



**Congregation
ETZ CHAIM**
creating meaningful Jewish experiences

Congregation Etz Chaim

Department of Education

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Dear Parents,

Mazel Tov and Congratulations!

It is hard to believe that your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah is so close at hand. We are delighted to be sharing this milestone with your family.

Your child's education has been a long time in the making, and the preparation to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is much the same. We are happy to provide this handbook in hopes that it may guide you along the way.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to call upon any of us. We are always here to assist you.

Again, a hearty Mazel Tov! Cherish these moments and enjoy the "process" leading to this most joyous occasion. It passes all too quickly – don't forget to enjoy "the journey!"

Cordially,

Daniel Dorsch
Rabbi

Jonathon Adler
Rabbi

Elliot Okrent
President

Martin Gilbert
Executive Director

Debbie Deutsch
Director of Education



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Congregation Etz Chaim B'nai Mitzvah Handbook

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Our Core Values

A Nurturing Environment

We want our B'nai Mitzvah program to be a nurturing and caring one. We strive to always be gentle, kind, considerate, patient and sensitive to our students and their parents. We want to create an environment that enhances the spiritual and religious experience of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Parental Involvement

Parental Involvement is key to the success of our program and the entire B'nai Mitzvah experience. We highly encourage parents to get involved with their child's learning – at whatever level is of comfort.

Relationship Development

The regular and continuous involvement of our professional staff with students and parents fosters an opportunity for relationship development. Lifelong bonds between students, parents, rabbis, teachers and tutors are created during the course of each student's progress through our program.

Excellence in Preparedness

We want our children to achieve success. We want them to do the very best they are capable of doing and encourage each child to participate as much as possible and to the full extent of his/her ability. (The better prepared our B'nai Mitzvah, the more positive the experience.)

Putting God on the Guest List

We want to emphasize the religious and spiritual significance of a B'nai Mitzvah. We want each child to connect and embrace their Judaism, family, Israel and our Jewish community.

B'nai Mitzvah Date Assignments

How is my Child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah date determined?

At Congregation Etz Chaim girls may have their Bat Mitzvah any time after they have reached the age of twelve (12). Boys, however, must have reached the age of thirteen (13) per their Hebrew birth date prior to their actual Bar Mitzvah ceremony. During the spring of your child's 4th grade year, there will be a B'nai Mitzvah workshop for families that will help you understand the Torah and the Haftarah and identify the dates corresponding to the Torah portions, *parshiot*, that are closest to your child's Hebrew birth date. You will then be given a form to rank these dates and communicate any other options and/or conflicts. The date this form is returned to the education office will be taken into consideration as needed when assigning dates.

Once all requests have been received, the list will be reviewed by our Religious School Director, and Rabbi Dorsch who will determine the final date assignments. You will receive a letter of confirmation shortly thereafter.

6 months after your date is confirmed, you will have a meeting with our Religious School Director. The purpose of this meeting is to begin a conversation about your child's specific needs, interests and learning styles. We will also discuss your expectations of your child's level of participation in his/her service.

If you are interested in having your daughter become a Bat Mitzvah at 12, please contact our Religious School Director, Debbie Deutsch, at Debbie@EtzChaim.net or 770.977.3384.

Generally, B'nai Mitzvah are held on Shabbat mornings. From time to time, a Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony is permitted during the late afternoon on Shabbat, concluding with Havdalah, on Rosh Chodesh, or on Monday or Thursday morning when the Torah is read.

Questions about your Bar/Bat Mitzvah date should be directed to the Religious School Director.

Qualifications

Qualifications for becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah

To qualify as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, your family must be members of Congregation Etz Chaim, and your membership, including all dues and fees, must be in good standing. Your child must either be enrolled in our religious school, have attended an approved Jewish education program for at least 5 years or be enrolled in a Jewish Day School. Enrollment and attendance **through and including** the grade of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah year is mandatory.

Religious School Attendance Requirements (Non Day School Students)

Your child's religious education and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process are intrinsically linked. Religious school students are expected to be students in good standing at the Congregation Etz Chaim Religious School, including (but not limited to) complying with the attendance policy of our school.

Shabbat Attendance Requirements

It is the congregation's goal that each student who becomes a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Etz Chaim feels comfortable with religious services at Etz Chaim. In order to qualify for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, your child is required to attend services in our Radow Sanctuary (hereinafter referred to as "Sanctuary"). As such, the following attendance requirement has been adopted for all B'nai Mitzvah students:

Beginning in second grade, each student is required to attend the number of Shabbat services a year equivalent to their grade. Attendance can be on any Shabbat including Shake It Up Shabbat or a synagogue elsewhere. Please also refer to your Religious School Parent Handbook for more details. These requirements familiarize the B'nai Mitzvah students with our services and make them more comfortable in our Sanctuary.

Additionally, students are highly encouraged to attend Saturday Morning services on the Shabbat which directly precedes their actual ceremony.

To maximize the learning experience that attending services provides, students are expected to arrive at 9:30 a.m. when services begin. Students will be expected to follow the service and remain in the Sanctuary for its duration. Bar/Bat Mitzvah students are expected to observe proper etiquette at all times. Please see page 12 for more information on Synagogue Decorum and Etiquette.

As always, parents are highly encouraged to attend services with their children so they may learn and develop commitment through example.

Tutoring

When should my child begin tutoring?

A portion of our Religious School curriculum includes the learning of *tefillah*, prayers for the Shabbat morning and Friday evening service. As the year prior to their Bar/Bat Mitzvah approaches, we begin to integrate an individual tutoring component to help prepare each child for his/her specific Bar/Bat Mitzvah. All parents will meet with the Religious School Director, Debbie Deutsch, and Rabbi Dorsch approximately 1 year before your child's date to discuss tutor options and match your family with the tutor that will best meet your child's learning style and needs.

