

Timeline and Checklists

Finished	◆ Two+ Years-18 Months Ahead (or whenever you start)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get the date (you may already have had it for a year or more).• Check “The Torah for the Farchadat” in book to see which portions your child will have. Confirm portions with the rabbi. Read the portion and check the <i>MitzvahChic</i> book's Torah chapter for additional reading/viewing suggestions. Go to www.MitzvahChic.com links to find book and video order information).• Make it a routine that once a week over dinner the family will discuss one idea from the Torah portion. Then your child will be very prepared to write the <i>D'var Torah</i> when it's time.• Talk with your child about mitzvah projects related to the portion (see “Party Ideas for Each Torah Portion”) or of special personal interest.• Consult the list of “Questions to Ask the Rabbi/Cantor” in <i>MitzvahChic</i> book to see if you need any answered now.• At this point, you want to decide if you need to book the synagogue auditorium for kiddush or an evening party.• You also want to make the rabbi aware if your child has a learning issue that could dictate a longer course of study.• Draft a preliminary guest list and discuss as a family the kind of celebration you have in mind – you'll need this to know what kind of reception space you're looking for.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decide roughly how many kids your child may invite; expect the final choice of “who” to be in flux up until the invitations go out. <p>Check MitzvahChic.com vendor directory for your region for all vendors and ask experienced parents for their reaction to the venues, caterers, bands/DJs and photographers you see listed in there. Start going around to hear bands/DJs. Solicit estimates from all vendors you're interested in.</p>

Finished**One Year Ahead**

- Based on proposals, projected head count (and checklist available at http://www.mitzvahchic.com/images/discover_book.pdf), work up a rough budget. If there are compromises to be made, discuss as a family where to make them.
- Make sure everything you agree on is in writing in the contract and hire the...
 - Caterer
 - Band/DJ
 - Photographer and/or videographer
- Find out the actual date your child's tutoring will begin (should be at least nine months ahead, but add time if your child has any learning issues), how progress will be measured and the synagogue's timeline for completing the *D'var Torah*, mitzvah project and other requirements.
- If you haven't yet delved into the Torah portion, check "The Torah for the Farchadat" in *MitzvahChic* book for reading and viewing suggestions related to the Torah portion. Watch or read something together as a family and discuss your interpretation of it.
- If you want to do your own invitation, start thinking about what it might look like (see samples in "Crafts for Style and Therapy").
- Get ideas from MitzvahChic.com vendor directory, ideas sections and discussion forum.
- Review also the party ideas in book – the chapters entitled "Party Ideas for Each Torah Portion" and "Eight Complete Parties That Will Leave You *Farklemt!*".
 - Pick a theme if you wish and decide which ideas to use.
 - Identify and hire people to do the work – party planner, art student, Kinko's, friends, you.
- If you have out-of-town guests coming, find a local hotel that will reserve a block of rooms or, for guests who need to walk to shul, local people who will put them up for the night.
- Inform close friends and family of the date and ask them to hold it.
- If you don't regularly attend services, make a point of attending

often when there is a bar/bat mitzvah so you will be familiar with your synagogue's approach. Make notes on anything you want to ask the rabbi/cantor at your initial meeting in several weeks.

Finished



Nine-Ten Months Ahead

- Your child begins tutoring. Often the process formally begins with a family meeting with the rabbi and/or cantor. Ask general questions here (see list in *MitzvahChic* book). If there's a sensitive issue to discuss – divorced parents or how a non-Jewish parent will participate, for example – parents should set up another meeting and come without their child.
 - Find out exactly what your child will do in the service and in the months leading up to it. How will you know if he/she is making acceptable progress? What is the schedule of tutoring appointments?
 - How does the synagogue want the parents to be involved?
 - Are there any printed guidelines that answer all the usual questions parents have about synagogue policy? If not, whom should you ask when you have questions? Is it possible to be matched with a family that has recently gone through the process as mentors?
 - Tell the rabbi/cantor what you are doing as a family to become familiar with the portion and to prepare for the ceremony. Solicit his/her suggestions.
- Finalize guest list with complete addresses.
- Make – or shop for and order – the invitations (more than you think you need), several extra envelopes plus thank you notes for your child to use afterwards.
 - For wording discussion, see “The Little Party Details That Really Matter.”
 - If you're making your invitation, keep in mind you'll need various enclosure cards plus a reply card and envelope. Plain white or cream-colored versions of these are available at office supply stores like Staples, but for unusual papers, you will need to buy extra paper and cut it down.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While invitations are being printed, find any maps you'll include in the mailing and make photocopies. Also, be sure to enclose a card alerting guests if the festivities start the evening or day before the service so they can make appropriate travel arrangements. • Put a party end-time so parents will know when to pick up their kids. • If you want to buy, from a charity, a tallit for the bar mitzvah or handmade kippot for family members, order them now. See website www.MitzvahChic.com links or book for charitable sources. • Discuss decorating and party ideas with your child and/or introduce him/her to the party planner if you're using one.
--	---

