

THE JOURNEY TO BAR/BAT MITZVAH

Grades 3-7



*At five years, the age is reached for
the study of Bible;
At ten, for the study of Mishnah;
At thirteen, for the fulfillment of
the commandments.*

[Avot 5:21]



New Image Photography



**The
Park Synagogue**

Anshe Emeth Beth Tefilo Congregation

Park Synagogue East 27500 Shaker Blvd., Pepper Pike • **Park Synagogue Main** 3300 Mayfield Rd., Cleveland Heights
216-371-2244 | www.parksynagogue.org | Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ParkSyn



Jewish education begins at birth, and one very special milestone is the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. A Bar/Bat Mitzvah is not merely one day, or even one year; it is an experience enhanced by special achievements along the way. This resource guide describes some of the important moments during the years leading up to and including the ceremony itself.

On behalf of Park Synagogue, we wish you a *Mazel Tov* on your upcoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

May you continue to embrace our heritage and grow as a person by making Jewish study an integral part of your life.



CONTENTS

REQUIREMENTSPAGES 4-5

TIMETABLEPAGES 6-7

THE CEREMONY & CELEBRATION PAGES 8-10

BAR/BAT MITZVAH FEES PAGE 11

CONTINUING EDUCATIONPAGE 12-13

PARK CLERGY & ADMINISTRATIVE **STAFF**.....PAGE 14



Marc Golub Photography

REQUIREMENTS

R requirements for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student and family:

- 1) Members in good standing at Park Synagogue
- 2) Currently enrolled in the Religious School or currently attending an area Jewish Day School
- 3) Successful completion of the skill levels described in the curriculum below
- 4) Participation in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Club
- 5) Bar/Bat Mitzvah lessons designed for student participation in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service

Hebrew Curriculum

3rd

Third graders learn how to **decode** Hebrew, expand their Hebrew reading skills, and master basic concepts and vocabulary. They use their growing skills to read basic prayers and blessings.

4th

Fourth graders take a leap in their Hebraic knowledge. With an added emphasis on **fluency**, students participate in prayer study and in reading Hebrew stories. They increase their knowledge of Hebrew and prayer in Shabbat youth services.

5th

Fifth graders build on decoding and fluency, with an emphasis on **participation**. Students focus specifically on the Amidah and the Shabbat morning service. On Shabbat, they may use their skills as they participate in Youth Services.

6th

Sixth graders focus on a greater **understanding** of prayers and engage in an in-depth study of the Torah service.

7th

Seventh graders have the opportunity to put the **“mitzvah”** of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah into practice. The 7th grade curriculum connects our middle school teens to the experiences and responsibilities of our Jewish and world communities. Our focus is formulating a personal Jewish identity through *mitzvot* and Hebrew study, plus Bar/Bat Mitzvah lessons with Gadi Galili.

As with any foreign language, comfort and ease in reading Hebrew comes with frequency and repetition. The more exposure, the more familiar your child will be. Your child’s “regular” school may teach foreign language four to five days a week. Our Hebrew School is a supplemental two to three day program. If your child is not developing their Hebrew at a comfortable pace in the two-day option, you can add a third day. Adding a third day greatly increases the Hebrew level of many of our students. Remember, children learn differently and at their own pace. Please be aware of your own child’s progress and be in touch with us!

Whatever option you choose, **parental encouragement**, **regular attendance**, and **family participation at Shabbat services** greatly enhances the student’s motivation and confidence in preparation for his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah lessons.

➤ **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Club**

A required course for **ALL sixth grade students**, including Jewish Day School students and parents (grandparents are also welcome!), held on either Saturday or Sunday morning, mid-January through mid-May. The group addresses questions of “good” and “evil,” free will, making prayer relevant, as well as Jewish history and culture, in a new, interactive and fun way with the rabbis and other clergy. The morning includes prayer, study, breakfast, and special group programming as well as opportunities to get to know other families experiencing this milestone.



➤ **Shabbat Youth Services**

An important part of the learning process (parents are always welcome, too!); services are held throughout the academic year on Shabbat morning and ensure familiarity with the customs of our synagogue. They are fully participatory and give every student the opportunity to help lead.