Tutoring may begin earlier at the request of parents who feel that additional preparation time is necessary. Please speak with the Religious School Director for more information.

With what will the tutors be helping my child?

Tutors will work closely with their students to ensure they are expertly prepared. This instruction will be tailored to each student's individual level of learning and tutors will provide the necessary materials for instruction. Tutors will also provide individual Torah readings with the appropriate audio and visual aids necessary, for those honored with a reading from the Torah. However, be aware that there may be an additional charge per hour for this service if more than five recordings need to be prepared.

B'nai Mitzvah tutoring will prepare each student to lead the Torah Service, chant their Maftir Torah reading, the blessings before and after the Torah reading, the haftarah and haftarah blessings and the Musaf service. They will then instruct your child on leading the remainder of the Shabbat morning services as well as the Friday night services. The Mincha/Ma'ariv/Havdalah Services will be taught to those students who will lead that service.

What does the tutoring cost?

Religious School tuition for sixth and seventh grades includes eighteen (18) hours of tutoring, including rehearsals. This is usually thirty-six (36) tutoring lessons at thirty (30) minutes each. Some tutors, however, prefer sessions of 45 minutes in duration, and they factor the total time frame into the lessons. Any tutoring needed over and above this amount can be negotiated between your family and your tutor. If you must change a tutoring appointment, please provide your tutor with at least 24 hours of advanced notice. If you fail to keep a tutoring appointment and do not give adequate notice, your tutor *will* charge you for that session.

What other preparation should my child be doing?

During the year prior to their Bar/Bat Mitzvah, in addition to their individual tutoring, **students are expected to study at home a minimum of 30 minutes a day, excluding Shabbat and major holidays.** In most cases additional study will be required. Students should be reminded to wear a kippah while studying. Parents should periodically listen to their child during his/her preparation and keep track of how much time their child is studying.

Approved Bar & Bat Mitzvah Tutors

See page 45 for a list of approved tutors.

Meetings

Our professional staff is always available to meet with you throughout this process. In addition, you can expect the following...

From the Rabbi

Four (4) months prior to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah date, your family will meet with Rabbi Dorsch to begin preparing your D'var Torah (Bar/Bat Mitzvah speech). These meetings are for the Rabbi and your child to become better acquainted, explore your child's Torah and Haftarah portions, and guide your child in writing his/her D'var Torah. After connecting with Rabbi Dorsch, you will receive your family learning project to be completed in advance of your first meeting. After this time, your child will begin meeting with your officiating Rabbi. After the initial meeting, the Rabbi and family will determine how many more meetings will be needed.

From the Religious School Director

Approximately one (1) year prior to your simcha, you will be invited to meet with the Religious School Director to discuss your expectations for your child's simcha.

At least six (6) months prior to your simcha, the Religious School Director will be in touch with you and your family to answer any questions you may have.

Our Religious Services

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Services

Friday Night – Erev Shabbat

To enhance the experience of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, all B'nai Mitzvah students, along with their family and guests, are expected to attend the Friday evening service which precedes their Bar/Bat Mitzvah Shabbat Service. Many families choose to have Friday Night Dinner in the Social Hall either before or after services and you may use the Social Hall at no additional cost to rent the room.

Friday Night Services begin at 6:30 p.m. with Kabbalat Shabbat in the Radow Sanctuary or Levine Family Chapel and conclude with the evening service.

Please let us know the number of expected guests for Friday night, so we can plan on the correct prayer space. See page 17 regarding the Erev Shabbat Friday Night Oneg.

Shabbat Morning

Shabbat Morning Services are comprised of the following four services: P'sukei De-Zimra, Shacharit, Torah Service & Musaf.

Shabbat Morning Services begin promptly at 9:30 a.m. in our Sanctuary and end at approximately Noon.

Shabbat Evening

These services are comprised of the following three services: Mincha (the afternoon service), Ma'ariv (the evening service) and Havdalah (the celebration of the completion of Shabbat).

For those celebrating a Bar/Bat Mitzvah on Shabbat evening, or at any time other than Shabbat morning, a fee of \$750 will be incurred. Please speak with our Executive Director, Martin Gilbert if you have any questions.

We realize that every child and family is unique and therefore every child's level of participation in leading services as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah will be different. Our goal is to have children participate at their highest level possible so that they have a positive experience where they feel successful, challenged and supported.

Honoring Family and Friends

It is the custom of Etz Chaim for families to honor relatives and friends during Shabbat Morning Services. There are many opportunities for both Jewish and non-Jewish family and friends to be honored.

Assigning Shabbat honors is a very important part of your simcha. It is always an honor to participate in services, but during one's B'nai Mitzvah it is extra special to be on the Bimah.

It is imperative that all honored family members and/or friends abide by our synagogue's decorum. Please inform your honorees of the standards of dress, head coverings and tallit requirements. Please refer to our **Synagogue Decorum and Etiquette Policy** on page 12 of this handbook.

The Etz Chaim Shabbat Honors Form must be filled out no later than 2 weeks prior to your ceremony and approved by your officiating Rabbi. Please see our "FORMS" section for further information.

Torah Service Honors

Processional/Ark Opening

The Processional is the start of the Torah Service. Family members or friends (up to 6) ascend the Bimah and Open the Ark and then the curtain. They will then follow behind the Bar/Bat Mitzvah while the Torah is carried around the Sanctuary.

