



BNEI MITZVAH SIMCHA GUIDE

Dear family,

Mazal Tov to all of you on this wonderful milestone. We are so pleased you've decided to mark this special moment with your community at Shira Hadasha, and we look forward to celebrating with you as you welcome your child into Jewish adulthood. Shira has put together this guide to help you along the journey – we can't wait to be part of it together.

Here's what to do now:

1. Please complete this [short form](#) and email back to admin@shira.org.au
2. Our administrator, Rachel Kariak, will contact you with further information. Rachel will be your central contact throughout the lead-up to your Simcha, putting you in touch with all the necessary people along the way.
3. We warmly encourage your child to attend the Bnei mitzvah program that Shira runs. It is a truly enriching experience full of learning and fun, and its the seed of lifelong friendships forged in the shul community.
4. Please read this Simcha guide to orient yourself. Our administrator and our Simcha liaison can help you with any questions you have along Shira Hadasha

WHO WE ARE

Shira is a lay-led community in Melbourne where both women and men are active participants in accordance with *halakha* (Jewish law). We embrace a commitment to *halakha* and *tikkun olam* (the work of bettering the world).

At Shira we aim to make your *Simcha* (celebration) as individual as possible. We are looking forward to celebrating this milestone with you in our community, and making it a meaningful and memorable occasion for you and your loved ones! We welcome your family to take part in the service, joining us to lead and to participate in as much as you would like to!

WHAT DOES A BNEI MITZVAH AT SHIRA INVOLVE?

- A Bat Mitzvah is held for Jewish girls on reaching the age of 12, and a Bar Mitzvah is held for Jewish boys on reaching the age of 13. This is calculated according to the Hebrew calendar. We can help you calculate this. [See: [Hebcal](#)]
- At Shira, a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is celebrated on Shabbat, during Saturday morning prayer services.
- The main part of the Bnei Mitzvah ritual is when the Bar or Bat Mitzvah child receives their first aliyah (call-up) to the Torah. This involves the child saying two short brachot (blessings) in Hebrew while holding the Torah scroll.
- At Shira we will invite the whole family to stand with the Bar or Bat Mitzvah child and sing a traditional song to welcome them to Jewish adulthood. The parents will also be invited to bless the child.
- In addition to the aliyah, the Bar or Bat Mitzvah child can do as much (or as little) as they want in the shul service. For example:
 - they can read a portion of the Torah and/or Haftorah
 - give a drash (mini-sermon)
 - lead other parts of the service
- Family members are also encouraged to participate in the formal part of the Simcha if they would like to. This can involve (where appropriate):
 - leading the service
 - reading from the Torah, and/or reading the haftorah (additional section from the Tanach read after the Torah),
 - reading communal prayers,
 - carrying the Torah around the shule, and
 - giving the dvar torah (mini sermon)

We can discuss all of these roles with you in further detail.

- If your child wants to do any of these things and you are looking for a teacher, we are happy to make recommendations. A Bar/Bat Mitzvah teacher's relationship with your child is a special opportunity for Jewish mentorship and the shul can help you find the right fit for you. You can work independently with the teacher to make arrangements. (Teachers are independent of Shira and have their own rates and arrangements etc.)

- After your child has had their first Aliyah to the Torah, we shower them with lollies to celebrate! If you want to do this, please make sure that you bring the lollies to shul either on Friday or with you on shabbat. (Please use kosher lollies. Soft ones are preferable!)
- Often, the parents of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, or the child themselves give a talk/drasha about their journey into Jewish adulthood and their Torah Portion that week. The attached Drasha guide has more information.
- We have a wonderful Bnei Mitzvah programme that your child is invited to join! It is led by exceptional Jewish educators and provides an opportunity for your child to meet a cohort of other teens, have a great time learning and forming lifelong friendships as they embark on the journey together.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

- **ONE YEAR BEFORE THE SIMCHA** (or when you contact us):
Rabbanit Ellyse Borghi, or another shul member, will contact you to discuss your simcha with you.

- **SIX MONTHS BEFORE THE SIMCHA**

Shul attendance on a regular basis is strongly encouraged. Attendance makes the Bar or Bat Mitzvah experience more meaningful as it gives you and your child the chance to get to know the shul community. It is also an invaluable experience for your child to see how shul works and understand exactly what they are going to do when they stand at the bimah in celebration of their simcha.

You and your child are strongly encouraged to attend other bnei mitzvot before your Simcha to get a sense of how it will run.

