

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Planning Timeline

Planning for a B'nai Mitzvah can take 12+ Months.

This comprehensive list will help keep you on track with the multitude of To-Dos.

12+ Months Before The B'nai Mitzvah

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Start a Planning Folder/Binder | This will be a place for all of your plans, lists, receipts & contracts. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss Visions & Priorities | Meet with your family to discuss & document your visions & priorities (especially for the B'nai Mitzvah child!). Make a list of “must haves”, “would be nice”, and “definitely don’t want” and refer to it often. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Draw up a Budget | Decide what you can, or are willing to, spend. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pick a Theme or Color Scheme | Whether it is sports, theater, music, emojis, games, dance or a specific color scheme, picking a theme is a personal choice and can add a lot of fun to your planning. There are many resources online for ideas & implementation (like Pinterest). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hire an Event Planner or “Day of” Coordinator, if applicable | Questions to ask yourself: Are you organized? Do you lack time to plan everything yourself? Can you afford a planner? Do you just need a “Day of” event coordinator? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pick a Date | If your synagogue hasn’t assigned your date, or you are not planning on having the service at a synagogue, you will need to choose a date for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. |

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Planning Timeline

12+ Months Before The B'nai Mitzvah

Pick the Type of Party

Decide on a day-time/luncheon party after the service, an evening party (Saturday or Sunday), a kids-only party, a casual party, a formal party, or maybe no party at all. Some people opt to have a small luncheon/kiddush and go on a family trip in lieu of a big party. This is completely a personal preference.

Choose a Venue

Think about possible venues in your area for the party: a synagogue's ballroom, restaurant, special event/party space, sports arena, museum, yacht, nightclub, etc. Research pricing and availability. Book your venue once you have decided.

Make a First Draft Guest List

This list will depend on the type of party you are having. If you are having a Kids Party for example, you can consider just inviting close family/friends to the party and a lot more people to the service/kiddush. Get an idea of who your child wants to invite but keep in mind that friendships change often especially in Middle School.

Get Support

Consider joining a group on Facebook (like DIY Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, for example). Read customers' reviews of vendors/venues you are considering. Ask friends that have planned a B'nai Mitzvah for their best tips.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Planning Timeline

8-10 Months Before The B'nai Mitzvah

Meet with the Caterer

Some questions to ask: Will you have passed hors d'oeuvres or stations during the cocktail hour? Do you need allergy-friendly options (gluten free for example)? Are you having stations (buffet) or a sit-down formal dinner? Do you plan on having it Kosher-style? Will you have a dessert bar or a large cake? Will you have a separate food area for kids? What is the price per person?

Decide on Party Entertainment

Go back to your priorities & vision list and decide what kind of entertainment you want for the party. Cocktail party music? Luncheon entertainment? Band or DJ? Airbrush artist? Illusionist? Comedian?

Research/Hire Photographer, Videographer, Band/DJ

Ask for references, look at videos online, find out what the price includes, shop around to get quotes then sign contracts because dates can get filled up quickly.

Research Local Hotels for out-of-town guests, if applicable

Many hotels will offer a discount for a block of rooms. Think about how many rooms you might need and see if there is a local hotel that will offer a discount.

Start Studying Torah and Haftorah Blessings

This of course completely depends on your synagogue or what type of service you are doing, but typically this is the time your child would be studying.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Planning Timeline

8-10 Months Before The B'nai Mitzvah

Begin a Mitzvah Project

Some synagogues require the B'nai Mitzvah child to have a Mitzvah Project. Even if it is not required, it is recommended as it allows the focus to be on Tikkun Olam (which translates as acts of kindness performed to perfect or repair the world). The project should be something that is meaningful to the child and allows some type of participation from others (collecting used books, organizing/ participating in a Fun Run, Disease Education/Fundraising, etc..

Pick out Invitations

Look at a variety of invitation options (as well as your budget). Decide if you want formal invitations from a custom Invitation company (local or online such as Etsy), invitations that you design yourself online (such as Zazzle, Minted or TinyPrints), postcards, electronic invitation (sent via email), etc. Purchase as soon as you have decided.

