

Bar and Bat Mitzvah at Woodside Park Synagogue



Dear Parents,

Mazel Tov on reaching this very exciting time of your child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah! Everyone here at Woodside Park Synagogue is here to help you make this occasion a meaningful, inspiring experience that will stay with you forever.

The terms Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah are popularly associated with the actual celebrations of the day. However, it is not simply the ceremony in shul, but the journey itself — you 'become Bar Mitzvah', rather than 'have a Bar Mitzvah'. We celebrate your child becoming a responsible adult, and so celebrate it by doing Mitzvot as a Jewish adult. Therefore, boys are called up to the Torah, and girls deliver a 'D'var Torah' — sharing a teaching about the Torah portion, any forthcoming festivals, or another topic.

So when your child becomes Bar Mitzvah (literally 'Son of the Commandments') or Bat Mitzvah ('Daughter of the Commandments') they are taking their first independent steps on their Jewish journey.

We look forward to sharing this journey together with you.

Rabbi Hackenbroch

Rabbi Yitzi Blachman

This pack will guide you through the process of booking, preparing for and celebrating your special occasion. There is a glossary at the back explaining terms that may be unfamiliar.

Please also see our Synagogue's Guide to the Shabbat Service, available in hard copy from our office or available to download from our website at <http://www.woodsideparksynagogue.org.uk/shabbat-and-festivals>

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Shabbat Celebrations on the day of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah

Bar Mitzvah

The centrepiece of the Bar Mitzvah celebrations is being called up to and reading from the Torah. The Torah reading is an integral part of the Shabbat morning service. Jews across the world read the Torah in an annual cycle, placing its teachings and laws at the centre of synagogue life, and hence of Jewish life. When we are called up to and reading from the Torah we are making a statement of the importance of the Torah to our lives. To an extent, being up on the Bimah, surrounded by the community, is like re-enacting the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

Most boys, therefore, will be called up to the Torah and read a portion from it (Maftir, the last call-up from the week's reading), a section from the Book of the Prophets (Haftarah) and the associated blessings. Depending on ability and the length of the Torah reading, some boys learn more than this. Boys typically study for 12 to 24 months with a teacher as preparation. Once you have a date confirmed, the Office will tell you the relevant Torah Portion (in Hebrew — Sedra or Parasha).

Bat Mitzvah

Whilst Orthodox synagogues do not allow girls to lead the ritualistic part of the Torah Reading, they are full partners in Torah Study in every other respect. As such, at Woodside Park Synagogue girls generally celebrate their Bat Mitzvah by sharing a D'var Torah — a Torah teaching. This sermon-style presentation typically revolves around the Torah portion of the week, forthcoming Festivals, or Jewish topics of the girl's interest. The process of learning about their Torah portion, their own Jewish name and so forth is incredibly meaningful and affirming. The D'var Torah is a statement of the importance of Torah to our lives, and teaching it to the community demonstrates our appreciation of your daughter as a mature adult from whom we can all learn.

Girls typically study for 6 to 9 months with a teacher as preparation. Once you have a date confirmed the office will tell you the weekly Torah Portion (in Hebrew — Sedra or Parasha), and you can discuss with your teacher any other appropriate topics to cover.

For special circumstances or educational needs, please contact Rabbi Hackenbroch or Rabbi Yitzi who will discuss ways of celebrating in a way that will ensure your son or daughter and yourselves have the most meaningful experience possible.

Booking the Shul

A provisional date can be held in the shul calendar from three years before the English date of the Shabbat required for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Bookings may be formally made and the date confirmed in writing from two years prior. Please contact the Bnei Mitzvot Coordinator (details at the end of this booklet) who will guide you through the booking process, including, if necessary, working out the exact Hebrew birthday.

Delaying a Bar Mitzvah or a Bat Mitzvah

It is not uncommon for a Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah celebration to be delayed for a variety of reasons, whether to do with the Jewish calendar or for personal or family reasons.

Please remember the technical day of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah is on the 13th or 12th Hebrew birthday.

For the boy, if for any reason there is a delay in the formal celebrations, please contact Rabbi Hackenbroch, Rabbi Yitzi or the Office for further advice as to how to mark this day.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Programme

Becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah is about beginning the Jewish journey as an adult. Jewish education in all facets of Jewish life is essential preparation for this journey, so your child will not only be prepared for the actual day, but for Jewish life in general.

