

NORTH SHORE
HEBREW ACADEMY

ישיבת חוף הצפון



Mazal tov

BAR/BAT MITZVAH • PLANNING GUIDE

Dear NSHA Families:

Mazal tov on your upcoming simcha!

Your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah is one of the most important and formative milestones for a Jewish family. It reaches not only the individual child, but also the community at large. It is a public and communal moment of recognition of the Torah values that unite us as a Jewish nation. We look forward to partnering with you along the journey of preparing for and celebrating your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Whether this is your first simcha or your fifth, whether you are beginning to plan or have already been planning for some time, these guidelines are meant to help answer questions, provide guidance and serve as a resource as you make your plans and preparations. NSHA sees your Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration as a vital part of our school - home partnership. We will review these guidelines with our students in school, but ask that you also review them together with your child as you plan your simcha. Along the way, please do not hesitate to contact us should you wish to discuss individual or specific questions further.

The Bar or Bat Mitzvah celebration offers families an opportunity to share their values and their joy with the rest of the community, whose presence only reinforces and magnifies those values and that joy. It also offers families a chance to remind themselves of the values they hold dear and what they really want to celebrate.

**We wish you much joy and nachat as you embark on this exciting journey.
Mazal Tov!**

Rabbi Adam Acobas

Rabbi Dr. Jeffrey Kobrin

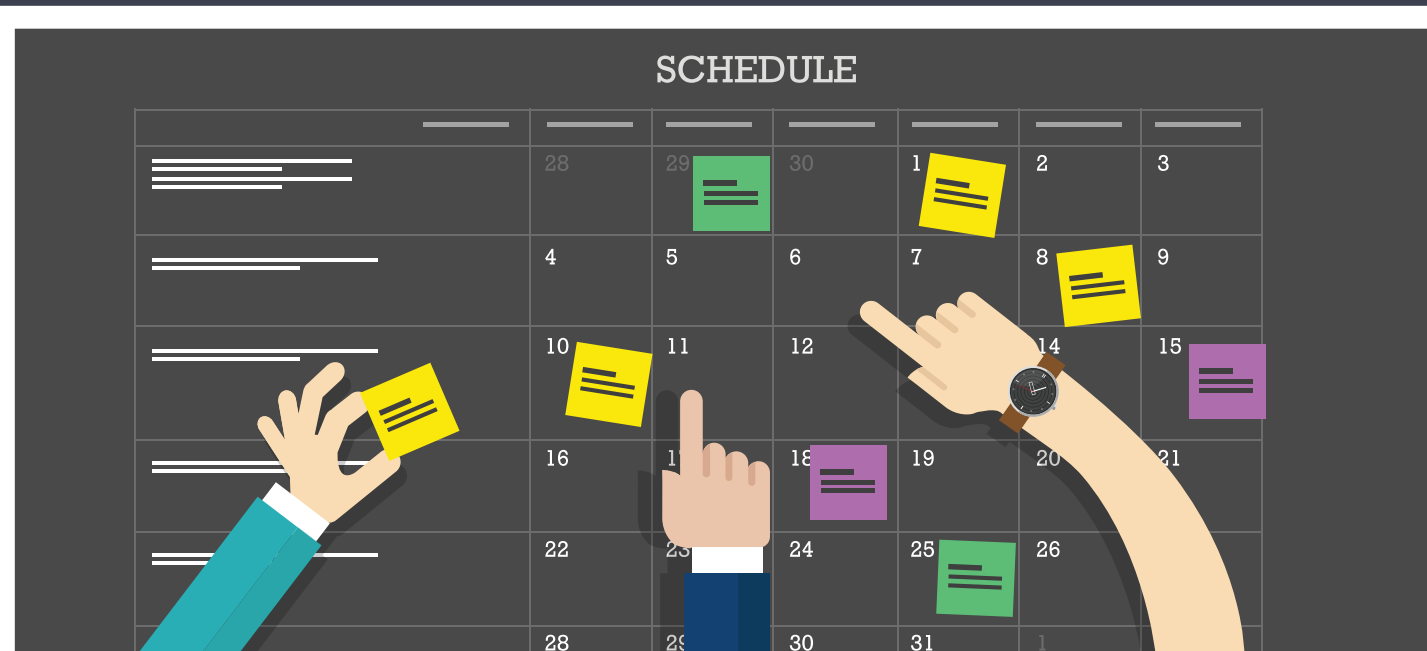
The focus of your simcha should be the celebration of your child taking on adult mitzvot. To recognize this important day, many students commit to reading their parasha, learning a selection of Tanach, Mishnah, Gemara, or other Torah source, as well as possibly taking on a chesed project. Many families also host a celebration to commemorate this special day. Parents of sixth grade boys and fifth grade girls must schedule an appointment with Rabbi Adam Acobas or Rabbi Dr. Jeffrey Kobrin to discuss their plans for their child's special day.