We are happy to give families experience with aliyot (being called up to the Torah) and other roles so that they feel confident on the day of the Simcha.

- **TWO MONTHS BEFORE THE SIMCHA**

Rachel will send you an email with some queries, including an honours sheet to complete. The 'honours form' will assign shul honours to as many of your friends and family as possible. We are happy to guide you through this.

- **THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE SIMCHA**

Please send the fully completed honours form to Shira. Please let Rachel know the name and seating arrangements for the Kiddush (ie seating, standing, buffet tables etc). Rachel will discuss logistics directly with the caterer.

- **1 WEEK BEFORE THE SIMCHA - Rehearsal**

We designate the Thursday evening before your Simcha for your rehearsal.

We can arrange access to the shul at this time and encourage you to take up the opportunity to have your bar/bat mitzvah teacher attend the shul with you. If you are learning with a teacher who isn't familiar with the Shira community (for instance, through your school), we can arrange someone from Shira to meet with you all at the shul.

This is also a good opportunity to have photos taken, as well as deliver any items that you need for Shabbat e.g. lollies, tablecloths, decorations, alcohol etc.

OTHER INFORMATION

Shule times - Please put 9.30am as the start time on your invitation.

Siddur - Shira would be honoured to gift your child their first siddur (prayer book) as a Jewish adult. A dedication will be on the inside from us – may they use it in good health!

Security - CSG (Community Security Group) has requested that we notify them of all upcoming Simchas. Please speak with us if you have any questions or concerns about this. We have community volunteer security guards at Shira who are trained regularly. However if you wish to book private security guards for your Simcha, please talk to us and we can arrange this (at your additional expense, which is roughly \$260 at the time of writing).

Seating - Please let us know if you would like us to offer some non-gendered seating options in the middle of the shul, for guests or members who are gender diverse.

COSTS

Shira is a not-for-profit organisation. The costs for your Simcha will directly cover the costs incurred by the shul. There are 4 cost components, we've broken them down here for convenience.

Please note: Some synagogues make on-the-day donation requests. At Shira, we like to focus entirely on the celebration and on our prayers, so we won't ask any of your family or guests (even those receiving honours) for donations at any point.

However, if anyone wishes to give a (tax deductible) donation this would of course be greatly appreciated.

1. Membership Fees

- The Bnei Mitzvah child and at least one parent/guardian must be shul members to hold your Simcha at Shira. Prices for membership can be found at this [link](#).
- Membership runs from Rosh Hashana to the following Rosh Hashana (roughly September - September). We ask that you take out membership within the membership cycle in which your Simcha falls.

2. Bnei mitzvah administration fee

- In order to ensure the chosen date for your Simcha, we require prepayment of **\$350**. This covers all the services Shira will provide, including the Shabbat celebration of your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- The Bnei Mitzvah booking fee covers your child's enrollment in our Bnei Mitzvah education program. If you have enrolled in the Bnei Mitzvah education program (currently \$350) you do not need to pay this again (The fee applies even if your child does not participate in the Bnei Mitzvah program.)

3. Catering

- As part of the Simcha, the family usually provides a kiddush for guests and the community. The kiddush must be **dairy or parve (no meat) and certified kosher**. Shira can provide a suggested list of kosher caterers. Choosing food/beverages is arranged directly between you and the caterer. (We will help facilitate their access to the premises.)
- If you wish to self cater, please let us know so we can guide you through the process. Self catering may include purchasing food platters from a kosher caterer and preparing fruit/vegetables on the Shira premises. If you self cater, you will need to provide someone to set up, serve and provide some clean up. (Kosher caterers generally include this in their cost.)
- Shira may incur additional cleaning costs for self-catering so we require a \$200 bond, which can be refunded if we do not have additional cleaning charges from the premises. Please note that this \$200 is additional to the set-up and cleaning costs detailed below.

4. Room Hire, Set-up and clean-up

- Shira incurs additional costs for setting up and cleaning up the kiddush room and the shul for a Simcha. This is a direct out-of-pocket expense for Shira, which we pass on to the family.
- This cost depends on the size of your Simcha. For fewer than 60 of your guests we are charged **\$350**, with the kiddush held in the foyer. For more than 60 of your guests, the large hall is needed for the kiddush and we are charged **\$1000**. (This fee comprises \$500 cleaners fee and \$500 hall hire charged by the Theodore Herzl Club.)

If you have any questions, please reach out! We would love to hear from you.
admin@shira.org.au.