

## Making A Bar Mitzvah? - Mazal tov!

We have put together this guide which we hope will help you in arranging the celebrations for what may be the first simcha you have planned yourselves. Many of these matters are summarised in our Bar Mitzvah booking form which is available from the Shul Office.

You need to start thinking some 18 months before your son's 13th birthday. The very first thing you need to understand is the exact Hebrew date of your son's birth. If you do not know this or are not sure the Rabbi or Gabboyim will be pleased to help. If you get this wrong now he will probably end up learning the wrong parsha! The Hebrew date can easily be worked out from the English date but it will also be necessary to know the time of birth to establish the correct date.

If this day is other than שבת then the Bar Mitzvah boy should have an aliyah in shul on the earliest Monday or Thursday. He and the family should come in their בגדי שבת (best Shabbos clothes) as befits the occasion. Many people make a לחיים after the service. This could be at either of the two minyanim that we have. You will need to tell the Gabboyim well in advance so that they can make appropriate arrangements. If the birthday is שבת then the aliyah will be on that day.

You will need to book the Bar Mitzvah with the Shul Office so that this can be approved by the Gabboyim and booked in the shul diary. To date we have not had any dates when more than one Bar Mitzvah has occurred (apart from twins of course) but if that situation arises the mitzvot for the day can be shared or sometimes other arrangements can be made. The Gabboyim will be pleased to help with this. The Office will also explain your options for the Kiddush after davening should you wish.

You will need to find someone to teach your son his parsha. If you are not sure please contact the Rabbi, shul Administrator or Gabboyim who will put you in touch with capable ba'alei korah. The teacher will help you all decide how much of the sedra and / or haftorah can sensibly be learned in the time available.

Every Bar Mitzvah boy is required to be appraised as to his leinyng capabilities before he is allowed to leiyng in shul. This usually takes place about 4 weeks before the bar mitzvah depending on the circumstances. If there is a problem the appraiser will advise how best to overcome this.

You will need to purchase a pair of Tefillin for the Bar Mitzvah. These can be obtained from the many different shops and sofrim in Edgware. You will need to tell the supplier whether your son is right-handed or left-handed and whether you use the nusach ashkenaz or sefard method of binding. This is necessary as you will need to be supplied with the correctly set up straps for binding.

The custom is that the bar mitzvah starts to put on his tefillin four weeks before his birthday. Some have the custom to carry this out in private and not in shul - possibly so as not to confuse the Gabboyim!, others do this in shul at the regular davening. It is also appropriate that your son has learned with someone the laws of tefillin.

At least two weeks before the event you should contact the Gabboyim to give details of any mitzvot that you wish members of the bar mitzvah party to have. We usually try to accommodate the bar mitzvah party as much as possible, but it should be borne in mind that sometimes there are other chiyuvim who take priority.

The custom is to hold a festive meal סעודה מצוה in the evening of the actual Hebrew birthday to mark the occasion. Naturally, you may be thinking of holding a party. This should be at a level appropriate to mark this religious event.

Remember that once your son has become Bar Mitzvah, it is not so much that he has reached a goal, more that he has attained the status to commence his full participation as a member of כלל ישראל.