01



PLANNING YOUR SIMCHA

TIMING



In order to eliminate issues with event conflicts and to facilitate maximum attendance at each child's simcha, the Great Neck community has established a calendar to facilitate date selection. It is the school's expectation that all families consult with this calendar and schedule their simcha on this calendar when planning their celebrations. This applies to all parties and celebrations including Tefillin ceremonies and Shabbat luncheons/Kiddushim. This helps avoid unnecessary conflicts as families begin this exciting planning process, recognizing that many calendars (synagogues, family, friends) must be considered.

The calendar can be accessed at <http://greatneckcalendar.blogspot.com/>.

A date can be requested by emailing greatneckcalendar@gmail.com.

Please keep in mind the guidelines below so that this process remains equitable, allowing each child to shine on his/her special day:

Shabbat: Baruch Hashem, we have many students: multiple semachot in different communities and synagogues may take place on the same Shabbat. Whether or not there are multiple semachot on Shabbat taking place, we ask that families consult the school to ensure that guest lists are coordinated, no students are omitted and semachot are inclusive to encourage the sense of community that we work so hard to produce here at NSHA.

Motza'ei Shabbat (only in winter months): Only one Bar or Bat Mitzvah celebration per grade can take place per Motza'ei Shabbat. Parties should not be made on a Saturday night after we have moved our clocks 1 hour forward (Daylight Savings begins - Typically from the third Saturday night in March and on) as it is nearly impossible to avoid desecrating Shabbat in order to begin the event at a reasonable hour.

Sunday events: We generally discourage two parties on the same day in the same grade because the second party often suffers in attendance. Sunday night parties should end by 11:00pm. If a party ends at a late hour on Sunday night, student attendance and productivity at school are affected the following day.

Weeknights: Parties cannot be held on weeknights.

Sefira Period: Parties involving music should not be made during the Sefira period (following Pesach until Lag B'Omer). Please consult your Synagogue Rabbi if there are extenuating circumstances for more specific guidelines.

Shabbat is a beautiful time to celebrate a simcha. If you will be hosting a celebration on Shabbat, please encourage students who do not live in your community to join the celebration. This includes arranging for sleeping accommodations and meals for children who live outside of your neighborhood. Providing adequate supervision over the course of Shabbat for students who are attending the simcha without their parents will help maintain proper decorum for your celebration and the safety of visiting students.



SHABBAT CELEBRATIONS



VENUE, GUEST LIST & TRANSPORTATION

LOCATION, MUSIC, AND DANCING

The location of celebratory events, choice of entertainment, and music should reflect your child's entrance into a life of Torah and Mitzvah observance. **Keep in mind that this is not a birthday party but a religious celebration of your child reaching the age of Mitzvot.** The celebration venue and decor should be appropriate and the music selection should be appropriate for a religious celebration (simcha dancing, Israeli, or Jewish music).