Aliyot

An aliyah is the honor of being called to the Torah to recite the blessings before and after a Torah passage is read. Parents and Grandparents (as a couple) are permitted to chant the aliyah together. In all other honoring instances, only **one** person can chant the blessings per aliyah. B'nai Mitzvah families are allowed to assign up to four (4) aliyot to their honored guests. **Please note** that it is customary for those who are Kohein/Bat Kohein or Levi/Bat Levi to be assigned the first (Kohein/Rishon) or second (Levi/Sheini) aliyot.

(For your convenience, a copy of these blessings can be found in the BLESSINGS section of this handbook.)

Please note: Congregation Etz Chaim is an egalitarian synagogue and does allow Bat Kohein and Bat Levi aliyot. Those honored with an aliyah must indicate if they are a Kohein or Levi, as those are designated aliyot.

Torah Readers

Reading Torah is a skill acquired through study and dedication. Families are permitted to assign all Torah readings. Your tutor should provide you with your readings, necessary for study, as well as vocalizations for trope. Honored guests may only read directly from the Torah (Hand written notes or transliterations are not acceptable). Torah readers are subject to approval by your tutor at least two (2) weeks prior to your ceremony.

Gelilah

Gelilah is the act of “dressing” the Torah. Please select one person.

Please note: The Hagbah honor, which precedes the honor above, is assigned only to designated Etz Chaim congregants. Congregants wishing to be approved for Hagbah may meet with the rabbi two weeks prior to the simcha for instruction.

Torah Holder - Haftarah

This person will sit next to the Torah while sitting on the Bimah when the Haftarah is being read by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Please indicate your selections on the HONORS FORM found in the FORMS section of this handbook.

Prayer for Our Country

Page 177 in the *Siddur Lev Shalem*

Led in English. May be assigned to Jewish or Non-Jewish family and/or friends, please select no more than two people.

Prayer for the State of Israel

Page 178 in the *Siddur Lev Shalem*

Led first in Hebrew and then in English. May be assigned to Jewish or Non-Jewish family and/or friends; please select no more than two people.

Prayer for Peace

Page 178 in the *Siddur Lev Shalem*

Led in English. May be assigned to Jewish or Non-Jewish family and/or friends, please select no more than two people.

Recessional/Ark Closing

The Recessional concludes the Torah Service. Up to six (6) family members or friends will gather at the Bimah to parade the Torah around the Sanctuary. After which they will ascend the Bimah to return the Torah to the Ark. They will then close the curtain as we begin the Musaf Service.

Recessional Torah Carrier

Of the six (6) family and/or friends, one (1) person should be designated to carry the Torah and walk with it around the Sanctuary.

Additional Shabbat Morning Service Honors

Siblings, family members or friends may also be honored by joining the Bar/Bat Mitzvah on the lower Bimah to lead:

Ashrei

Page 181 in the *Siddur Lev Shalem* – It is customary for the entire 7th grade class to join the Bar/Bat Mitzvah on the bimah to lead Ashrei

Ein Keloheinu

Page 204 in the *Siddur Lev Shalem*

Adon Olam

Page 211 in the *Siddur Lev Shalem*

Lobby Greeter

All 7th grade families are required to serve as Shabbat Lobby Greeters in shifts from 9:15 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. for each other's celebrations. Greeters help to direct attendees, answer questions, and pass out programs, candy, and Kippot. A sign-up genius will be distributed prior to the beginning of the school year for families to choose their dates.

The Presentation of Tallit/Parents Honor

Before the Torah Service, the B'nai Mitzvah will be presented with the tallit by the parents. He/She will recite the b'racha (blessing) over this tallit. Parents will then recite the *She'hechyanu*, to bless their child and share some brief words to them. For your convenience, a copy of the *She'hechyanu* may be found in the APPENDIX section.

**Please note this tallit must be different from the tallit used by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, if they are leading P'sukei D'zimra and/or Shacharit.

PLEASE NOTE:

**All of the above honors must be indicated on the
“B'nai Mitzvah Shabbat Honors” form which can be found in the FORMS
section of your handbook**

Synagogue Decorum & Etiquette

Please remain quiet and refrain from conversation during services.

One should not leave the Sanctuary during the following times: When the Rabbi is delivering his sermon or addressing the congregation, when the ark is open, when the Torah is being read or when the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is delivering his/her D'var Torah.

Gifts

Please ask friends and family not to bring gifts including gift cards/envelopes to the synagogue the morning of the service.

Kippot

Please ask ALL men and boys to wear Kippot (Yarmulke), at all times while in the synagogue building, even after the service concludes.

Cell phones/Electronics

In observance of Shabbat and Festivals, all cell phones must be turned off and/or silenced so as not to disrupt the service. Cell phone or electronic usage of any kind is prohibited on Shabbat throughout the building and on synagogue property.

Smoking

On Shabbat, smoking is prohibited everywhere on synagogue property. This includes the entire building, bathrooms, hallways and parking lot.

Photography and Videography

No photography or videography, including photos taken by cell phone is permitted by family or guests during services or while on synagogue property.

Children and Younger Guests

Families with young children should make every effort to ensure the dignity of the service and your Bar/Bat Mitzvah, who has worked hard to prepare for this day. Please discuss the following guidelines with any guests to whom they might apply:

Parents with newborns or infants should be seated in a space that allows easy access to the doors should it be necessary to leave the Sanctuary to avoid noise disruption of the service. We also have babysitting or a parent-child program available every Shabbat, which they are welcome to participate in.

Other children are welcome under proper parental supervision. We ask that children should remain seated quietly while in the Sanctuary and be escorted out should they become disruptive.

For your convenience, our congregation offers several programs for children on Shabbat morning. Please refer to the Etz Chaim website for specific options.

