

WHAT EXACTLY IS A BAR MITZVAH?



At thirteen, a young Jewish man or woman becomes obligated to observe the commandments of Judaism. "Bar/Bat mitzvah" literally means "son/daughter of the commandment." The celebration of a bar/bat mitzvah signifies that the young man or woman is beginning and will continue to function as an active and responsible Jew in the Jewish community. Or, as Bar Mitzvah boys will tell you, "Today I am a man!"

As part of his Bar Mitzvah, Max has been hard at work studying, and will read from the Torah in Hebrew as well as lead some of the prayers. Max will deliver his D'Var Torah (in English), his interpretation and personal connection to the Torah portion he has read.

WHAT IS THE PROPER GREETING?

You may hear people greeting each other with "Shabbat Shalom" (pronounced Shah-BAHT Shah-LOME), which basically means "Good Sabbath," or "Peaceful Sabbath." The proper response is to repeat back, "Shabbat Shalom."



DO I NEED TO WEAR A YARMULKE?

A yarmulke, or head covering (also known as a kippah), is traditionally worn by males during the service and also by women in more liberal synagogues.

Wearing a kippah is not a symbol of religious identification, but is rather an act of respect to the sacredness of the worship space. Feel free to wear it or not - it is up to you! Of course, even if you don't wear one, please take it home as a souvenir.



WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SITTING AND STANDING?

Jewish worship services are filled with frequent directions to stand for particular prayers and sit for others. Take your cue from the other worshippers or the Rabbi's instructions. Standing and sitting in a Jewish service does not constitute any affirmation of religious belief, it is merely a sign of respect.

JUST WHAT IS EVERYONE SAYING?

You may have noticed that the prayers and Torah readings are nearly all in Hebrew! If you look in this Siddur (prayer guide), the Hebrew is always on the right hand page, and the transliteration (phonetic pronunciation) as well as the English translation, are on the left hand page, to get an idea of what is being said. Feel free to read to yourself or follow along out loud.

WHY ARE SOME PEOPLE CALLED UP?

During the service, some people will be called up for an aliyah, which literally means 'going up' in Hebrew, to read a prayer or dress the Torah before and after it is read. This is considered an honor, a way of including them in the event and thanking them for being an important part of Max's life.

WHAT IF I NEED TO USE THE RESTROOM?

If nature calls, of course get up and leave - try to be discreet, of course, and if at all possible, don't leave during one of the 'standing up' parts!

WHEN DO WE EAT?

There will be a cocktail hour at 5:30 where drinks and hors d'oeuvres will be served, and then a full dinner will be served at approximately 8:15, shortly after the reception begins. Coffee and dessert will follow. Dinner will include a meat choice as well as a vegetarian choice. The kids will enjoy a buffet with chicken tenders, burgers and mac & cheese.



WHAT SHOULD I WEAR?

A Bar Mitzvah is similar to a wedding. Some Bar Mitzvah receptions are black tie - this one isn't. You should dress nicely, but be comfortable (You'll probably be dancing later on!) A jacket and tie aren't required, but are certainly encouraged.

ANYTHING ELSE?

We've tried to answer all of the basic questions you might have here in this guide - but if there's something you're wondering about, please reach out to us. There's no such thing as a stupid question! We want to make you feel as comfortable as possible and have a great time.

