

BLAKE STREET HEBREW CONGREGATION

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Policy

AIMS

- . to foster and promote a long term connection and relationship between the bar/bat mitzvah, and their family and the congregation;
- . to ensure that the occasion is one which is meaningful and rewarding in both a personal and spiritual sense to the bar/bat mitzvah and their family;
- . to allow so far as is possible for the individual bar/bat mitzvah to have input into the occasion to suit their personal desires/needs;
- . to ensure all bar/bat mitzvahs held at BSHC are memorable, uniquely presented and talked about so that BSHC becomes a sought after venue for bar/bat mitzvahs;
- . to give ongoing special consideration to the development of a Bat Mitzvah ceremony that is individual, meaningful and spiritually rewarding for the girl concerned.

METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION

- upon receipt of a booking an interview is to be arranged between the bar/bat mitzvah and their family and the Rabbi and the President.
- intending bar/bat mitzvah to be encouraged to come to shule regularly for a period of 6 months prior to the day of the bar/bat mitzvah (NB such attendance is not mandatory);
- whilst coming to shule prior to the day of the bar/bat mitzvah the young person may be "buddied" with a slightly older person so they are not left alone and confused;
- whilst coming to shule prior to the day of the bar/bat mitzvah the young person should be allocated duties/tasks during the service to make them feel important;
- whilst coming to shule prior to the day of the bar/bat mitzvah the young person should be introduced to as many people as possible to ensure they are made to feel welcome and part of the community;
- whilst coming to shule prior to the day of the bar/bat mitzvah the young person should be encouraged to bring other members of their family;
- in the time between the first interview and the day of the bar/bat mitzvah further interviews/meetings may take place between the Rabbi (and possibly the President), and the bar/bat mitzvah (and possibly their family) to assess the satisfaction/progress/wishes/input of the bar/bat mitzvah, if necessary;
- whilst coming to shule prior to the day of the bar/bat mitzvah a special "family Shabbat" should be organised where honours/duties are distributed amongst the bar/bat mitzvah's family and they are introduced to other members;
- group meetings/suppers should be held with intending bar/bat mitzvah to discuss their thoughts and the significance of the occasion, and to obtain input from them generally (this will hopefully bond the group to increase the prospects of them continuing to come to Shule after the bar/bat mitzvah);

- Rabbi and/or President may have one or more social outings with groups of bar/bat mitzvah prior to the day to "meet them on their own turf";
- special bar/bat mitzvah shiurim will be held;
- responsibilities can be allocated to bar/bat mitzvah after the occasion to keep them coming to Shule e.g.: they can be the older "buddy", or they can write an article for the newsletter, or they can give Friday evening/Parsha summary/Shabbat afternoon talk, or they can address new group of bar/ bat mitzvah children etc;
- newsletter articles can be written on the topic of bar/bat mitzvah with an indication of how BSHC is responding to the needs of its members;
- articles can be written for the AJN to promote BSHC and our way of honoring bar/bat mitzvah.

ASSOCIATED MATTERS

- provision of a teacher, if necessary.
- policy re clashes: other than in exceptional circumstances, and with the express approval of the first booked bar/ bat mitzvah family, only one Bar or Bat Mitzvah will take place on any Shabbat.
- program of learning/shiurim for the bar/bat mitzvahs.
- Bat Mitzvah is to be held within 3 months of a girls Hebrew birth date (preferably on the first Shabbat after her birthday) unless exceptional circumstances exist.
- We will encourage girls to celebrate their Bat Mitzvah in Shule on Shabbat in a single person ceremony.
- Rabbi will address Bat Mitzvah girl during his Drasha & perhaps prior to Laining to emphasize the Bat Mitzvah. After the Drasha the Rabbi will present the book to the Bat Mitzvah girl.
- After Adon Olam the Mehitza is opened & announcements made by either President or Bat Mitzvah girl. If Bat Mitzvah girl is speaking, she will be introduced by the President or the Rabbi and tree certificate will be presented by the President after she speaks. If she is not speaking, the President will present the Tree Certificate after the announcements.
- Blake Street Shule requests that in sending out invitations to your Simcha, you include a paragraph along the following lines:

“We have chosen to celebrate our Simcha at Blake Street Hebrew Congregation which is a warm and welcoming modern orthodox congregation. We ask that you respect the congregation’s request to dress appropriately for the synagogue and leave your mobile telephone at home.”