If you anticipate having a large number of younger guests attending your simcha, please notify the Office Manager, Betsy Fitzwater, in advance so we can staff accordingly.

Please contact the Religious School Director with any questions about the programs on the morning of your family's simcha.

Shabbat Customs at Etz Chaim

Inclusive Philosophy

Etz Chaim's Sanctuary was designed with inclusivity in mind, the lower bimah can be accessed via a ramp on either side of the bimah. Congregants and guests can also access the hearing loop as needed. Additionally, if any of your guests need special assistance, please contact our Executive Director.

Kippot and Ladies Head Coverings

Bar/Bat Mitzvah families typically provide kippot and ladies head coverings for their invited guests. It is recommended that families order a minimum of 4 dozen Kippot and 2 dozen ladies head coverings, or enough for their invited male and female guests. These items will be displayed on the front reception table in our Gelernter Family Lobby on Shabbat morning and distributed by our Lobby Greeters.

Kippot and head coverings should be ordered at least 6 weeks prior to your simcha and may be purchased from our Sisterhood gift shop if desired.

Tallit

It is our custom for all Jewish males above the age of Bar Mitzvah to wear tallit. Jewish women above the age of Bat Mitzvah may choose, of their own accord, to wear tallit as well. Tallit must be worn by both males and females while on the Bimah in the performance of any ritual act.

Sanctuary and Bimah Decorations

Please feel free to decorate our Bimah with fresh flowers and/or "Renterpieces" from JF&CS. You can find out more information about the "Renterpieces" including photos and prices at <https://jfcsatl.org/services/support-services/renterpieces> or call them directly at 770.677.9337.

Front Lobby Décor

Families may choose to arrange for a centerpiece on the foyer table in our Gelernter Family Lobby. This front foyer table may also be used to display your kippot, ladies head coverings and programs. Please arrange for set up at least 30 minutes prior to your service.

Booklets and/or Programs

Creating a booklet or program that identifies your honorees is a meaningful way to enhance the Shabbat experience. Samples of previous programs are available, and assistance with your booklet or program can be provided by the Religious School Director.

Please submit a "rough draft" of your program to your officiating Rabbi for approval at least two weeks prior to your service. A minimum of 100 programs is recommended.

Candy

It is a tradition at Etz Chaim that candy is GENTLY tossed at the Bar or Bat Mitzvah in celebration. All candies MUST have a Hechsher (Kosher Certification Marking) and be individually wrapped.

For a single Bar/Bat Mitzvah seventy-five (75) individually wrapped packets of candy should be prepared. Fifty (50) packets are to be placed on the Bimah prior to the beginning of the service; these candies are distributed to youngsters at the end of the service by our synagogue's President. The additional twenty-five (25) are distributed **only to adults** prior to the beginning of the service by the Lobby greeter or your designated appointee. Candy is gently tossed at the Bar/Bat Mitzvah after his/her Aliyah and Torah reading.

For a B'nai/B'not Mitzvah (double), EACH family should prepare fifty (50) individually wrapped packets. Families place half (25) of these on the Bimah prior to the beginning of the service, and the remaining twenty-five (25) should be distributed **only to adults**, by your designated appointee. Candy is tossed following the chanting of the Blessings after the Haftarah.

Please note: Unless you choose otherwise, the Religious School will be happy to package the candy bags for you. Please reach out to the Religious School Director four weeks prior to your simcha to get guidance on what is needed.

Deliveries

As nothing should be delivered on Shabbat, please bring your kippot, programs and candy to Etz Chaim the day before your Simcha. A good time to do this is when you come in for photos. All items should be taken to the main office; your items will be put in the Gelernter Family Lobby on Shabbat morning. See page 19 for more information regarding deliveries.

Shabbat Attire

For the Bar/Bat Mitzvah:

Boys - Suit or sport jacket with tie

Girls – Proper suit or modest dress, of appropriate length, which covers the shoulders

For Invited Guests

Men - Suit or sport jacket with tie or business attire

Ladies – Appropriate suit, dress or pants (Shoulders must be covered while in the Sanctuary)

When on the Bimah

Men – Kippot and Tallit must be worn

Ladies – Head Covering and Tallit must be worn

(Tallit does not have to be worn on the Lower Bimah while leading an English reading)

S'eudat Mitzvah/The Festive Meal

The first word in the name of our synagogue is "Congregation". Here at Congregation Etz Chaim, it is our mission to create meaningful and lasting Jewish experiences...we accomplish this through our sense of passion and feelings of warmth in our place of comfort and celebration.

All Simchas promote a sense of connection and community. In this regard, the most basic mitzvah we can perform is to break bread with our family, friends, and fellow congregants.

It is with this in mind, and the desire to sustain a congregation filled with warmth, comfort and celebration, that our Board of Trustees has adopted the following policy with respect to our Erev Shabbat Friday Night Oneg and our Congregational Shabbat Morning Kiddush Luncheon.

Erev Shabbat Friday Night Oneg

It is the custom of our congregation that the B'nai Mitzvah family provides wine and *pareve* refreshments, in our Gelernter Family Lobby, prior to the 6:30 p.m. Friday evening service.

Refreshments may be supplied by the B'nai Mitzvah family or by an Etz Chaim approved caterer. If you choose to provide the reception yourself or have friends prepare it for you, the following guidelines must be followed:

1. All food and drinks must be kosher pareve and marked as such.
2. All food and drinks must be brought to the synagogue (unopened) for kosher certification no later than 11 a.m. on Friday. Please call Martin Gilbert earlier that week to schedule the time for check in.
3. The dairy kitchen refrigerator may be used to store your cold items.
4. Please provide brand new trays for your items as none of the synagogue's serving trays or serving pieces may be used.
5. The foyer and the Sunshine Family Kitchen (hereinafter referred to as "Kitchen") must be cleaned and empty of all your food/drinks before 7 p.m. Nothing should remain in the Gelernter Family Lobby except for those items that will be needed during Shabbat morning services (flowers, programs, kippot).

