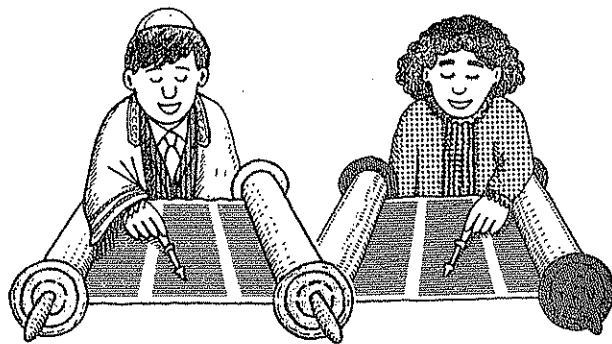


MAZEL TOV!

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## YOUR CHILD'S BAR AND BAT MITZVAH

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Some Thoughts As  
You Plan And Prepare

Congratulations...

### THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH

When your child is about to become a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*, it is an exciting time for the entire family. For your son or daughter, it is a time of additional Jewish study as he or she prepares to participate in the synagogue service as an adult. The *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* celebration is how your family and synagogue community mark your child's new role. The day will be a time for friends and family to gather together with you in celebration of this life-cycle event.

Actually, a child becomes a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* not as a result of a ceremony, a ritual, or a performance. To a great extent, becoming a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* is analogous to turning eighteen and having the right to vote. It means that the young man or woman is now at the age at which Judaism considers them responsible for the observance of *mitzvot*, commandments. This happens whether there is a celebration or not.

So why all the fuss? We prepare and plan because it marks the young person's entrance into a stage of life that Jews and Judaism consider well worth celebrating. It is a time when your growing, maturing child becomes increasingly independent. It is a time when your son or daughter should begin to develop his or her own personal Jewish commitments. To do this, your child will need a good basic Jewish education. Continuing his or her Jewish studies is a means of accomplishing this.

The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is a time for plans and preparations. For the child, it is a time for special lessons and heightened anxiety. For parents, there is often the myriad details of planning for the celebration. It requires extra effort to make sure the central meaning of the event is not lost in the process.

Hopefully, you will spend time together as a family during the period before your child becomes a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* and the celebration that surrounds it, making that period a meaningful one. Consult with your rabbi, synagogue school's educational director and cantor to assure that not only is your child properly prepared for his/her role in the service, but that, as a family, you help your child think about the deeper meaning of becoming part of the responsible adult Jewish community.

### The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Celebration

Becoming a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* is often marked by a joyous celebratory meal. It can be simple or lavish, for 30 or 300. Inevitably, we put time, energy and expense into it, for it marks a milestone in our child's life. This joyous meal is an integral part of celebrating a young person's becoming a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*. It is a continuation of the celebration marked by your child's role in the service. It is meant to accompany and enhance the sacredness of the occasion. As such, it should be a celebration of Jewish commitment.

If the meal is held after services on *Shabbat*, it should be in keeping with *Shabbat*. Discuss with your rabbi what this will mean. Whether on *Shabbat* or after, the meal should be *kosher*.

## KOSHER MAKES A DIFFERENCE

### *Kashrut* -- The Jewish Way Of Eating

For millennia, Jews have sought to sanctify every aspect of life. Everyday activities such as how we speak to each other, how we do business -- and how we eat -- can be performed in a holy way. The commandments have ethical and spiritual significance. Their observance is an opportunity to live Jewishly in relationship to others, the world, and God.

Eating is appetite in both symbol and fact. It fills a basic human need, but like any human appetite, it can be taken to the extremes of excess or self-deprivation. In Judaism, we strive to raise eating and other physical appetites symbolized by eating to a higher level, to make it more than the expression of desire and need. Eating can be a way to celebrate and enjoy life -- without excess. It can be a way to relate to God, others, and the world around us. Through the observance of the laws of *kashrut*, the Jewish dietary laws, we sanctify ourselves through what and how we eat. It is the Jewish way of eating.

## The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Celebratory Meal

If you keep *kosher*, you will take for granted that the celebratory meal should be *kosher*. If you do not keep *kosher*, it can still be an important dimension of this Jewish life-cycle event. It is not "hypocritical" for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah meal to be *kosher* if you do not keep *kosher*.

Celebrating the Bar/Bat Mitzvah with a *kosher* meal makes the celebration a statement that it is more than just a party; it gives it Jewish significance. Having a *kosher* meal shows that you wish to link yourselves and your child to generations of Jews in the past and to Jews throughout the world in the present. It demonstrates your commitment to the perpetuation of Judaism for your child(ren). It demonstrates to all that you consider it important to celebrate this special moment in a Jewish way.

◆ A *kosher* Bar/Bat Mitzvah meal enables any Jewish guest to comfortably partake of it.

◆ A *kosher* Bar/Bat Mitzvah reception shows that you respect Jews, Judaism, Jewish law and tradition.

◆ A *kosher* Bar/Bat Mitzvah meal says that you want to celebrate in a meaningful Jewish way filled with joy and significance.

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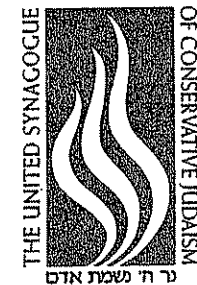
## Next Steps

We hope that this brochure has provided you with "food for thought" and that you will seriously consider celebrating the Bar or Bat Mitzvah with a *kosher* meal. Speak with your rabbi to explore how this can be accomplished in a manner consistent with your needs and taste. If you would like to learn more about *kashrut*, consult the resources listed below.

*The Jewish Dietary Laws: Their Meaning For Our Time* by Samuel Dresner, with *A Guide to Observance* by Seymour Siegel and David M. Pollack.

*Ma'alim Bakodesh -- The Jewish Dietary Laws: Sanctify Life* by James Lebeau.

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