

Mazel Tov! Your son is growing up, He'll soon be celebrating the biggest event of his adolescent life: **His Bar Mitzvah.**

ews have celebrated Bar Mitzvahs for thousands of years, and they have become a prominent part of our contemporary culture. We see it as a 'coming of age'; a time to be fully counted in the 'Jewish Community'; a time to celebrate one's Jewish identity.

All true.

But, as you plan a Bar Mitzvah with your son, you may have some more questions:

- What is the deeper meaning of becoming a Bar Mitzvah?
- What is its significance?
- How has it been celebrated through history?
- How do we celebrate the Bar
- Mitzvah at Chabad?
- What does the preparation
- process entail?
- Where's my place as a parent in the Bar Mitzvah?
- Where does my family fit in?

What is a Bar Mitzvah.....

A Look at Bar Mitzvah Through the Lens of the DEVELOPMENTAL SPECTRUM



As you watch your child grow into an adult, you are observing the 'unfolding' of his persona. As time passes, developmental stages are reached and actualized, and a new level of identity blossoms. It's the natural flow of life. We can call it the developmental spectrum. At a certain point on this continuum, a child is ready to step beyond childhood. Still short of adulthood, the youth enters a 'post-childhood' phase. At this stage, he is ready to accept responsibility for his actions, and ready to 'step-up' as a reliable functionary in family and society.

In Jewish tradition, Bar Mitzvah is that stage; it's exiting childhood and crossing the threshold into 'post-childhood'. We want to make the most of this stage...

But, for thousands of years, we've seen it as more than the natural unfolding of the psyche. We see Bar Mitzvah as a time when the soul begins to 'blossom', allowing the individual to find 'moral maturity' within him/herself. It's seen as a point of time when we can begin to find a crystallization/awareness of our values which we know to be correct - and have

In Judaism, SPIRITUAL CELEBRATIONS

find PHYSICAL EXPRESSIONS



In Jewish thought, 'celebrations of the spirit' also need to be 'celebrations of the body'. A Bar Mitzvah is a multi-dimensional event, celebrating a number of spiritual, psychological and emotional events in the child's and family's life. So a Bar Mitzvah event needs to find TANGIBLE ways to express all these facets. In planning a meaningful Bar Mitzvah, we need to identify the psycho-spiritual facets of celebration and then bring them to tangible expression in our celebration.

What are some spiritual CONCEPTS we are celebrating?

A Bar Mitzvah celebrates the first 13 years of a child's life; childhood is a formative stage and is a foundation for life. A Bar Mitzvah celebrates the child's commitment to living his life as a Jewish adult.

A Bar Mitzvah celebrates our Torah, which gives us a world-view and guidance on how to lead a meaningful life. A Bar Mitzvah celebrates the idea that this boy is now taking his rightful place as part of the Jewish community. A Bar Mitzvah celebrates the new link in the chain of Jewish continuity.

To think about: How can we infuse these important

concepts into the design of the Bar Mitzvah celebration?



How we celebrate at Chabad....

Rather than focus on a 'Bar Mitzvah product', or just the 'special day', we emphasize the 'process' of maturation, responsibility and Jewish identity. The readings and Mitzvah projects are direct expressions of this process.

YOUR SON'S CEREMONY INCLUDES:

- Hebrew and English Torah readings
- A speech, with reflections on the meaning of this important milestone, his path in reaching it, etc.
- A representation of the Mitzvah Project that your son worked on over the course of his Bar Mitzvah preparation
- The rabbi's explanation of the process, ceremony and respective readings
- As per your guidance, we call on family-members and friends for readings and/or personal reflections.
- A handout will be prepared for all the guests containing all the above readings and some additional prayers. The handout generally contains a personalized message/s from the family. If you like, you can also design your own cover.
- The parents (and grandparents if you choose) bless the Bar Mitzvah boy. They will also convey the continuity of tradition with a 'Judaic bestowal', e.g a Tallit, Shabbat candlestick, tzitzit.
- A candy throw, in which we shower the Bar Mitzvah with sweetness.
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TORAH Portion:

Twelve passages of Scripture, Talmud and Jewish Spirituality will form the core of your son's readings. We have selected these passages because they each articulate a developmentally-appropriate message for your child. They are not just religious texts for a Bar Mitzvah event; they are messages for life, and we hope that these values will become 'tools for a meaningful life' as your son matures into adult life.

Please see page 11 for more details.

We at Chabad would like to create everlasting memories as your son celebrates his Bar Mitzvah. As per your guidance, we design the ceremony to include family and guests in any of the services.

