

Writing My Chapter

Bar / Bat
Mitzvah
Journey



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Introduction

Mazel Tov!

You are embarking
on a journey!



Today you are entering adulthood and beginning your journey as an independent member of the Jewish people! This milestone is an opportunity to explore different aspects of Jewish culture and identity, as you embark on your personal journey toward becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah. According to Judaism, the life cycle includes different stages, each with its rituals and customs, based on multiple layers of scripture and tradition, deeply rooted in Jewish history, and infused with Jewish values.



Map of the Desert Journey, Heinrich Bunting, 1585
Eran Laor Map Collection, The National Library of Israel



Where do we begin exploring our diverse and rich heritage?

What topics should we study in depth when reaching the age of 12 or 13?



How can we forge a personal connection to these traditions, even those that seem unfamiliar?

What can the past teach us about ourselves, about the community we live in, and the issues we grapple with in the present?



How can we create for ourselves a meaningful and long-lasting experience?

This program is based on the twofold mission at the National Library of Israel encapsulated in our motto: **Bringing History to Life**. As the prime institution of national memory of the Jewish people and the Israeli nation, we are dedicated to both **enlivening** the history of the past and to **personalizing** it for a new generation.

The National Library of Israel is inviting you to take a unique journey through select treasures from our archives and collections. This is a chance to explore primary sources that signify different aspects of our culture as “People of the Book”, while reflecting on your connection and adding your chapter to the story of the Jewish people. In the final chapter, you will share a primary source of your own, an authentic presentation of your personal experience, your link in the chain of history.



Shana Tova Card, New York, 1910

The Joseph and Margit Hoffman Judaica Postcard Collection, The Folklore Research Center
The Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem



Why do you think that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is depicted as the height of the Jewish milestones represented in this postcard?

Why do you think it is traditionally celebrated at the age of 12/13?

What are other milestones of adulthood? How are they different now from in the past?

“

He [Judah ben Tema] used to say: At five years of age the study of Scripture; At ten the study of Mishnah; At thirteen subject to the commandments; At fifteen the study of Talmud; At eighteen the bridal canopy; At twenty for pursuit [of livelihood]; At thirty the peak of strength; At forty wisdom; At fifty able to give counsel; At sixty old age; At seventy fullness of years; At eighty the age of “strength”; At ninety a bent body; At one hundred, as good as dead and gone completely out of the world.

(Mishna, Pirkei Avot 5:21)

”



Bar and Bat Mitzvah Symposium Poster
Tel Aviv Municipality Archive

What do you think about the title: "How to Celebrate and How Not to Celebrate"?

What elements of Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrations are familiar to you?

What other coming of age ceremonies do you know of in other cultures and how do they differ from ours?

What is the significance of this milestone for parents in contrast to children?

Tel Aviv, 15 Iyyar 5728, 13.5.68
Bat Mitzvah and Bar Mitzvah
How to Celebrate and How Not to Celebrate Symposium
(Translation)



Activity Ideas:

- Use this [Canva template](#) we designed for you to create a personalized scrapbook that will accompany you as you explore elements of Jewish culture, reflect on your personal connection to them, share your thoughts, and document the process.
- Create a "[word cloud](#)" that represents the multiple facets of your identity (place of birth, hometown, hobbies, favorite foods, role in family, gender, interests, etc.).
- Create a timeline of your life with the milestones you have already experienced and write why they were meaningful to you.



Chapter 1

"You Are Cordially Invited"

Exploring Identity
and Community



Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrations are an opportunity to gather as a community and share this meaningful event together. In this chapter, we will explore the themes of identity and community through the lens of Bar and Bat Mitzvah invitations of the past.



If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And being only for myself, what am I? And if not now, then when?



(Pirkei Avot 1:14)

**אם אין אני לי, מי לי? וכשאני לעצמי, מה אני?
(משנה, פרקי אבות א', י"ד)**



Bar Mitzvah invitation printed on a "Torah scroll", Mexico City, 2007
The Invitations Collection, The National Library of Israel



Bar Mitzvah Invitation,
United States, 20th Century
The Joseph and Margit Hoffman
Judaica Postcard Collection
The Hebrew University of
Jerusalem