Please be mindful of your entertainment choices such as games, photo booths, walk-around magicians. In addition, when hiring dance motivators please ensure that they are appropriately dressed and that male motivators are with the boys and female motivators are with the girls. It is appropriate to share some words of Torah at your simcha. It is our hope that these guidelines will help ensure that the tone of your simcha fits with NSHA's religious values and philosophy.

GUEST LIST

Thoughtfully construct the guest list for your simcha. To maintain the grade's cohesion and the students' emotional well-being, please remember that NSHA policy states that you invite either all girls, all boys, or all students in your child's grade. No student should feel excluded. Our school office will provide you with class lists and contact information. **Please remember that this guest policy applies not only to parties, but to Tefillin ceremonies and Shabbat Luncheons/Kiddushim as well.**

INVITATIONS TO TEACHERS

It is appropriate as well as encouraged to include your child's Teachers, Rabbis and Morot as part of your celebration. It further emphasizes the strong partnership that is formed between the school and home in educating our children. Although at times personal conflicts may arise where invited faculty are unable to attend, we will do our utmost in having the NSHA faculty represented and part of your simcha.

TRANSPORTATION

If you are arranging special transportation to and/or from your simcha, ensure that proper adult supervision is provided on the bus and upon arrival and departure. Parents should be told the timing of the bus and be provided with a contact person and number for any questions.

ENTERTAINERS

We have extensive resources for entertainers who specialize in Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrations that conform to halachically acceptable standards. This includes DJ's, motivators, bands etc. Please contact Rabbi Dr. Kobrin and Rabbi Acobas for more details.

SPEECHES/DIVREI TORAH

Prior to attending a celebration, please remind your child of the importance of listening quietly and respectfully to the program. This includes behaving respectfully and politely and not using smartphones or other devices during the speeches. Our children emulate the adults around them.

When attending a simcha, please be mindful to behave in the same way we expect of our children. Likewise, when planning your simcha, please try to plan a program which will be enjoyable and meaningful for all of your guests. Please be mindful of appropriate content and length of the speeches. We teach our students the importance of Derech Eretz and good Midot but these values should be reinforced at home and prior to attending a celebration.

RSVP

As a courtesy to the host, please ensure you reply promptly to all invitations. Whenever possible, we expect that all students will attend the semachot to which they are invited.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Upon arrival at the celebration, children should seek out the parents and grandparents of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah, introduce themselves and extend a sincere "Mazal Tov" and "thank you" for being included in the celebration. When leaving the celebration, guests should again thank the parents for the lovely simcha.

PARTICIPATION

During a celebration, it is important for all children to help enhance their friend's simcha by arriving on time for tefilla, remaining in the synagogue and participating appropriately. A major component of most celebrations is dancing. We strongly encourage all students to join the ruach and fun of the event. We dedicate time during the school day to teaching popular simcha dances to our students so they are prepared to fully participate in a meaningful and inclusive way.

When attending a celebration your child should participate fully including being attentive during speeches and services and engaging in dancing. This means that on a weekday/night celebration, cellphones and other devices must be put away so as not to cause any distraction or disrespect during a simcha. We ask that parents model this behavior for their children and likewise, do not use cellphones or devices during speeches, dancing or programming.

ATTIRE

Please be sure that your child attends semachot dressed in a way that conforms with the ideals of tzniyut (modesty) that we instill at school as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a celebration of personal acceptance and embodiment of Jewish values. This includes a proper head covering for boys and appropriate length sleeves and skirts/dresses for girls.

05



**ATTENDING A
CELEBRATION**



IN-SCHOOL BAR/BAT MITZVAH COLLATIONS

06

We encourage your family to celebrate your child's simcha with his/her classmates in school. To reserve your in-school celebration date, please contact Morah Susan Lieberman at the Middle School office at (516) 487-9163 or slieberman@nsha.org.