Students in third through sixth grade who attend one Youth Service a month on Shabbat morning are more comfortable performing their Bar/Bat Mitzvah part on their special day.



➤ **Mitzvah Project**

The synagogue encourages students to take part in a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Project with a focus on social action, community service or a worthy cause in the community. Students should plan to complete their Mitzvah Project by the end of sixth grade or the first half of seventh grade.



TIMETABLE

Preparation leading up to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah follows a timetable to ensure that every student is fully prepared and confident on his/her special day. Please also make sure your **dues are current** to ensure full participation in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process. Below is the timetable leading up to the ceremony.

➤ **Three Years Before: Save the Date**

During the student's fourth grade year, **Rabbi Skoff** and **Park's Ritual Director, Gadi Galili**, assign a Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. Gadi Galili will send the family a letter to confirm the date.

➤ **One Year Before: Learning Opportunities & Plans for the Ceremony**

- Parents will receive a letter and contract from the Executive Director's Assistant explaining the fees for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation and ceremony.
- Sixth graders along with their parents (and/or grandparents) attend the **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Club**, which meets on Sundays from mid-January to mid-May.
- Parents are invited to attend Rabbi Skoff's weekly Bible Study to learn about and study their child's Torah portion. (Contact Rabbi Skoff's office for more information).

➤ **7-11 Months Before: Lessons with Gadi Galili**

Families will be contacted by Gadi Galili's Assistant to set up a weekly tutoring schedule. Please feel free to discuss any issues or special needs with Rabbi Skoff or Gadi. We want every student to succeed. Many students say it is so much fun working with Gadi that they look forward to their lessons each week!



➤ **3 ½ Months Before: Meetings with Rabbi Skoff**

Rabbi Skoff's Executive Assistant will contact the family to schedule appointments which will include:

- 1)** Time for Rabbi Skoff and the student to meet and help develop his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah speech;
- 2)** Time for Rabbi Skoff to meet with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student and parents to finalize details for their particular event.

Throughout the Bar/Bat Mitzvah year, Rabbi Skoff and Gadi are in close contact regarding the student's progress. Parents receive periodic updates from Gadi making sure everything is "on track." **Rabbi Skoff is available for consultation and advice for any issue of concern throughout the process. An early consultation can alleviate any concerns.**



➤ One Month Before – Publicity to the Community

Gadi Galili's Assistant will contact the family for a high-resolution headshot (head and shoulders) photo of the student and a short bio. The photo and bio will appear in the *Cleveland Jewish News* and in *The Park Synagogue Bulletin*.

➤ The Week of the Ceremony

- **Morning Minyan:** The week prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the student will lead the morning minyan with the Clergy and the Ritual Director. Families may choose to sponsor the breakfast that follows the morning minyan service.
- **Rehearsal:** Usually takes place the week before the ceremony at Park Synagogue Main. During the rehearsal, the parents and student run through the family's parts in the service. At the rehearsal, photographs may be taken in the Sanctuary.
- **Friday Night Shabbat:** The student and family are encouraged to attend the Friday night Shabbat service preceding the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. The Friday evening service provides some of the most joyous moments of the weekend and families should confirm attendance with Rabbi Skoff's office. The family is invited to lead selected prayers, including the blessing over the candles and the Kiddush following the service. Some families also enjoy having a private Shabbat dinner at the synagogue following the evening service. Please check with the Executive Director's Assistant, Mary Lauriel, at (216) 371-2244, ext. 135 or lauriel@parksyn.org for details and costs.

➤ Making the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Process Accessible for Everyone



David Tavens, Natural Light Studio

We, as a family, wanted to find a synagogue that could accommodate the special needs of our daughter. Rabbi Skoff instinctively understood what needed to be done. He related to us. He invited our family to services, to experience the rituals that would need to be mastered. He encouraged our daughter and tailored the experience to our daughter's strengths. He spoke our language. Our interactions with the Hebrew School, Gadi and the rest of the community – all shaped to construct a secure environment. I will never forget when Rabbi Skoff called and said, "Talia needs to take her place in the Jewish community. She will succeed. And we will make it so."