Create a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Website, if applicable

It is starting to become popular to create a simple website/webpage for B'nai Mitzvahs event. The website can house all the service and party details, FAQ, maps, itinerary, hotel information for out of town guests, RSVP tab, and even a place for photos after the event. The sky is the limit here and there are plenty of free sites available to help you.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Planning Timeline

6-8 Months Before The B'nai Mitzvah

- Start Dress Shopping for Bat Mitzvah girl (and Mom)

Pay attention to big sales after Holidays or Prom season if you have a tight budget. Think about any photography sessions your child/family might have. And remember that your child will potentially need an outfit for Friday night services, Saturday services, and a party.

- Begin Studying Friday Evening and Saturday Morning Prayers

Besides the Torah and Haftarah portions, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah might have other prayers to learn. Each synagogue has a tutor timeline, but typically children should be learning these prayers by this point.

- Send Save the Date Cards, if applicable

If the B'nai Mitzvah is on a Holiday weekend, or during a busy time, or you know there will be guests needing to travel from out of town, a Save the Date is helpful. Be sure to send only to those you definitely want to invite. Save the Dates can be via a card, postcard or even an email. Be sure to include the date and general location (like city) and to mention that the formal invitation is to follow. You can even include your B'nai Mitzvah website address if you have one.

- Begin Regular Attendance at Synagogue Services

Some synagogues require a set number of services to be attended in the months prior to the B'nai Mitzvah. Be sure to check with your synagogue by this time.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Planning Timeline

6–8 Months Before The B'nai Mitzvah

Order Yarmulkes/Kippot

Decide if you want yarmulkes personalized (to include child's name, B'nai Mitzvah date, etc). Look at different styles and find something that you like, or that complements your theme, and is within your budget. If ordering online, allow enough time to receive and check for mistakes before your event. Plan on ordering 1 for each male invited plus 20–25 extra. You might end up with extra but that is better than not having enough. Yarmulkes can be bought online for as little as \$1–2 each.

Decide on Centerpieces

Do you have a Party/Event Planner or Decorator? If so, meet with them to discuss table decorations. If you are DIY, decide what you will make and how many you will need. Will you need centerpieces for a luncheon/kiddush as well as a party? Make use of online resources such as Pinterest or DIY Facebook groups.

Choose and Order Party Giveaways/Favors/Swag

Although not required, many parties have giveaway items for guests. This can be t-shirts, sweatshirts, chocolates, sports bags, glow items, create-your-own items, etc.

Hire Vendors for Additional Entertainment Needs

You might want to consider blackjack tables, arcade games, "tattoo" or graffiti artist, interactive photo booth etc. Shop around and be sure it fits in your budget.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Planning Timeline

3-4 Months Before The B'nai Mitzvah

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Mail (or email) Invitations | Don't forget to include RSVP date and postage for reply cards. It is helpful to number your reply cards just in case some guests don't write their name on the card when they send it back to you. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decide on Candle Lighting Ceremony, if applicable | Will you have one? What do you want it to look like? Who will make it for you or will you DIY? There are many ideas online to help you create one. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choose Sign-in/Guest Book or Alternative | Will you have a photo book? You can create one using an online service such as Shutterfly. Will you need professional photographs taken or will you use photos you already have? You can also consider an alternative to a book – such as having a guitar case or basketball or poster or chair signed instead. Consider your theme and where you would keep the item after the event. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Create Photo File for Video Montage, if applicable | Whether you are creating your own montage (using iMovie, for example) or hiring someone to do it, you will have 12-13 years of photos to choose from! Start creating a file folder on your computer with photos that you will potentially use. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule Formal Photo Session, if applicable | Some people have a pre-B'nai Mitzvah photo shoot (with or without family). You might also want formal family photos at your synagogue the week of the service. |

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Planning Timeline

1-2 Months Before The B'nai Mitzvah

- Order Challah and Cake, if applicable

Some people like to incorporate a cake into the candle lighting ceremony and some people don't feel the need to have a cake because they are having other desserts. It is a matter of preference. It is the same with challah – some people have one at the service and/or kiddush so don't feel the need to have one at the party. Other people want to incorporate grandparents or other family at the party by having them recite the Ha Motzi blessing.

