITZVAH PROJECT

Long after the DJ's name is forgotten and the imprinted sweatshirts outgrown, a young Jewish adult's Bar or Bat Mitzvah Project should be remembered. It should resonate for your child and open up a myriad of future possibilities. It should feel good.

We hope these next two first-hand Mitzvah Project stories help your child choose a do-able, but meaningful Bar or Bat Mitzvah Project. You can also start by asking a few questions:

- What are your synagogue's requirements for a project?
- Does it have to be related to a certain Torah portion?
- How much time can your child realistically devote to completing this?
- Then ask your child: What makes him or her happy — sports, fashion, technology, the arts? What does he or she care about — animal welfare, the environment, Israel, cancer research, education, hunger?

As a parent, your job is to help guide your child to find a project that is meaningful and uses his or her natural talents. It can involve volunteering time, educating others, selling products or services to benefit a cause, or collecting money or needed items for a charity. Hopefully your child will find something that leaves him or her with a full heart and a lifelong desire to help others and do good.

MITZVAH TIP: Each of our Celebrate! Party Showcases feature a Mitzvah Project Fair where your child can meet face-to-face with various organizations that offer meaningful Mitzvah Projects. Learn more at celebrateshowcase.com

Top left: Benjamin Levine calls his project "Stitches by Ben" in support of ConKerrCancer.org. Top right: Maya Ungar in front of the completed mural for the Leket offices in Israel. Bottom left: Adam Koss of Syracuse, NY prepares to embark on the MLB Road Trip. Bottom right: Melissa Nadler from Hastings-on-Hudson, NY organized her friends and family to each make a tile to raise money for SCOPE.





A *Cooking* PROJECT

By Daniel Satran

My parents have always told me that they believe the most important part of the Bar Mitzvah is the Mitzvah Project and that you should have a real connection to it to make it truly meaningful. I agree, but I had been struggling to find the right project that worked for me. Then I got a little help from my mom.

An interest of mine has always been cooking. I love to make breakfast and dinner for my family. I learned a lot about cooking at camp. My mother had gone to Israel with the Jewish Women's Renaissance Project and discovered the organization, OneFamily Overcoming Terror Together. OneFamily helps those who were victims of terror attacks and war rebuild their lives. While she was there, she cooked recipes from OneFamily's "A Taste of Life" cookbook alongside parents whose children had died from such attacks. In the cookbook, bereaved mothers share their recipes and tell the story

of their children through the food they shared.

When my mom came home, we discussed the trip. That's when I realized that since I enjoy cooking and babysitting younger kids, perhaps I could craft a workshop/fundraiser combining those interests for my Mitzvah Project. Plus, I could help the organization at the same time.

I decided to model a cooking class like my mom did in Israel, and charged \$36 (double chai) for each child to participate. All of the money received went directly to OneFamily. I selected recipes I loved from the book, chose a date and created a flyer that I distributed around my town.

Once kids started registering, I realized I needed some help. So, a couple of my friends helped me by running a cooking station. We had 17 kids, ages 5 to 11. We made my favorite recipes from the OneFamily



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cookbook – pizza (where everyone made their own custom creation), shakshuka (an Israeli dish of eggs poached in a sauce of tomatoes, chili peppers and onions), and every kid's favorite, candy salad! (It's actually a mixture of chocolate, marshmallows, sprinkles and gummy candies).

We also read Gidi's story from the cookbook. Her mother wrote about how Gidi's special birthday treat was candy salad. This helped show the kids what was truly special about what they were cooking and why we were raising money for this organization that helps such families.

After the workshop, my mom and I went to the OneFamily U.S. offices in New Jersey to personally deliver the \$700 I raised. (In addition to the charge for the program, other people found out about my project and gave me donations.) This part was more meaningful than



I thought. Once we got there, we saw how much they appreciated the money, and what it meant to them. I saw firsthand how something I worked hard on could help others.

Not only did I raise money, but I also raised my awareness about what is happening in Israel. This is something I enjoyed so much that I want to do it again in the future. I'm already planning what other recipes I want to cook. •

.....
Daniel Satran is in 8th grade at Briarcliff Middle School. For more information about OneFamily, go to onefamilytogether.org or call 646-289-8600.

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Braving THE SHAVE

By Sophie Glaser

The first time I heard about the St. Baldrick's Foundation, I was at dinner with my family. I was nine at the time. My parents pulled up a photo of one of our close family friends who had shaved his head to raise money and awareness for pediatric cancer. Something tugged at my heart as I watched the videos on the St. Baldrick's website about kids with cancer and thought about the many adults in my life who were also diagnosed with cancer.

That was when I knew what I wanted to do. As my long curly hair bounced on my shoulders, I announced to my parents that I wanted to shave my head, too.

And so, it happened. That was just the first time.

I've long been involved with St. Baldrick's, a non-profit organization that partners with kids, teens and adults to raise money for pediatric cancer research. Volunteers educate, fundraise and spread the word. They also shave their heads in solidarity with those who have lost their hair during chemotherapy treatments.

Towards the end of third grade, I shaved my head for

the first time. I raised more than \$12,000 for St. Baldrick's. The fundraising took place over a month, and I wrote letters, contacted my friends and spread the news via the internet to raise awareness about the cause. It was one of the most unforgettable experiences of my life. That's why, more than three years later, when I was thinking about what I wanted to do for my Bat Mitzvah project, it was the first thing that came to mind.

However, I also wanted to give back directly to the community and do something more personal than simply raising money. So, I taught myself how to knit hats on a loom. My intention was to donate them to the kids in the pediatric oncology ward to keep their bald heads warm during the cold Connecticut winters.

