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The only locally published Bar/Bat Mitzvah guide

FALL 2011



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## Mazel tov!



It's your time to shine. I hope everyone finds something useful in the Cleveland Jewish News Bar/Bat Mitzvah fall 2011 magazine. Two stories that I would like to draw your attention to are those about

a boy who has Down syndrome who stepped into the spotlight to mark his transition into adulthood, and one about a father who shared the bimah with his children as they all cherished their big day.

This edition also provides information about the highly popular Simchapalooza! and 17th annual Bar/Bat Mitzvah Showcase that will be held from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Signature of Solon on Sun., Nov. 6. More than 1,000 people are expected to attend and discuss their simchahs with some 70 vendors. They'll learn what's hot and what's not on the bar/bat mitzvah circuit. I hope to see you there.

Don't forget to bring along this magazine, the only locally published bar/bat mitzvah guide, which includes worksheets and tips.

But before you do anything else to make your bar/bat mitzvah the best of the year, flip through the pages of this semi-annual magazine. And don't forget to let me know how your event was. We may just feature you in the next edition!



Managing editor Bob Jacob can be reached at 216-454-8300, ext. 261, or [bjacob@cjn.org](mailto:bjacob@cjn.org)

## On the cover

Jessica Silver of Mayfield Heights relaxes toward the end of her bat mitzvah party, surrounded by some of the gifts she received. Jessica became a bat mitzvah at The Temple-Tifereth Israel.



PHOTO / DAVID TAVENS / WWW.MITZVAHPHOTO.COM

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**Publisher and editor:** Michael E. Bennett

**Sr. director, sales & custom marketing:** Randy Loeser

**Business manager:** Sherry Lapine

**Production manager:** Sharon Ulsenhimer

**Asst. production manager:** Christine Ulsenhimer

**Creative director:** Frida Kon

**Managing editor:** Bob Jacob

**City editor:** Margi Herwald Zitelli

**Editorial staff:** Arlene Fine, Marilyn H. Karfeld, Sarah Reymond, Roberta Sears, Violet Spevack

**Advertising staff:** Paul Bram, Gina Fabian, Ron Greenbaum, Tarah King, Nell V. Kirman, Laura Legan, Kathy Legg, Bernice Levine, Laurie Mandell, Zach Marcus, RJ Pooch, Sherry Tilson, Wain Advertising Intern: Matthew DeFaveri

**Production and Design:** Jon Larson, Reuben LeVine

**Business staff:** Diane Adams, Tammie Crawford, Abby R. Royer, Susan Stanevich

**To reach the CJN**

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# The tradition continues

## 'Grandparents' Great Bar/Bat Mitzvah Trip' takes behind-the-scenes planning

BY JERRY D. BARACH

Some of our people's traditions are centuries old, and others are pretty recent and of dubious origin. In our case, the tradition I'm going to tell you about is not only recent but one that it seems we just kind of "fell into."

I'm talking about "The Grandparents' Great Bar/Bat Mitzvah Trip." I'm sure we didn't invent that tradition, but in our case, it has truly taken hold after my wife and I took our eldest granddaughter on such a trip four years ago following her bat mitzvah to Belgium, Holland and Germany.

That trip cemented it as a "given" – as far as the next grandchildren in line were concerned – that there would be similar trips for them when they reached the age of Jewish responsibility. The result is that we've now done three such trips – the latest this past summer.

Planning such trips intelligently is not an easy matter. On the one hand, you want the kids to have a great time seeing and doing things that are fun and appropriate for their age. On the other hand, there should be some educational elements to it, and – hey – the grandparents are paying for it, and they should get something out of it, too, no?

A general rule is that the more you practice doing something, the better you get at it. In our case, I think the third time around was definitely the best.

In arranging the latest trip with our 12-year-old granddaughter Eden to France, we did a lot of planning as well as searching and reserving via the Internet to make sure that she'd get her "due" of great things that she'd likely enjoy. It helps, too, to talk with friends who've been there and get from them whatever travel material they have.

Fortunately for us, this granddaughter is talented in art, and thus France was a natural choice, with its great artistic tradition and many world-class museums. The bat mitzvah girl also had dreams of Paris as the "fashion capital of the world," as she put it, with expectations of acquiring some great new clothes. That turned out to be a great delusion when she saw the prices in the stores. There are no *met-zias* (bargains) there.

We took in the obvious sites, such as a visit to Montmartre hill with its artists' square, Notre Dame, a boat trip down the Seine, a ride to the top of the Eiffel Tower, and of course, a stroll on the Champs Élysées – all very touristy and crowded places but somehow seemingly "required" for a first-time visitor like our granddaughter. We even managed to get in a fashion show at one of Paris's top department stores.



Eden Barach is flanked by her grandparents Norma and Jerry Barach at her bat mitzvah party.



Eden Barach saw the sights of Paris, including the Eiffel Tower, as part of her "Grandparents' Great Bar/Bat Mitzvah Trip."

But we didn't fail to add substantial/educational elements, particularly the many fine art museums of Paris: the fabulous Musée d'Orsay with its unsurpassable Impressionist collections, the Museum of Modern Art, the Orangerie, the Pompidou Centre, and the Louvre (where if you don't get there early, you'll be stuck in line for a long, long time).

We didn't stop there, however. After all, this

### Going kosher on the road, other tips / 6

was a bat mitzvah trip and should have some Jewish content. We went to the far less touristy Holocaust Memorial and the Museum of Jewish Art and History, both of which are not far from the ancient Jewish inner-city section of Paris, Le Marais, known affectionately as the *Pletzel*. There is even, by the way, a little-known underground memorial which we visited in back of the Notre Dame Cathedral honoring the 200,000 people, Jews and non-Jews, deported to Nazi concentration camps during the Second World War.

As for the Pletzel, it wasn't at all as I remembered it from previous visits many years earlier; it was now highly yuppified with a lot of trendy (and expensive) boutiques and was literally "stuffed" with tourists on a Sunday afternoon when we were there. It was so crowded that it was hard to move at times in the main street of the quarter, the *Rue des Rosiers*, and getting a meal in the kosher eateries that still exist there was practically impossible. As it turned out, we waited in a long line in the street just to buy *felafel* at an incredibly popular spot.

So much for Paris, but France is a big place (especially compared with Israel), and we couldn't limit our trip just to Paris. ▲



# Side trips make the journey extra special

BY JERRY D. BARACH

France is a big place, and one shouldn't limit a visit there only to Paris.

We took off from Paris for a five-day jaunt by rented car to the north of the country, with a visit to an annual medieval fair in Bayeux in Normandy, famous for its enormous tapestry commemorating the 1066 Norman conquest of England.

Having stayed there overnight after the fair, this grandpa announced that the next day was to be "his" day, with a visit to the highly informative museum in Bayeux of the Normandy D-Day (June 6, 1944) invasion, followed by a visit to the nearby Omaha Beach American cemetery and memorial, a tribute to the thousands of American servicemen who lost their lives storming the beach on D-Day. In the vast cemetery, one can see here and there white Magen Davids among the many crosses, and we even saw one Magen David, upon which someone had deposited the traditional small stone as a memorial.