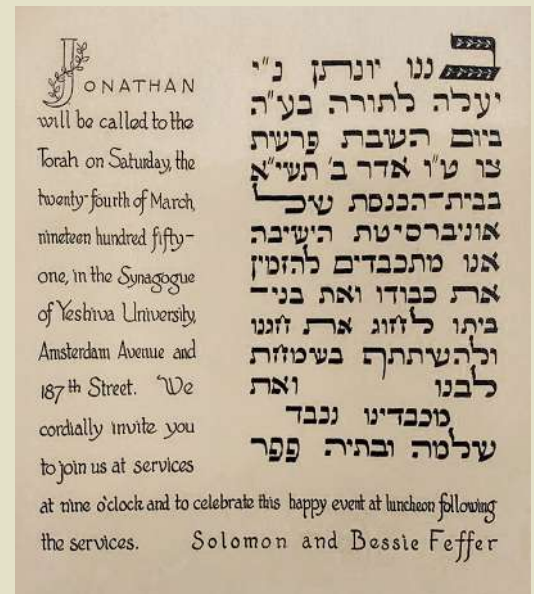


What do the two flags in this invitation symbolize?

How would you feel about using a set template for your invitation?



Bat Mitzvah Invitation
Mexico City, 2009
The Invitations Collection
The National Library of Israel



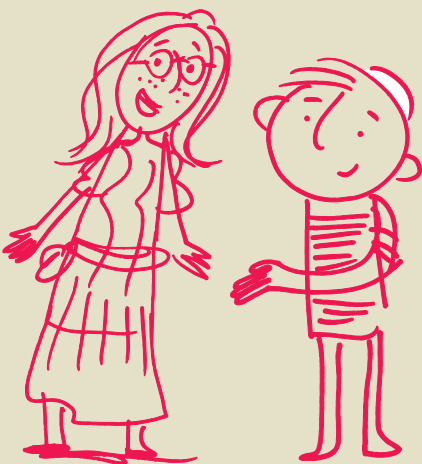
Bar Mitzvah invitation, New York, 1951
The Invitations Collection
The National Library of Israel



What can we learn about the personal identities of the celebrants and their communities from their invitations?

Is it usually the parents or the children who decide who to send invitations to? Whose event is it? How can you find the balance between the two?

Activity Ideas:



- Design your own Bar/Bat Mitzvah invitation incorporating language and symbols that reflect your own identity and the communities you belong to.
- When writing a guest list, you need to take into consideration all of your various community circles (for example: neighbors, classmates, family, childhood friends, teammates, etc.). In your scrapbook, fill in each concentric circle, starting with the names of the communities closest to you and expanding out.

Chapter 2

Save the Date!

Exploring
the Jewish
Calendar

The unique rhythm of the Jewish calendar unifies the Jewish community while distinguishing it from other communities. In this chapter, we will explore the theme of sacred time in the Jewish calendar and holidays.

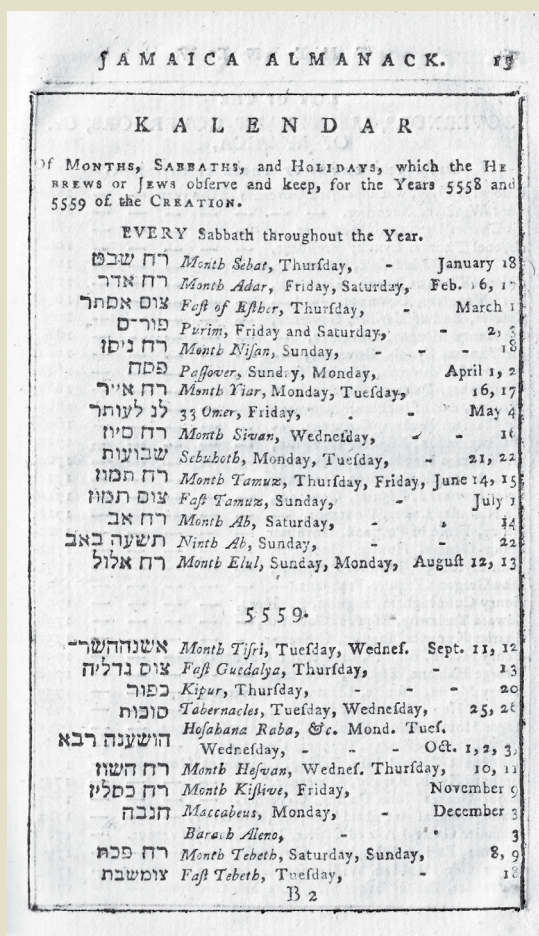


For everything there is a season and
there is a time for everything under the sky.