A suggested menu for the Erev Shabbat Friday Night Oneg can be found in our menus section on page 35.

If you have questions concerning the Kitchen or *kashrut*, please call the Executive Director.

Friday Evening Shabbat Dinner

We welcome all families to celebrate their simcha by hosting your Friday night dinner in the Hammer – Tritt Social Hall at no charge. Please contact Betsy, our Office Manager, to reserve your room. Please see the list of approved caterers on page 41 when planning your meal.

Shabbat Morning Kiddush Luncheon

We at Etz Chaim believe that a kiddush luncheon is the perfect way to cap off a Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. To build community, families at Etz Chaim are required to provide a Kiddush luncheon at the conclusion of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah Shabbat Service. We are fortunate to have an in-house caterer, Diamond Caterers/Bagelicious that we engage for this purpose. By using an in-house caterer, there is continuity of quality, assortment, and presentation in the luncheons that are provided. In addition, we have been able to negotiate a fair and significantly reduced pricing structure for our congregants. Etz Chaim will pay for the A Menu kiddush luncheon of the 100 congregants who regularly attend services. The cost of paper goods for those 100 congregants will be included. Families will then pay for their invited guests. Should a family choose to provide a B or C Menu Kiddush, they are required to cover the difference in the cost of that menu and the A Menu for that initial 100 congregates, plus their invited guests. Families who choose to provide paper goods rather than pay the \$1.65 per person will need to provide paper goods for all congregants. Please see menus beginning on page 33 for the most current menus and pricing from BAGELICIOUS, our approved Shabbat Kiddush luncheon caterer.

An administrative fee of \$1000 is required for synagogue and maintenance services. This fee will be added to your Etz Chaim bill your child's 7th Grade year.

Any questions regarding food requirements and fees should be directed to our Executive Director, Martin Gilbert.

Social Hall Decorations

Should you choose to use centerpieces for any part of your simcha weekend, our Sisterhood offers a rental option for your convenience. With your rental fee, you will receive a free JNF tree planted in Israel with a beautiful certificate of honor. Please see the order form in the Forms section of the appendix.

Things to Know...

Deliveries

All deliveries for your weekend events must be completed no later than 3 p.m. on Friday. Please notify our Office Manager, Betsy Fitzwater, of any expected deliveries.

Men's and Ladies Room Amenities

You may choose to provide flowers and/or amenities for the Men's and Ladies restrooms, these items may include, but are not limited to the following: Specialty Hand Soap - First Aid Kit - Mouthwash & Cups - Hand Lotion and/or Sanitizer – Hairspray - Bobby Pins - Nail Care items – Combs - Feminine Hygiene Products

Shomer Shabbat Guests

If you should require housing for any Shomer Shabbat guests, please contact our Office Manager, to make arrangements at least one (1) month prior to your simcha.

B'nai Mitzvah Announcement in the Voice of Chaim

Please refer to the FORMS section to submit your child's announcement in our *Voice of Chaim* no later than the 1st of the month that precedes your simcha.

Invitations to Classmates and Friends

We ask our families to please be sensitive to the feelings of 12 and 13 year olds. We require you to invite ALL of the students in your child's 7th grade Bar/Bat Mitzvah class. It is also appropriate to invite your child's 7th grade teacher(s), the Religious School Director, and the Rabbis to your simcha. The Education office will be happy to provide you with this list.

Parties and dinners held outside the synagogue should respect and follow the laws of Shabbat and Kashrut. Please consider a dairy or parve meal to avoid issues with Kashrut. To do otherwise diminishes the significance of the B'nai Mitzvah ceremony.

Photos

Many Bar/Bat Mitzvah families choose to have formal photos taken in the Sanctuary with our Rabbis. Photo sessions are ONLY scheduled on Fridays (unless this conflicts with a Jewish holiday) and your session must be scheduled through the Office Manager. Please make these arrangements at least 4 weeks prior to your simcha.

Out of respect for Shabbat, photo sessions must conclude prior to 3 p.m.

Post Simcha Etiquette

Celebrating Your Joy

Many families like to celebrate their child's entrance into the adult Jewish community by making a donation to the synagogue in a way that is meaningful to their family. Purchasing a leaf for the Etz Chaim tree of life that hangs in the Gelernter Family Lobby is a beautiful way to commemorate your child's simcha. There are many additional opportunities for giving; please contact Martin Gilbert, Executive Director to learn more.

Acknowledgement of the Rabbis

It is customary to show your family's appreciation to the Rabbi who worked with your child for his insight and guidance throughout the B'nai Mitzvah process. This can be done by making a donation to the appropriate discretionary fund or one of the synagogue's other donor opportunities. A list of all donor opportunities is available in the main office or on the synagogue website via the "Giving" link.

Thank you notes

All B'nai Mitzvah students will receive gifts from Congregation Etz Chaim at the Friday evening service as well as on Shabbat morning. The Sisterhood and Men's Club present a silver yad to your child and the synagogue presents a Chumash from the congregation. Sending thank you notes from the Bar or Bat Mitzvah to the Sisterhood, Men's Club and synagogue President is an appropriate way to show appreciation after the simcha weekend has concluded.

Forms



B'nai Mitzvah Shabbat Honors

(Choose 4 Aliyot PLUS Maftir for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Child)

Mazel Tov on your *Simcha*! Please complete this form to let our Rabbis know with whom you are sharing this joyous occasion.

