

B'nai Mitzvah Preparation

1. Boys and girls must be at least 13 years of age. Any child who is about to be 13 at the time of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah will be considered as being in compliance with this requirement.
2. Children are expected to complete four years of the Hebrew School program through Hebrew IV and the Kindergarten through sixth grade, and enrolled in seventh grade of the Sunday School. A child may become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah any time after this sequence is complete. Six months or more prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah the child will meet with the Rabbi for individual instruction. This will be in addition to Hebrew and Sunday School. If a family chooses to have their child celebrate his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah during the time the child is in Hebrew IV the child will be attending Hebrew IV in addition to being tutored by the Rabbi.
3. All children in the Religious School, particularly those enrolled in the B'nai Mitzvah program should attend Shabbat evening and morning services as often as possible. It cannot be emphasized enough that the frequency of attendance at Shabbat services will enhance the child's appreciation of the service and increase the level of comfort he/she will have in leading services.
4. In the year of the B'nai Mitzvah, children will be encouraged to attend at least two Friday evening Shabbat services and two Saturday morning Shabbat services a month. On one of those weekends, the B'nai Mitzvah students will help lead the services. In the six months prior to their simcha, students should make every effort to attend all the Shabbat evening and morning services.
5. A child who goes through the Religious School program as outlined above may participate in all of the following on the day of his or her Bar/Bat Mitzvah:
 - Chant the liturgy of the Friday and Saturday morning services
 - Have an aliyah
 - Chant the maftir of the Torah on Shabbat morning
 - Chant the haftarah on Shabbat morning
 - Deliver a D'var Torah to the congregation on Shabbat morning
6. There will be a Tikun Olam component to the B'nai Mitzvah program.
7. Children will learn how to put on tallit and tefillin, both of which may be purchased at the option of the parents.

Process

1. Children may begin Hebrew School in the second or third grade. Parents of children who have fall birthdays will be asked if they wish their child to begin Hebrew School in the second grade rather than the third grade if the child is able to read.

2. The school Principal and Rabbi will meet with the parents of incoming Hebrew School students sometime during the spring prior to the start of Hebrew School to acquaint them with the above.
3. The Rabbi will contact each family in the congregation with children of the appropriate age to begin Hebrew School and discuss the family's plans for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Also the Rabbi will meet regularly with each parent to discuss progress and concerns pertaining to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. These meetings will be initiated by the Rabbi or at the request of the parents.
4. No other rabbi can officiate or co-officiate at a Bar/Bat Mitzvah held at Agudas Achim without being invited by the Rabbi of Agudas Achim.
5. In order for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah to be scheduled, the family must be members in good standing at Agudas Achim. All dues and other financial obligation must be paid in full sixty days before the date of the Bat/Bar Mitzvah. Any exceptions must be addressed to the treasurer or president.
6. Parents should consult the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Guide and Checklist for detailed information on invitation, kashrut requirements, caterers, etc.
7. Parents should consult with the Agudas Achim administrator at least three months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to coordinate the weekend.

Accommodations

The synagogue will make every effort to work with students and their families to make the Jewish education of their child a rewarding experience. Knowing that children have many activities, both academic and non-academic, the school will try to work with the parents to optimize the Jewish educational component of the child's life. Every child is unique, as is each family, and so the following guidelines have been formulated to insure that each child will be able to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah when the above guidelines do not meet a family's needs.

1. Any child with special needs, or who is considered to be a special case as determined by the Rabbi or Principal, will be accommodated, and as much as possible, will be mainstreamed in the program as outlined above. Parents are urged to consult with the Rabbi and Principal at an early stage to help plan appropriate educational goals and strategies. They can help identify tutors and other resources available to address the child's particular needs.
2. Any child who is new to the community will be placed in his/her age grouping as soon as possible. Parents will be responsible for securing a tutor if needed to facilitate this process.
3. A child who is 13 years old may become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah by having an aliyah at a Friday night Shabbat service or Saturday morning Shabbat service irrespective of Religious School participation.
 - Only children who have completed the recommended Religious School program will lead the Saturday morning Shabbat service or chant the haftorah.

- The Rabbi will officiate at the Bar/Bat Mitzvah but will not be available for tutoring for a child who has not completed the recommended Religious School program. However, the Rabbi may provide families the names of qualified tutors who can be hired at the family's expense.

4. The Rabbi will address any exceptions to these guidelines. The Rabbi may consult with the Principal or the chair of the Education Committee for advice, but the Rabbi will have the final decision.