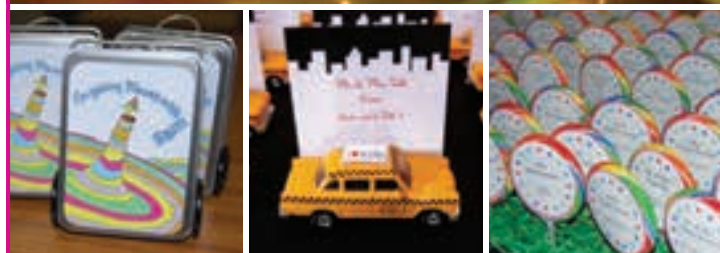
*White Magen Davids are spread among crosses at Omaha Beach American cemetery and memorial in France, where thousands of Americans died on D-Day.*

Rather than be bored by a day spent in studying this "ancient history" of World War II, our granddaughter, to our delight, displayed great interest in the various exhibits and films in the museums – a sign of seriousness and maturity on her part.

Staying at a nearby hotel, we visited one of the amazing sites in the area – Mont St. Michel, a fortified, strategic, tidal island just off the Normandy coast that was formerly reachable by land only at low tide. Now connected by a permanent causeway to the mainland, it is a world heritage site that attracts hordes of visitors annually. The tiny island is covered with ancient stone buildings and steep walkways, bordered by stores,

pubs and restaurants, leading up to the ancient Mont St. Michel abbey at the top.

We came late in the day, toward sunset, and watched the tide rapidly roll in, covering areas on the causeway that were marked with no-parking warnings about the hours of the high tide. At dark, the sight of the lit-up buildings is a magical, unforgettable one.



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# Keeping kosher in France

Keeping kosher in France is not nearly as problematic as in other European countries. Especially in Paris, there is no shortage of kosher restaurants and stores spread throughout the city, which are under the supervision of the local rabbinat.

Indeed, we printed from the Internet 17 pages of kosher restaurants and stores in France, the majority in Paris. For those looking for synagogues, you can find them via the Internet or on just about any tourist map and the large maps in and near the underground metro stops, marked on those maps with a Star of David.

We stayed two Shabbat weekends in Paris, one of them in the Montmartre area (9th arrondissement), which has kosher restaurants (two right near our hotel) and a nearby Sephardic synagogue, Beth El, which offers kosher Shabbat meals for 25 euros each (about \$35 U.S.).

For our second weekend, when we stayed in a small hotel



*Kosher restaurants and stores are plentiful in France, especially in Paris.*

near the Gare de Lyon train station, we were less prepared, but with the help of some friendly fellow diners in a kosher burger joint (and their handy smartphones), we were directed to area synagogues and kosher stores.

There are in Paris, we're told, numerous fine (and very expensive) kosher French cuisine restaurants where one can dine elegantly, but we decided that wasn't for us. After all, are we lacking good kosher restaurants back on our hometown

of Jerusalem? No need to blow a wad on that kind of eating in Paris, which in any case is an expensive city to visit.

For the kosher traveler who wants to just eat lightly sometimes in his hotel room and save time and money, it's a good idea to check beforehand if the hotel has an electric coffee pot in the room (many do) or a minibar where you can keep a few things. It's also possible to bring along a small electric skillet.

— Jerry D. Barach

## Planning bar/bat mitzvah abroad?

### Here are some tips

- If booking air tickets online, check the fares for different days of the week. They're often less expensive in midweek.

- When looking for hotels, make sure that they come with decent recommendations. You can do this in various ways by looking at reviews on booking sites or traveladvisor.com and virtual-tourist.com. Note that there can be a variance in the cost of a room at the same hotel, even significantly, between one booking site and another. It also pays to book tickets in advance online for attractions you're planning to visit. You'll save money and time waiting in line.

- It's worthwhile to look into hotel facilities to see if they have free Internet connections (most do). In our case, we took along a small computer notebook to enable our granddaughter to call home at no cost through Skype, important for a child who is likely taking his or her first long-distance trip without parents.

— Jerry D. Barach

### Side trips continues from page 5

Continuing the next day into Brittany, we took in a beautiful aquarium at St. Malo, then the well-preserved medieval quarter and remnants of an ancient city wall in the nearby town of Dinan.

It was then southward – on to Futuroscope, near Poitiers, which is a park featuring primarily high-tech visual presentations, in IMAX, 3-D and 4-D (the last adding movement and sensory stimuli) on a variety of subjects including nature, space, art and adventure.

There are also some live shows and a futuristic ride called “dancing with robots” in which participants are swung up, down and sideways in giant robots. The day ends at dark with an amazing laser show that features real-looking characters seemingly prancing atop a lagoon as well as spectacular pyrotechnic displays. Futuroscope is barely known outside of France and almost totally unknown to American tourists (we found out about it from a Jerusalem neighbor from France) but well worth a visit for families. Our granddaughter was thrilled by it.

Futuroscope also provides a gateway to the “château country” of the Loire Valley, leading northeast back to Paris. We chose the

Chenonceau château, a lovely 16th-century turreted structure with several authentic period rooms to visit and beautiful gardens surrounding it. There is even a maze to attract the children. Chenonceau was especially attractive to yours truly because it was not so crowded nor as *ongepatchkit* (Yiddish for lavishly overdone) as Versailles, which I remembered visiting many years ago.

Our two-week trip brought us back to Paris with the final two “granddaughter days” – visits to Disneyland outside of Paris (a 12-hour stretch amid hordes of people) and finally a more relaxed and shorter day at Asterix, a veteran, old-time amusement park near Charles de Gaulle Airport, where we turned in our car and went back home to Jerusalem – hopefully to relax a bit after a strenuous but worthwhile grandparents-grandchild tour.

Will we be in shape to do this again with the next one in line, who is now only 8 years old? Only time will tell. ▲

*Jerry D. Barach is a former editor of the Cleveland Jewish News who has been living in Israel for 31 years.*



# Your simcha is *guaranteed* to ROCK.



BY NICK BORELLI

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| *Investment: starting at \$240*

**High-Definition Videography:** “We wish we would have videotaped the party!” That’s the most common post-party regret RTH hears after their successful events. “Why not capture the essence of your simcha for your kids to show *their* kids?” comments event specialist, Jay R Rich.

| *Investment: starting at \$995*

**Photo booths and Green Screens:** “People are vain — in a good way,” says Matt Radicelli founder and owner. “Photo booths, Green Screen systems, and other photo novelties work because people want pictures of themselves to ‘show and share.’ If you don’t believe me, just check out your kid’s Facebook page.”

| *Investment: starting at \$750*

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When asked what the most important message he would like to tell to potential clients is, Matt Radicelli smiled. “We laugh when our clients tell us they’ve heard it’s all or nothing with Rock The House. True, we are 100% committed to every event, but you don’t have to purchase all our services to get that treatment. Even if we are not your DJs, we want to be part of your team. Your simcha will rock. We guarantee it!”

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Photo: Visualize Nation



# Smiles throughout the aisles

Aaron Weiser finds time to relax during a busy bar mitzvah weekend.

## Boy with Down syndrome overcomes challenges to enjoy bar mitzvah

BY AMY NEWMAN SMITH

Every child approaching bar mitzvah age faces challenges. Some have to overcome shyness or the fear of public speaking, while others struggle to find time to study amid commitments to school, sports and extracurricular activities.

Aaron Simcha Weiser, who has Down syndrome, faced his challenges with the help of a loving family and friends.