The following are some things that can be incorporated into any one of the services.

Parents' Speech

- D'var Torah, address
- by the Bar Mitzvah boy on the '12 Passages'
 - Rabbi's Comments
- Yivarechicha Blessing
 - By Bat Mitzvah boy's father
 - Candy Throw
 - Mazel Tov melody



Ceremony Options.....

The celebration described in part 2 is not a formal prayer service per se; it's a free-standing, Judaic celebration of your son's Bar Mitzvah. We can schedule this ceremony at a time - and shape its schedule in a way - which will maximize the Bar Mitzvah meaning and celebration. In addition, prayers will be recited, psalms read and speeches shared (the psalms and prayers may be recited in English) by any family and friends you'd like to honor).

Families have typically chosen two times/models:

Monday or Thursday afternoon, Before Sundown

In Jewish tradition, the Torah is read on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays. The ceremony will typically last an hour.

- If you choose to celebrate the Bar Mitzvah this way:
- The rabbi welcomes everyone and describes the Bar Mitzvah service.
- The Bar Mitzvah boy reads his Torah portion from the Torah.
- You may invite family and friends to read prayers or share thoughts.
- The Bar Mitzvah boy addresses the audience, incorporating lessons from his readings and Mitzvah Project.

NOTE: To view sun-down hours, go to ChabadBedford.com and click on calendar tools.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON - MINCHA

The service is held after 2:00pm, AND at least 45 minutes PRIOR to sun-down.

If you choose to celebrate the Bar Mitzvah this way:

- The rabbi welcomes everyone and describes the Havdala service.
- The Bar Mitzvah boy then begins his Bar Mitzvah ceremony, honoring close family members by having them participate in parts of the service.
- The Bar-Mitzvah boy reads rom the Torah or Haftorah.
- You may invite family and friends to read prayers or share thoughts.
- The Bar Mitzvah boy addresses the audience, incorporating lessons from his readings and Mitzvah Project.

Please bear in mind that videos, cameras, and microphones are not be used during this service.

SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE:

The Bar Mitzvah boy studies a portion of the Torah-reading with its cantillation and recites it as part of our Shabbat morning service.

The Bar Mitzvah boy addresses the audience, incorporating lessons from his readings and Mitzvah Project.

Parents and other family members are welcome to share speeches after the service. Service begins at 9:30am and lasts approximately three hours. The Family sponsors a kiddush for Chabad members and guests.

Please bear in mind that videos and cameras are not be used during this service.



Preparation Time Line.....



PRELIMINARY MEETING:

Whenever you are ready to begin planning your son's bar mitzvah (we recommend - 1 year prior to the service) please call Chabad to set up a preliminary meeting. The primary objective of this first meeting is to get to know each other and for you to share what you envision the Bar Mitzvah journey to be like. Rabbi Arik Wolf will facilitate this discussion with you and your son. We will also choose a date and discuss the possibilities for the ceremony and readings (as described in Part 2, 3) for the event. Your son will be assigned a **READING TUTOR** who will help him hone his Hebrew reading skills.

10 MONTHS PRIOR TO THE BAR MITZVAH SERVICE:

- Your son will be meeting with his tutor and/or the rabbi once a week over the course of this preparation process. Each meeting will be approximately ½ hour.
- The meetings will be devoted to perfecting your son's **diction/cadence** with regard to Bar Mitzvah ceremony's text(s).
- The tutor will also devote time to **study and discussions** about the lessons and meaning behind the readings. .
- During the appointments with the tutor, the Bar Mitzvah boy will discuss his choice of a **Mitzvah Project**. The Mitzvah Project has two dimensions: one of a 'social consciousness' nature and the other of a 'ritual' nature (e.g. Tefillin, Mezuzah).
- We encourage parents to schedule a time with Rabbi Arik to learn about your son's Torah portion and studies, so that the journey of learning is one that you embark on together.

One Month BEFORE THE BAR MITZVAH:

One month before the event, when your son has absorbed the readings and their messages, the Rabbi and he will begin to chart his Bar Mitzvah **speech**.

Rabbi Arik will meet with your family a second time to discuss the final details.

The template of the service booklet will be emailed to you so it can be sent off to print.

ACTUAL DAY OF THE BAR MITZVAH:

- Regardless of when you schedule your ceremony and party, the actual 'Bar Mitzvah day' is your son's thirteenth birthday on the Jewish calendar. With your permission, the Rabbi will **visit your son at home** on that day - perhaps for just a few minutes - to celebrate the day's unique character.
- Your son will lay Tefillin ('Phylacteries') in celebration of his Bar Mitzvah.