-Rob Zimmerman
(pictured with daughters, Lilli & Talia, and wife, Lisa)

THE CEREMONY & CELEBRATION



The majority of Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremonies at Park Synagogue are held on Shabbat morning. However, if special circumstances exist, please contact Rabbi Skoff or Gadi Galili.

The Shabbat morning service begins at 9:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah family should be at the synagogue by 8:45 a.m. Guests should plan to arrive by 9:45 a.m.

➤ Program

The synagogue prepares a Shabbat morning program that includes the name of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the Parsha (Torah portion), Torah readers, and acknowledgment of family members as well as the sponsors for the Kiddush (reception).

➤ Kippot

While the synagogue has black *kippot* (head coverings) available, a family may choose to purchase special *kippot* in honor of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child. They may bring these *kippot* in a basket placed outside the sanctuary. It is required that all males cover their heads with a *kippah* during the service.

➤ Tallit

During the service, the parents present their child with a *Tallit* (prayer shawl). They may use a family heirloom or one they purchase for the child. (You may purchase a special *Tallit* at the Sisterhood Gift Shop at Park East.)

➤ Gifts

During the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service, a number of gifts are given to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah from the synagogue and the Cleveland Jewish Community. Each student receives a gift from the Park Synagogue Men's Club and/or Sisterhood, as well as a "Gift of Israel" certificate from the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland. The certificate can be the first investment towards a trip to Israel or added to existing funds. For more information about the Gift of Israel, please contact the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland.

➤ Etiquette & Attire

In observance of Shabbat and Festivals, we request all cell phones be turned off or silenced. Smoking is prohibited everywhere on the synagogue property. As role models for the congregation, family and guests should follow the service in the prayer book and participate in readings and prayers.

Family and guests should also be encouraged to wear appropriate synagogue attire, particularly if the family member is participating in the service. All males must wear a *kippah* in the sanctuary or chapel.

➤ Flowers

We provide fresh flowers on the *bimah* (pulpit) each week and the cost is shared between the synagogue and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah families as part of the Kiddush Fee (see page 11).

Families may take the opportunity to perform a *mitzvah* by using food baskets instead of flowers to decorate the *bimah*. After the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the family would then donate the basket contents to an area food bank or shelter. The family will need to make arrangements ahead of time with the synagogue for the baskets as well as provide all contents, which must be kosher. Please contact the Executive Director's Assistant, Mary Lauriel, at (216) 371-2244, ext. 135 or lauriel@parksyn.org for more information about this *mitzvah* opportunity.

➤ Kiddush

Traditionally, Bar/Bat Mitzvah families sponsor the Congregational Kiddush after Shabbat services on the day of the simcha (celebration). The standard Congregational Kiddush is included in the Kiddish Fee (see page 11) and usually consists of two *challot*, sponge cake, honey cake, sheet cake, *kichel*, *mandel* bread, brownies and assorted cookies, wine and grape juice.

➤ Extended Kiddush Option

The synagogue also offers the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family the option of an extended Kiddush or more elaborate meal for the congregation and guests after services by an in-house or outside caterer. The synagogue can provide you with a list of approved caterers. If your family is planning a private catered luncheon or dinner, we encourage you to hold it at Park Synagogue, where we offer numerous options at both buildings. Contact Mary Lauriel at (216) 371-2244, ext. 135 or lauriel@parksyn.org.



➤ Photography & Videography

Park Synagogue recognizes the desire of many families to record their child's celebration as a memento of this religious experience. However, the use of photography and videography on Shabbat is contrary to traditional Jewish law. Please instruct your photographer and/or videographer about the following guidelines prior to the day of the ceremony:

- **Park does not allow photography or videography during the synagogue service or the congregational Kiddush (reception)** which follows immediately at the conclusion of the services for the entire congregation.
- **During a private celebration in the synagogue after services, photography and videography are allowed.** The photographer and/or videographer can move freely among the guests during the private hors d'oeuvre (appetizer) hour. Once the meal begins, we ask that the photographer and/or videographer not move table to table but rather set up in a corner of the room. Guests who wish to be videotaped or photographed can take a picture or leave a message related to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

➤ Shabbat Clubhouse

This free, drop-in service provides supervised and fun Shabbat activities for toddlers through first graders while adults attend services in the Main Sanctuary. Open to all congregants and guests attending services on Shabbat mornings.