In order to make the greatest number of hats possible, I taught my family and friends how to knit them, too. I also taught a class at a local store where I asked my students to donate their first hat to my Bat Mitzvah project. In the end, I donated more than 65 hats to the Connecticut

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Sophie shaving it all off in front of family and friends

Children's Medical Center.

I started raising money the September before my Bat Mitzvah. I posted on Instagram and my parents' Facebook pages, wrote letters, talked to friends and family and even spoke to students at my school about what I was doing. My goal was to raise \$5,000.

On February 25th, 2017, the day of my Bat Mitzvah I had raised more than \$7,000! But that wasn't all. During my reception, as I was surrounded by family and friends, I shaved my head for the second time in my life. (This was also after I had already cut off most of it to donate to Pantene Beautiful Lengths, an organization that makes wigs for people with cancer).

The room was brimming with excitement. I had my mom, dad and sister behind me as I sat in the middle of the room facing the enormous crowd of my family and friends. I felt the warmth and support of the people around me permeate the air. Underneath the cheers of my classmates and relatives, I could hear my family sniffle a little from emotion, just like they had done when I shaved my head in third grade. I cried, too, not only because I felt so lucky to be surrounded by the people who supported me, helped me and listened to me as I completed my Bat Mitzvah project, but also because of how important my Bat Mitzvah and my project was to me. Finishing it and seeing all of my hard work culminate in this wonderful event was so special; it was an emotional moment.

One of the things that I learned while doing this project is that it is important to have patience and be confident in yourself and your abilities. While I was fundraising, there would be periods where it looked like I wasn't going to reach my initial goal. That just made me work even

harder, and I surpassed my goal by \$2,000. This project also helped me increase my social skills, as I often had to introduce myself to strangers and talk to them about the cause.

This project meant a lot to me, and it really made my Bat Mitzvah special. The support I got from my family and friends on the day of my Bat Mitzvah was overwhelming, and I feel so lucky that I was able to complete my project surrounded by them. My project proves that anyone, anywhere, can help others. I took something as simple as knitting hats and turned it into a long-term project that positively affected my community. When I donated those hats, I felt such a sense of accomplishment and pride.

Shaving my head in solidarity with those who have cancer connected me to them. It helps to break down the stereotypes that come with a bald head; associations of sickness and masculinity. It also empowers me, and others, to take action and help people in any way possible. Hair, to me, is a form of expression, and I feel like there is no better expression than of support and solidarity.

In the months after my Bat Mitzvah, many people asked me why I was bald. When I told them about my project, I helped spread awareness about pediatric cancer and helped point them in the direction of a great organization that helps people around the world. I hope that I can continue my work with the St. Baldrick's Foundation in the future, whether it is by helping them fundraise, raising awareness or by shaving my head again. •



Sophie Glaser is in the 9th grade at Phillips Academy Andover. She lives in West Hartford, Connecticut. Find out more about St. Baldrick's Foundation, stbaldricks.com and Connecticut Children's Medical Center, connecticutchildrens.org

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QUESTIONS TO Ask...

Questions upon questions....you've got lots of them! Planning a Bar or Bat Mitzvah takes a lot of time and effort and you want to do it right. As they say, there are no dumb questions. Be sure to talk to your friends to get recommendations and scour www.mitzvahmarket.com to get ideas for logos, centerpieces and vendors to hire. And then ask away.

First things first: decide a ballpark figure of how many people you want to invite since this is important in finding the right venue and hiring many of your

vendors. Then make sure anyone you want to hire is available on your date. Now's the time to begin asking questions to ensure they'll be the right fit.

You know some of the basics -- like making sure they have experience doing previous Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, speaking to references and making sure outside vendors have liability insurance. Always ask about cancellation and refund policies and be sure to sign contracts with all the details and dates in writing.

Here are some questions to get you started:

QUESTIONS TO ASK A VENUE:

- How many guests can the venue **accommodate**?
- May we have the venue **exclusively** for our event? If not, how many events occur at one time?
- Is there a **separate area** for adults and kids or are they together in one room?
- Can you accommodate a Bar or Bat Mitzvah **service**?
- Do you have different packages for day and evening events? What does the pricing include? How many hours does this cover? Are there any **additional fees**?
- How much deposit do you require to hold our date? What is your **cancellation policy**? How much is refundable? What happens if we have to postpone due to inclement weather?
- May we bring in **outside vendors**, caterer, event designer, florist? If not, do we have a choice of vendors or do you supply them all?
- If we use your caterer, can we bring in our own cake? Will there be a **cutting charge**?
- Do you have experience with **food allergies**?
- If our Bar or Bat Mitzvah falls during the Christmas season, will there be **seasonal decorations** in your facility? Can they be removed?

QUESTIONS TO ASK A CATERER:

- **How many events** will you be doing at the same time as mine?
- Who is my **point person** to work out details beforehand? Will there be someone at my event making sure everything we discuss happens?
- What will the **guest/staff ratio** be?
- What is the **kids' price**? And what age is considered kids vs young adults who don't drink?
- (If they are coming into an outside venue) **Do you supply** all the serving pieces, place settings, linens, etc? What will I need to make sure the venue has available to you? Working kitchen, etc?
- Is there **flexibility** with your menus? Is there a tasting session before we choose the final menu?
- Are there **beverage packages** (open bar, vs. a set bar menu)?
- Do you have experience dealing with **food allergies**?
- Will you offer vegetarian, vegan or **other options**?



