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Northwood & Pinner
Liberal Synagogue



Bar and Bat Mitzvah

5778/9

2017-19

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NPLS takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people entrusted to its care. NPLS is committed to:

- Listening to, relating effectively to and valuing children and young people whilst ensuring their protection during synagogue activities;
- Ensuring that all personnel are given relevant support and training;
- Having a system for dealing with concerns regarding possible abuse.

In line with government guidelines, NPLS carries out DBS checks on all personnel working with children and young people at NPLS who are over the age of 16 at the beginning of the Cheder year. Any questions concerning DBS checks should be addressed to Debbie Davies (debbie@npls.org.uk). A copy of the safeguarding policy can be obtained from Rabbi Lea, who is the designated safeguarding lead for NPLS.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah – an Introduction

Traditionally, becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah simply meant that a child became responsible for keeping the same commandments (*mitzvot*) as any Jewish adult. For boys, this was on their thirteenth Hebrew birthday, and for girls, it was on their twelfth. There was no ceremony/party and the only noticeable change were the *mitzvot* now observed, e.g. fasting on Yom Kippur.

From about the Middle Ages, boys started to mark this transition from minor to 'adult' Jewish status by being called up to read from the Torah for the first time. Since then, the entire ceremony and process has radically evolved. What once started out as a marking of a moment in time has become one of the most essential and celebrated Jewish lifecycle events. It may be hard to believe, but the celebrations, which we now associate with a Bar Mitzvah, only began in the early 20th century with the creation of an enhanced Bar Mitzvah ceremony by the American Conservative rabbinate.

The founders of Liberal Judaism originally rejected the concept of Bar Mitzvah. They considered 13 too young for adult responsibilities, and it was a rite of passage only for boys. Group graduation from religion school at 16 instead was considered the desideratum, and religion school curricula were geared to this end. In most congregations the confirmation ceremony (now known as Kabbalat Torah) was, and it still is at NPLS, the highlight of the year. From the 1960s onwards, Liberal congregations began to restore the practice, subject to various safeguards. These included a minimum period of instruction and a guarantee of continuing to confirmation. Boys and girls alike were encouraged to have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah in line with Liberal Judaism's affirmation of the equal status of boys and girls in religious education.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah offers a spiritual, communal and celebratory rite-of-passage for teenagers. The essence of Bar/Bat Mitzvah remains the same - marking a transition from Jewish childhood towards Jewish adulthood. Yet becoming a 21st Century Jewish teenager also involves taking some responsibility for one's own Judaism.

At NPLS we place a strong emphasis on navigating this journey with the support of a Jewish peer group. Together, our fledgling teenagers enjoy celebrating the transition that each of them makes. Accordingly, students are expected to commit to completing the BM programme, even if their BM actually occurs earlier than some of their friends'.

We further hope that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah does not mark the end of Jewish education and do expect the teenagers to join our exciting Kabbalat Torah Programme.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah at NPLS

1. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Programme

The BM programme consists of two major components: a course in Jewish studies accompanied by a Hebrew course.

The Jewish Studies course consists of 12 modules taught over 6 terms, i.e. two academic years.

BM1 – first year of programme

Term 1	
Jewish Living I (How to live a Jewish life)	Sacred Traditions I (The Jewish life-cycle)

Term 2	
Jewish History I (Our ancient past)	Jewish Spirituality I (Why we pray and how we pray)

Term 3	
My Judaism I (Leading a Shabbat Service)	Jewish World I (Jewish life outside the UK)

BM2 – second year of programme

Term 1	
Sacred Traditions II (The Jewish year)	Jewish Living II (Social responsibility)

Term 2	
My Judaism II (Finding my own Jewish identity)	Jewish Spirituality II (Hundred blessings a day)

Term 3	
Jewish History II (The 19 th and 20 th century)	Jewish World II (Israel)

2. Family Study

Our Family Study programme provides opportunities for parents to explore and develop with their children the meaning of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah, and to gain an understanding of the ritual practices and ethical principles that their Bar/Bat Mitzvah service is founded upon. These sessions are led by our Rabbis. This engagement will heighten the joy of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service and provide a wonderful forum to develop relationships with your Rabbis that we hope will be a source of support throughout the family's lives.

BM1 – first year of programme

Once a term on Saturday morning from 9:45 to 10:45 am; on those days, BM1 families are expected to attend the Saturday morning service together with their children.

Session 1 The meaning of a **Bar and Bat Mitzvah** in Liberal Judaism

Session 2 How to interpret a **Jewish text** using commentaries

Session 3 **Jewish History** – where do we come from?