Finished	◆	Six Months Ahead
-----------------	---	-------------------------

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in with the tutor to see how your child is doing. • Child begins drafting the <i>D'var Torah</i>. • If your son is laying tefillin, get them now and have his father, grandfather or a clergy member teach proper method. • Decide if you will print the envelopes on the computer with a calligraphy typeface or have a calligrapher address them. • If you're making your own centerpieces or party favors, get started buying the materials, crafting them or assigning jobs to helpers. If you're using a party planner, finalize the concept. • Order any imprinted items: kippot, party favors (see MitzvahChic.com vendor directory and ideas sections).
--	--

Finished	◆	Four Months Ahead
-----------------	---	--------------------------

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in with the tutor to see how your child is doing. • Discuss with rabbi and cantor any music or readings you would like to add to the service. • Plan menu; make sure to include meatless options for vegetarians. • Shop for a cake.
--	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start shopping for clothes. But, particularly if your child is a boy, don't have anything altered until a few weeks before the big day.
Finished	Three Months Ahead
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents start talking about their speech and writing a first draft. (See chapter entitled "Writing a Great Speech..." in book.) Ask your rabbi for special poems or readings to incorporate. These can be read instead of a speech, if you wish. • Give envelopes to calligrapher or address them yourself. • Weigh a complete invitation at post office and buy stamps. When it's time to stuff the envelopes, write numbers lightly on the back of your response cards and record which number goes to which guest next to the names on your list. Then if you get a reply card with no name, you can just look it up.
Finished	Two Months Ahead
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in with the tutor to see how your child is doing. If he/she is really struggling, ask to adjust the size of the reading to allow him/her to do less with greater confidence. • Prepare list of aliyot. Let everyone on the list know of the honor so they can review and practice the Hebrew readings. • Mail invitations (you can wait two weeks to mail local invitations). • If you're going to be dressing the tables yourself, find out from the reception hall when you can get in to set up. Remember if your child is having a Saturday morning service followed by a lunch or dinner reception, you'll be occupied and unable to do anything yourself after Friday afternoon. Find out what the reception hall staff is willing to do; hire helpers to do the rest. • If it's a dance party and your child is insecure about his/her dancing, ask the DJ to schedule a dancer to give a few lessons. • Whatever relaxes you – massage, lunch with a friend, etc. – make an appointment to do it on the day before the bar mitzvah service. • Figure out what relaxes your child and plan to do that also on the day before the bat mitzvah service. • Some kids feel more relaxed just going to school and being with their friends following their normal routine, but if your child would

	like to spend some special relaxed time with you or alone, reading, watching a video, etc., try your best to make it happen.
Finished ◆	Six Weeks Ahead
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have your child meet with the DJ/band to pick songs and games. • Help your child polish the <i>D'var Torah</i> and write a “thank you” speech if one is planned. • Parents finalize their speech. • Have in-depth discussions with all your vendors to make sure you’ve made all necessary decisions and given clear direction. At this point, for example, the photographer should know the exact arrangements for taking pictures before the service. Is it the day before? The hour before? • Assemble any maps or local information for out-of-town guests including time and location of all events. Identify who can deliver eventual welcome baskets to hotel(s). • Where transportation options are limited, ask local friends to pick up out-of-towners and drive them. If there are several people without transportation who need to go from Point A to Point B, consider hiring a van or small bus to take them. • Ask friends to plan on transporting kids to the reception if it’s not in the synagogue. Or, hire a bus if necessary.
Finished ◆	Three Weeks Ahead
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call anyone you haven’t heard from and give caterer the final headcount. • Figure out seating arrangements and write placecards. Or, give list to your party planner. • If you’ve asked people to write notes to your child, place the ones that can be shared into an album to take to the reception. • Get your son’s suit altered. Make sure his dress shoes fit. • Buy items to make up welcome baskets to deliver to out-of-town guests. Or order filled baskets from a supplier, giving recipients’ names and hotel addresses.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make up toiletry baskets for the restrooms at your event, including such items as safety pins, bandaids, mild antacid tablets, etc. (make sure any medication is in a child-proof bottle and the baskets are out-of-reach of young children who might mistake medication for candy).
Finished	◆ The Week Before
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a rehearsal in the synagogue with as many of the participants as possible. • Give aliyot list to the rabbi/cantor. • Touch base with all your vendors for any last-minute instructions or questions. • Take posed photos in the sanctuary if possible. • Prepare welcome baskets for out-of-town guests. Tuck maps and local information inside. Give with addresses to delivery person.
Finished	◆ The Day Before
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>BREATHE!</i> • Go to your pre-arranged relaxation appointment. • Give your child his/her relaxation time. • Be sure in midst of all the chaos to take the time to let your child know that no matter what happens up on the bimah, you are so proud and that everyone who's coming loves and supports him/her. So, the day is really not about the "performance" but the sanctity of everything he/she did to reach this day. <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Mazel tov on this beautiful moment in your life!</i></p>