(Kohelet 3:1)



לְכָל זְמַן וְזֶמֶן לְכָל חֶפֶץ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם.
(‘קהלת ג’, א)



Jewish Calendar from Jamaican Almanac, 1798

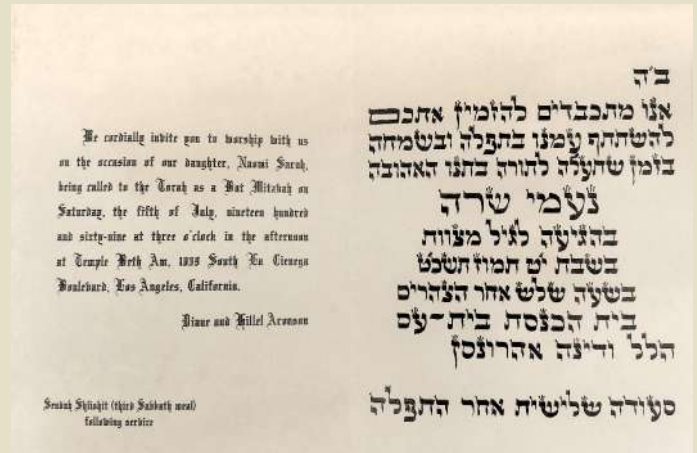


Do you recognize any
of the dates or festivals
in this 18th century
almanac from Jamaica?





Naomi Sarah Aronson



Bat Mitzvah Invitation, California, 1969
The Invitations Collection, The National Library of Israel

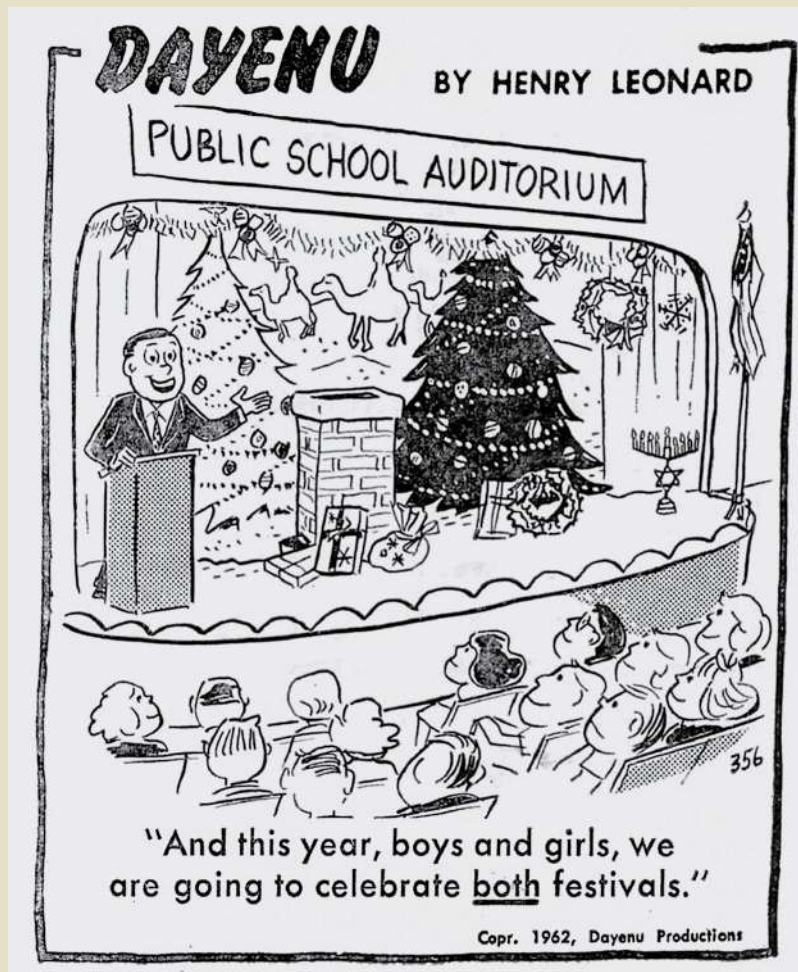
According to **Naomi's invitation**, her bat mitzvah took place on Shabbat, as is common, and was symbolized by the picture of her lighting the Shabbat candles on the front page of the invitation.

The "**Sabbath Manifesto**" (a project of the "National Day of Unplugging") presents ten key principles designed to help people slow down and bring the spirit of Shabbat into their lives:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 Avoid technology | 6 Light candles |
| 2 Connect with loved ones | 7 Drink wine |
| 3 Nurture your health | 8 Eat bread |
| 4 Get outside | 9 Find silence |
| 5 Avoid commerce | 10 Give back |



Which items on this list are you most drawn to and why?



Dayenu Cartoon, The Sentinel, 1962

Historical Jewish Press founded by The National Library and Tel Aviv University



This cartoon is a commentary on the so called "December dilemma." Have you experienced any conflicts between the traditional Jewish calendar and the Gregorian one? Which calendar do you feel more connected to?