ALIYAH#	HEBREW NAME	ENGLISH NAME	TORAH READER
Kohein/Bat Kohein/Rishon			
Levi/Bat Levi/Sheini			
Shlishi			
R'vee'ee			
Chamishee			
Shishi			
Shvee'ee			
Maftir (Bar/Bat Mitzvah Child)			

#Choose 4 Aliyot PLUS Maftir for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Child.

Processional (6 people at most, this includes Ark openers): _____

Gelila: _____ Torah Holder During Haftarah: _____

Prayer for Israel: _____ Prayer for our Country: _____

Prayer for Peace: _____ Recessional Torah Carrier: _____

Recessional (6 people at most, this includes Ark closers): _____

Ein Keloheinu _____ Adon Olam _____



Voice of Chaim

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Information Submission Form

Biographical Information

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Child(ren): _____

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date: _____

Son/Daughter of: _____

Parasha: _____

Hobbies & Interests: _____

School Information

Name of School: _____ Grade: _____

Number of Years in Etz Chaim Religious School: _____

Did your child attend Etz Chaim Preschool: ☐ yes ☐ no

If yes, how many years? _____

D'var Torah Quote: _____

Mitzvah Project (This information will be published in the Voice of Chaim and will also be posted on Etz Chaim's Facebook page, ☐check here to opt OUT of Facebook):

Photo

A digital, high-resolution photo should be e-mailed to Bernice Isaac at bernice@etzchaim.net. A color headshot photo is preferred. The size of the photo printed will be approximately 1 ¼" x 1 ¼". This photo will appear in the Voice of Chaim, Facebook and our Lobby monitor. ☐ Check here to opt OUT of Facebook.

Deadline

In order to guarantee that this information is included in the Voice of Chaim please be sure to submit this form and your photo to Bernice no later than the first of the month preceding your Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.

Let the *Etz Chaim Judaica and Gift Shop* help you with your Bar/Bat Mitzvah

We can order your kippot (at cost + \$36 service fee). We can have the topiaries on the tables for oneg. We have talism. If you would like to register for gifts to help your family and friends, we can assist you, as well.



The Gift shop is served by Sisterhood volunteers. Profits from the Gift Shop help to fund many of the Religious and Pre-School programs.

Please think of us first and you will get very friendly assistance in your busy time of planning this important day.

We are open during religious school on Tuesdays and Sundays, as well as 10:30-12:00 on Monday. If you need help at other times, please contact Lauren Gray at Lauren.gray04@gmail.com or (404)402-0040.

Blessings

Blessing the Torah – For the Honorees who will Bless the Torah

Those honored with an *aliyah* or other honor ascend the *Bimah* on the left side (as you face the Ark). They will descend on the right side of the *Bimah*.

Torah Blessings

You begin with:

בָּרְכוּ אֶת יְיָ הַמְּבֹרָךְ.

Barchu et adonai ha-mevorach

Congregation replies, then you repeat:

בָּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבֹרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

Baruch adonai ha-mevorach le-olam va-ed

and continue

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים

וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher bachar banu mikol ha'amim, v'natan lanu et Torato, Baruch atah adonai, no-tane ha-Torah

After the Torah reading:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת

וְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם נָטַע בְּתוֹכֵנוּ: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher natan lanu Torat emet, v-chayei olam natah b'tocheinu, Baruch atah adonai, no-tane ha-Torah

After you have blessed the Torah you will remain at the lectern during the next aliyah. Before leaving the *Bimah* shake hands with the *gabbaim* at the lectern, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the Cantor, Rabbis and officers and descend the right staircase.

Shehecheyanu – Blessing for Special Occasions

The *Shehecheyanu* blessing (“Who has kept us alive”) is recited to offer thanks for new and unusual experiences (such as seeing a baby's first steps, beginning a new year at school, dedicating a new house, tasting the first produce from a garden, etc.) This blessing is also often recited at the beginning of all the major Jewish holidays (e.g., on the first night of Sukkot) or to celebrate any long-awaited special occasion.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech haolam

שְׁהַחֵינּוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעְנוּ לְזִמְן הַזֶּה. [אָמֵן].
Shehecheyanu vekiymenu vehigianu lazman hazeh [Amen]

“Blessed are You, Lord our God, Master of the Universe, who has kept us alive and sustained us and has brought us to this special time.”

Menus & Approved Caterers

Should you choose to provide the food for Friday Night Oneg, the following is a suggested menu.

Erev Shabbat Friday Night Oneg **(Suggested Menu - Pareve)**

Hummus served with pita chips
Vegetable crudité's with pareve dip
Smoked salmon pate and crackers
Babaganoush
Fresh Sliced Fruit

2 Bottles Kosher (Heckshered) Wine
1 Red
1 White

Soft Drinks/Lemonade
Bottled Water

Bagelicious Friday Night One

Flat fee of \$250.00 to include

Cheese, Crackers, & Fruit

OR

Hummus and pita chips with celery, carrot sticks and
dip

Paper Goods

Soft Drinks and Apple Juice

Trifle Bar – Optional

\$55.00 each Trifle

Ice Cream Float Station – Optional

Root Beer and Coca Cola

Vanilla ice cream

\$275.00 flat fee

Shabbat Morning Kiddush Luncheon Menus

Etz Chaim Kiddush Luncheon "A"

Assorted Freshly Baked Bagelicious Bagels

Served with Butter, Jelly, & Peanut Butter

With your choice of two Cream Cheese Flavors: Plain, Veggie, Scallion

Cubed Cheese Bites with Crackers

Garnish Platters

Sliced tomatoes and onions

Mixed Green Salad with side dressing

Assorted Cookies

Congregational Challah for Rabbi's Sanctuary Kiddush

Regular and Decaffeinated Coffee, & Hot Tea

Assorted Soft Drinks

Coke, Diet Coke and Sprite

\$9.44

Per person

\$1.65

Per person for paper goods

**See our policy and procedures for additional rules, restrictions and fees.*

Gratuity NOT included.