His mother Amy began working with him to learn the blessings before and after the Torah reading a year before he would first be called up for an aliyah in August 2010. The lack of muscle tone that many children with Down's have makes it difficult for him to enunciate words, but Aaron practiced diligently, Amy said.

With the help of booklets, one for each *brachah*, made by Ronna Fox of The Jewish Education Center of Cleveland (JECC), which featured one large word on each page to help Aaron learn them as sight words, Amy and Aaron worked together twice a week, building up his skills with each session. The morning of his first aliyah, which took place on a Monday morning at the Hebrew Academy of Cleveland (HAC), Aaron, like many a bar mitzvah boy before him, got stuck on a few words. His father Herschel, standing beside him, gave him a whispered reminder to help him along.

That morning in HAC's small downstairs *beit midrash*, said Amy, was the most meaningful of Aaron's celebrations, which included a Shabbat morning aliyah at Young Israel in Cleveland Heights followed by a luncheon for the community, as well as a Sunday afternoon party at Heights Jewish Center.

The moment was the culmination of more than a year the two had worked side by side over the words of the brachot, she said. Watching the youngest of her six children standing beside his father, she thought back to when he was a baby and it was unclear if he would ever walk or talk. She remembered all of the therapy – speech, music, physical and occupational – and all the dedication by Aaron and so many people who helped bring him to that point.

Although they knew he wouldn't be able to lead much of the Shabbat service, as many young men do, there was never any question about whether Aaron would have a bar mitzvah, Herschel said.

"We did it for the rest" of the family's five boys, so there was never any discussion of whether the celebration would take place, merely what it would look like. Those parts of the services Aaron couldn't lead, his father, brothers and uncles took over.

"Like in any family, we fill in for each other," Herschel said.

The key to making the celebration a success was recognizing Aaron's abilities and helping him succeed within them, Amy said.

On Shabbat morning of *Parashat Eikev*, Aaron, of Cleveland Heights, shined as he once again said the brachot, gave a short speech he had written with his family's help, thanking everyone for coming, sending messages of love to his family,

### Where to find help

For families with special-needs children, the Cleveland Jewish community offers the following resources:

- Etgar – supplementary Jewish education  
[www.jecc.org/SpecialEducation/Etgar.htm](http://www.jecc.org/SpecialEducation/Etgar.htm)
- SEGULA – Support for day-school students  
[www.jecc.org/SpecialEducation/SEGULA.htm](http://www.jecc.org/SpecialEducation/SEGULA.htm)
- The Friendship Circle – social programming  
[www.friendscleveland.com](http://www.friendscleveland.com)
- Yachad – the National Jewish Council for Disabilities has a Cleveland chapter.  
[www.njcd.org](http://www.njcd.org)



and wishing the congregation a good Shabbos.

The smile on his face as he turned from the podium showed how proud he was of himself, Herschel said. Family had poured in from out of town, with others walking to Cleveland Heights from University Heights and Beachwood to share in Aaron's *simchah*, his moment of joy.

Aaron continues his Jewish education and involvement at the Etgar Sunday school program of the JECC, which is designed to give a Jewish education to children with special needs; The Friendship Circle; the Mandel Jewish Community Center camp; and summer programs run by HAC for special children.

Like generations of Jews before him, Aaron proudly recites the words of the kiddush over wine each Friday night with joy. ▲

*Amy Newman Smith is a freelance writer in Cleveland.*



*As he becomes a man, Aaron Weiser learns how to wrap tefillin.*

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Reading his Torah portion is Kevin Gregory as his wife Liz and Park Synagogue ritual director Gadi Galili look on.

# Torah, Torah, Torah!

*Triple naches when dad, daughters enter adulthood together*

BY NINA POLIEN LIGHT

On the days leading to a bar or bat mitzvah, most parents fret about whether their child will remember the *trope* or enunciate during the *d'var Torah*. The stress level was even higher for Liz Gregory as she prepared for the Aug. 20 *simchah* of her daughters Jensen and Casey and her husband of 19 years, Kevin.

"By far, I was more nervous for my husband," admitted Liz, 41. "The girls go to Agnon, so they read Hebrew and trope all the time. But before September of last year when he started taking classes at Siegal College, Kevin didn't read Hebrew."

It was a major undertaking, agreed Kevin, 42, whose Catholic mother used to take him to church on Christmas and Easter, but whose parents – when asked by their son as a child – encouraged him to practice the religion of his future spouse.

After meeting Liz at the University of Cincinnati and acknowledging her father's desire for a Jewish son-in-law, Kevin enrolled in Judaism courses.

"I thought that unless I really believe in Judaism, I'm not going



Casey, left, and Jensen Gregory rehearse their speech.

to commit to it," the South Euclid resident recalled. "But I kept learning and really fell in love with the religion."

Kevin converted to Judaism 20 years ago as a college senior. When he and Liz married a year later, they decided Kevin would become a bar mitzvah with their future children.

As their daughters approached b'nai mitzvah age, it was time for Kevin to make good on that promise. Once Jensen, now 13, and Casey, now 12, got over the fact that they weren't having separate *simchahs*, they embraced the idea of including their father.

"I'm really glad I had my sister and dad do it with me," Casey said. "It was scary on the bimah, and I'm glad I could have them with me."



"I was excited," Jensen added. "Not only would I become a bat mitzvah, but I was sharing the experience with my sister and dad. I knew it would be stressful, but I could rely on them for support."

Park Synagogue ritual director Gadi Galili divided their roles. Kevin received one aliyah; his daughters each received three aliyot and recited half the Haftorah.

The service went off without a hitch. But Liz and the girls admit to panicking during the preceding weeks when Kevin, who hadn't finished his Siegal classes until May and who preferred practicing his Torah portion before everyone arose, finally allowed his family to hear him chant.

"I do public speaking, and I prepare differently for that, with a measured pace," said Kevin, who practiced trope with slow, phonetic recordings Galili made for him. "So we were having Shabbat dinner; I was singing, and the girls had odd looks on their faces. I thought, 'Oh, this isn't good.'"

The family didn't want to tell Kevin that his delivery was stilted. "He didn't realize Gadi's recording was really exaggerated," Liz explained. "We met with Gadi and said, 'He's not stringing his words together as a flowing sentence. It's one word. Stop.'"

A practice session with the ritual director placed Kevin back on track.

From the bimah, Kevin thanked his daughters for "saving a lit-



*Dressed for their b'nai mitzvah party are, from left, Kevin, Liz, Casey and Jensen Gregory.*

tle room in your life today for me."

An evening celebration with the theme "Coast to Coast and Somewhere in Between" captured Jensen's dream to become a fashion designer in New York and Casey's desire to become a plastic surgeon in Los Angeles. It also paid homage to Kevin's childhood in the Bluegrass State.

The family regularly volunteers in the Jewish and general community. Eight years ago, Kevin and three American Jewish Committee friends founded Community Links, an organization co-sponsored with the NAACP to bring together members of the Jewish, African-American, and now Asian communities to play golf. The group also sponsors children's leader-

ship programs on topics such as avoiding racism.

For their mitzvah project, Jensen and Casey wrote and sent invitations seeking participants to form cross-cultural foursomes for the group's annual outing. They also assembled goody bags and collected auction and raffle prizes.