BM2 – second year of programme

In the first two terms, once a month on Saturday morning from 9:45 to 10:45 am; on those days, BM2 families are expected to attend the Saturday morning service together with their children.

Session 1 The beginning of the journey – Lech Lecha
Being comfortable with the **Torah** and interpreting our Torah portions

Session 2 Feeling at home with the Synagogue Service and the **liturgy**

Session 3 **Liberal Judaism**
We will look at the Affirmations of Liberal Judaism and consider what makes us a Liberal Jew and how **God** fits in

Session 4 Making our own **Liberal Jewish Choices**
We will focus on passages from *Pirkei Avot* as a foundation for identifying the principles by which we want to live and how they might affect our actions in different scenarios

Session 5 **Am Yisrael** – our relationship as part of a global community and with the State of Israel

Session 6 Your Choice!

3. Individual Tuition

While the Bar/Bat Mitzvah programme will provide Hebrew classes for the entire year group, it will be necessary to arrange individual tuition to help your child prepare their Torah portion, *Haftarah* and *D'var Torah*. We recommend the following tutors:

Ruth Colin: rrcolin@f2s.com - 01923 286143

Gill Colton: Mobile: 07745 264516 - home 01923 823558.

Dalia Manches: 01923 836 888

Jan Roseman: jroseman@sky.com - 07985 582999

Yoram Sadan: yoramsadan@hotmail.com - 07885 620 900

It is up to you to make arrangements with the tutor. If you have another tutor in mind, please talk to the rabbis before making a commitment as we want to ensure that all tutors understand our expectations of the individual tuition process.

The amount of individual tuition that a child needs varies from individual to individual and will be dependent on factors such as your child's prior knowledge of Hebrew and your ability to help with the learning. Our tutors are experienced to be able to make accurate recommendations but if you are concerned and want further advice, please do not hesitate to get in touch with one of the rabbis.

In addition, Judi Herman offers on a voluntary basis help with English reading and presentation skills. If you think your child would benefit from this, please contact her at judi_herman@hotmail.com or 01923 829442.

Additional Notes

General Expectations

Bar/Bat Mitzvah is not a one-day event but a journey. We therefore have certain expectations of the child:

- Regular attendance at cheder during year 7 and 8.
- Commitment to learn the minimum required and aim to learn more.
- Joining the Kabbalat Torah programme post Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

The family is an important participant in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah journey and we also have a number of expectations of the family as a whole:

- Attendance at family study mornings.

- Regular attendance of the whole family at services.
- Parent support and encouragement for the child's learning.
- Parents' participation in the Kiddush rota for BM mornings to offer mutual support to the other families in the cohort.

What the Bar/Bat Mitzvah students need to learn

- The Tallit blessing in Hebrew.
- The blessings before and after the reading of the Torah in Hebrew (sung or read).
- To read or chant their portion from the Torah in Hebrew.
- To understand and be able to explain their portion to the congregation via a D'var Torah.
- The blessings before and after the reading of the Haftorah in Hebrew (sung or read).
- To read the Haftorah in English.

What is desirable for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah students to learn

- To sing/read the Shema and Amidah (in Hebrew) and know the basic ideas contained in those prayers.
- To understand the Ten Commandments in English.
- To recite the blessing for Shabbat candles, Kiddush wine and Challah/Hamotzi in Hebrew and have an awareness of the grace after meals and Havdallah.

The Shabbat of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah

On the Friday evening:

- The family will be invited to light Shabbat candles prior to the Service.
- The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will choose and read a passage in English appropriate to the Service.

On the Saturday morning:

- Recite the tallit blessing.
- Read a special prayer for the occasion of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony.
- Recite the blessings before and after the Torah reading.
- Read or chant and translate a portion from the Torah.
- Give a D'var Torah – an explanation of the Torah portion.
- Recite the blessings before and after the Haftorah reading.
- Read the Haftorah in English.

Tallit and Kippah

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah is actually the first opportunity for a Jew to wear a tallit (prayer shawl) and so it is a significant part of the ceremony and ritual of the occasion. As an egalitarian community, we encourage both boys and girls to wear a tallit and kippah for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah when they will be reading from the Torah – and indeed at Shabbat morning services thereafter!

Students with special educational needs

We are aware that some children in the community may not be able to fulfil the general requirements due to their special educational needs. Please speak to the rabbis if you feel that your child may need special support. We are committed to enabling all children to have a meaningful Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Rehearsals

These will usually take place in the week immediately prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. If you would like to take any photographs/video (including bringing in a professional) this is a perfect opportunity to do so as you cannot take any images during the services.