Woodside Park Synagogue runs a Bar and Bat Mitzvah programme for all year 7 girls and year 8 boys. Sessions take place approximately once every 2 weeks during term time (October to July), usually from 7pm - 8.30pm on a Thursday night. Typically there are around 14 or 15 sessions each year. Parents may be asked to attend on some of the dates. It is for all children, regardless of whether they go to Jewish schools or have any other arrangements for Jewish education. This fun, meaningful programme also means your child will make friends with other children from the community and will make the journey with their peers.

2022/2023 Bar & Bat Mitzvah Programme Prospectus: <https://tinyurl.com/BBMProg22-23Prospectus> - the prospectus for 2023/24 will be published shortly.

To register for the 2023/2024 Bar & Bat Mitzvah Programme visit <https://theus.org.uk/BBMProg23-24>

All children celebrating their Bar / Bat Mitzvah at Woodside Park are expected to enrol in this programme. A charge is made to cover the costs of running the programme, however, if for financial reasons this is difficult for you, this can be discussed in strictest confidence.

Shul attendance

Experience has shown that families experience the most meaningful connection to their Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremonies when they are able to participate in the Shabbat morning service as fully as possible. As such, comfort and familiarity with the Shabbat service makes the day much more meaningful, as well as equipping your child with an essential Jewish skill. Regular attendance also means that the family is much more part of the community, turning what can sometimes seem like a private celebration into a much more communal celebration.

As such, we require regular attendance at shul in the year preceding, in either the main service or our thriving Youth Service.

Please contact our Youth Directors (details at the end of this booklet) for further information about the Youth Service. If you are unfamiliar with the Shabbat service, Rabbi Hackenbroch, Rabbi Yitzi or the Wardens are able to help organise a discreet, sensitive mentor to welcome you and to help guide you through the service.

Tefillin

The Mitzvah of Tefillin — ritual black boxes containing passages from the Torah, worn on the arm and head — is one of our precious Mitzvot. Whilst it is a Mitzvah to wear them every weekday, normally during Shacharit (morning services), Judaism considers a 'body that has not put on Tefillin' to be

incomplete, and so Bar Mitzvah boys wear them at the first opportunity after their actual Bar Mitzvah. This may be at their mid-week call up, or at another weekday opportunity. Rabbi Hackenbroch or Rabbi Yitzi will discuss this with you nearer to the time.

A good set of Tefillin will last a life-time. Frequently, old sets are invalid for use (Tefillin need to be 'kosher' —meet certain religious requirements - like any other ritual article), and so we recommend purchasing a new set for your son, or getting an old set properly checked by a Sofer (Scribe). Please contact Rabbi Hackenbroch or Rabbi Yitzi for advice on reliable, economical retailers (we do not recommend buying from the Internet, as they are often invalid or unnecessarily expensive!), or how to get Tefillin checked.

To practice putting on Tefillin, please contact Rabbi Hackenbroch, Rabbi Yitzi, the Wardens or your Bar Mitzvah teacher. They will also be happy to help if anyone in your family would like a refresher.

Weekday Call Ups

The Torah is read on Mondays, Thursday and on other special mid-week occasions as part of the daily Shacharit (morning) service. Most boys come on the first appropriate midweek occasion after their Hebrew Birthday to be called up, recite the blessings and possibly read from the Torah. As well as 'seizing the Mitzvah at the first opportunity' (the Hebrew equivalent of *carpe diem!*), the atmosphere at this shorter, intimate service is less intimidating than Shabbat morning, and also allows the opportunities for photos and videos!

For large families this provides an opportunity to offer honours during the shul service to members of their families where the numbers are very large and it would not be impossible to fit everybody in on Shabbat alone. It is common for the family to provide a very small "l'chaim" at the end of the service with whisky, orange juice and some biscuits.

Rabbi Hackenbroch, Rabbi Yitzi, the Wardens or the Office can advise of when the first appropriate occasion will be for a mid-week call up.

Jewish Modesty and Dress Code

The value of Modesty is an integral part of Jewish life for men and women, in terms of behaviour and conduct. An integral part of this is a dignity of dress that ensures we give the proper credence to the soul rather than the body. This is especially true in shul, and all the more so as your child is celebrating following the footsteps of Jews over the generations.

Therefore, in order to ensure your child celebrates in the appropriate way, guidance should be as follows:

Dresses or skirts for girls and women should be worn, and should cover the knee. Tops should have sleeves to the elbow, cover the shoulders and not be low-cut.