The b'nai mitzvah weekend exceeded the family's expectations. "We used to say our wedding was the best day of our lives," Kevin said. "But after the b'nai mitzvah," Liz said, "I don't want you to be offended, but *this* was the best day." ▲

*Nina Polien Light is a freelance writer in Cleveland.*

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# Your Planning Guide

Bar/Bat Mitzvah of \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Caterer \_\_\_\_\_

Venue Location \_\_\_\_\_

Party Planner/Decorator \_\_\_\_\_

DJ/Band/Entertainment \_\_\_\_\_

Photographer \_\_\_\_\_

Videographer \_\_\_\_\_

Hotel Block \_\_\_\_\_

## DATE

### 2-3 years before

\_\_\_\_\_ Contact synagogue to set date

### 1 year before

\_\_\_\_\_ Begin formal bar/bat mitzvah lessons

\_\_\_\_\_ Discuss community or mitzvah project

\_\_\_\_\_ Determine budget

\_\_\_\_\_ If the ceremony will be in Israel, find travel

\_\_\_\_\_ agent who can arrange location and rabbi

\_\_\_\_\_ Find vendors: videographer/photographer,

\_\_\_\_\_ party planner, caterers, DJ, band, florist,

\_\_\_\_\_ venues

\_\_\_\_\_ Contact hotels and decide where to book

\_\_\_\_\_ blocks of rooms

\_\_\_\_\_ Create list of out-of-towners to be invited

\_\_\_\_\_ Send save the date reminders

### 10 months before

\_\_\_\_\_ Have bar/bat mitzvah child meet party

\_\_\_\_\_ planner, if using one, to give input on

\_\_\_\_\_ decorations

### 8 months before

\_\_\_\_\_ Create guest list with complete addresses

### 7 months before

\_\_\_\_\_ Begin to look at invitations

\_\_\_\_\_ Decide on wording for invitations

\_\_\_\_\_ Decide arrangements to transport kids to

\_\_\_\_\_ and from party

### 6 months before

\_\_\_\_\_ Order invitations, thank-you notes

\_\_\_\_\_ Create maps, directions sheets

\_\_\_\_\_ Pick calligraphy style for envelopes

\_\_\_\_\_ Order informals

\_\_\_\_\_ Order yarmulkes

\_\_\_\_\_ Find child's tallit

\_\_\_\_\_ Begin to plan menu

### 4 months before

\_\_\_\_\_ Weigh invitation at post office

\_\_\_\_\_ Choose and purchase postage stamps

## DATE

### 3 months before

\_\_\_\_\_ Take invitations to calligrapher

\_\_\_\_\_ Work on second mailing

\_\_\_\_\_ Discuss valet

\_\_\_\_\_ Decide on hotel room gift bags for

\_\_\_\_\_ out-of-town guests

\_\_\_\_\_ Select clothing for family members

\_\_\_\_\_ Finalize menu

\_\_\_\_\_ Decide on centerpieces and sign-in board

### 2 months before

\_\_\_\_\_ Mail out-of-town invitations

\_\_\_\_\_ Make hair appointments for family for the

\_\_\_\_\_ week before the event

### 6 weeks before

\_\_\_\_\_ Mail in-town invitations

\_\_\_\_\_ Send second mailing to out-of-towners

### 4 weeks before

\_\_\_\_\_ Reconfirm with service providers

\_\_\_\_\_ Put together seating plan

\_\_\_\_\_ Have child practice speech out loud

\_\_\_\_\_ Set up rehearsal time with synagogue

\_\_\_\_\_ Put together gift baskets for out-of-town

\_\_\_\_\_ guests

### 3 weeks before

\_\_\_\_\_ Work with caterer on a floor plan and plan

\_\_\_\_\_ the agenda for the event

### 2 Tuesdays before

\_\_\_\_\_ Order any necessary kosher dinners

### 2 Wednesdays before

\_\_\_\_\_ Assign tables

\_\_\_\_\_ Personalize gift bags, if desired

### Weekend before

\_\_\_\_\_ Finalize guest count/seating as best you can

### Monday before

\_\_\_\_\_ Finalize seating cards

### Day before

\_\_\_\_\_ Deliver gift bags to hotels

**RELAX, ENJOY THE DAY!**

On the big day ... don't forget

Yarmulke

Tallit

Speech

Relax



# Tips to make your *simchah* sparkle

## Choosing a perfect venue

### 1. Number of guests

Pick the appropriate-sized room.

### 2. Proximity

Is it close to the service  
(if applicable) or geographically  
accessible for everyone?

### 3. Catering

Is it affordable? Are the reviews  
good?  
Does the menu meet your needs?

### 4. Rentals

Is the dance floor built-in?  
Do tables, chairs or linens have to be rented?  
What will you have to bring in that will increase  
your budget?

### 5. Hidden costs

Is the service charge comparable to others?  
Is there a charge for a coat room attendant?  
Does it have enough equipment to handle  
your event?



PHOTO / EXECUTIVE CATERERS AT LANDERHAVEN

### 6. Ambiance

Is the room freshly painted?  
Are the carpet and the banquet chairs  
in good condition?  
Will the lighting serve your needs?

### 7. Time frame

Will you have enough time to  
decorate?  
Is there a charge for access to the  
room prior to the event?  
Is there a mandatory ending time?

### 8. Parking

Is there enough?  
Is valet a must and/or is it included?

### 9. Deposit

Is it nonrefundable?  
Is there a date by which you could cancel?

### 10. When is final payment due?

More tips pages 14-17 and 20-23

**DJ/MC Entertainment**

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## Choosing accommodations

### 1. Cost

Can your guests afford the room rates?

### 2. AAA Ratings

If you don't check, your guests will

### 3. Availability

Are there enough rooms for your guests?

Will the hotel block them off at no charge until a certain date?

### 4. Discounts

Is there a price break based on the number of rooms you reserve.

### 5. Proximity

Is the hotel close to the event?

Are there other hotels in the area for overflow?

### 6. Amenities

Does the hotel have room service and/or a restaurant?

Is there an indoor/outdoor pool, fitness room, spa, arcade for down time?



### 7. Hospitality rooms

Will the hotel provide a hospitality room for you and your guests to gather? What is the charge?

### 8. Welcome bags

Will the hotel put them in your reserved rooms or hand them out at registration?

### 9. Shuttle

Is there a shuttle available to your event destination and/or other attractions in Cleveland?

How many guests will the shuttle accommodate?

Is there more than one?

Is there an extra cost?

How late do they run?

### 10. Sunday brunch

Is there space to host a Sunday brunch for out-of-town guests, if desired?

Daytime to  
Special  
Occasion  
Dressing

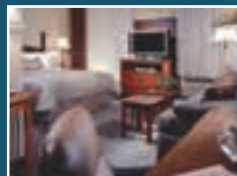


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## What to ask a DJ

1. **What percentage** of your business is bar/bat mitzvahs?
2. **What sets you apart** from other DJs?
3. **What's your backup plan** for equipment failure and/or employee illness?
4. **What else can you provide** other than music to keep my guests entertained?
5. **How will you make** my party unique, different and special?
6. **Do you have** a money-back guarantee?
7. **Do you charge** by the hour or a flat rate?
8. **What are the most popular** games you play?
9. **Will you be leading** the event or just playing music?
10. **Are your songs and music videos** appropriate for young adults and families?