Mitzvot during the service

Families are allocated a number of mitzvot by the rabbis so that they can invite close relatives to participate in the service. You will get more information about this from the officiating rabbis at the first meeting. Please note that every Shabbat service is shared with the rest of the congregation and so some Mitzvot may be reserved for those members of the congregation who have a Yahrzeit (anniversary of a loved one's death) or are celebrating a happy occasion. While we want your child to feel like the star of the day, there may be other celebrations on the day of your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah, such as a baby blessing or an aufruf (for couples before their wedding).

Music during the service

For Bar/Bat Mitzvah's we normally arrange for the choir to sing. On rare occasions the choir may not be available but we will always ensure that the service includes beautiful music. If your child is particularly musical, you may want to discuss with the rabbis how they could contribute their musical talents to the service.

Filming & Photography

The family can make private arrangements for the Shabbat service to be filmed using a stationary camera on the balcony. Photography or other videography is not permitted during the service.

Kiddush

To celebrate the joyous occasion, we encourage Bar/Bat Mitzvah families to arrange a Kiddush for the congregation. Sue Wayne can provide you with guidance help you with the arrangements. She will also need to know how many guests you are expecting to ensure that we can set up the sanctuary accordingly.

Charges

The charge for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at NPLS in the academic year 2017-18 is £230 in addition to the regular cheder fee. This fee will be invoiced over two years with the cheder fee invoices. If you have any concerns about charges, please speak to Rabbi Aaron or Rabbi Lea.

Hall Hire

We hope that you will consider hiring the Synagogue's facilities for your family celebration. If so, please contact Sue Wayne for Community Centre Lettings on 01923 836 403 or suew@npls.org.uk.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Timeline

24 months	Make sure to enrol in cheder
In school year 6	Attend the BM Induction
12 months	First meeting with Rabbi to discuss the BM journey
9 months	Begin BM tuition
7 months	Ring NPLS to make a date for progress check with officiating Rabbi [for 6 months before BM]
6 months	Start discussing the contents of your portion with your tutor to begin the process of writing your D'var Torah
6 months	Second meeting with Rabbi
4 months	Contact Sue Wayne in the office to discuss BM logistics such as arranging the Kiddush, etc.
4 months	Ring NPLS to make a date for progress check with officiating Rabbi [for 3 months before BM]
3 months	Progress check with officiating Rabbi: bring your Siddur and Torah portion ; confirm date for rehearsal and make a date for final check with officiating Rabbi [for 4 weeks before BM]
2 months	Look at Torah portion in scroll with tutor. You should be receiving an invoice for the BBM charge.
4 weeks	Final check with officiating Rabbi: bring Siddur, Torah portion & draft of D'var Torah
3 weeks	All of the following should be completed so that the last 3 weeks can be spent 'polishing', so practice: reading D'var Torah, Torah and Haftarah blessings, Torah portion and Haftarah and reading the Bar/Bat Mitzvah prayer
3-2 weeks	Make sure that you've had a practice with your tutor on the Bimah
1 week	Rehearsal: bring Siddur, Tallit, Torah portion & D'var Torah

Finally

A Bar/Bat Mitzvah is supposed to be a joyous occasion. It would be a travesty if a young person looked back at his or her Bar/Bat Mitzvah as a negative experience, full of pressures, arguments and pointless hard work. The part of the service and the number of verses from the Torah that a young person is assigned should correspond with their ability and should be seen as a new challenge that provides for a real sense of achievement.

Most importantly, for us, a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is only the first step. We endeavour for every young member to **WANT** to stay on and participate in the Kabbalat Torah programme. We certainly will do our bit to engage with your child, but we also need your help. Please encourage your son or daughter to see their BM as the beginning of the journey not the end, and to expect more Jewish exploration, social activities and enjoyable programmes with their Synagogue.

Term Dates

5778, 2017/18

(Dates subject to change)

Term 1

1st Day of Term: Classes will start on 16 September 2017

Half Term Break: No classes on 21 and 28 October 2017

Last Day of Term: Last day of classes will be 9 December 2017

Term 2

1st Day of Term: Classes will start on 6 January 2018

Half Term Break: No classes on 10 and 17 February 2018

Last Day of Term: Last day of classes will be 24 March 2018

Term 3

1st Day of Term: Classes will start on 21 April 2018

Half Term Break: No classes on 26 May and 2 June 2018

BM1 class leading service: 9 June 2018 at 11 am

Last Day of Term: Last day of the Cheder year will be 7 July 2018