Men should be dressed commensurate with the dignity of the day. Any male guests should be asked to cover their heads (Kippot are available in shul foyer).

For further information or clarification, please contact Rabbi or Gila Hackenbroch, or Rabbi Yitzi who will be happy to advise.

Shabbat Morning Service Guide

We understand that you may have guests, including non-Jews, who may be unfamiliar with the Shabbat service, including appropriate decorum and practice. Please refer them to Woodside Park Synagogue's Shabbat Guide, which is accessible via the following page on our website: www.woodsideparksynagogue.org.uk/shabbat-and-festivals, or in hard copy from the Office. We recommend emailing this to guests a few weeks before the Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

Other Shabbat Services

Friday night services (Kabbalat Shabbat and Maariv) in Shul are warm, relaxed with a lot of singing. Shabbat afternoon (Mincha) involves a short Torah reading, and either a shiur (class) or Seuda (Shabbat afternoon meal). We encourage you to come to these on the Shabbat of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah, adding a sense of excitement and completion to the day.

Teachers and Proficiency

It is normally necessary to study with a private teacher for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Please contact the Office, Rabbi Hackenbroch or Rabbi Yitzi for recommended teachers, and contact the Office once you have a teacher confirmed. Teachers must be approved by the Rabbi as part of the booking process (please refer to the booking guidelines).

Boys normally begin preparing around 18 months beforehand, and girls 6-12 months. It is advisable to have a teacher confirmed in good time before you want to begin.

Please contact the Office 2 months before the Bar or Bat Mitzvah to arrange a rehearsal of the Torah Reading or D'var Torah.

Catering

As the Bar or Bat Mitzvah is the beginning of your child's Jewish journey in life, please ensure that all aspects of your celebrations are consistent in practice with what we as a community believe. Moreover, members of our community are often put in difficult positions when faced with invitations to celebrations that are not Kosher, or not under appropriate Kosher supervision.

As such, please ensure that any catering is under the auspices of a recognised Kashrut Authority, such as the London Beth Din, Federation, or the Sephardi Bet Din.

Further information from the United Synagogue, including a list of certified KLBG caterers, can be found at www.theus.org.uk/category/kosher

Families often sponsor the Kiddush in honour of the occasion. The Hall may be hired for a Shabbat lunch or other celebration by the family; please contact the Office to discuss either of these possibilities.

Bnei Mitzvot Visit

A visit will be arranged about a month prior to your simcha by a member of our Bnei Mitzvot Liaison team. At this visit, they will explain how the Shabbat morning service will be arranged around your simcha, including the allocation of honours.

This is also your opportunity to ask any last minute questions, although the wardens will also be on hand right up to and including the Shabbat service in case you need any assistance.

Honours

It is customary to honour close family members and friends when celebrating a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Several different options may be available, such as an Aliyah (call up to Torah), Hagbah and Gelilah (lifting and rolling up the Torah after reading), Pesicha (opening the Ark). Also, a boy under Bar Mitzvah may sing Anim Zemiroth at the end of the service.

Please note that the number of honours varies each week, depending on honours given to other members for other celebrations or commemorations.

For further information about any of the honours, or for advice or refreshers for how to perform them, please contact Rabbi Hackenbroch, Rabbi Yitzi or the Wardens.

An honours form will be sent to you to complete in advance of your simcha.

Newsletter

The community wishes Mazel Tov to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah and the family in the weekly newsletter that is sent out via email and printed out for reading on Shabbat morning. The Shul office will contact you in advance for a picture of your child and a short summary of their interests to be included in the newsletter.

Separated parents or other sensitive family situations

Please contact the Office, Rabbi Hackenbroch or Rabbi Yitzi to discuss how we can accommodate any particular circumstances or sensitivities you may have.

Other functions

It may on occasion be necessary to accommodate other functions or celebrations on the same Shabbat, such as a Baby Naming, or Aufruf (call up before a wedding). Where necessary, we may also hold both a Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah on the same date. We will contact you if such a situation arises.

Donation

The Synagogue is a charity and we would be unable to function and offer such a wide range of activities and services without extra funding over and above your membership fee. It is customary to mark the occasion of your simcha by making a donation to the shul. We would appreciate you making whatever donation you can afford in order to mark the occasion, and during the visit from one of the Bnei Mitzvot Liaison team they will be able to discuss various projects that you may wish to consider supporting.