Source: Nick Borelli, Rock The House

PHOTO / ROCK THE HOUSE ENTERTAINMENT



## Tell us about your bar/bat mitzvah

Now that your bar or bat mitzvah is over, and all that studying and partying is behind you, we would like to know what you thought about it.

Tell us in about 300 words, and don't forget to send some photos.

We may use them in our next Bar/Bat Mitzvah magazine

or online.

Send submissions to: [editorial@cjn.org](mailto:editorial@cjn.org) (put Bar/Bat in subject line), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/ClevelandJewishNews](http://www.facebook.com/ClevelandJewishNews), or on Twitter @CleveJewishNews. You can also mail submissions to 23880 Commerce Park, Suite 1, Beachwood 44122.



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## What to do in C-Town

*All right, you have 40 people in from out of town and after the kiddush on Saturday, you have no idea what to do with them. Most likely you want nothing to do with them. You need a rest; they're raring to go. But where?*

*Here are some great things to do in Cleveland (prices effective as of fall 2011):*

### 1. Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

\$22 adults, \$13 kids, \$17 seniors. Purchase in advance as a Cleveland resident and pay \$18 adults. Group pricing is available.

### 2. Great Lakes Science Center

\$23 adults, \$21 kids for all three attractions: general admission, OMNIMAX, and the steamship William G. Mather. Single attraction tickets are also available.

### 3. The RainForest at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo

Connect with wildlife and learn how you can help conserve the world. Brand new at the zoo is the African Elephant Crossing: Meet a herd of elephants, meerkats and more in the zoo's state-of-the-art elephant habitat and education village. \$11 adults, \$8 kids.

### The Cleveland Museum of Art



### 4. The Greater Cleveland Aquarium

Cleveland's newest attraction (opening in the fall) features underwater adventure from Ohio's lakes and rivers to the ocean's depths. Sharks, rays, piranha, crocodiles, octopus. The best of nature meets Cleveland's history at the 100-year old Powerhouse.

### 5. The Cleveland Museum of Art

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#### 6. Pro Football Hall of Fame

The names are revered. The plays forever etched in the collective memory of football fans everywhere. They are the giants of this game. Located in Canton, about 40 minutes from Cleveland's East Side. \$21 adults, \$17 kids.

#### 7. Cleveland Botanical Garden

An exotic Glasshouse — the only one of its kind in the world; 10 acres of beautiful gardens, including an award-winning children's garden. \$8.50 adults, \$3 children.

#### 8. Shopping

East, west, all around the town. Legacy Village, Eton Chagrin Blvd., Beachwood Place, and the outlets of Aurora Farms. Free, if you want to call it that.

#### 9. Golf (weather permitting).

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#### 10. Mandel JCC

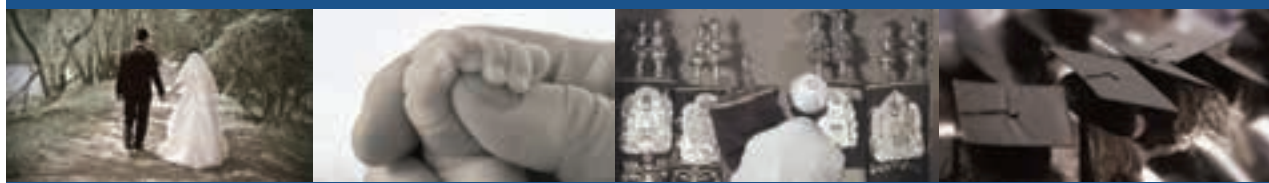
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# SimchaPalooza

Cleveland's premier party planning expo

plus

17th annual Bar/Bat Mitzvah Showcase

BY SHERRI FOXMAN

**I**s there a simchah in your future? You're invited to plan your next celebration at the fourth annual SimchaPalooza Party Planning Expo from 11-3 Sun., Nov. 6, at Signature of Solon in Solon.

Having organized this event for over four years and attended it for over 16 years, I know its calming effect on hosts-and hostesses-to-be.



Foxman

There's nothing more stressful than planning a party (be it for 50 or for 300) of your closest friends and relatives. Besides having to stay organized, stay on budget and assemble a group of vendors you can count on, you have to assign tables – the most difficult part by far.

If I only knew that Aunt Rita wasn't talking to her sister from another mother or that the two grandmothers need to sit one on the north side and the other on the south side of the room, I would do it for you. But I can't. What I can do is invite you to an event where you will find the best vendors, compile a fine-tuned budget, and make the planning fun and not a chore.

Besides the obvious – a chance to compare invitation companies, DJs, venues, caterers, bakers, photographers, videographers, special-effects companies and more – you will also see what's new in the industry. You wouldn't believe the things that light up these days.

You will also have the opportunity to talk one-on-one with the many vendors in the room (I know most of them personally and recommend each and every one) as well as collect the information and knowledge that helps you plan your event and forego sleepless nights.

Hopefully, this publication will be well used by the time of your party. Refer to it for vendor contacts, creative ideas, budget planning, do's and don'ts and much more. Use the tips and the charts to make your life easier. Remember, you have a lot to determine – and this Bar/Bat Mitzvah fall 2011 guide is the perfect place to start when thinking about the following:

## Big, bad budget

Event budgets range from \$500 to \$100,000 and more, of

**WHAT:** SimchaPalooza and 17th annual Bar/Bat Mitzvah Showcase

**WHEN:** Sun., Nov. 6, 11-3

**WHERE:** Signature of Solon, 39000 Signature Dr., Solon

**INFO:** Julie Felder, Party411 Events, 216-514-8411 or Julie@party411.com

course. Whether it's a bar or bat mitzvah or a baby shower, a rehearsal dinner or a full-blown wedding, you still want it to be the best it can be and memorable at the same time, no matter what you spend.

First and foremost, you must be comfortable with your bottom line. Big or small; fancy or casual; stodgy, sophisticated or fun note that the type of party does not necessarily dictate the size of the budget. And, by the way, let me say for the millionth time that events can be stodgy, sophisticated and fun. In fact, one of my most successful events was "Black Tie Bingo" – a low-budget fundraiser with everyone dressed to the nines.

## Basics

Lunch or dinner? Adults or kids or both? Where should it be? Where should out-of-towners stay? Are gift bags a must? A Shabbat dinner? A Sunday brunch? Bus the kids? What's the theme, or should there even be a theme? Linens to the floor or halfway? Buffet or sit-down? Formal or informal?

## Schedule

I was at a bat mitzvah that had an unbelievable lineup only to have no one left when dessert came out. It included toasts and thank-yous, a candlelighting, a 20-minute video, a hypnotist and a comedian – all one after the other. The only song the DJ played was background music when he acted as emcee.

## Entertainment

Is a DJ better or a band? Will the kids be bored? Are games and other distractions necessary (oh, my G-d, what if no one dances)? Will everyone be able to get a photo or record a song? What if that temporary tattoo doesn't come off when Josh gets home?

I'll stop now. I think you're convinced.

And I hope to see you at SimchaPalooza, which is all for a good cause as a portion of the proceeds will benefit the Greater Cleveland Chapter of Hadassah.

