

Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Or Hadash Frequently Asked Questions

1. How is my child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah date chosen?
 - Several dates are offered to each student in 4th grade, based on his or her 13th birthday. Each family submits their top 3 choices. Synagogue administration works with the Rabbi to determine each student's date. The family then confirms the choice of date in writing.
 - Your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah will be held on a Saturday morning. Additionally, the family is honored by being called up to light Shabbat candles on Friday night and the student will be called to the bimah to lead some prayers during the Erev Shabbat service.
2. Can we choose a Havdalah (Saturday evening) service for my child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah service?
 - B'nai Mitzvah services at Or Hadash are held on Shabbat morning, a time for communal Torah reading. Our religious school curriculum focuses on prayers from both the Erev Shabbat (Friday night) and the Shabbat Shacharit (morning) services in order to support learning and participation. It is therefore the policy of Or Hadash that B'nai Mitzvah services be held on Shabbat mornings, rather than at an alternative time.
3. How do interfaith families approach B'nai Mitzvah?
 - It is important for us to ensure that everyone feels welcome and comfortable at the celebration. There are many opportunities for non-Jewish family members and friends to participate in and feel connected to the service and the milestone it marks. If there are any issues related to non-Jewish family members that are of concern to you, please speak to the Rabbi early in the preparation process.
4. What if my child has a learning disability or special needs?
 - We will make every effort to help provide the resources and support services necessary for a child with learning challenges or special needs to participate to the best of his/her ability in a meaningful Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. We will approach this on a case-by-case basis and are happy to make modifications or accommodations to the service necessary for your child's success.
 - Please meet with the Rabbi, the Education Director and your child's teacher to discuss your child's specific needs and strengths.
5. How is the Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutor assigned and what does the instruction include?
 - Following an orientation in the fall of 6th grade, each family is matched with a tutor, roughly one year before the service date.

- Tutoring begins 9-12 months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. Be aware of special calendaring needs of your child when arranging tutoring, such as summer camp schedules.
 - The Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee covers the cost of 18 half-hour sessions. Additional sessions/payments can be arranged with the tutor. Financial assistance is available for extra sessions if needed.
 - The tutoring sessions mainly focus on the Torah and Haftarah portions, and their corresponding blessings.
 - Upon completion of 6th grade, students will have learned all the necessary prayers to lead the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. Students receive a CD at the beginning of 6th with all the prayers, which can also be found on our website. The tutor may review these prayers in the tutoring sessions. Students may choose to learn extra prayers.
6. How many verses of Torah will the student need to learn?
- Each student chants a minimum of 9 verses from the Torah. A student may choose to chant more lines. Other family members or friends may also chant from the Torah during the service.
 - In addition, the student generally learns to chant 9-12 verses from the Haftarah (weekly portion from the Book of Prophets)
7. Is there a rehearsal for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service?
- The Rabbi schedules several individual meetings with each family as part of the preparation process for becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The final meeting is a rehearsal that generally takes place on the Thursday 9 days prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. During the rehearsal, the Rabbi will review all readings, prayers and the chanting of Torah/Haftarah as well as any logistical issues related to the service.
 - Additional rehearsal time for chanting from the Torah scroll with the tutor can be arranged through the Rabbi or Synagogue Administrator.
8. What is the Mitzvah Project?
- Each student works on a community service project, or Mitzvah Project, as part of becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah. A minimum of 12 service hours is required.
 - The project itself is chosen by the child/family, but requires approval from the Education Steering Committee (ESC).
 - The Project Proposal Form is due to the ESC **12-15 months** prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. The ESC will review the proposed project for suitability, time requirement and supervision.
 - ESC strongly recommends that the Mitzvah Project be focused on meaningful face-to-face time with recipients of the mitzvah, rather than merely collecting money for a worthy cause. Examples of projects include volunteering at a nursing home, volunteering at a school or library to read to children,

- volunteering for Special Olympics, volunteering in the Or Hadash Religious School, or cooking meals for those in need through our Hesed Committee.
- Completion of the Mitzvah Project volunteer hours must not conflict with Religious School hours.
- The Project should be completed no later than **3-6 months** prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.
- The student shares reflections on his/her experience with the ESC and with the congregation at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. The Reflection Questions are meant to assist the student in developing their thoughts to share with the congregation. This form is due **1-3 months** prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.
- All forms related to the Mitzvah Project are available in the B'nai Mitzvah Orientation packet and also on the Or Hadash website.

