



A Bar Mitzvah celebrates the coming of age for a Jew, who as an adult is now obligated to perform the Jewish mitzvot [commandments]. The ceremony marks the first performance of mitzvot such as reading from the Torah [Five Books of Moses].

Guests are encouraged to hum along during congregational melodies and to participate in the service to the extent that they feel comfortable. Standing and sitting in a Jewish service does not constitute any affirmation of religious belief; it is merely a sign of respect. There may also be instructions to bow at certain parts of the service, and because a bow is a religiously significant act, feel free to remain standing or sitting as you wish at that point.

Please leave your camera on and sound muted. You will be invited to use chat or unmute for certain portions of the service.

Order of the Service

Introductory Prayers and Blessings

Rafi will don the traditional Tallis, a rectangular prayer shawl, for the first time. In each of the four corners of the shawl are strings tied in a particular pattern, called tzitzit. The origin of the tzitzit is biblical; the practice is prescribed in Numbers 15. The precept is to put these strings on the four corners of one's garment — in ancient tradition, with a single strand of blue as well—as a reminder of the duties and obligations of a Jew.

Morning Service

Today's morning service has special additions and tunes to celebrate the holiday of Hanukkah. The holiday celebrates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after its defilement by the Syrian Greeks in 164 BCE. The eight day festival is celebrated with lighting of a menorah in the evenings, an eight-branched candelabrum to which one candle is added on each night of the holiday until it is ablaze with light on the eighth night.

One added portion is Hallel, a collection of Psalms recited as an act of praise and gratitude. We also say a prayer of healing for those who are sick during this part of the service.

Torah Reading

The Torah is divided into—and read in—weekly portions, according to a prescribed calendar, so that the entire Torah is read in the span of one year. Each division of the reading provides an opportunity to honor a member of the congregation or a guest by calling them to recite the blessings over the Torah reading. This is known as "receiving an aliyah," or "being called up" to the Torah. The day of the bar mitzvah celebration is when the child is called to the Torah for the first time to recite these blessings. Members of our family will also be honored with receiving an Aliyah today.

Rafael will share a short speech, and then read from the Torah. After his reading and blessings, we sing 'Simon Tov v' Mazel Tov [A good sign and good luck]' while clapping and throwing candy at Rafi in celebration.

Conclusion of Service

The concluding prayers include a memorial prayer for those who have passed. The service ends with Rafi saying the blessing over bread.

After the service, we will stay on the zoom and share thoughts and wishes with our guests.