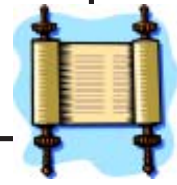


Bar/Bat Mitzvah Monthly Project



Month 11
before your Bar/Bat Mitzvah

MEANING OF BAR/BAT MITZVAH: MOVING FROM CHILDHOOD TO ADULTHOOD

This is to be completed together with your parent(s):

I. From Child to Adult

You will need a blank piece of paper for each parent and for the student. Begin by individually listing 3-4 differences between being a child and being an adult. Do this individually. Include at least one physical and one legal difference. After you've written your answers, compare them with your parents. Then continue:

Read Aloud:

Judaism has long understood that children are different than adults. Children are not held responsible for their actions in some important ways. For instance, in Jewish law, children are not legally responsible for their actions (like when a 10-year old orders something over the phone) in the same way that adults are held responsible. Anything legal that involves a minor, needs a parent's approval.

Likewise, children and adults have different religious responsibilities in Jewish tradition; that is, children are encouraged but not required to perform mitzvot, Jewish responsibilities. For example, healthy adults are supposed to fast on Yom Kippur, but children are not required to perform this mitzvah. Children, however, are encouraged to fast as much of the day as they can – and to grow into this practice as they approach adulthood.

In American law, children are not allowed to work full days; as part of the protection of children, their freedom to work is limited.

Answer these questions together as a family. Students should answer first, then get parent's reactions.

1. Name a way in which your parent(s) **USED** to protect you that they no longer do.
2. Name a way your parent(s) protect you **NOW** that you don't expect them to continue to do in the future.
3. Name a responsibility that you have **NOW** that you did **NOT** have three years ago.
4. Name a responsibility that you **EXPECT** to have in three years that you **DON'T** have now.

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11 month project continued...

II. Becoming an Adult

Here is a list of “firsts” which make some people feel like adults. Rank the top three experiences on this list that you guess will make you feel most like an adult. You may either do this together with your parent(s), or do it first, then ask your parent(s) if they agree or disagree and why.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Getting a driver's license | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting a first job |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Voting in an election | <input type="checkbox"/> Graduating Middle School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having a 13 th birthday | <input type="checkbox"/> Graduating High School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having an 18 th birthday | <input type="checkbox"/> Graduating College |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having a 21 st birthday | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting a graduate degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having a 40 th birthday | <input type="checkbox"/> Moving out of home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Growing pubic hair | <input type="checkbox"/> Spending a summer in Israel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Participating in Confirmation | <input type="checkbox"/> Paying for a meal instead of
your parents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Observing your Bar/Bat Mitzvah | <input type="checkbox"/> Shaving for the first time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Getting married | <input type="checkbox"/> Never |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having a child | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

In every generation, every girl and boy has a unique time clock by which he or she matures – some sooner, some later, almost all in bumpy, uneven ways. Sometimes one experiences a single moment in life that seems to change everything, radically and suddenly; it feels as if one has moved from being a girl to being a woman, or changed from boy to man, in that instant. Oddly, when these moments occur, they are usually followed by just as important times when we feel like kids again!

With everyone aging differently, kids and parents of ancient Judaism wondered just when kids become like adults, taking on more responsibility and being seen as more independent. Children grow at different rates...so when is a person mature enough to sign a legal contract? making binding decisions? or participate in a fast day?

In Talmudic times (almost 2,000 years ago, when Jews lived in Babylon after being forced out of Israel) the leaders of the Jewish community established the legal ages at which girls and boys were asked to take on adult responsibilities. In general (but not over all issues) a boy became an adult at 13, a girl was no longer a child when she was 12.

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11 month project continued...

By the Middle Ages (about 1,000 years ago), saying the Torah blessings in public became a traditional way a boy showed that he had reached age 13, his age of responsibility. He would publicly draw attention to the fact that he had become Bar Mitzvah (a son of (the) Commandments), and so was legally able to perform the mitzvah of blessing the Torah, as well as other mitzvot that adult men were required to perform. He would have been old enough for these responsibilities whether or not he publicly proclaimed his age. Similarly, once you complete all the requirements of high school, you will be a graduate whether or not you pick up your diploma in a public graduation ceremony.

About 60 years ago, many Jews decided that it was important to add a ceremony for girls to celebrate their emergence into womanhood. Bat Mitzvah began in Reconstructionist Judaism in Philadelphia and was quickly followed by the Reform movement, and later the Conservative and Orthodox movements. Today, however, some very traditional Jewish groups do not treat women equally to men.

On the reverse side, answer the following questions and discuss your answers with your parent(s).

STUDENT: List three areas in which you would like total responsibility after you become Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

PARENT(S): List three areas in which you would like your son/daughter to take total responsibility after his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

STUDENT: List three areas you still want your parent(s) to be involved in your life.

PARENT(S): List three areas you plan to retain control in your child's life.

Final Step:

Attached are two sheets of questions: one for you to complete, and one for your parent(s) to complete. Answer them privately, then share your answers and discuss each one together.