

## Who Invented the Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

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There is no mention of it in the Bible nor in the Talmud. Abraham did not have a Bar Mitzvah, nor did Sarah have a Bat Mitzvah. None of our patriarchs enjoyed its revelry, so who invented it?

According to Jewish tradition you don't have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, you become one chronologically, automatically. At the age of thirteen one is called *Bar Onshin*, which means an accountable, legally responsible person.

So who made the Bar/Bat Mitzvah into such an important event? Not the Rabbis and not the sages. It became a major event because of the will of the people.

Many have witnessed truly sacred moments at a Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. Some of the most poignant moments of our services at Congregation Beth El are the B'nei Mitzvah and their families who have clearly grown as a unit but also spiritually for having completed this age old tradition.

The question still remains, why has the Bar/Bat Mitzvah become so central? The answer is that it is a stage of transition in which a child enters into adolescence. But as a Rabbi who works with many B'nei Mitzvah families each year, I have found that the moment celebrates the coming of age of the *mishpacha* (family). I know that it is his or her moment under the sun, but in truth the event embraces the entire family.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah carries with it a number of strains. Invitations are important because the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is not only a private event but also a public event. It is the coming out of the family, a new self-awareness of the family and its maturation as *mishpacha*. Whom to invite and whom not to invite is not simply a matter of finances. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a challenge and an opportunity. It offers a chance to end old feuds, to reconnect, to discover cousins, uncles, aunts and to teach our Bar/Bat Mitzvah the concept of *kedushat mishpacha* – the sanctity of family.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah can truly shape a family image. It is an inter-generational event that blends the personal and collective values of our tradition and powerfully reflects the uniqueness of our family.

Wishing all of you a Mazel Tov on your upcoming *simcha*, and in celebration of that momentous occasion, may you not lose sight of the real meaning and significance of the celebration.

Shalom,  
Rabbi Avi Libman

For more helpful Bar/Bat Mitzvah planning resources and links to qualified event vendors, please visit: [www.BesaSanDiego.com](http://www.BesaSanDiego.com)