Security

You will be asked to supply a list of potential guests attending your simcha to be held by security. We would be grateful if this list is supplied the week before and appreciate your assistance in helping the security team to ensure the safety of the community.

Timeline

Time	Event	Contact
Before booking	Check Hebrew birthday	Office to make contact
From 3 years before anticipated date	Provisionally book Bar or Bat Mitzvah in shul diary	Office to make contact
From 2 years before	Formally book simcha date	Office to make contact
Prior to starting year 6 (girls) or year 7 (boys)	Enrol in Bnei Mitzvah Programme	Online application
12 months prior	Attend Shabbat services regularly	
3 months prior	Meeting with Rabbi Hackenbroch or Rabbi Yitzi	Office to make contact
2-3 months prior	Visit from Bnei Mitzvot Liaison	BM Liaison to make contact
2 months prior	Complete newsletter and Honour (Aliyot) Forms	Office to make contact
First available Monday or Thursday following boy's 13 th Hebrew birthday	Midweek call up in shul	Office to make contact

Useful Contacts (*subject to change at AGM in May 2024)

Woodside Park Synagogue Office	020 8445 4236	bm@woodsidepark.org.uk
Rabbi Hackenbroch	07976 728350	rabbiph@woodsidepark.org.uk
Rebbetzen Gila Hackenbroch		ghackenbroch@gmail.com
Assistant Rabbi Yitzi Blachman	07307 404020	rabbiyitzi@woodsidepark.org.uk
Debby Poznanski & Asher Renton, Youth Directors		yds@woodsidepark.org.uk
Zila Golbert, Community Manager	020 8445 4236 "1"	manager@woodsideoark.org.uk
Jacqueline Krafchik, PA to Rabbi Hackenbroch	020 8445 4236 "6"	pa@woodsidepark.org.uk
Rosalind Zeffertt, Bnei Mitzvot Co-ordinator	020 8445 4236 "7"	officeassistant@woodsidepark.org.uk
Ruth Starr, Finance and Administration Assistant	020 8445 4236 "1"	office@woodsidepark.org.uk
Andrew Harris, Chairman*		andrew129@mac.com
Joanna Diamond, Vice Chairman*		vicechair@woodsidepark.org.uk
Zachary Segal, Warden*		zacharysegal.wps@gmail.com
David Richards, Warden*		wardendavid@woodsidepark.org.uk
Naomi Goldberg, Women's Officer*		women@woodsidepark.org.uk
Danielle Brull, Kiddush Co-ordinator (Ladies@WPS)		daniellebrull@hotmail.com
Caroline Sinclair, Bnei Mitzvot Liaison	07939 056 458	snclr_crln@yahoo.co.uk
David Raphael, Bnei Mitzvot Liaison	07770 315 194	david.raphael@michaelberman.co.uk

Glossary

Aliyah — Call Up to the Torah

Anim Zemiro — lit. Sweet Song of Praise— sung by a younger boy at end of Shabbat service

Bar Mitzvah — lit. son of Commandments, 13th Birthday celebrations when become Jewish adult

Bat Mitzvah — lit daughter of Commandments, 12th Birthday celebrations when become Jewish adult

Chagim — Jewish Festivals Chazan — leader of service Gelilah — rolling of Torah after reading

Haftarah — weekly reading from Prophets

Hagbah — lifting of Torah after reading

Kiddush — light refreshments at end of service to celebrate Shabbat. Please wait for the Rabbi/Chazan to 'make kiddush' — recite the appropriate blessings — before eating or drinking

Kippot — Jewish male head covering (skull cap)

Kvelling — see nachas

Maftir — last portion of weekly Torah reading

Mazel Tov — Congratulations

Nachas — see kvelling

Rosh Chodesh — Jewish New Month

Sedra, Parasha — weekly Torah reading

Simcha — celebration, term for Bar, Bat Mitzvah, wedding etc.

Tefillin — ritual objects used by Jewish men in prayer services. Contain Biblical passages and built to precise ritual requirements

Tribe — either Cohen, Yisrael, Levi. Defines order of call-ups. Please contact the Rabbi if you are unsure of your tribe

The Synagogue and Rabbi want to offer a meaningful and inspiring occasion for you and your family. Please feel free to be in touch in the lead up to your simcha so that we can enhance, enrich and support you.