*Sherri Foxman is owner of Party411 events*





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## Most overlooked venues



Ballroom at Park Lane



The Cleveland Browns



College Club of Cleveland



The Geodesic Dome



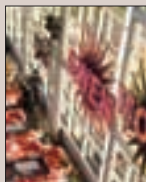
Glenmoor Country Club



Lodge at Geneva-on-the-Lake



The Pro Football Hall of Fame



Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

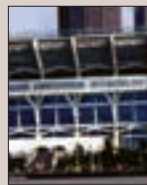


Roseland Lanes



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## Interesting venues



Cleveland Browns Stadium



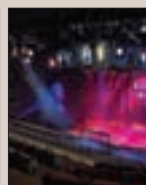
Cleveland Metroparks Zoo



Dave and Buster's



Goodtime III or Nautica Queen



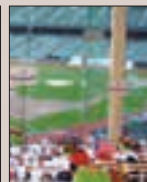
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The Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage



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## Top music requests by/for kids

1. **LMFAO** –  
"Party Rock Anthem"
2. **Maroon 5** –  
"Moves Like Jagger"
3. **Nicki Minaj** –  
"Superbass"
4. **Ke\$ha** –  
"Blow"
5. **Pitbull** –  
"Give Me Everything"
6. **Britney Spears** –  
"I Wanna Go"
7. **LMFAO** –  
"Shots"
8. **Rihanna** –  
"S&M"
9. **Justin Bieber** –  
"Somebody to Love"
10. **Journey** –  
"Don't Stop Believing"



## Top music requests by/for adults

1. **Cee Lo Green** –  
"Forget You"
2. **P!nk** –  
"Raise Your Glass"
3. **EWf** –  
"September"
4. **Usher** –  
"OMG"
5. **LMFAO** –  
"Party Rock Anthem"
6. **Def Leopard** –  
"Pour Some Sugar On Me"
7. **Flo Rida** –  
"Low"
8. **Lady Gaga** –  
"Born This Way"
9. **Marcia Griffiths** –  
"Electric Slide"
10. **Journey** –  
"Don't Stop Believing"

Source: Nick Borelli, Rock The House

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## *Better late than never*

### **1. Hire a consultant**

If you think it is necessary, to help with the other nine things listed here

### **2. Make a guest list**

This determines budget, room size and more

### **3. Determine a budget**

### **4. Choose the right theme**

This may help in choosing the venue

### **5. Reserve the perfect venue(s)**

For the big event, Shabbat dinner, Sunday brunch

### **6. Find a great caterer**

If necessary depending on the venue

### **7. Hire a DJ**

And/or other entertainment

### **8. Hire a**

Photographer and/or videographer

### **9. Reserve transportation**

To and from

### **10. Make sure**

Little Susie goes to Hebrew school

## *Foods to forget*

### *Kids will be saying,*

### *“Oh no! Not again!” when served*

- Chicken fingers
- Pizza
- Macaroni and cheese
- Nachos
- Mozzarella sticks

### *Kids may have*

### *“No comment” when served*

- Mini corn dogs
- Peanut butter and jelly triangles
- Mini Mexican three-layer dip with chips in a takeout container
- Tuna fish salad wrapped sushi-like with cut tortillas



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# What to ask a DJ?

## *What can a DJ do to ruin a party?*

Not have control of the event. Ignore the family's wishes and "rubber stamp" the event.

## *What is the most important thing that a DJ should do for a bar/bat mitzvah?*

Keep control of the kids and the event and make the event run as smoothly as possible.

## *Did you know?*

What is the price range for hiring a bar/bat mitzvah DJ in the Cleveland-Akron area?  
\$995 to \$2,995

## *How far in advance must a DJ be booked?*

Average booking time is 18-24 months before the event date.

You can't "secure" any services until you have a date. Once your synagogue gets you your date, then you can begin asking about availability and pricing.

## *How can a DJ make an event stand out?*

Listen to the needs, wants and wishes of the family and guest of honor. Use the information collected and discussed to make every part of the event truly unique and memorable.

Source: Nick Borelli, Rock The House



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# He puts smiles on others' faces

**P**ediatric patients and their caregivers looked on in wonder as Eli Kaufman performed yo-yo tricks in the outpatient waiting rooms at MetroHealth Medical Center in Cleveland. Eli is 13 years old, and he's learning early how to give back. For MetroHealth, he's done so by both volunteering and through making a donation.

## MITZVAH PROJECT

A self-taught performer, Eli has only been at the yo-yo for a year, but he seemed like a pro in front of children younger than he in the hospital's Kids Korner. He also did some magic and cup-stacking tricks, similar to what you might see on the show "Minute to Win It." Last winter, Eli did a similar show for residents at the MetroHealth Old Brooklyn Senior Health & Wellness Center.

Eli's connection to MetroHealth started years ago, when he and other children from Park Synagogue made blankets for sick children at the hospital. When Eli and his mother Debbie delivered the blankets and got a tour of the hospital, they said they



Eli Kaufman

were impressed. "Ever since Eli saw the playroom in the department of pediatrics a few years ago, he always felt a connection to that space and to sick children," his mother said.

This spirit of giving continued when Eli chose MetroHealth to give back to the community for his bar mitzvah. Earlier this year, Eli began making wallets out of duct tape and selling them. The wallets cost \$7 each, and all proceeds would benefit the hospital. In total, he raised \$125 for the hospital, which will benefit Child Life.

According to his mother, Eli's passion for giving began in 2005 after she and her husband Steve encouraged him to donate some of his birthday presents to a family that moved to Cleveland after losing everything in Hurricane Katrina.

"Ever since, he has understood that there are many children who are not as

happy, healthy or as fortunate as him and has learned to reach out to the sick, homeless and less-fortunate," said Kaufman. "He has been happy to donate his money and time to the patients at the hospital and put a smile on the face of someone who is sick." ▲

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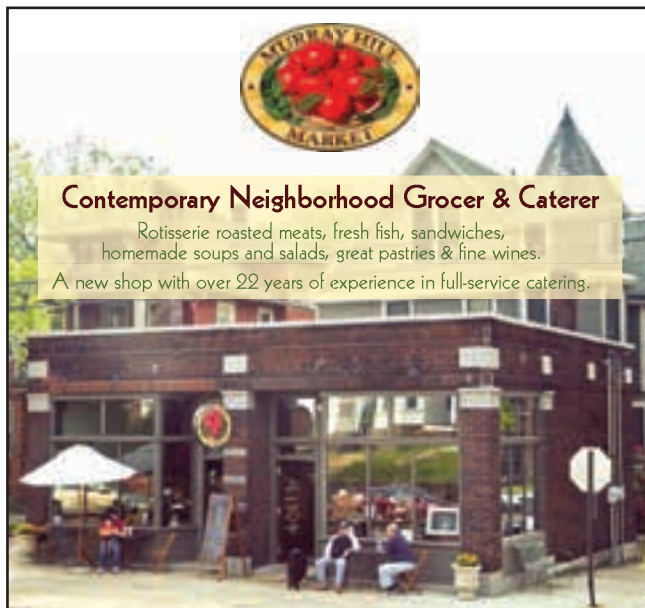
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## She has right Rx to help others

**S**haker Heights resident Danielle Bieler, 13, collected three boxes of medical supplies and raised over \$200 for MedWish for her bat mitzvah project.

MedWish is a not-for-profit organization that collects medical supplies and equipment discarded by the healthcare industry and ships them to developing countries.

"She's done small things, but this is the first project that she initiated, that she focused on and figured out the best way to volunteer for them," said her mother Jill Bieler.