At the in-school celebration, the Bat Mitzvah girl will deliver a d'var Torah following tefilla; the Bar Mitzvah boy can lead tefilla and will either read from the Torah or receive an aliyah on a Torah reading day. A short speech in honor of the celebrant is given and a school gift is presented to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child at the collation.

Additional immediate family members are welcome to join us at this celebration. Following tefilla, the family is welcome to provide a snack for the entire grade.

Please bring doughnuts with an O-U, O-K, Kaf-K or Vaad of Queens certification. Please contact the school office for the grade(s) headcount so you can order appropriate quantities. Was also ask that each family provide 80 seven-ounce plastic cups, 80 paper napkins, 8 or 9 half gallons of Kosher-certified apple or orange juice, and 14 large paper plates.

Reminder: All food brought to NSHA must be **NUT-FREE**. If you are bringing Dunkin' Donuts from Middle Neck Rd (516-708-9389), please make sure the kosher sticker is on each box. NO chocolate icing or chocolate filling is acceptable. Bagel Mentch (516-487-2243) carries nut-free, pareve baked goods, but needs a two-day advance order. Entenmann's are not manufactured in a nut free facility and are not acceptable. If you have any questions about acceptable items, please contact Lisa Parker, NSHA Food Services Director at 516.487.8687 x129 or lparker@nsha.org

We ask that all supplies are brought to the hallway outside the school office; our students will set up for you in the lunchroom. Join us in the Beit Midrash at 8:00 a.m. for davening. We will conclude by 9:10.

In addition, when attending the school simcha, we remind everyone to abide by the dress code in the Parent-Student Handbook, which outlines the visitor dress code. Women should wear skirts or dresses that are at least knee length. Men should wear kippot and married women should have their head covered during tefila. All visitors are expected to wear shirts with sleeves and no shorts or denim bottoms are permitted.

In order to establish a sense of class unity, the NSHA PTA has established the **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Simcha Fund**. In lieu of gifts, each family makes a contribution when their child is in 6th grade in the amount of \$360 to their child's class **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Simcha Fund**. Upon becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, each child will receive three (3) \$100 State of Israel Bonds. All bonds will mature five (5) years after their issue date, at which time the \$300 purchase amount will be paid together with all interest accrued to your child. The purchase of the State of Israel Bonds reflects our steadfast support of our Jewish homeland. The remainder of the funds collected will be used as a class tzedakah donation to a cause which will be determined by the class.

This **Class Bar/Bat Mitzvah Simcha Fund** takes place of **all** gifts between students of that graduating class and between all students of the Middle School. **Individual gifts are strongly discouraged.** Graduating classes since 2007 have participated in this fund and it has been a **tremendous success!**