QUESTIONS TO ASK A FLORIST:

- What is your **style** (modern, classic, natural, glam)?
- **Are you open** to my input and creativity and will you work with me as a team?
- Are you willing to **make samples** for me to see and adjust them if requested?
- What flowers do you recommend based on my **color scheme and theme**?
- What flowers will be in season the month my party occurs? How much more will it cost to get my **favorite flowers** if they are not in season?
- Are you willing to work **within my budget** of \$\$\$? What can I do for that price?
- Can you provide **centerpiece options** that go beyond flowers? What will be the additional cost?
- What other **décor elements** can you provide? (ie: linens, mirrors, other room and table decorations)
- Do you charge a **delivery fee**?
- Will you be responsible for working with my venue in terms of **installation**?
- What happens to the flowers/centerpieces at the **end of the event**?

QUESTIONS TO ASK A DJ:

- How many **years of experience** do you have doing Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrations?
- Can we see you **in action**? (Most DJs have videos showing them performing so you can get a sense of their style and interactions with guests. Others will supply dates they are doing similar affairs so you can see them in person.)
- Will you guarantee (and put in the contract) the name of a **certain DJ/MC** who will be at my event? Can I speak to that person in advance? Tell me about him or her?
- **What attire** will the MC, DJ and dancers be wearing? May I request a change? Will they wear T-shirts I provide?
- Do you bring all your **own equipment** or do you need the venue to supply anything?
- Do you have **backup equipment** and other MCs and DJs available in case of emergency or illness?
- Will you work with us to create a **timeline of the event** and when to add in such activities as the hora, candle lighting ceremony and montage? (Coordinate this with the venue as well.)
- Will you supply the **giveaway party favors**? Do we get to choose what we want? Is this an additional charge or is it included? Can I save money by purchasing these myself?
- What **other extras** can you supply, such as arcade games, live musicians, magicians, photographers, video montages experts, etc.?
- **What is your fee** and what does it include (including number of people they will bring, how many hours they will play, etc.)? Are there any other fees for parking, travel expenses, etc.?
- Are we **expected to tip** everyone you bring? How much?
- Am I expected to **feed the crew**? (If so, ask your venue or caterer to supply sandwiches for a pre-set price.)

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE ORDERING INVITATIONS:

- What is the **quality of the invitations** I am receiving? Is there a quality guarantee?
- Does your company do their own printing?
- **How long** will it take until my order is printed?
- **What is included** with my order? Do I get envelopes? RSVP cards? Tissue inserts?
- How many **extra envelopes** will I get in case I make mistakes printing addresses?
- Do I get a sample or print **ready proof** of my card before I finalize the order?
- **How much postage** will it take for this invitation? (Remember square envelopes cost more!)
- How much will it cost if I order **extra invitations** after the initial print run? How long will that take?
- Do you offer **calligraphy** or other printing services for the addresses?



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QUESTIONS TO ASK A PHOTOGRAPHER/ VIDEOGRAPHER:

- What is **your style**? Traditional? Photojournalistic?
- Are you skilled in **party candids, portraits** or both?
- Have you photographed **many Bar and Bat Mitzvahs** before so you know what to expect?
- (If you are working with a large photography studio) Who will actually be **shooting my party**? Can I speak to them directly beforehand?
- **How many people** do you work with? (If you have a large guest list or a lot going on, you may want additional photographers so you don't miss anything.)
- Do you shoot **digital or traditional** film or both?
- When will we **see proofs** and how soon will albums be delivered once we choose the photos?
- **Do you post** the photos on your website so I can share with friends and family? How long will they stay online?
- What does your **price include**? An album? Prints? Will I have to pay for each photo ordered? How much will that cost?
- Can I have the photos on a **USB drive** so I can have my own digital books printed? Is that an additional cost?
- **How many hours** will you be there? What do you charge for overtime?
- Are you available for **additional photo shoots** in synagogue before the Bar or Bat Mitzvah or for a creative session with the child? How much more will that cost?
- What **back up plans** do you have if you can't make the party at the last minute?

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Should You Have An

UNPLUGGED BAR/BAT MITZVAH?

By Hollee Actman Becker

The morning after my daughter's Bat Mitzvah, I glance at the clock — 6:00 am. I've barely slept three hours since I basically spent the night replaying the entire celebration in my head, but I roll over and reach for my phone anyway.

What I find there is amazing. Text after text from my friends and my daughter's friends filled with all the pictures and videos they captured during the night. There's our entrances, the chair going up during hora, the father/daughter hip hop dance that brought down the house.

On Instagram it's the same story. We gave all of our guests a custom hashtag to use, and man, did they use it. I saw images of our friends dancing and our family members laughing, plus close-up shots of all the party details I had spent months pulling together. Being able to re-live everything so soon after it happened was truly the best feeling in the world. After I finally finished scrolling, my face hurt from smiling.

It's now four years later, and suddenly, throwing an "unplugged" event — where you collect kids' cell phones on the way into the party — is starting to become a thing. I totally understand why. Cell phones can be a major attention suck at an event. You want your guests engaged and involved in what's going on in the room, not sprawled on a piece of LED lounge furniture watching Ninja play Battle Royale.

But, while I agree that electronics can sometimes be a major bummer during a service — *Addisyn, stop snapping dog filter pics during Emily's haftorah!* — I don't think banning phones during your celebration is the answer, either. In fact, I think it will probably be a big turn-off for your guests. And maybe even for you, since you might end up feeling like you missed out on the whole social networking experience we've all become so accustomed to.

The bottom line is that technology is a huge part of both our lives and our kids' lives, and it isn't going away

anytime soon. What we really need to do is embrace it and find ways to use it to our advantage instead of being so afraid that it will take something away from our celebration.