Danielle's bat mitzvah took place Sept. 3, 2011 at Kol HaLev, where her theme focused on community responsibility.

"The whole thing was about being responsible for your neighbors, whether they're close or far," Jill said. "She thought this (opportunity) would be the perfect one."



Danielle Bieler

Danielle checked with MedWish and asked what supplies were needed. "Believe it or not, they needed Band-Aids," Jill said.

Danielle sent requests for Band-Aids to her guests and they received hundreds of donations, her mother said. "Probably 40 or 50 boxes. And

### MITZVAH PROJECT

a relative of ours works in medical supplies, so he gave us two huge cartons of latex gloves, adhesive wrap and all that stuff," Jill said.

Jill believes the volunteer project taught Danielle an important lesson. "She was able to send out this message to help MedWish and donate, and it was empowering for her to see

that. It's the idea that you can do that as a kid and be responsible for other people, even if they aren't immediate neighbors." ▲

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# Blanket project comforts seniors

It was an idea woven from the creative mind of Montefiore junior volunteer Elaine Millas. The 13-year-old Beachwood resident delivered over a dozen colorful felt blankets to residents – all decorated by family and friends who were in attendance at her bat mitzvah in January.

## MITZVAH PROJECT

In 2007, Elaine attended a summer opportunities fair at the Cuyahoga County Public Library's Beachwood branch and there, heard her calling to be of service as a junior volunteer.

"I thought becoming a junior volunteer at Montefiore would be good for me because I've always been helpful to others," said Elaine, whose great-grandmother had resided at Montefiore just prior to her learning about the volunteer program.

There was one problem – at age 9, she was restricted from many volunteer opportunities, like wheelchair transporting, until reaching age 12. Sweet, conversational and exceptionally responsible, Elaine took every opportunity for one-on-one interaction with residents.



Junior volunteer Elaine Millas, second from left, presents former Montefiore rehabilitation patient Betty Reese with a blanket decorated at her bat mitzvah. Junior volunteers, from left, Morgan LaRue, Maggie Thomas and Courtney Prebul provide extra support in giving out the blankets to residents on all floors.

"Every summer, I participated in Montefiore Idol, a talent show the junior volunteers put on for the residents. I read poetry, some my own and others more famous – like "Sick" by Shel Silverstein. Another year, I played the viola," she said.

"I would also do 'candy count,' going room to room with a jar filled with Hershey's kisses and see if any of the residents could correctly guess how many candies were in the jar," she said.

When it came time for her mitzvah project for her Jan. 8 bat mitzvah at Kol HaLev, Elaine spent more than 60 hours helping transport residents to their hair and mani-

cure appointments at Montefiore's beauty shop.

When her big day finally came, dozens of family members and friends, including parents Pam and Greg Millas and younger sister Esther, listened as she weaved her experiences of comforting the elderly at Montefiore into the ceremony. Afterwards, in addition to crafting the blankets, guests also presented donations to Montefiore in honor of the occasion. ▲

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# 'Love,' 'hope,' breathe,' a stone's throw away

**A**fter Charna Katz's aunt was diagnosed with breast cancer several months before Katz's bat mitzvah on May 21, 2011, Katz decided to do a mitzvah project that benefited The Gathering Place.

"One need they did have was for inspirational stones that are given to families facing cancer," said her mother Nancy Katz.

Charna, a Shaker Heights resident, took a tour of The Gathering Place and was sold on the idea when they brought up message stones, she said. "People need stuff that will make you happy. I came up with the words for the stones I raised money for. They say 'love,' 'hope,' 'breathe' to give encouragement to people who have cancer or family members with cancer."

Her project was twofold: to raise money for the stones, she designed five different cards which sold for \$5 each.

"I went to Interlochen Center for the Arts over summer 2010 and learned how to do printmaking intensively," Charna said. She began hand-printing cards shortly after Chanukah. "Cutting the



Charna Katz works on a card.



cards was the easy part. The hard part was rolling the ink out and printing it."

Each card featured a flower design on the front, which Charna also designed.

"I thought flowers would be a good

## MITZVAH PROJECT

thing to be basing it off of because flowers are beautiful and symbolize many different things, like love, renewal and healing. I also just think they bring happiness period."

Charna purchased 384 stones and donated \$720 from bat mitzvah monetary gifts to The Gathering Place.

"I learned what hard working was," she said. "I learned

how to market and create something. It felt awesome. It was tiring but it was knowing that I was going to make a difference, it felt like a good thing." ▲

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# Books for the *bar/bat mitzvah*

By JENNIFER GOLDBERG

If you're just starting the planning process for your child's bar or bat mitzvah, it can seem overwhelming. However, in recent years a number of books have been published to help parents and children plan a ceremony that's meaningful and fun. Here are some recommendations:

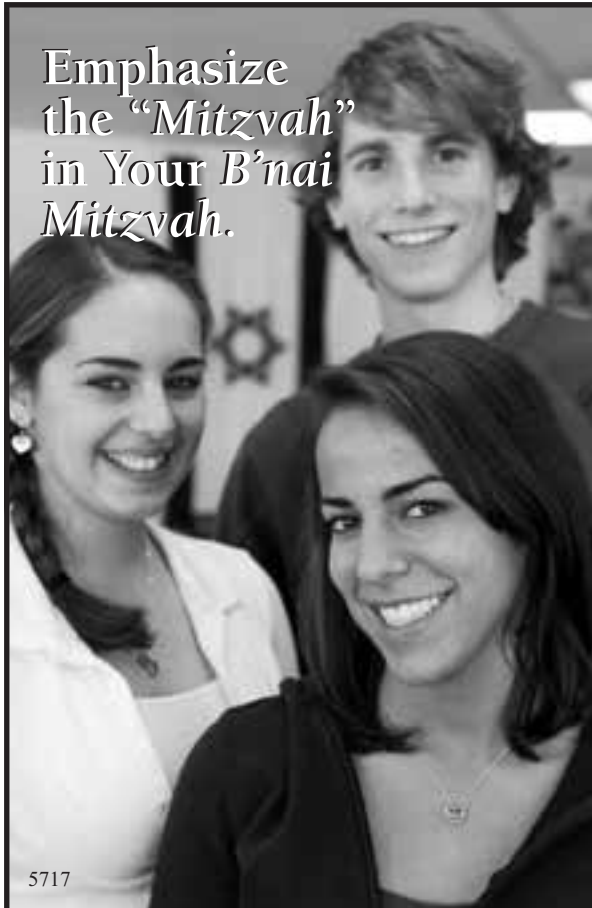
***The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planner*** by Emily Haft Bloom  
(Chronicle, \$20 hardcover)

This comprehensive book puts most of its focus on the party-planning aspect of the bar or bat mitzvah. Chapters on stationery, flowers and photography, entertainment and themes give parents what they need to plan the event. Tabbed sections and a pocket for business cards and other paper help keep everything organized.

***Mitzvah Chic: How to Host a Meaningful, Fun, and Drop Dead Gorgeous Bar or Bat Mitzvah*** by Gail Anthony Greenberg (Simon & Schuster, \$18 paperback)

*Mitzvah Chic* offers families one-stop help on all topics related to the event, including themes and additional reading for each Torah portion, great famous quotes to add to

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Looking for B'nai Mitzvah opportunities and community-service hours? The Federation's Jewish Volunteer Network offers hands-on volunteer projects as well as virtual opportunities you can do at home. Learn more at [www.jewishcleveland.org/volunteer](http://www.jewishcleveland.org/volunteer).



