



## Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation

### Bar/Bat Mitzvah

The bar and bat mitzvah is a time when boys (at the age of 13) and girls (at the age of 12) are obligated to keep the mitzvot (commandments). The idea of a ceremony marking this occasion did not begin until the 14<sup>th</sup> century and really only blossomed into ceremonies like today in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

The process that started in the 14<sup>th</sup> century – that of a father blessing his son and thanking God for freeing him from responsibility of the deeds of his son – had progressed significantly in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century a boy was not only receiving an aliyah (being called for a blessing over the Torah) but he was also reading from the Torah, chanting Haftorah (weekly reading from the Prophets), leading services, and giving a drash (sermon/teaching on the Torah portion).<sup>1</sup>

The bat mitzvah ceremony came later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the first bat mitzvah that was held in honor of Judith Kaplan in 1922. Since this time the bat mitzvah has been celebrated by the more liberal movements within Judaism but has also been slowly developing in the traditional movements as well.<sup>1</sup>

There has even been a trend of adult bar/bat mitzvah in some synagogues. Initially this trend started as a way for women who did not have a bat mitzvah at age 12 to have that experience as an adult. Eventually adult men were also invited to participate in the adult bar mitzvah. In general the adult bar/bat mitzvah is a group pursuit but can also be done individually.<sup>2</sup>

## Confirmation

The 19<sup>th</sup> century Jewish reformers were uncomfortable with the ritual focus of the bar mitzvah and developed what became known as the confirmation. The confirmation ceremony (also known as Kabbalat Torah – Accepting the Torah) was a way for older teens to celebrate the acquired principles of Judaism. This ceremony spread quickly into Reform and Conservative congregations and included both boys and girls.<sup>1</sup> The confirmation ceremony was based upon the Christian catechism. After a period of study the teen would be asked certain questions that would display an understanding of Jewish religious principles.<sup>3</sup>

Initially the confirmation ceremony was linked to schools and homes rather than the synagogue but this changed over time. Confirmation ceremonies have traditionally been held on Shavuot when Jews celebrate the giving of the Torah. Confirmation is generally held when a teen is 16 to 18 years old and has completed supplemental Hebrew school classes where he or she has attained greater knowledge and practice of Jewish principles.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>“Bar and Bat Mitzvah 101.” *myjewishlearning.com*. My Jewish Learning, n.d.

[[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Life\\_Events/BarBat\\_Mitzvah/BarBat\\_Mitzvah\\_101.shtml?p=0](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Life_Events/BarBat_Mitzvah/BarBat_Mitzvah_101.shtml?p=0)]

<sup>2</sup>“Motivations for Adult Bar/Bat Mitzvah.” *myjewishlearning.com*. My Jewish Learning, n.d.

[[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Life\\_Events/BarBat\\_Mitzvah/About\\_BarBat\\_Mitzvah/Adult\\_BarBat\\_Mitzvah.shtml?p=0](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Life_Events/BarBat_Mitzvah/About_BarBat_Mitzvah/Adult_BarBat_Mitzvah.shtml?p=0)]

<sup>3</sup>Debra Blank. *History of Confirmation*. My Jewish Learning, n.d.

[[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Life\\_Events/BarBat\\_Mitzvah/History/Confirmation.shtml?p=0](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Life_Events/BarBat_Mitzvah/History/Confirmation.shtml?p=0)]

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