I've been on the Mitzvah circuit for almost six years now, and I've seen some pretty great ways to keep all the kids involved in the party without making them give up their phones. The key, it seems, is to find the place where cell phones and engagement meet. And if your DJ is a good one, the kids will be totally present at your party, whether there are cell phones in their hands or not.

That being said, I think a nice little sign set up near the entrance of your synagogue that says something like "This is an unplugged service so please turn off your phones" is a good idea. Same goes for having cubbies at your party with the kids' names on them, or drawstring bags on the backs of their chairs so they can quickly stash their phones when they want to hit the dance floor.

At the end of the day, whether you choose to ban cell phones or not is up to you. But remember, most of the people using their phones to snap pics at your party are doing it from a place of love. You've chosen to share your special celebration with all the important people in your life, so why not let them share it through pictures and videos as well? Here are six ways to encourage them to do it.



1. THE CUSTOM HASHTAG

Creating a custom hashtag for your Bar or Bat Mitzvah is one of the easiest ways to engage your guests in the celebration. They take pictures during the night, post them to Instagram using your event hashtag and boom — you get to experience the night through their eyes. Pretty cool, right? It's like the 2018 version of all those dispos-



able cameras we used to place on our wedding tables once upon a time.

2. THE SNAPCHAT FILTER

I'm not gonna lie — I love a good Mitzvah snapchat filter, and so will all of your younger guests. It's pretty much the first thing they look for when they enter the room. You can create your own filter or lens to frame your event right on the Snapchat app, even if you don't have an account. It takes less than five minutes, costs less than five dollars, and is a super-easy way to involve your guests and make the night feel special. If the idea of using Snapchat seems too intimidating, just ask your kid to do it for you.

3. THE HAND-OFF

One of my fav ways to incorporate cell phone pictures and videos into your event is to have the Bar or Bat Mitzvah child hand their phone off to one of their friends, and then have THEM capture all the amazing moments of the night. Your kid is hands free for the night, but won't miss out on a single recorded moment. Total win-win.

4. THE GROUP SELFIE

Remember when Ellen DeGeneres hosted the Oscars and took that epic group selfie? Or when Justin Timberlake took one from the middle of the stadium during the Super Bowl? Everybody loves crowding around a single phone to take a selfie, so set it up ahead of time with your DJ. Trust me, your guests will LOVE it.

5. THE GIVEAWAYS

While I'm on the topic of your DJ ... there are so many cell phone-related accessories you can order to have your MC toss out as giveaways. Some of the ones I've seen recently include logo-ed ear buds, PopSockets,



Bluetooth speakers, wireless chargers, cases, ring holders and wallets, and fans that plug into your phone's charger port — a huge hit with all the, ahem, older women.

6. THE FACETIME

Finally, don't forget about FaceTime and Skype. While some synagogues will now stream your service online for those who can't be there in person, not all of them do so. Using FaceTime or another live video app during your service or even during your candle lighting ceremony is a great way to include far-away relatives. The grandparents of my friend Rochelle's husband couldn't make the trip from Florida for her son's big day, so they decided to record it using Facebook Live. "They got to see their first great-grandchild Bar Mitzvah'ed live," she said. "They felt like they were a part of it, and it was so special for them."

So today, when some high-end restaurants and clubs are banning cell phones to keep a quiet and respectful atmosphere, it might be appropriate to do the same in synagogue; but I don't think we need to go that far at most Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrations. Instead, help your guests use their electronics in a fun way. Bottom line: like anything else in planning your perfect party, do what feels most comfortable for you and your family. And enjoy the moment both on and offline. •



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Alex Michals

BAR MITZVAH DATE: March 24, 2018

PHOTOGRAPHER: White Light Photography

SERVICE: Temple Beth Am, Merrick

PARTY VENUE: Bridgeview Yacht Club,
Island Park, NY

DRESS CODE: Black tie

SERVICE ATTIRE: The Havdalah service meant that Alex was able to wear his black tuxedo (from Esquire Tuxedos in Merrick) over a crisp, white shirt throughout the night.

SERVICE ACCESSORY: Grandpa Sam's tallit was a sentimental talisman worn as Alex recited the Hebrew prayers.

PARTY ACCESSORY: A silver tie and shiny black dress shoes gave the classic tuxedo a modern vibe.



To read more about Mitzvah Style, visit MitzvahMarket.com

SOMETHING *Old,* SOMETHING *New*

BAR/BAT MITZVAH ACCESSORIES

By Bari Cener

The fashion you need to look your best on your Bar or Bat Mitzvah day is a little bit throwback, a little bit fast forward. But what stays the same in Mitzvah fashion is that with enough confidence any kid can pull off the hottest trend or rock a vintage look. And it's great if you can add a unique twist that's all your own.

Since the day is a mix of old and new customs, why not keep this in mind when adding different accessories for both the service and the party. Raise your style game by weaving in a few key pieces for each part of the day.

Wearing important Judaica – especially when it's something that has been passed down by beloved family members – pays homage to the past, while new items are symbols of a contemporary celebration that's all yours. And while it doesn't get any more special than wearing a family heirloom, it's always fun to open a new box of bling!

While reading his Torah portion, Alex Michals wore a tallit that belongs to his Grandpa Sam and that was also worn by his brother Joshua to his own Bar Mitzvah service. To lead her service with perfect polish, Zoe Bernstein wore a lavender tallit that was custom made and sent by cousins in Israel.



Lara Indich

BAT MITZVAH DATE: September 16, 2018

PHOTOGRAPHER: Hi Tech Events

SERVICE: Temple Israel of South Merrick, Merrick, NY

PARTY VENUE: East Meadow Jewish Center

DRESS CODE: Cocktail attire

SERVICE DRESS: A light grey and black A-line dress was worn for the morning service.

