Dear friend,

Mazel tov and welcome to the B’nei Mitzvah journey at Central Synagogue. When a child is called to Torah for the first time, it is a simcha, a joy, for the entire community. In that spirit, we thank you for sharing your joy with our Central family. This brochure contains information which will guide you through our meaningful process of becoming Bar/Bat/B’nei Mitzvah.

Many cultures have found a way to acknowledge the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual changes in the lives of teens. Some communities celebrate this moment by having their children demonstrate physical prowess, while others challenge their teens to wildlife survival. The Bar/Bat/B’nei Mitzvah calls upon our young adults to read and teach from the Torah. This taps into your physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual self in the most meaningful of ways as we recognize your entrance into adulthood.

Becoming Bar/Bat/B’nei Mitzvah is a bold step in joining the 3,000 year conversation about living Jewishly. As you embrace the Torah on the day of your Bar/Bat/B’nei Mitzvah service, you will be our scholar and teacher. The cantors, rabbis, tutors, and lay leaders are with you in your learning and preparation, and we look forward to learning from you as well. We will work closely with you to support you in this process, and we look forward to sharing the journey with you.

Warmly,

Central Synagogue Clergy and B’nei Mitzvah Team

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**Timeline**

Below is a list of key events in the B’nei Mitzvah process for you to look forward to. Keep in mind that these are in addition to the expectations/requirements listed in this brochure and in our B’nei Mitzvah Handout on our website.

- **BONIM**
  - 5TH GRADE
    - Attend Brit B’nei Mitzvah Family Program
  - 6 MONTHS PRIOR
    - Begin tutoring
  - 3 MONTHS PRIOR
    - D’var Torah Workshop led by Rabbis
  - 1 MONTH PRIOR
    - Second Student/Rabbi Meeting, Third Student/Cantor Meeting
  - 1 WEEK PRIOR
    - Final rehearsal with parents (and service partner)

- **NITZANIM**
  - 4TH GRADE
    - Receive Bar/Bat/B’nei Mitzvah Date at Derech Mitzvah
  - 4-5 MONTHS PRIOR
    - First Student/Cantor Meeting
  - 2 MONTHS PRIOR
    - Parent/Rabbi Meeting, First Student/Rabbi Meeting, Second Student/Cantor Meeting
  - 2 WEEKS PRIOR
    - First rehearsal (with service partner)

- **CHALUTZIM**
  - 6TH GRADE
    - Attend Masa Mitzvah Retreat and Complete Mitzvah Project
  - 4-5 MONTHS PRIOR
    - First Student/Cantor Meeting
  - 2 MONTHS PRIOR
    - Parent/Rabbi Meeting, First Student/Rabbi Meeting, Second Student/Cantor Meeting
  - 2 WEEKS PRIOR
    - First rehearsal (with service partner)
ABOUT THE B’NEI MITZVAH PROGRAM

What is a Bar or Bat Mitzvah?
Bar or Bat Mitzvah means son or daughter of the commandment. For our children who identify as gender non-conforming or gender non-binary, we are happy to discuss language that honors their experience. In the past, we’ve used the term ‘B’nai Mitzvah, meaning child of the commandment. Children reach this milestone at 13 years old. The Talmud, the major compilation of Jewish law, describes this rite of passage as the age at which children become personally responsible for their observance. At Central, we mark this special moment with a Bar, Bat, or B’nai Mitzvah service. At this service, your child will be called to read from the Torah for the first time. Typically, they will also chant Haftarah (a reading from the Prophets), and give a d’var Torah (a teaching from their Torah portion).

How will my child’s Bar/Bat/B’nai Mitzvah date be assigned?
We make every attempt to assign a date close to your child’s birthday. As we don’t have B’nai Mitzvah services at Central in July or August, children with summer birthdays will be assigned a date in the Spring or Fall, as close to their birthday as possible.

What if we are assigned a date that does not work for our family?
After all dates are assigned at the Derech Mitzvah program, you will be notified of the process for requesting a date change. Although we cannot guarantee a specific date will be available, we will do our best to find a date that works for your family. We ask that you do not request a specific date for your child’s Bar/Bat/B’nai Mitzvah. However, if there are certain dates that you know you will not work for your family, please let us know via the Bar/Bat/B’nai Mitzvah Date Form, which you can request, and we will do our best to accommodate.

Who will be officiating my child’s Bar/Bat/B’nai Mitzvah service? Can I request a Rabbi or Cantor?
Clergy assignments are completed in the Spring preceding the academic year. We know that you may have special relationships with specific clergy, and in assigning dates, we will take those relationships into account. Regardless of who officiates, it will be a meaningful day for your family.

What is the difference between the 9:30 AM and the 11:30 AM services?
Children celebrate becoming Bar/Bat/B’nai Mitzvah at our Shabbat morning services at 9:30 AM. If we have more than two children becoming Bar/Bat/B’nai Mitzvah on a Shabbat morning, we will hold an 11:30 AM morning service as well. The liturgy and role of the B’nai Mitzvah will be the same at both services.

What if my child has special learning needs?
We have special education support in place at Central and will be happy to discuss with you how we meet the needs of all our B’nai Mitzvah students. If you would like to speak with a clergy member about your child’s needs, please contact our B’nai Mitzvah Program Manager, Keren Eckstein, at ecksteink@centralsyn.org.

• Bar/Bat/B’nai Mitzvah is open to members of Central Synagogue.