➤ **Music**

On Shabbat, music may be played during the private celebration. Amplifiers and other electrical equipment are prohibited, but instruments that do not require amplification, other than through the use of a microphone, can be used. Music selected should be Jewish or otherwise tasteful and appropriate in keeping with the mood of the day. During an extended Kiddush, appropriate music may be played approximately fifteen minutes after services are over.

➤ **Luncheon & Dinner Celebrations**

Celebrating a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Park Synagogue with a luncheon or dinner is a natural and wonderful way to continue the special event that begins with the Saturday morning religious service. Park offers several exceptional dining venues. At Park Main, our Bridge is very popular for lunch or dinner and so are Goldberg Hall in the Kangesser building and the Rosenthal Ballroom. At Park East, the Miller Social Hall is another good option for either lunch or dinner celebrations.

For more information about arranging an extended Kiddush, catered party, or other event at Park, please contact the Executive Director's Assistant, Mary Lauriel, at (216) 371-2244, ext. 135 or lauriel@parksyn.org.



New Image Photography

BAR/BAT MITZVAH FEES

A

Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee will appear on your membership statement at the beginning of the student's sixth grade year. The fee covers the formal preparation costs of Bar/Bat Mitzvah instruction and tutoring, as well as breakfast, programs, and speakers during the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Club (which meets every Sunday morning from mid-January to mid-May of the sixth grade year).



➤ Summary of Expenses

• Bar/Bat Mitzvah Fee billed during the sixth grade year	\$330.00
• Kiddush Fee billed during the Bar/Bat Mitzvah year	\$450.00
• Minyan Breakfast (optional)	\$135.00
• Extended Kiddish (optional)*	Varies
• Room Rental for Celebrations (optional)*	Varies
• Celebration Catering (optional)*	Varies

To avoid unnecessary inconvenience and to prevent any conflicts with the synagogue calendar, please let us know your plans as soon as possible so that we can reserve the appropriate rooms and facilities.

*For more information about arranging an extended Kiddush, catered party, or other event at Park, please contact the Executive Director's Assistant, Mary Lauriel at (216) 371-2244, ext. 135 or lauriel@parksyn.org.

➤ Contracts

You will receive a contract for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah fees and/or any facility rental in the months leading up to the ceremony. Please sign and return one of the copies of the contract, together with your check, no later than ten weeks prior to your event.



CONTINUING EDUCATION

Making a commitment to lifelong learning fulfills the true meaning of being a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. A student's involvement in Jewish education beyond the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony, including Confirmation Class and our Junior/Senior Seminar, is a greater indication that the student will identify with Judaism as an adult, more significantly than even the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony.

➤ **Students:** The continuity of our religion is based on a lifetime of Jewish learning. We encourage every Bar/Bat Mitzvah student to continue their Judaic education at Park's Wolf Religious School.

- **7th-9th Grades:** The focus will be on discovering personal identity as it relates to society and the world we live in. In 8th and 9th grade, there are opportunities for being a **Madrich** (Teacher's Aide) which is a paid or volunteer position, **Bible History Study**, and/or **Klezmer Band**. Students will also have the opportunity to perform a variety of community *mitzvot*.
- **10th Grade:** This is the time for students to declare a more adult commitment to Jewish life. We explore the theme, "Balancing Justice and Mercy in our Everyday Lives." Students study with Federal Judge Dan Polster and Rabbi Skoff. Students visit Judge Polster's courtroom and participate in a weekend Shabbaton.
- **11th- 12th Grades:** Students discuss the "big questions" of Judaism with Rabbi Skoff and a community of their peers. The curriculum alternates yearly between "When Bad Things Happen to Good People" and "The Secrets of Life Your Parents Never Told You."
- **USY:** Our United Synagogue Youth chapter offers a number of fun local and national activities and programs for **eighth through twelfth graders**. Teenagers find the kind of friends they want to stay in touch with for the rest of their lives.