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speeches, advice for the non-Jewish parent and project ideas for homemade invitations, centerpieces and more.

***The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planner: Everything You Need to Organize and Plan a Meaningful Ceremony and a Joyous Celebration*** by Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayar (Sellars, \$22 hardcover)

Like having an event planner in your hands, *The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planner* contains a wide variety of resources for pulling off a fabulous bar or bat mitzvah. The book includes storage pockets, checklists, timelines, numerous tips, shopping lists and creative ideas for themes and activities.

***Putting God On the Guest List: How to Reclaim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah*** by Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin (Jewish Lights, \$17 paperback)

When you're trying to choose centerpieces and invitations, it can be difficult to remember that the bar or bat mitzvah is a spiritual event and an important milestone in your child's religious life. *Putting God on the Guest List* aims to prepare the family for the sacred aspects of the ceremony by explaining the different aspects of Jewish holy texts and providing an analysis of the Shabbat morning worship service. Salkin also addresses practical topics like choosing a mitzvah project, divorced and geographically distant families, and keeping teens engaged with Judaism after the event.

*Jennifer Goldberg is a writer for the Jewish News of Greater Phoenix (Ariz.)*

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Do you have any tips and ideas that would help others who are busy preparing for their bar or bat mitzvah? Why not share them with us?

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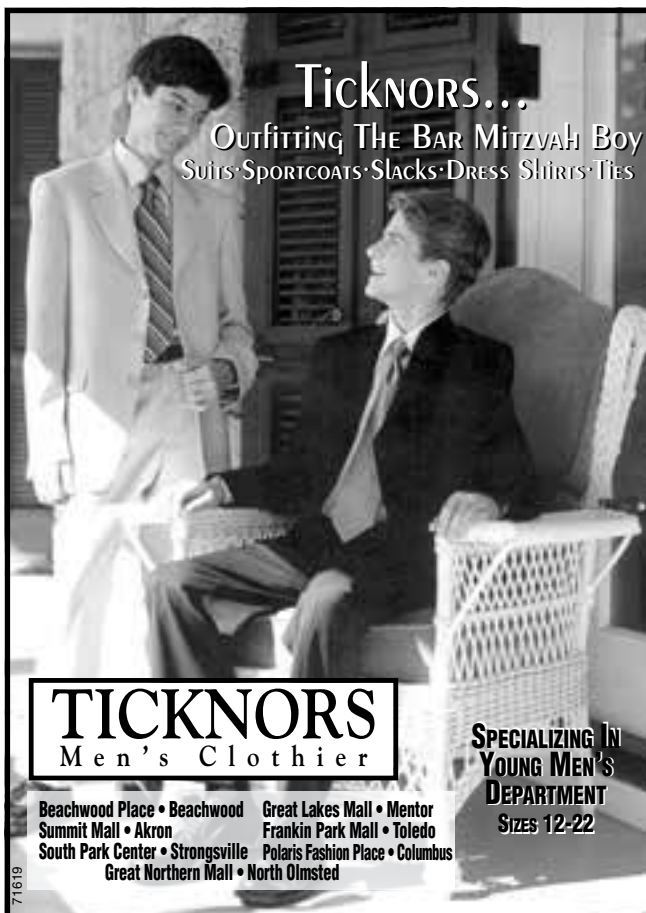
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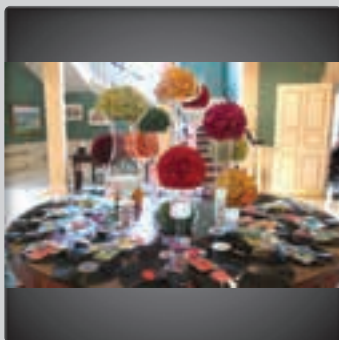
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Caterer (meal No. 1)		- -	\$	\$	\$
Adult meals		- -	\$	\$	\$
Children's meals		- -	\$	\$	\$
Bar		- -	\$	\$	\$
Caterer (meal No. 2)		- -	\$	\$	\$
Adult meals		- -	\$	\$	\$
Children's meals		- -	\$	\$	\$
Bar		- -	\$	\$	\$
Caterer (meal No. 3)		- -	\$	\$	\$
Adult meals		- -	\$	\$	\$
Children's meals		- -	\$	\$	\$
Bar		- -	\$	\$	\$
DJ/Band/Entertainment		- -	\$	\$	\$
Centerpieces		- -	\$	\$	\$
Florist		- -	\$	\$	\$
Photographer		- -	\$	\$	\$
Videographer		- -	\$	\$	\$
Invitations/Postage		- -	\$	\$	\$
Printed Programs		- -	\$	\$	\$
Yarmulkes		- -	\$	\$	\$
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Clothes		- -	\$	\$	\$
Tallit/Tefillin		- -	\$	\$	\$
Hotel valet/Parking		- -	\$	\$	\$
Gift bags		- -	\$	\$	\$
Sign-in board		- -	\$	\$	\$
(Other)		- -	\$	\$	\$
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(Other)		- -	\$	\$	\$
Total		- -	\$	\$	\$

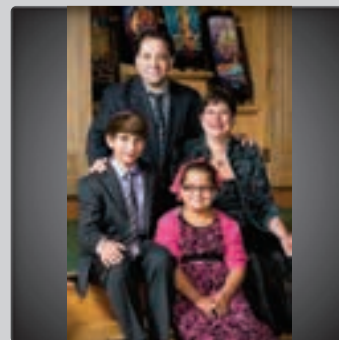




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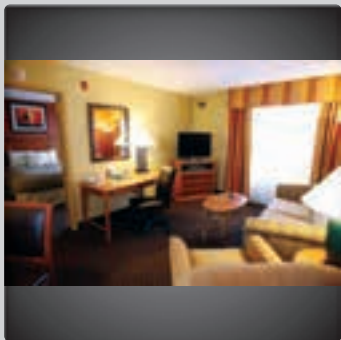
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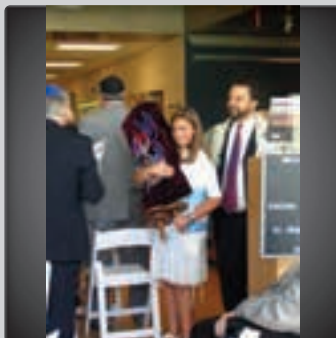
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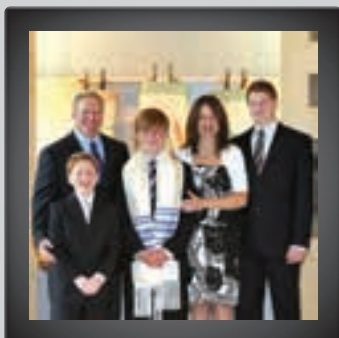
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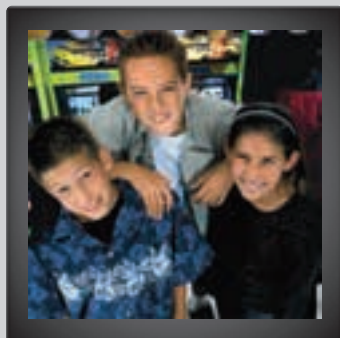
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