SERVICE ACCESSORIES: Lara Claire used a head covering at the Friday evening service that belonged to her great grandma Claire, who she is named after.

PARTY DRESS: A white, two-piece dress with a full, hi-low skirt accented with silver lining was paired with a jeweled bodice.

PARTY ACCESSORIES: Blinged-out platform sneakers, two bangle bracelets, and small, drop earrings.



Jake Tolipano

BAR MITZVAH DATE: April 22, 2017

PHOTOGRAPHER: White Light Photography

SERVICE: Temple Beth Am, Merrick

PARTY VENUE: Temple Chaverim in Plainview, NY

DRESS CODE: "Dress Deluxe, No Tux"

SERVICE ATTIRE: Coordinating colors and textures, Jake wore a Tallia blue suit with black plaid lining and a two-button notched lapel. His powder blue Robert Graham shirt was topped off with a tone-on-tone pocket square and necktie.

SERVICE ACCESSORY: A tallit & yarmulka given to him by his grandma and grandpa.

PARTY ATTIRE: Custom made by Mur-Lee's in Lynbrook, his black tone-on-tone Tallia dinner jacket had a single button with solid black lapel over a white tone-on-tone dress shirt.

PARTY ACCESSORY: A dashing polka dot pocket square and necktie updated the classic dinner jacket.

Zoe Bernstein

BAT MITZVAH DATE: April 28, 2018

PHOTOGRAPHER: Hi Tech Events

SERVICE: The Plainview Jewish Center in Plainview, NY

PARTY VENUE: The Heritage Club in Bethpage, NY

DRESS CODE: Daytime cocktail

SERVICE ATTIRE: A sweet and simple white dress with cap sleeves and a pearl encrusted belt.

SERVICE ACCESSORY: Zoe's cousin from Israel had a tallit made for her using the lavender color of her party dress to wear during her Bat Mitzvah service.

PARTY DRESS: Custom made by Elena DoVales of Designing Dreams in Mineola, the lavender confection had a sweetheart neckline and tiered, hi-low skirt.

PARTY ACCESSORIES: Throughout the day, Zoe wore teardrop diamond earrings given to her by her grandma, and a matching teardrop diamond necklace from her parents.





MITZVAH MARKET

Moms Tell **ALL**

Preparing for a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a lot of work for both the child, who is learning to read Torah, and the parents, who are designing a celebration of the event. But there is no need to reinvent the wheel when it comes to party planning. You can always get some great advice from others who have been there/done that. Check out our Mitzvah Market regional Facebook groups for tips from others in your community or general advice from those with experience. Here are some of our favorite tips from our Mitzvah Moms about what's important and what's not:

GIVE A GIFT WITH MEANING

Every time I give a Bar or Bat Mitzvah gift I also include a blank check for \$50 for the child to send to a charity of their choosing. This way they get to think about donating to a cause that means something to them. One girl gave it to an organization that was fundraising for a disease that one of her friends was fighting and another boy gave it to a breast cancer charity in honor of his mother. The kids get so many gifts. They appreciate this because it makes them think a little. It's a lot better than me saying: 'I made a donation to a cause I care about' in their name. Why not let them choose? After all, that's what becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is all about. – Donna Bernstein

GET ORGANIZED

I know it's a Mitzvah Market thing itself...but the Mitzvah Organizer was the best tool/purchase I made. I used it for both my kids. That, and starting thank you notes as soon as they begin receiving gifts. Finish all those before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and then all they have to worry about are the ones from the weekend. – Dorey Krinsky Kappel

MAKE MEMORIES

Looking back to my kids' B'nai Mitzvah (they are boy and girl twins), there are not many regrets that come to mind. It was a joyous service and celebration. The one thing I can tell families is to stick to what is good for you and your kids. Do not feel pressure to do anything out of your comfort zone, financially or otherwise. Our culture puts a lot of pressure on us not only to keep up, but to surpass everyone else with whatever we are doing. When it is all said and done, it is you, your kids and your bank account. And the most important memories will not revolve around how much money you spent on centerpieces. – Kori Rehfield

BE YOUR OWN TRENDSETTER

Don't let the latest trends sway your budget or you/your child's taste and/or comfort level. – Robin Hochroth

MAKE THE PARTY ABOUT YOUR CHILD

Make sure the party is all about your child, not just what the parents want. My sister hated her Bat Mitzvah because it was more like my mom wanted to make a party and invite all her friends instead of a celebration of my sister and what and who she liked. Use your child's interests and hobbies to make it their special day. If your child is very shy, they may not like a big party. If your child is very artistic, use one of their drawings on the invitation. It personalizes it and makes the kid feel great because it's really all about them and their talents.

— Leora Lambert

DO WHAT'S MEANINGFUL FOR YOUR FAMILY

I highly recommend the Monday morning Bar or Bat Mitzvah; shorter service, none of the Shabbat restrictions. Serve brunch to everybody; go home.