- Purchase Bar Mitzvah boy's (and Dad's) suit

Whether you plan on buying or renting, now is the time to get measured and make a purchase or sign a rental agreement. Don't miss the big sales that offer Buy-one-get-one-free suits! Your child can end up with one suit for Friday night and one for Saturday. Or you can buy one that fits now and buy one a size bigger for the future.

- Book Makeup and/or Hair Stylist Appointments

If you need makeup/hair styling appointments for photos, before the service and/or before the party, now is the time to make your appointments. Some Bat Mitzvah girls (and their Moms) get their make up done professionally for the big day. You should also book your child's regular hair cut appointments (boys and girls) for 7-10 days prior to the B'nai Mitzvah.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Planning Timeline

1-2 Months Before The B'nai Mitzvah

Create Video Montage

If you started a file of photos a couple of months ago, it will make this step much easier. There are plenty of programs (such as iMovie) that allow you to create a montage yourself or you can hire someone to do it for you. Montages can be chronological or by category. Most montages use 75-100 photos, are 7-10 minutes long and have 3-5 songs for variety.

Schedule Meetings with Rabbi & Cantor

Some synagogues require 3-4 family meetings prior to the B'nai Mitzvah date so be sure to schedule them around any other priorities. Some synagogues require weekly cantor meetings with the child/parents.

Assign Torah Readings and Honors/Aliyyot

Determine the number you have to assign then ask family/friends if they would like the honor.

Start writing Candle Lighting Poems, if applicable

Decide who gets to be honored then start writing. It is a great project for the B'nai Mitzvah child. There are lots of resources online to assist with writing, or you can hire someone to do it for you.

Create Seating Chart, if applicable

If you are having a formal sit-down meal, and you have received your guests' replies, you can begin creating your seating chart. There are charts online available to assist you or you can just use note cards and post-it notes to figure it out.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Planning Timeline

1-2 Months Before The B'nai Mitzvah

Order Table/Place Cards

Once you know who is coming to your party and you are having a formal sit-down meal, you can go ahead and create/order your Table or Place Cards. You can think out of the box and tie it to your theme or just go with a classic place card.

Meet with the Synagogue's Executive Director

Discuss luncheon/kiddush/oneg details such as what food will be served as well as how the room would be set up. Also this would be the time to pay any outstanding dues.

Book Restaurant for Family Dinner, if applicable

Some people choose to have a dinner on the Friday night for family and out-of-town guests. It can also be done Saturday afternoon or evening depending on when your party will take place.

Create a Service Guide for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service

This can be created on your computer then printed at a local printers (such as Fed Ex or Office Depot, for example) or can be made professionally. Some things typically included are Mitzvah Project details, Honors/Aliyot information, Synagogue etiquette, etc.

Purchase Tallis

This can be done locally at a Judaica store or through an internet store. If bought locally, the family outing (including grandparents) can make for some great photo keepsakes and memories.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Planning Timeline

2-4 Weeks Before The B'nai Mitzvah

Confirm Details with Vendors

It is a good idea to check in with your various vendors to make sure everyone is on the same page. Also this would be a good time to make any adjustments to original plans.

Start Composing "Week-of-Event" and "Day-of-Event" Timelines

There will be a lot happening in that final week so it would be helpful to have a Timeline to refer to. Some items to include: rehearsal schedule, photography session, suit pick-up, out-of-town guest's arrival times, family dinners, etc. The Day-of-Event Timeline can include Hair/Make Up appointments, Service start/end times, Party details, etc.

Provide List of "Must-Haves" to Photographer & Videographer

Do not assume that your photographer and videographer know every single moment you want captured. If you have an Itinerary, it is best to provide it to them. Some ideas could be all the siblings together, Mom with best friend, all the friends with the B'nai Mitzvah, all the Grandparents/Aunts/Uncles, etc.

