

OJC's B'nai Mitzvah Manual



Okanagan Jewish Community Centre
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Introduction

Mazel Tov on your upcoming celebration! Becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah (B'nai Mitzvah in the plural) is one of the greatest events in the life-cycle of a Jewish family. B'nai Mitzvah planning at OJC is truly a collaborative effort between the OJC community, Rabbi Tom, your child, and your family.

At OJC, we teach our children to question, to debate, to fall in love with Torah, all the while finding their own voices in the chorus of our tradition. Our students don't have a B'nai Mitzvah – they become a B'nai Mitzvah. They become responsible adults in the Jewish community and in the world. They have the privilege of entering into the sublime world of Torah study, exploring the mysteries of the texts and ideas that have sustained our people. They become partners in the work of tikkun olam, of fulfilling the Prophetic mandate for the universal recognition of human dignity, the loving pursuit of justice, and for shalom, peace, wholeness. Becoming a B'nai Mitzvah is not the end of the journey; it is the beginning.

OJC committed to working closely together with our B'nai Mitzvah students and their families to create a personalized learning process and ceremony which combines traditions with personal meaning. The information included in this manual is designed to help make preparing for a B'nai Mitzvah as smooth and meaningful as possible.

Mazel Tov for this exciting time.

B'Shalom,
Rabbi Tom Samuels
Okanagan Jewish Community Centre

OJC's Bnai Mitzvah General Guidelines

At the minimum of two months before the B'nai Mitzvah date, please contact Anne at the OJC Office with the date you are requesting. She will need to know an approximate number of attendees to be able to coordinate with the day care to open-up the Social Hall.

Anne can provide contact information on hiring the kitchen help, reaching out to OJC volunteers for room set-up and take-down, and other logistical items.

Anne can be reached at: (250) 862-2305 or at admin@ojcc.ca.

Setting a Date

The date of the B'nai Mitzvah service is set by both you and Rabbi Tom, and in coordination with the synagogue's calendar.

Location

We encourage B'nai Mitzvahs to be held at the OJC as part of regular Shabbat services, and open to the entire OJC community. This helps to foster a lifelong and seamless sacred bond between your child, your family, the OJC community, and to the Jewish people.

Financial Expectations

B'nai Mitzvah families must be OJC members in good standing for the fiscal year (May 1 - April 30) for which the date of the B'nai Mitzvah is taking place.

The Ceremony

There are different options for having a Shabbat-Oriented B'nai Mitzvah Ceremony. These include: Saturday morning regular Shabbat services (10:00am); Shabbat afternoon Mincha and Havdalah Shabbat Services (5:00pm/6:00pm); and Friday evening Kabbalat Shabbat and Ma'ariv Services (6:00/7:00 pm). Other options are always on the table for discussion with Rabbi Tom.

Tutoring

Each child is unique and as such both the educational as well as ritual requirements for the B'nai Mitzvah entails an individualized determination process that is a collaboration between Rabbi Tom, you and your child.

During the year before becoming a B'nai Mitzvah, the student will meet with Rabbi Tom through an individualized tutoring program. The emphasis will be on skill development, the development of a D'var Torah (a sermon on the Torah portion), and most important, to help the student find an engaging Jewish voice of meaning and joy. Rabbi Tom will work with the family on a tutoring schedule including dates, tutoring locations (in person and/or online). Students will be assigned homework by Rabbi Tom which they are expected to have completed by their next scheduled tutoring session.

As part of the process to become life-long participants in the OJC community, we highly encourage that your child and you attend OJC Shabbat and Jewish Holiday services.

Mitzvah Project

B'nai Mitzvah students are highly encouraged to choose a Mitzvah Project as part of their B'nai Mitzvah process. This is typically a hands-on, social action-related project for a cause that resonates with the student. The Mitzvah Project is a unique opportunity for the student to contribute to others, learn about the importance of the Mitzvah, and to create a fulfilling experience that could inspire them throughout their life. Rabbi Tom is available to work with you and your child to craft a Mitzvah Project

Ushers

Families will need to work with the OJC Operations Committee to arrange for ushers to staff the front door, direct people to the sanctuary, hand out prayer books and/or materials and hand out kippot (head coverings) and tallitot (prayer shawls).