9. What is the D'var Torah?

- 'D'var Torah' literally means 'Words of Torah'. Each student offers reflections to the congregation on the meaning of the week's Torah and/or Haftarah portion. These remarks include the student's personal perspective on how the portion relates to his/her life.
- The Rabbi works with the student to develop ideas for the D'var Torah.
- Torah/Haftarah summaries and commentaries are provided in the B'nai Mitzvah Orientation packet (distributed in 6th grade)

10. How are honors and readings assigned for the service?

- The family works with the Rabbi to assign various honors for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. The Service Participation Form that outlines these honors is due at least **4 weeks** prior to the service date. The form is in the Orientation Packet and is available on the Or Hadash website.
- Parts/honors assigned include: presentation of tallit, recitation of the blessings before and after Torah reading, hagbah (lifting the Torah) and g'lilah (dressing the Torah), Torah readers (if family members are chanting in addition to the student), Ark openers/closers, children to pass out candy, additional ushers, and presenter of congregational gift. (During the service your child receives a small gift from the congregation, which is presented by a member of the Or Hadash community.)
- Some of these roles may only be performed by Jewish participants and others are available to anyone.

11. Is it possible to add readings of our own choice to the service?

- You may include additional readings or songs, with the approval of the Rabbi.
- These readings may be read by anyone of the family's choosing.

12. What are the Oneg and Kiddush?

- These are refreshments provided after the service: Oneg on Friday evening and Kiddush on Saturday.

- The Bar/Bat Mitzvah family is responsible for providing both Oneg and Kiddush on the weekend of your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.
 - Details of what to provide for the Oneg/Kiddush are available in the B'nai Mitzvah Orientation packet.
13. Are there any Shabbat service attendance requirements for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student?
- It is expected that all students attend a minimum of ten Shabbat services during seventh grade, including a combination of Friday night and Saturday morning services. (These may include a few services at other synagogues.) The goal is for families to connect to the Or Hadash community and prayer experience.
 - Attendance at services will help the student and his/her family become more proficient in the prayers and understand the service better.
 - Bar/Bat Mitzvah services, as well as all Shabbat and Holiday services, are open to the entire congregation.
14. Do we invite all of the student's classmates?
- In order to promote a feeling of community and development of friendly ties among the students, we ask that families invite all of their student's classmates for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration.
15. Is it appropriate to invite the Rabbi to our reception?
- Yes, you may invite the Rabbi to your reception. You may also extend the invitation to your student's tutor, teacher and Education Director.
16. What is the Bar/Bat Mitzvah booklet?
- This is a booklet, or program, with an explanation of Bar/Bat Mitzvah, an outline of the service, additional songs and readings, etc. for distribution to your guests at the service.
 - A booklet is not required.
 - Samples of past booklets are available at the Or Hadash office.
 - Please give the Rabbi a draft copy of the booklet for review at least **2 weeks** in advance in case any changes need to be made.
17. Is there a dress code for the service?
- Out of respect for Shabbat and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service, appropriate attire should be worn by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah as well as all those who will be on the Bimah for aliyot, honors, readings, etc. Please see the B'nai Mitzvah Orientation packet for the specifics of attire recommendations.
18. Are there ushers for the service?
- Ushers are assigned from the families of our Religious School. Ushers greet guests and distribute siddurim (prayer books) and booklets at the start of the

service. They also pass out chumashim (Torah books) midway through the service. In addition, ushers assist guests as needed.

- We strongly recommend that you assign several adults to supervise your teenage guests. It is also recommended that you hire a sitter for any young children. If needed, a classroom can be provided for the sitter and young children.

19. Do we have to usher at another child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah service?

- Religious School students and their families act as ushers at the Bar/Bat Mitzvah services. Usher assignments are made at the beginning of the school year.
- If you have a conflict with the dates for your family's ushering assignment, it is your responsibility to contact another parent to make other arrangements. Please inform the Education Director of these changes.