• Students are required to have at least four years of participation in our religious school (the LCLJ), beginning by the third grade, and continuing through the school year of their Bar/Bat/B’nai Mitzvah. Students must fulfill all religious school requirements, including regular attendance, participation, and completion of work. Students who join the LCLJ later than the third grade may require additional tutoring in Hebrew beyond that offered by our Bar/Bat/B’nai Mitzvah program.

• Students are expected to attend services regularly – at least five times per year during 4th, 5th and 6th grade, and at least seven times per year during the 7th grade year. Worship is part of Jewish life and it is especially important that students and their families become accustomed to the flow of Shabbat service so they are comfortable when they help lead it.

• All B’nai Mitzvah students are expected to complete the social justice unit in their 6th grade year at the LCLJ.
My child’s Bar/Bat/B’nei Mitzvah is in the Fall. Do they need to be enrolled in LCLJ?

Enrollment in the LCLJ is an important piece of instilling a sense of community in your child; therefore, enrollment and attendance are both mandatory for the full year of your child’s Bar/Bat/B’nei Mitzvah service.

RITUAL INFORMATION

What role will my child have in the Shabbat service?

At the service when a child becomes Bar, Bat, or B’nei Mitzvah, he, she, or they will typically do the following:

- Chant from the Torah and the corresponding Haftarah in Hebrew
- Chant the associated blessings for the Torah and Haftarah in Hebrew
- Deliver a brief d’var Torah (teaching) about the Torah portion

What honors can I give my family?

Every child comes to Torah through the support and love of family and community, and we want to honor those who have been part of the journey. There are many ways to honor loved ones for your child’s Bar, Bat, or B’nei Mitzvah:

- Two loved ones may kindle the Shabbat lights on Friday evening. This is a low-pressure honor that does not require speaking or chanting so it works well for younger siblings but can be for anyone you choose.
- When the Torah Scroll is removed from the Ark, the Bar/Bat/B’nei Mitzvah and his/her/their immediate family – parents and siblings – will join the Bar/Bat/B’nei Mitzvah and the clergy in the procession around the Sanctuary.
- There are three Torah honors called Aliyot. Family and loved ones participate in the first two Aliyot, and the Bar/Bat/B’nei Mitzvah receives the third. Each Aliyah involves honoring chanting the blessings before and after the Torah reading. Aliyot may go to anyone over the age of thirteen who the Bar/Bat/B’nei Mitzvah family seeks to honor. Honorers often include, but are not limited to: grandparents, parents, older siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins.
- Prior to your child’s first rehearsal, we ask that you fill out the honors form. To do so, please visit: www.centralynagogue.org/BneiMitzvahHonor
- Your child’s name will be listed in our Order of Service and on our LCD Board on 55th Street and Leininger.

What is the Torah Passing Ceremony?

Great grandparents, grandparents, and parents, are invited to participate in the “chain of tradition,” where the Rabbi symbolically passes the Torah down from one generation to the next by holding the Sefor Torah (Torah Scroll) in front of each member of the family. If you have not witnessed a Torah pass, please join us for any B’nei Mitzvah service and experience the emotional charge that this moment brings.

What honors can I give to non-Jewish family and friends?

We seek to include non-Jewish parents and relatives in the celebration in equally meaningful ways, and we will be guided by each family’s sense of what is authentic and appropriate. The only honor we reserve specifically for Jewish family members is the ritual Hebrew recitation of the blessings over the Torah reading. The translation of these blessings may be offered by non-Jewish family members.
The child stands inheriting from the one and transmitting to the other... - Harry M. Epstein, The Eternal Light

...The child stands between generations, inheriting from the one and transmitting to the other...

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**B’nai Mitzvah Timeline**

Below is a list of key events in the B’nai Mitzvah process for you to look forward to. Keep in mind that these are in addition to the expectations/requirements listed in this brochure and in our B’nai Mitzvah Handout on our website.

1. **Nitzanim 4th Grade**
   - 5th Grade Attend Brit B’nai Mitzvah Family Program
   - 6 Months Prior Begin tutoring
   - 3 months Prior D’var Torah Workshop led by Rabbis
   - 1 month Prior First Student/Cantor Meeting
   - 2 months Prior Parent/Rabbi Meeting;
     First Student/Rabbi Meeting;
     Second Student/Cantor Meeting
   - 2 weeks Prior First rehearsal (with service partner)
   - 1 week Prior Final rehearsal with parents (and service partner)

2. **Bonim 5th Grade**
   - Attend Brit B’nai Mitzvah

3. **Chalutzim 6th Grade**
   - Attend Masa Mitzvah Retreat and Complete Mitzvah Project with LCLJ
   - 4-5 months Prior First Student/Cantor Meeting
   - 2 months Prior Parent/Rabbi Meeting;
     First Student/Rabbi Meeting;
     Second Student/Cantor Meeting
   - 2 weeks Prior First rehearsal (with service partner)

4. **Nitza**
   - 4th Grade Receive Bar/Bat/B’nai Mitzvah Date at Derech Mitzvah

5. **Chalutzi**
   - 6th Grade Attend Masa Mitzvah Retreat and Complete Mitzvah Project with LCLJ
   - 4-5 months Prior First Student/Cantor Meeting
   - 2 months Prior Parent/Rabbi Meeting;
     First Student/Rabbi Meeting;
     Second Student/Cantor Meeting
   - 2 weeks Prior First rehearsal (with service partner)

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Meet the Team

[www.centralsynagogue.org](http://www.centralsynagogue.org)