Keep your eye on what is important about the event for your family. Is it about the religious observance? Is it about being with your family? Is it about sharing with as many people as you can, or just with a few close friends and family? That is the place to start planning. If you are unsure that something is necessary (band, photo booth, benchers, party favors, inviting coworkers, whatever...) then it's probably not. Take a lot of pictures. — Lynn Cohen Berman

CREATE A TIMELINE

Work with your DJ and/or party planner to create an event timeline and give it to all your vendors so everyone is on the same page. This way the DJ knows when to play quieter music during the meal and when to rev things up. The caterer knows when to wheel out the cake, etc. It will make the whole event go smoothly. — Rachel Fishbein

CELEBRATE THE INNER JOURNEY

Keep directing the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to their inner journey, what's meaningful to them, while setting specific times to learn together, using the Torah or some other touchstone, as it will relate to the big day. It's not just a party, but a time to grow and bond. — Sheila Kaufman-Lewis

HIRE A HELPER

I wish I had hired someone to help me with the details on the day of the event. Someone who could make sure the centerpieces were straight, collect gifts, ask the DJ to play certain songs, etc. Not a party planner, just another helping hand. Even an organized college student would work. — Jennifer Unter

BE PREPARED

Have the tips and payments ready to go and labeled in envelopes before the day starts. — Michele Erenfryd Minick





GET YOUR CHILD INVOLVED

Ask your kid about all aspects of the service and party. A whole year before the big day, we sat down and discussed whether he just wanted an aliyah, or if he wanted to prepare to read from the Torah. Once he said he wanted to read from the Torah, we discussed how much he was going to read. He also said he wanted to give a speech in front of the extended family on Friday night, rather than before the entire congregation the following day. We made a plan for how he would prepare the reading and the speech, and he stuck to it.

Also, I narrowed down the invitation selection to three, then showed those to him. He picked the one he liked best.

Ask them what foods they want served at lunch or kiddush. When we called the caterer, they had several selections for the package we purchased. We ran the dishes by our son, and he let us know which items he and his friends would enjoy the most.

When it came to the cake, he had a particular flavor combination that he wanted quite badly. The more affordable bakeries did not offer either the icing flavor or the cake flavor he wanted, so we asked him if he wanted to serve pastries instead, and which ones.

We asked his feedback on other aspects of the Bar Mitzvah, too. It's important to ask your child and get their input. Becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah means they are taking responsibility for their spiritual life. If we plan and execute every detail of their lives for them, how will they learn to take responsibility? Also, preparing to read Torah, lead part of a service, speak in front of people, learning the obligations of adult Jews -- these are all tasks that require time and effort from them. If they help decide what they want the final product to look like, kids are more willing to spend the time and effort on making it a reality.

– Rebecca Klempner

PLAN YOUR PHOTOS

Give the photographer a list of photos to be sure to take. We never got a great family photo with the four of us because we were so busy making sure our daughter was photographed with everyone else. – Jane Hiriam

ENJOY THE MOMENT

Take a minute or two to stand in the back of the room and take it all in. Look at your child, friends, and family and enjoy the moment. It goes by very quickly! – Mindy J. Schmidt

MAKE IT ABOUT YOUR CHILD

#1: It shouldn't be all about the party. #2: The party should be all about them...a party for them and their friends, not a big dinner dance for all the parents' friends. – Keren David



To find a group in your area visit: mitzvahmarket.com/mitzvah-ideas/other-ideas/find-planning-parents-in-our-local-facebook-groups/



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Bar/Bat Mitzvah 101

A Glossary For Those in the Know

By the time your son or daughter steps up to the bimah one Shabbat morning to recite his or her haftarah, they will understand perfectly well what the first half of this sentence meant. But will you? And will you be able to explain it all to your guests? Here is a short glossary of important Hebrew phrases to know before you go:

- **Aliyah:** In Hebrew, the word aliyah means to go up, or, as a noun, an ascent. During the Torah reading portion of the service, some members of the community are offered an aliyah, meaning they are called up to the bimah to perform a certain role. This can include reciting the blessing over the Torah, reading from the Torah, dressing the Torah and returning it to the ark, or some other function. It is considered an honor to be called up, and as such it is often given to family members and close friends of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah.
- **Aron Ha-Kodesh:** Literally meaning “the holy ark,” the Aron ha-Kodesh is an ark where the sacred texts used during a prayer service are held. Mostly, this includes one or more scrolls of the Torah and perhaps a similar looking scroll that will hold the haftarah portions. The ark itself is meant to symbolize the mishkan (tabernacle) in which the ancient Israelites stored the sacred tables Moses received on Mount Sinai.
- **B’nai Mitzvah:** B’nai Mitzvah is the plural of Bar Mitzvah and is the term used to describe the coming of age according to Jewish tradition. Literally meaning “master of commandments,” becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah means the person is obliged to observe the Jewish commandments, and a ceremony, along with a celebration, takes place to mark this moment. The Bar Bat Mitzvah event is a formal and spiritual declaration of a child’s accession to adulthood. Jewish tradition designates Bar and Bat Mitzvah age as 13 for a boy and either 12 or 13 for a girl.
- **Bimah:** Hebrew for stage, the bimah is the raised location in the sanctuary where the Torah is read. At Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, family members and close friends are often called onto the bimah for an aliyah, or to assist with the service.
- **D’var Torah:** Literally “a thing of Torah,” a d’var Torah is a speech that tried to convey a life lesson or message supported by the story in the weekly parasha or haftarah (scripture readings). After the Torah portion is read, the Rabbi will give a d’var Torah, typically as part of a sermon; when a child becomes a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, he or she delivers a d’var Torah as well, often tying it into personal experiences.
- **Davening:** A transliteration of the Yiddish word, meaning praying, to daven is to pray. Like in many other faiths, davening can take numerous, varied forms, from mediation to the more traditional chanting of prayer in synagogue.
- **Haftarah:** Often mispronounced as “haf-torah,” the haftarah is a selected reading from one of the other sections of the Jewish Bible (Old Testament). Traditionally, the haftarah is recited after the Torah reading on the Shabbat or another holy Jewish day, and is usually thematically related to the parasha. It is customary for the Bar Bat Mitzvah to read this portion of the scriptures in addition to any part of the parasha he/she has read.
- **Kiddush:** This is the blessing recited over wine on Shabbat and other Jewish holy days. Kiddush derives from the Hebrew word kadosh, which means holy. By saying kiddush, one is proclaiming the holiness of the day.
- **Kippah:** The Hebrew name for the traditional head covering worn by Jews in synagogue as well as, for some, in daily life. Often called a yarmulke, its Yiddish name, the kippah is meant to signify a Jew’s recognition of the presence of God. In more orthodox Jewish sects, only men wear kippot (plural of kippah), though some observant women cover their heads using hats, veils, or wigs. Less observant Jews often choose to wear kippot only during religious pursuits, such as when in a synagogue or while studying sacred texts. And some more liberal Jews do not wear a kippah at any time.
- **Minyan:** The number of people required to be present for certain prayers to be recited. A minyan consists of 10 Jewish adults, or, for Orthodox Jews, 10 Jewish males. When a child becomes a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, he or she is eligible to be counted in the minyan.
- **Motzi:** The blessing recited over bread, which ordains the start of the meal. On Shabbat and other holy days, a festive, braided challah bread is used.
- **Parasha:** The weekly Torah portion read in synagogue. On Shabbat, a cantor or members of the