Review RSVP List

Now is the time to contact any guest who still has not responded to the invitation. Decide if you will be calling them or sending them an email (depending on how close you are to the person). You will need to provide final numbers soon to the caterer.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Planning Timeline

2-4 Weeks Before The B'nai Mitzvah

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Complete Bar/Bat Mitzvah Speech | The B'nai Mitzvah child will need ample time to practice saying his/her speech out loud so be sure to have the speech completed by now. You will need to have time to proof read it and possibly have it approved by your Rabbi. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deliver Song List to DJ (or Band) | This could include Candle Lighting Songs, Video Montage Songs (in case there are audio issues with the video), Mother/Son or Father/Daughter Song, songs you want to hear and possibly other songs that you definitely don't want to hear. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Submit Child's Bio to Synagogue, if applicable | Some synagogues have a weekly or monthly newsletter which feature upcoming B'nai Mitzvah children. Check with your synagogue for specifics. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assemble Hospitality Baskets for Synagogue and/or Party Venue | Many people provide Hospitality Baskets (aka Bathroom Baskets) for guests' use at the service and/or party. The key is to keep it simple and try not to go over the top. Some items to include are individually wrapped mints, gum, tissues, hair ties (ponytail holders), band aids, perfume/cologne, antacids, safety pins, bobby pins, antibacterial soap, and perhaps a couple of tampons/pads. |

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Planning Timeline

1 Week Before The B'nai Mitzvah

Provide Final Head Count to Venue

Communicate the final number to both the venue and the caterer. Be sure to include vendors in the count given to the caterer as they will be hungry and will appreciate (and sometimes expect) a meal.

Provide Set-Up Requests to Venue

Some things to consider: Where will the DJ/Band set up? Will you need a Podium? Will the video montage need a large screen and/or projector? Do you need a table for Sign-In Book and/or Candle Lighting Display? Where will tables be set up for Dining and Food (if you're having Stations)? Will you need a chair for the Hora? etc.

Get B'nai Mitzvah Child's Hair Trimmed

7-10 Days prior to the B'nai Mitzvah is ideal for a trim. Stay away from trying a brand new hair cut.

Pick up Suits

Final suit alterations should be completed by this time for the Bar Mitzvah boy (and Dad).

Create a Party Itinerary

This should be shared with all Vendors (Caterer, DJ/Band, Photographer, Videographer, etc.) either by email ahead of time and/or as a hard copy on the day of the party. Include Cocktail Hour, Hora, Toast, Mother/Son or Father/Daughter Dance, Candle Lighting, Video Montage, Dinner, etc.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Planning Timeline

2-3 Days Before The B'nai Mitzvah

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Check all Outfits | Go over each family member's outfits for the various events of the weekend (Friday Night Service, Saturday Morning or Havdallah Service, Party, Family Dinners etc.). Ensure that each part of the outfits are clean and fit properly. Save yourself the hassle of "last minute" clothing emergencies. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend Thursday Morning Minyan Service | Some synagogues require attendance by the entire family. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend Dress Rehearsal/Formal Photography Session | Many synagogues have the B'nai Mitzvah child run through the entire service the Thursday afternoon/evening prior to the actual B'nai Mitzvah. This is also an ideal time for Photography/Videography (if your synagogue does not allow it on Shabbat). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deliver Place Cards, Favors, etc. to Venue | Give any special items to the Venue or to a Party Planner/Day of Coordinator if you are using one. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deliver Welcome Baskets to Hotel for Out-of-Town Guests | This can include a weekend itinerary, a list of local restaurants and/or delivery menus, maps, water bottles and snacks. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write out Vendor Checks | Save yourself time over the busy weekend and write out vendor checks for the party day. It is also a good time to make sure you have cash on hand for tips. |

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Planning Timeline

The Friday of The B'nai Mitzvah

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Deliver Service Guides, Yarmulkes, Centerpieces, etc. to Synagogue | Some synagogues require delivery by noon, others might require it the day before. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend Friday Night Service | Some synagogues require attendance by the entire family. This is also a nice way to get out-of-town guests acclimated to your synagogue. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy a Family Dinner | This might also include out-of-town guests and extended family. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get a Good Night's Sleep | Send the B'nai Mitzvah child (and yourself) to bed at a decent time! |

The Saturday of The B'nai Mitzvah

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Wake up early | Leave plenty of time to get ready and allow for any unforeseen issues. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eat Breakfast | This is especially important for the B'nai Mitzvah child. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bring Important Items to Synagogue | Be sure to bring water, tissues, speeches, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bring Important Items to Party Venue | Bring a lighter and tall candle for the Candle Lighting, phone charger, video montage (on flash drive), itinerary, cash, vendor checks, important phone numbers, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relax & Savor Every Moment | This is such a special time that will fly by. Enjoy your family's simcha! |