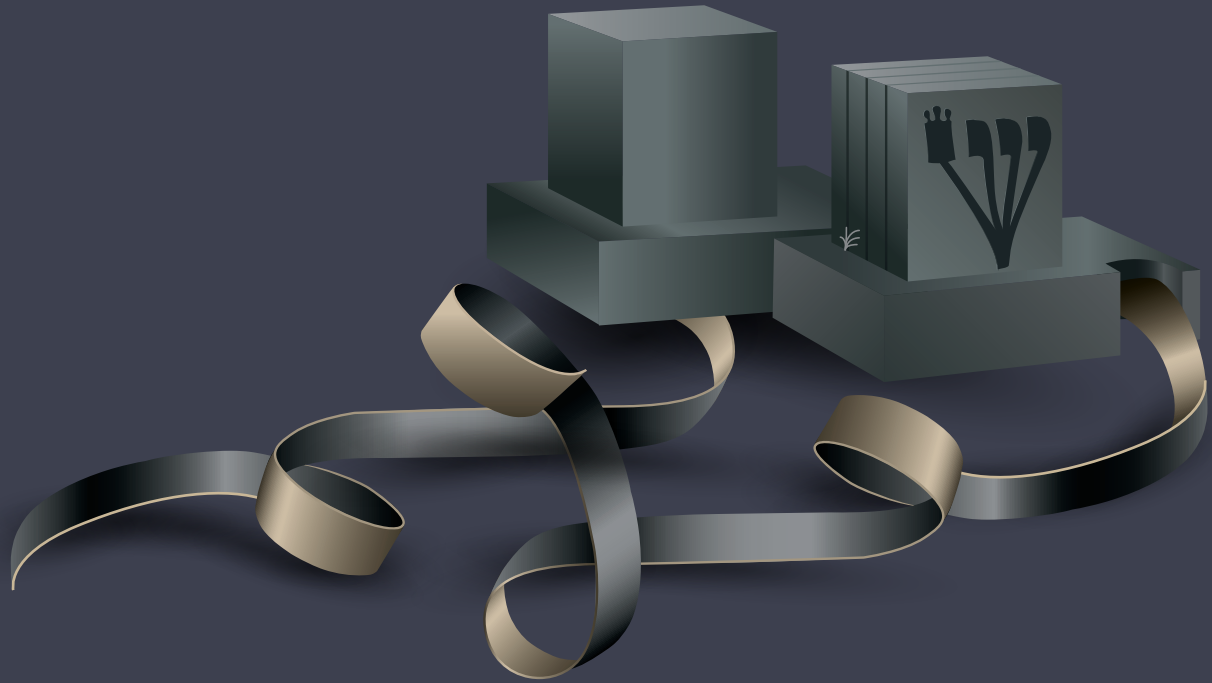
CHESED PROJECTS

At NSHA, one of our core values is Achrayut - a responsibility to care for the Jewish and global community. As a part of this major milestone in your child's Jewish life, we encourage each child and their family to complete a chesed project that best expresses the student's interests. This is an excellent way to emphasize to your child that entering the age of Jewish adulthood not only means responsibility to Hashem but also responsibility to the community as well. NSHA has partnered with Areyvut which is an excellent resource for finding chesed opportunities. Areyvut's goal is to connect Jewish youth to opportunities within our communities to volunteer and give back. Their Volunteer Opportunities Database consists of local organizations that offer ways to get involved, either as part of a project for a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, or as a stand-alone volunteer opportunity.

Please visit: <https://www.areyvut.org/>



GIFTS & CHESED PROJECTS



TUTORS & IN SCHOOL PREP

As you prepare for your son's Bar Mitzvah/daughter's Bat Mitzvah, it is important to think about who can learn individually with your child to maximize your child's experience in learning and preparing for his/her simcha. We can serve as a resource in connecting you with Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutors. Please contact Rabbi Dr. Kobrin or Rabbi Acobas for more details.

IN-SCHOOL PREPARATION

It is our belief that the school should serve as a guide and resource for parents in planning their simcha, therefore we will be actively engaging with both students and parents to help your child be fully prepared to celebrate his/her own simcha and at the semachot of others.

Our Rabbis and Morot will be teaching classes which will encompass topics pertinent to a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Topics will include, among others:

- Proper etiquette at a simcha
- Simcha dancing: A professional simcha dancer/motivator will lead workshops to teach our students the latest simcha dances, how to dance inclusively and in a manner appropriate for a religious celebration.
- How to prepare and deliver a d'var Torah
- Choosing a chesed project (through our partnership with Areyvut)

In addition, Rabbi Acobas meets with each family to discuss plans for their child's simcha and offer guidance to assist families in planning a simcha that is appropriate and reflects our religious values.

The NSHA Administration and Faculty takes tremendous pride in our students as they reach this important moment in their Jewish life journey. It is our goal to partner with you as your children become Bnei and Bnot Mitzvah and enhance your celebration to embody this spiritual and Jewish milestone. We are hopeful that this guide will be helpful to each of our NSHA families in preparing for this momentous occasion in your child's life. May we be able to share many happy occasions (semachot) in the lives of our children.