Photo by Leo Vatikn Photography

congregation read the parasha. The Torah portion is divided into seven sections. As a new member of the Jewish community, the Bar Bat Mitzvah will often read a section or even the entire parasha during his or her Bar or Bat Mitzvah service. Once children receive their Bar Bat Mitzvah date, the parasha they will read from is known.

- **Shabbat:** The Jewish day of rest, where everyone is commanded to stop all work before sundown on Friday and enjoy the company of friends and family until sundown on Saturday. This is also typically the day on which Bar and Bat Mitzvahs are held (by custom though not by requirement). It is customary to indulge in an extensive meal on Friday night with guests, and the following morning a longer prayer service is usually held. Shabbat is meant to be a moment of peace in an otherwise hectic world and, depending upon one's level of observance, some choose to refrain from many activities on Shabbat such as driving, writing, or watching TV. A special Shabbat service is held in most synagogues on Saturday morning that includes these three parts: Shacharit, the morning prayers; the Torah Service, which includes the reading of the Torah and the haftarah (the focal point of the Bar Bat Mitzvah); and Musaf, the additional Shabbat prayers focusing on song-like praises of God.
- **Simcha:** The literal definition of simcha is joy. Simcha refers to a special happy occasion in a Jewish life, such as a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, a bris, or a wedding.
- **Tallit:** A tallit is a traditional prayer shawl worn by Jewish adults while praying in synagogue. At each of

the four corners of the garment are fringes of string, or tzitzit in Hebrew, that are braided and knotted as a way to remind Jews of the commandments issued in the Torah. Anyone of Bar Bat Mitzvah age or older who approaches the bimah to take a leadership role in the services is required to put on a tallit; beyond that circumstance, however, there are different customs on who wears a tallit, according to different sects of Judaism. Orthodox sects of Judaism traditionally reserve the privilege of wearing a tallit to married men, while conservative and reform sects allow both sexes to wear a tallit, starting from Bar Bat Mitzvah age.

- **Torah:** Torah has multiple definitions, but in this context it refers to the first five books of the Bible, often called the Five Books of Moses. The Torah recounts the creation of the world and the establishment of the Jewish faith, while also offering a set of laws on which Jewish life is based. The Torah is divided into 54 portions with one read each week (two weeks have double portions). The reading of each week's portion (or part of the portion in some traditions) serves as the focal point of the Shabbat prayer services.
- **Trope:** In Jewish tradition, sacred text is chanted rather than simply read, whether for public reading or for study. Trope is the Yiddish word for the 1,400-year-old system of distinctive marks that function as musical notation and punctuation for the biblical text. The trope determines the actual tune used by readers for the parasha and haftarah. As part of their preparation, some B'nai Mitzvha learn the names and tunes for each trope marking so they can figure out the cantillation for themselves.

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.**
- ❑ **Sign up for MitzvahOrganizer.com.** This planning tool will keep track of all your party details.
- ❑ **Talk to friends who’ve already planned a Bar or Bat Mitzvah for ideas and tips.**
- ❑ **Go to a Celebrate! Party Showcase.** 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.





- ❑ **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.**

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!**



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.**



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MITZVAHNOMICS

Keeping Track of Your Costs

No matter what kind of celebration you plan for your child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah, there are many costs involved. First, you need to decide what kind of party to have and what extras to include. Do you want to spend more money on the entertainment or the food? Do you want to hire a magician or have the kids make flip books? What other events will you host? We've provided a list of all of the potential costs. Check off those that pertain to your party and how much you want to budget for each. Planning ahead and keeping track of your expenses will help you develop a realistic picture of the total costs.