20. What are Bimah baskets?

- Often flower arrangements are placed on the Bimah for a simchah (celebration) as an act of hiddur mitzvah (beautifying a commandment).
- Many families choose to provide decorated baskets of food donations in lieu of flowers. The synagogue has a Bimah Basket program which donates money to the Mitzvah Food Pantry
- Some families provide decorated baskets of items to be donated, which are related to the student's mitzvah project such as pet supplies or sports items.
- Another option is to provide plants that can be donated.
- Arrangements for delivery of Bimah baskets/flowers must be made through the Synagogue Administrator.

21. What is the passing down of Torah through the generations?

- This a relatively new tradition in which grandparents, or aunts/uncles, pass the Torah scroll to the parents who then pass the Torah to the child. Please consult the B'nai Mitzvah Orientation packet for further details.
- This is an optional part of the service at Or Hadash. The choice of whether to include this, and who will participate, is up to the family. Please refer specific questions to the Rabbi.

22. What are the requirements regarding tallitot and kippot?

- The wearing of *tallit* (prayer shawl) and *kippah/yarmulke* (head covering) are optional at Or Hadash for both men and women. The congregation will provide a limited number of both for attendees.
- Each b'nai mitzvah student will make his/her own tallit, and learn how to tie the tzitzit, during a Family Education Programs in 6th grade. Many students wear this tallit during their Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.
- You may also provide *kippot* with your child's name and Bar/Bat Mitzvah date inscribed on the inside, but this is not required.

23. Is the building available for rental for a reception?
- The building is available for rental. If you wish to have an extended Kiddush, Kiddush luncheon, or reception, please review the B'nai Mitzvah Orientation Packet and contact the Synagogue Administrator for the fee schedule and additional details.
24. What type of food may I serve during a reception?
- In order to serve meat, it must be kosher certified. (Contact Synagogue Administrator for details and a list of certified kosher caterers.) If dairy/vegetarian food is served, it is not necessary to use a kosher-certified caterer; but all events held at the synagogue must conform to the synagogue's Kashrut Policy. There are no cooking facilities at Or Hadash. A list of caterers that have worked with the synagogue in the past is available from the office.
25. Is photography/videography allowed during the service?
- During the service, photographers are limited to the back of the sanctuary, are asked to keep movement to a minimum, and are not permitted to use a flash.
 - Videotaping of the service is permitted, but the camera must be mounted on a tripod and remain stationary behind or to the side of the congregation.
 - If you wish to take photographs prior to the day of the service, please make advance arrangements. The Ark may not be opened except by specific prior arrangement with the Synagogue Administrator and Rabbi.
 - Please inform your guests that they may not take photographs during the service.
 - There are no music or photo restrictions during the reception.
26. How do we schedule deliveries of items needed for the celebration to Or Hadash?
- Please schedule all deliveries through the Or Hadash office. All items that need to be delivered to the synagogue ahead of time (i.e., food, flowers, balloons, rented tables, chairs, etc.) must be delivered prior to 12:00 noon on the Friday of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service as the office closes promptly at 2:00.
27. What is the tradition of 'candy throwing'?
- It is a tradition to shower the child with sweetness by throwing candy at the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student at the conclusion of the service to celebrate the sweetness of this special occasion. Or Hadash provides the candy.
28. What if I have difficulty meeting my financial obligations to the synagogue?
- In order to begin the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process, and have a tutor assigned, all financial obligations to Or Hadash, including all membership dues and school tuition, must be up-to-date one year prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. In

addition, payments must remain up-to-date throughout the year prior to, and the year of, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration.

- In the event that you have difficulty meeting these obligations, it is your responsibility to contact the Or Hadash Treasurer to discuss financial accommodations. This will be a strictly confidential conversation.

29. How does religious education continue after Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

- The Or Hadash High School Program offers a meaningful curriculum for post-B'nai Mitzvah teens that is designed to encourage our students to become life-long Jewish learners. This dynamic program covers grades 8-10, with a strong focus on service learning. The 10th grade culminates in a unique and meaningful Confirmation Service, that the students plan and design themselves.