Etz Chaim Kiddush Luncheon “B”

Assorted Freshly Baked Bagelicious Bagels

Served with Butter, Jelly, and Peanut Butter

With your choice of two Cream Cheese Flavors: Plain, Veggie, Scallion, Loxspread, Sclox, Olive, Jalapeno, Strawberry, Walnut Raisin, or Honey Almond

Your Choice of Two Additional Luncheon Selections:

All White Meat Albacore Tuna Salad

Egg Salad

Marinated Vegetable and Pasta Salad

Optional – NOVA- Priced by the pound per guest count

The Above Served with:

Cubed Cheese Bites with Crackers

Garnish Platters

Sliced tomatoes, onions, cucumber and peppers

Seasonal Fruit

Mixed Greens Salad with side dressing

Assorted Cookies & Other Desserts

Congregational Challah for Rabbi's Sanctuary Kiddush

Regular and Decaffeinated Coffee, & Hot Tea

Assorted Soft Drinks

Coke, Diet Coke and Sprite

\$15.18

Per person

\$1.65

Per person for paper goods

**See our policy and procedures for additional rules, restrictions and fees.*

Gratuity NOT included.

Etz Chaim Kiddush Luncheon Menu "C"

Assorted Freshly Baked Bagelicious Bagels

Served with Butter, Jelly, and Peanut Butter

With your choice of two Cream Cheese Flavors: Plain, Veggie, Scallion, Loxspread, Sclox, Olive, Jalapeno, Strawberry, Walnut Raisin, or Honey Almond

Your Choice of Four (4) Additional Luncheon Selections from the
Following:

All White Meat Albacore Tuna Salad

Egg Salad

Whitefish Salad

Marinated Vegetable and Pasta Salad

Homemade Kugel

Plain, Raisin, or Spinach and Mushrooms

Warm Blintze Casserole

Served with Sour Cream and Preserves

Optional – NOVA – Priced by the pound per guest

Cubed Cheese Bites with Crackers

Garnish Platters

Sliced tomatoes, onions, cucumber and peppers

Seasonal Fruit Salad

Mixed Greens Salad with side dressing

OR

Fresh Spinach Salad with Mandarin Oranges, Slivered Almonds, and Greek
Vinaigrette

Assorted Cookies & Other Desserts

Congregational Challah for Rabbi's Sanctuary Kiddush

Regular and Decaffeinated Coffee, & Hot Tea

Assorted Soft Drinks

Coke, Diet Coke and Sprite

\$17.06

Per person

\$1.65

Per person for paper goods

**See our policy and procedures for additional rules, restrictions and fees.*

Gratuuity NOT included.

Bagelicious Policies and Procedures

Sales tax is not included in quoted prices and will be added to your invoice.

All leftovers that have been served out in the Hammer-Tritt Social Hall and that are considered edible by Caterer are available for the host family to take home.

NOTE: Bagels from Kiddush Table **WILL NOT** be repackaged to take home due to sanitary reasons.

*** If you are NOT adding the per person paper goods option, please provide Ziplocks and Tupperware for the caterer to package up the food***

Caterer will provide ONE server to be included in our fee for up to 75 guests. We recommend one server per 75 guests. Additional servers are charged at a rate of \$175.00 each.

Gratuities are at your discretion, however \$50 or more per server is suggested.

The 'per person' charge (but not the labor charges) set forth above is valid for any Kiddush Luncheon occurring on or before June 30, 2026 and is subject to an increase of up to 5% for any Kiddush Luncheon occurring on or after July 1, 2026.

The minimum number of guests (excluding children ages 5 and under) that the host family is responsible for could be changed at the request of Etz Chaim based on the results of periodic audited counts conducted by Etz Chaim.

Gratuities NOT included

Hannah Dombrowski
Bagelicious
Hannah.Dombrowski@icloud.com
770-509-9505

Congregation Etz Chaim Approved Caterers

FOR SHABBAT KIDDUSH LUNCHEON

BAGELICIOUS/DIAMOND CATERERS

Hannah Dombrowski
770.509.9505
Hannah.Dombrowski@icloud.com

TROPICS CATERING

Hector Sampson
678.964.3574
tropicscatering@yahoo.com

OTHER KOSHER CATERERS

Would need to join catering panel for events at Etz Chaim

AVENUE K (AKC)

David Covell
770.578.1110
david@avenue-catering.com

CHEF CARY'S CUISINE

Cary Eisen
770.429.0060
chefcarycuisine@mindspring.com

AFFAIRS TO REMEMBER

Yossi Ben'haim
yossi@affairs.com
Rich Wilner
rich@affairs.com
404.872.7859

C. PARK CATERING

Tara Teilhaber
404.874.7644
Tara@cparkscatering.com

ADDED TOUCH (AKC)

Mitzi Tillem
770.321.9592
mitzi@sandrasaddedtouch.com

YUM! CATERING

Ande Baron
812.220.5558
ande.yum@gmail.com

Additional Resources

Approved Bar/Bat Mitzvah Tutors

Donna Bierman

770.823.4455

donnabierman@comcast.net

Donna Bierman retired from working as a medical sonographer after thirty years in the field. She learned to read Torah and Haftarah several years ago and has also been teaching in the Etz Chaim religious school. Donna enjoys teaching and tutoring religious school students and Bar/Bat Mitzvah students.

