

July 2017

Dear Grade Seven Parents:

Mazel Tov on your son's upcoming בר מצוה. We have watched with great pride as your son has grown and developed into the בן תורה that he is today. We truly share your feelings of שמחה.

A בר מצוה is an occasion to reflect on the past with a vision for the future. Gazing at the young man in front of you, fosters feelings of gratitude to ה' for enabling you to have raised your son on a true Torah path and bringing him to this great milestone — a genuine שהיה לנו moment — a cause for grand celebration. At the same time, there is a serious tone to the event. It is an occasion which marks a young man's rise to the status of a שומר תורה ומצוות. As such, the בר מצוה affair should be reflective of its essence. The שמחה associated with the event should be modest and in good taste. The בר מצוה is an occasion for a סעודת מצוה which should include singing, dancing and דברי תורה.

As you are in your planning stages, we would like to take this opportunity to share with you school policies and suggestions gleaned from our experiences.

הנהחת תפילין

All family members are welcome to join us at our Minyan for your son's הנהחת תפילין. Please let us know your date and plans in advance so we can properly accommodate all your guests and set up a ladies section. If you are planning to bring a treat for the grade (as per school policies, nut-free/הלב ישראל), we will gladly assist in organizing and ensuring that things run smoothly.

When discussing the בר מצוה and the obligations and responsibilities of the children and parents, the need to be punctual to davening at school and in shul are extremely important to the חינוך of your son.

As a ישיבה, we place strong emphasis on תפילה. Attendance is mandatory for all boys in Grades 7-8, Sunday-Friday. Fathers are encouraged, and cordially invited, to join their sons. Except for in an extenuating circumstance, please do not request permission for your son to daven elsewhere as the school strives to promote a specific level of כוונה and אהדות during davening.

In light of this policy, parents who are planning a בר מצוה during school hours, should not invite the entire class to attend. You should limit invitations to 2 Eitz Chaim Middle School students only. In the event that you are having the הנהחת תפילין at a different shul during school hours please note that school policy allows only 2 Eitz Chaim Middle School students to attend.

Invitations

We ask that you be very sensitive regarding excluding children. The entire class should be invited. Exclusion from Bar Mitzvahs has caused some of the greatest pain for children and parents. It has led, in recent years, to children leaving Eitz Chaim due to a sense of not being wanted.

שבת בר מצוה

Your sons will be invited to daven in many different Shuls and attend many social events celebrating the בר מצוה of classmates. Surely all parents concern themselves with their sons' behavior during these high profile occasions. The בר מצוה is a time when many boys become overnight guests in the homes of their friends. They daven in crowded Shuls together with classmates and celebrate at festive meals attended by large numbers of adults and public dignitaries. Needless to say, proper behavior is a necessity at all times. Anything less, reflects badly on the child, his family, and his yeshiva. We encourage you to sit down with your sons and review expectations for all aspects of the event. It means that parents insist that their sons behave themselves in Shul and at the סעודה as if they were in the company of parents, principals and Rebbeyim.

We truly believe that every boy has the ability to be outstanding if he understands our clear expectations.

סעודת שבת

Great consideration should be given to how the boys are seated. It has been our experience that seating them away from everyone in a large group is only asking for undesirable behavior. We recommend that the boys sit in smaller groups and that their tables are intermingled with the adult tables.

שמחת בר מצוה

Should you be planning a reception during the weekday which includes your son's classmates, please keep in mind that they must comply with school policies.

- Any program or entertainment during the שמחה must reflect the school's השקפה – No non-Jewish music, movies, shows etc.
- Eitz Chaim families making a שמחה at which there will be dancing, must ensure that there is an appropriate separation (מחיצה) between genders. Please note that a מחיצה is necessary even if men are not dancing.
- Also, please be mindful of the lateness of the hour, as the boys usually have a regular day of school the next day.

- In the possibility a family chooses to organize a recreational activity in addition to the bar mitzva (skating etc.) it must be in a facility that is rented out to ensure that it is not co-ed.
- In the interest of safety of our children, there can be no posting of Bar Mitzvah photos in any form of public media (such as Facebook, instagram, twitter, etc.) unless there is explicit consent from all parents, and only first names and last name initial are used.
- **When planning events, we encourage parents to be mindful of peer pressure that exists, and to consider programs that are less extravagant, and within the budget of all families.**

We encourage you to let us know of your plans in advance in the spirit of establishing the appropriate tone for your son and his classmates.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in these related matters. As a true partner in the חינוך of your son, you are asked to seriously consider these thoughts and requests. May we be זוכה to join הקב"ה in receiving abundant נחת and הצלחה from our boys.

עם ברכת כל טוב, מזל טוב!

Rabbi Y. Rennert Rabbi A. Frielich

Rabbi Y. Krames Rabbi A. Friedman Rabbi M. Lebovits Rabbi G. Wachsman