➤ **Parents:** Parents are welcome to continue their lifelong Judaic learning by joining Rabbi Skoff's Bible Class on Sunday mornings from 11:00 a.m. to Noon. Hebrew, Talmud, Spirituality and Judaica classes meet throughout the year. Be sure to check *The Park Synagogue Bulletin* for other opportunities.



➤ **Families**

As part of the religious school curriculum, students participate in *tzedakah* projects in every grade level. There are also many opportunities at Park for families to perform *mitzvot* and acts of loving-kindness. For more information, contact Ellen Petler, Park's Program and Volunteer Director at epetler@parksyn.org or 216-371-2244, ext. 122.



➤ **Trip to Israel**

It's not too early to begin to save up for a trip to Israel. More information is available in the Wolf Religious School office.



PARK SYNAGOGUE CLERGY & ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

(Main Phone: 216-371-2244)

**We are here to help guide your family on the Bar/Bat Mitzvah journey.
Please let us know if we can answer any questions along the way.**

Clergy & Staff	Title	Phone	Email	For Questions About
Rabbi Joshua Skoff	Senior Rabbi	Ext. 128	jskoff-eva@parksyn.org	Overall coordination of the service, student speeches, parent prayers, family honors & <i>aliyot</i> , special circumstances, synagogue etiquette & ritual, Friday evening service, continuing education
Rabbi Sharon Young Marcus	Associate Rabbi	Ext. 123	symarcus@parksyn.org	Synagogue etiquette & ritual, coordination of the service when Rabbi Skoff is absent, Youth Groups, Youth Services, Judaica resource, continuing education
Cantor Misha Pisman	Cantor	Ext. 107	mpisman@parksyn.org	Music direction, resource for family participation & proficiency
Gadi Galili	Ritual Director	Ext. 193	ggalili@parksyn.org jbloom@parksyn.org	Bar/Bat Mitzvah assignment dates, tutoring and lessons, rehearsal, photography, adult preparation of Torah readings, family honors & <i>aliyot</i> , morning <i>minyan</i> , special circumstances
Stuart Deicher	Executive Director	Ext. 136	sdeicher@parksyn.org	General questions, room rentals, membership, costs, maintenance, security
Teri Rube Hochberg	Director of Education	Ext. 125	teri@parksyn.org	Wolf Religious School, Youth Services, student <i>mitzvah</i> project, advanced Hebrew preparation, continuing education
Jenni Thomas	Communications Director	Ext. 130	jthomas@parksyn.org	Park Bulletin
Allison Solomon	Membership Director	Ext. 121	asolomon@parksyn.org	Membership
Ellen Petler	Program & Volunteer Director	Ext. 122	epetler@parksyn.org	Programs & volunteer opportunities
Eva Simpson	Executive Assistant to Rabbi Skoff	Ext. 127	eva@parksyn.org	Rabbi Skoff's schedule, Bar/Bat <i>mitzvah</i> program, general Bar/Bat Mitzvah questions
Jill Bloom	Assistant to Gadi Galili	Ext. 155	jbloom@parksyn.org	Scheduling Bar/Bat Mitzvah lessons with Gadi, Bulletin/CJN notice
Adele Sheftel	Assistant to Rabbi Marcus	Ext. 161	asheftel@parksyn.org	Rabbi Marcus' schedule and Youth Department
Mary Lauriel	Executive Assistant to Stuart Deicher	Ext. 135	lauriel@parksyn.org	Room rentals & contracts
Mackenzie Corpora	Education Office Assistant	Ext. 124	mcorpora@parksyn.org	Wolf Religious School
Judi Tursic	Bookkeeper	Ext. 154	jtursic@parksyn.org	Billing