Leah Coonley

678.637.2598

CoonleyL@gmail.com

Leah Antonoff Coonley has been tutoring Hebrew since her Bat Mitzvah over 20 years ago. Her mom and sister have been in Jewish education their entire careers -- let's just say it must run in the family! Leah has 2 young kids, one in Etz Chaim's preschool and the other in elementary school across the street at East Side. Leah and her husband are new Etz Chaim members but have been part of the East Cobb Jewish community for a long time. Leah grew up here in East Cobb. When she's not tutoring or being a mom, she's a marketing consultant and runs her own marketing firm helping small and medium sized businesses grow and achieve their dreams. Leah specializes in working with children with learning disabilities because she can relate on a personal level - she's dyslexic ADHD herself.

Allison Safran

678.595.1893

allisonsafran@gmail.com

After a successful 28-year career in Financial Services, most recently as a consultant with IBM specializing in AI and Analytics, Allison retired in 2022 to follow her passion for meaningful, personal pursuits. With a deep love for Judaism, she is dedicated to inspiring Jewish preteens to connect with their heritage by making the traditions relatable to their everyday lives.

Allison brings a unique blend of patience, insight, and enthusiasm to her tutoring. She spent two years teaching religious school and has spent the last two and a half years tutoring students in decoding Hebrew, preparing for their bar and bat mitzvahs, and engaging in Torah study.

When she's not guiding young learners on their Jewish journey, Allison is embracing her new role as a travel advisor. She also cherishes her time visiting her children in California and Florida, enjoys cozy moments with her husband and their beloved Goldendoodle, Maverick, and is working on writing a novel. Her interests include reading, traveling, and tackling puzzles—skills that inspire her tutoring approach to be both thoughtful and fun.

Allison's goal is simple: create an enriching, joyous experience that helps each child celebrate their special milestone with confidence and pride.

Rachel Schwartz 678.836.4596 rachel.schwartz25@gmail.com

Rachel Schwartz is a native East Cobb-er who returned to Atlanta after spending 5 years living, learning, and working in Jerusalem. She has been involved in formal and informal Jewish education for over 10 years, having taught at several Hebrew Schools, tutored students in Hebrew and Bnai Mitzvah prep, and worked at Ramah Darom. She currently is a teaches Hebrew & Judaics at The Epstein School. Rachel is passionate about making the Bnai Mitzvah process fun and tailored to the needs and skills of each student to make sure they are proud and confident on their big day. Given her strong background in Hebrew and extensive learning in Jerusalem, she aims to provide students with an understanding of the 'what' and the 'why' of their services and Torah portions, not just the 'how', which will build the foundation for their Jewish life after their Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

Linda Weinroth 404.822.8332 mlweinroth@aol.com

Linda Weinroth retired in 2007 as Education Director of Congregation Etz Chaim after a thirty-one-year tenure. In addition to tutoring students for Bar/Bat Mitzvah, she also tutors students from middle school through the college level in all areas of mathematics, as well as Math SAT Prep. Some of her time is also spent as an educational consultant. When working with Bar/Bat Mitzvah students, Linda's goals are to make sure that her students feel comfortable on the Bimah and to make the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process meaningful for the entire family. She and her husband Michael are currently enjoying their role as grandparents to Noah, Jordi, Henry, Margot and Izabelle.

Countdown to the Big Day

A Quick Guide to Important Dates in this Handbook

One Year Out

Meet with the Rabbi and the Religious School Director.
Contact your tutor.

Six Months Out

Meet with the Religious School Director to check-in.

Four Months Out

Call the Rabbi to arrange a meeting.
Once arranged the Rabbi will reach out to you with a copy of your Family Learning Project to be completed by your first meeting.

Eight Weeks Out

Contact Hannah Dombrowski at Bagelicious
hannah.dombrowski@icloud.com or 770-509-9505 to discuss your Shabbat morning Oneg.

Six Weeks Out

Order kippot and/or head coverings.

One or Two Month Out

Reserve the Bayit for *Shomrei* Shabbat guests.
Contact synagogue office to schedule photos.
Contact the Executive Director to discuss your guest list and number of guests.
Reach out to Education Office regarding candy bags

Three Weeks Out

Give your Shabbat Honors form and program to the Rabbis for proofreading.
Have your Torah Readers chant for your tutor.

Day Before

Take photos.
Deliver kippot, programs, candy, & Friday night Oneg items to the synagogue.

Day Of

Take a deep breath, relax, and enjoy your child's accomplishment.

MAZEL TOV!

Who to Contact

- | | | |
|--|--|--------------|
| <u>Marty Gilbert</u> | mgilbert@etzchaim.net | 770.973.0137 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Administrative- Financial questions- Questions about the Kitchen & Kashrut- To make arrangements for guests with disabilities | | |
| <u>Betsy Fitzwater</u> | betsy@etzchaim.net | 770.973.0137 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- To reserve the Hammer-Tritt Social Hall, Bayit and/or Kitchen- To schedule your photo session with the Rabbi- To schedule deliveries- To schedule your meeting with Rabbi | | |
| <u>Debbie Deutsch</u> | debbie@etzchaim.net | 770.977.3384 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Educational requirements- Tutor assignment | | |
| <u>Rabbi Dorsch</u> | rabbidorsch@etzchaim.net | 770.973.0137 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Rabbinic questions (D'var Torah, Services, Family Learning Project) | | |
| <u>Lauren Chernau</u> | lauren@etzchaim.net | 770.977.3384 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Arrangements/questions for young children | | |