FOR THE SYNAGOGUE

- ☐ **Synagogue Fees** Ask what costs are associated with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. \$ _____
- ☐ **Programs** Some families choose to print a program or brochure to explain the service rituals and who is participating. \$ _____
- ☐ **Kippot** See if your synagogue allows personalized kippot before ordering. \$ _____
- ☐ **Flowers** Do you need to provide flowers for the bimah? \$ _____
- ☐ **Tallit** Are you purchasing a new tallit for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child or using one from a family member? \$ _____
- ☐ **Kiddush** If you plan to host a buffet or luncheon following services, ask your synagogue what costs are involved (food, staff, flowers, linens, etc.) If there is another celebrant, see if you can share the costs. \$ _____

PRINTING NEEDS

- ☐ **Invitations** These can range from expensive custom invites to do-it-yourself homemade ones. \$ _____
- ☐ **Thank You Notes** \$ _____
- ☐ **Save the Date Cards** \$ _____
- ☐ **Table Place Seating Cards** \$ _____
- ☐ **Calligraphy** If you decide to hire someone to hand write your place cards and/or envelopes. \$ _____
- ☐ **Postage** Make sure to weigh an envelope with all enclosures to determine the final cost. For an extra fee, you can order customized stamps through many websites including razzle.com and stamps.com. \$ _____

LOOKING GOOD

- ☐ **Clothes for synagogue and party for your child and other family members** \$ _____
- ☐ **Hair and makeup** \$ _____



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MITZVAHNOMICS

FOR THE GUESTS

- **Transportation** Will you transport out-of-town guests from the hotel to the synagogue and to the party if it is off site? You may also need transportation for children attending without parents. \$ _____
- **Additional Meals** Are you having out-of-town guests for Friday night dinner and/or Sunday brunch? \$ _____
- **Welcom Gifts for Hotel Guests** \$ _____

FOR THE CELEBRATION

- **Party Planner** (if you choose to use one) \$ _____
- **Venue** \$ _____
- **Caterer** Food may be included in the total rate, but can be additional. \$ _____
- **Band or DJ** Keep in mind you will be charged extra for dancers and motivators and be sure to factor in feeding the extra staff. \$ _____
- **Entertainment** This varies widely depending on the type and quantity of activities you bring in. \$ _____
- **Flowers/Décor/Lighting** \$ _____
- **Centerpieces** \$ _____
- **Sign-in** \$ _____
- **Montage Specialist** You can hire a specialist or ask your DJ/Entertainment company if they can put together a creative montage of photos and videos. \$ _____
- **Photographer/Videographer** \$ _____
- **Custom Cake** \$ _____
- **Party Favors** \$ _____
- **Giveaways** Some DJs supply giveaways they hand out on the dance floor; others may ask you to supply your own or you may want to supplement their offerings. Ask what's included in their fee. \$ _____
- **Socks** Sounds odd, but trust us, girls will often take off their shoes for dancing and will want to don socks for sliding around the floor. \$ _____
- **Exit Treats** Many parties include candy bars, coffee trucks and other fun food as guests exit the party. \$ _____
- **Tips** There may be some staff you would like to tip afterwards. \$ _____



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Jewish-Ceremonies.com Rabbi/Cantor Ronald Broden

89 Clinton Avenue

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jewish-ceremonies.com

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privatebatmitzvah.net

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Turn your pictures into confetti to make your event personalized and memorable! Photofetti is 1" pieces of confetti made from your images, mingled with colorful accent pieces!

Simple Party Designs

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ENTERTAINMENT: GAMES/ AMUSEMENTS/INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES

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Syosset, NY

516-921-5777

2BSeenDressesLI.com

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4661 Palisades Center Dr., West Nyack, NY
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Pelham Manor:

881 Pelham Parkway, Pelham Manor, NY
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Staten Island:

2655 Richmond Ave., Staten Island, NY
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Times Square:

234 W 42nd St, 3rd Floor, New York, NY
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516-317-4000

thebeachlongisland.com

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barmitzvahbouncer.com

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Top CANDLE LIGHTING SONGS

for All Your Friends and Family Members

Having a candle lighting ceremony at a Bar or Bat Mitzvah celebration is a tradition many families like to include. It can be a great way to honor your loved ones who have joined you on this special day, and even to remember those who are no longer here to take part in the celebration.

Here are some fun songs Dance Time Entertainment suggests to play when your guests come up to light their candles. But remember: this is your child's day; get their input when choosing songs. After all, they're up-to-date on the latest music and may have some favorites they want to use.

TOP SONGS FOR THE GUEST OF HONOR

All Star - Smashmouth
Beautiful Boy - John Lennon
Beautiful Day - U2
Best Day of My Life - American Authors
Birthday - Beatles

TOP SONGS FOR PARENTS & GRANDPARENTS

As Time Goes By - Jimmy Durante
As Long As We Got Each Other - Growing Pains Theme
Because You Loved Me - Celine Dion
Can You Feel The Love Tonight - Elton John
Can't Stop The Feeling - Justin Timberlake

TOP SONGS FOR BROTHERS & SISTERS

Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better - Annie Get Your Gun
Bad To The Bone - George Thorogood
Barbie Girl - Aqua
Born To Be Wild - Steppenwolf
Brown Eyed Girl - Van Morrison

TOP SONGS FOR AUNTS, UNCLES & COUSINS

All You Need Is Love - Beatles
Bad Case of Loving You - Robert Palmer
Celebration - Kool & The Gang
Could You Be Loved - Bob Marley
Crazy Little Thing Called Love - Queen

TOP SONGS FOR OUT OF STATE GUESTS

America - Neil Diamond
Back Home In Indiana - Jim Nabors
California Dreamin' - The Mamas & The Papas
California Girls - Beach Boys
Carolina On My Mind - James Taylor

TOP SONGS FOR FRIENDS

With a Little Help From My Friends - Beatles
Ain't No Mountain High Enough - Marvin Gaye
All I Do Is Win - DJ Khaled
Anytime You Need A Friend - Mariah Carey
As Long as We Got Each Other - Growing Pains

TOP SONGS FOR MEMORY CANDLE

Angel - Sarah McLachlan
A Thousand Years - Christina Perri
I Will Always Love You - Whitney Houston
I Will Remember You - Sarah McLachlan
Memory - Cats





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