



Coming-of-Age Event Calendar

Finally, the Middle School years typically can be unique, in that there are a number of families at ECFS who mark their child's journey with a life-cycle ceremony while the child is in middle school. These "coming of age" ceremonies may include a bar or bat mitzvah (as described above), confirmation or other religious, ethnic and/ or personal event. As a service for our community, P+T volunteers maintain a shared calendar of coming of age celebrations; any family planning a life cycle event for which they will be inviting other Fieldston children should request their date be entered on the calendar, and the identifying information, other than the date, will be kept confidential. The calendar keepers will notify parents if two or more children have ceremonies/events scheduled for the same date. Our 6th, 7th, and 8th grades are large, therefore conflicts on dates are somewhat inevitable. Please note that the P+T representatives do not resolve conflicts - we simply notify and connect parents so that they can decide whether they wish to make a change and/or try to coordinate celebrations in a way that works best for each family. Other than disclosing the existence of a conflict, all information will be kept confidential.

Current calendar keepers are:

Class of 2031

Natasha Kuhlkin (nkuhlkin@jennison.com)

Class of 2032

Allison Fisch (allison.fisch@gmail.com)

Rebecca Gordon (rebeccagordon@gmail.com)

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Lila Rymer (lilarpaul@gmail.com)

Randi Seigel (randierin@gmail.com)

We hope this information is helpful!

Sincerely,

Fieldston Middle P+T Co-Chairs

Middle School is typically when many Jewish children become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Some parents have questions about the traditions, customs and etiquette around Bar and Bat Mitzvahs. This communication is offered to Middle School families to give some background and to address some of those questions in order to help families navigate some of the rituals and customs associated with Bar and Bat Mitzvahs.

BAR/BAT MITZVAH – What is it? What should my child expect when attending one?

Bar/Bat Mitzvahs are joyous and momentous occasions celebrating a major milestone in the Jewish religion. Bar/Bat Mitzvahs take place around the time of the 13th birthday and mark a child's ascension into adulthood at a religious service. Students prepare for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah for many months (if not years!), studying the Hebrew language and their portions of the service. (Bar Mitzvah is for a boy. It means son of the commandment. Bat Mitzvah is for a girl and means daughter of the commandment.)

Central parts of the religious service (often held on a Saturday morning) are the Torah and Haftarah readings, during which the sacred Torah scroll is removed from the Ark where it is stored, opened and unrolled so that a section of it may be chanted aloud in Hebrew to the community. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah child recites Torah for the first time as a Jewish adult, chanting some of the Torah verses and then sharing his or her interpretation of that text. In addition to the Torah and Haftarah portions, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah typically leads the congregation in additional prayers.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a joyous occasion that is usually celebrated with a party, which takes place either immediately after the religious service, later that evening or at times on another day. The style and size of the party (including the ratio of family members to friends) can vary a great deal. If the celebration does not immediately follow the service, there is sometimes a light lunch (called a Kiddush) following the morning service.

Attendance/Logistics

While being invited to a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a privilege, and a great deal of effort goes into studying for and planning a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, attending a number of Bar and Bat Mitzvahs can be challenging from a time management perspective. Since the party is often separate from the religious service, parents may want to organize shared drop-offs and pick-ups. There are also financial considerations, which we address below in gift-giving and attire. Parents should be aware of all of these considerations in order to plan and also in order to guide their child accordingly.

An invited guest may have a conflict with either the religious service or an evening party. If this should come up, it is ok to be in contact with the host family to advise them of the conflict and still send your child to the portion they are able to attend. If plans change and your child can no longer attend an event, it is respectful to contact the host family in advance, as planning these milestone events is a significant undertaking.

Appropriate Decorum in a House of Worship/Attire

Please advise your child to refrain from chatting disruptively with friends during the service. In particular, when the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child is speaking, invited guests should pay attention to the child- Friends should “lean in” and make a special effort to listen to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah reading Hebrew and to the child’s interpretation of their Torah and Haftorah text, as this is the child’s opportunity to share thoughts about the reading and how it can apply to one’s life and the larger world.

Cell phones should be turned off before entering a synagogue. Texting during the service can be disrespectful to the host family and to the congregation

Gift-Giving

Many parents have asked what is an appropriate gift to give to a Bar or Bat Mitzvah child. Any gifts are appreciated by the child and the family. Gifts range from checks/cash (often in increments of \$18 because 18 in Hebrew means “life”), to donations to service projects or organizations identified by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child, to personal gifts (sometimes given together by multiple friends/families).

Attire

For the religious service, in general it is appropriate to wear slacks or chinos and a button-down or other collared shirt; or skirts/dresses. T-shirts, jeans and sweats should not be worn. Another good rule of thumb is to wear clothing that covers shoulders, and skirts/dresses that are worn should not come too far above their knees for the religious service.

For the party, it is appropriate to wear slacks or chinos and a button-down shirt; or skirts/dresses. Many children will wear sneakers with their dress clothes.

On-Line Activity and Party Memorabilia

Please discourage your children from posting photos from Bar and Bat Mitzvah parties on social media or on text or otherwise online. This may be a breach of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family’s privacy and may also be hurtful to those students who were not invited and who would inevitably see the photos online.

Also, please instruct your children not to wear or bring to school articles of clothing or other memorabilia from the Bar/Bat Mitzvah party for two weeks following the party (after which it can be worn). It is a violation of Fieldston Middle policy to do so, primarily because it engenders feelings of exclusion when a large number of students all wear clothing from an exclusive event immediately after the event takes place.

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