Photography/Video

During services and/or receptions which fall on either Shabbat or on Yom Tov, we ask that cellphones and electronic devices not be used while in the building. Rabbi Tom will typically make an announcement regarding this at the start of the service and/or reception. If a family wishes to come to the synagogue on another day to take pictures, this can be scheduled with Rabbi Tom and the President and/or delegate.

Prayer Books

We typically use OJC's Mishkan Tefillah (URJ 2007) prayer book for most Shabbat and Yom Tov services. We have enough copies to provide for all members and guests. There is always the option for the family to work with the Rabbi Tom to develop a special supplemental handout. In this case, the family will be responsible for formatting and printing copies.

Day of the Bnai Mitzvah

Arrive at least one hour before service with the food for set-up, to meet with the kitchen helpers, and to setup tables and chairs. Coordinate your arrival time with Rabbi Tom who will meet you at OJC and let you in to the building. Rabbi Tom will also work with you on when to lock-up the building after the event.

Room Set-Up & Take-Down

OJC does not have a custodian, and is reliant on volunteers. As such, the B'nai Mitzvah family is required to ensure that OJC's set-up and take-down protocols are followed. Many families organize among their friends and family members (and often is the case, other B'nai Mitzvah families) to arrive early with them to help set-up, and then to stay after the event for take-down.

Basic Set-Up Tasks:

Take-out and set-up tables and chairs for the reception in the Social Hall. For large B'nai Mitzvot, there may be a need for additional seating provided for the service component. Some families bring flowers for the pulpit as well as for the reception tables. Some families bring Kippot for their guests, others use the supply at OJC. In both cases OJC has a Kippah box that can be placed on the table in the foyer at the entrance to the sanctuary.

Basic Take-Down Tasks:

After the event, the room has to be totally cleared for the daycare, which enters on Monday morning. This includes taking out all the garbage, returning tables and chairs to their proper places, and leaving the kitchen as you found it.) Note that the B'nai Mitzvah family is responsible for taking the tablecloths home to wash, and to return to the OJC kitchen within a week.

Kitchen Help

Elena and Marta (kitchen helpers) are available for hire. If you write out exactly how you would like your prep done, they are more than capable. They will set up the buffet as well. You will not have to worry about anything during the B'nai Mitzvah service. They do all of the clean up of the kitchen after the luncheon. They charge \$30 per hour per person.

Kosher Requirements

We are a veggie/dairy and shellfish/meat-free synagogue. This means that as long as you keep to foods that are veggie and/or dairy, our kitchen and building is open for use.

Saturday Morning - *Kiddish* and/or Luncheon

For students having a Saturday morning Shabbat ceremony, the B'nai Mitzvah family has traditionally sponsored the Kiddish/luncheon for the entire congregation following the service. If there are financial constraints, this can be discussed with the President and/or delegate.

Saturday Afternoon - *Seuda'at Shelisheet/Havdala*

For students having a Saturday afternoon Shabbat and Havdala ceremony, the B'nai Mitzvah family will work with the President and/or delegate to coordinate a Seuda'at Shelisheet (Third Mitzvah Meal that is traditional on Shabbat). This typically includes simple veggie/dairy fare. If there are financial constraints, this can be discussed with the President and/or delegate.

B'nai Mitzvah Certificates

OJC will supply a B'nai Mitzvah certificate given to the B'nai Mitzvah student by a member of the OJC Board at the service. Rabbi Tom will coordinate this with you.

Pulpit Flowers

Families may provide pulpit flowers for the Shabbat of the B'nai Mitzvah service if they wish.

Program Brochures

Brochures and the like for the B'nai Mitzvah are optional, and up to the individual family. All costs and preparation of such materials will be incurred and coordinated by the family, with Rabbi Tom's involvement in developing their content.

OJC Torahs

Please note that our Torahs are insured for use in the OJC building only. If a Torah is taken out of the building for a private B'nai Mitzvah, the B'nai Mitzvah family will be required to work with the OJC to insure the Torah (insurance currently estimated at \$250 cost) for the duration that it is out of the OJC building.