Activity Ideas:

- What custom or act symbolizes the meaning of Shabbat for you? Take a photo of it to include in your scrapbook.
- Draw a cartoon that expresses the conflict/balance between the traditional Jewish calendar and the Gregorian one.

- Using the hebc.com date converter, determine the date of your Hebrew birthday and add it to your scrapbook.



Chapter 3

Called to the Torah

Exploring
Traditional
Rituals

In this chapter, we will explore traditional rituals that are associated with the Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremony, including reading from the Torah and putting on **tallit** and **tefillin**. Traditionally these rituals take place in the synagogue and signify the transition of a child into adulthood and active participation in the community. It is from this age onward that children become accountable for their actions and are considered “Bar/ Bat Mitzvah”, literally, one who is subject to **mitzvot** (religious laws).



“

**You shall teach them diligently
unto your children... and bind them for a sign
upon your hand, and they shall be for frontlets
between your eyes. And you shall write them upon
the door-posts of your house, and upon your gates.**

(Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

”

וּשְׁנַנְתֶּם לְבָנֵיכָה וּדְבַרְתֶּם בָּם... וְקָשַׁרְתֶּם לְאוֹת עַל יָדְכָה
וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֵיכָה. וְכָתַבְתֶּם עַל מְזוֹזֹת בֵּיתְכָה
וּבְשַׁעְרֵיכָה.

(דברים ו', ו'-ט)



Avraham Sheifeld, Romania, 1945
Centropa.org

Does the photograph look staged or spontaneous?



How does this Bat Mitzvah photo differ from the Bar Mitzvah photo above?

In her testimonial, Vera Tomanic explains: "My father, Pavao, was very religious. Every morning he put on tefillin and prayed. My mother Elza was not religious to the same degree, but our family marked all the Jewish holidays, and every Friday we lit candles."



Why were differences in religious observance between men and women, boys and girls, common during this time period?



Vera Tomanic's Bat Mitzvah, Osijek, 1930
Centropa.org

"There is a street in Iasi in the area where we lived that was called just like that: the Synagogues Street. A lot of synagogues were there, separate synagogues according to trade: the Tailors' Synagogue, the Publicans' Synagogues, and the Grand Synagogue...

In my childhood and even later, when I was 15 or 16, my father would take me with him to Friday and Saturday evening prayers. When others would go outside to play football, I had to go to the synagogue. But this is how I learned everything that is to know about Judaic tradition."



Medric Milu, Romania, 1930
Centropa.org



What role does the synagogue play in your life and your parents' life?

Is the synagogue still the center for Jewish community life?

- Synagogue is also referred to as **shul** (school in Yiddish), temple, **beit kenesset** (house of gathering), and **beit tefila** (house of prayer). What are the different meanings and connotations of each of these terms?



- **"Tefillin Barbie"** was created to challenge the notion that **tallit** and **tefillin** are "male" garments. What is your reaction to this image? What is your custom?

- Both Torah scrolls and **tefillin** can only be made using special scrolls made of animal leather and written by trained scribes with a feather quill. Why do you think all of these requirements are maintained at a time when mass printing is readily available?



Activity Ideas:

- Browse [The National Library of Israel](#) or [The Center for Jewish Art](#) to research one Jewish ritual object (examples: tallit, tzedakah box, mezuzah, shofar).



- Create a photo gallery in your scrapbook of ritual items from different time periods and styles. Include a museum label that describes your own connection to the item and your interpretation of it. Here is a cool example of a very special mezuzah: [Mezuzah from space](#).

- Inside both [tefillin](#) and [mezuzot](#) are scrolls containing sacred text. If you were to create a text that would be hidden away as a reminder and inspiration, what text would it be? Add it to your scrapbook!

Reading in Hebrew?!

Exploring Language



Hebrew is considered the holy language of Jewish tradition, the language in which the Bible and many other Jewish texts are written. However, many Jews are not fluent speakers or readers of ancient Hebrew. In this chapter, we acknowledge the challenges of learning Hebrew while exploring its significance for Jewish culture and peoplehood and reflecting on its potential for connecting Jews all over the world.

**He formed, weighed, transmuted, composed,
and created with these twenty-two letters every
living being, and every soul yet uncreated.**

(Sefer Yetzira, Chapter 2)

**שרים ושתים אותיות חקקן, חצבן, שקלן, והמירן
צרפן וצר בהם נפש כל היצור ונפש כל העתיד לצור.
(ספר היצירה, פרק ב')**

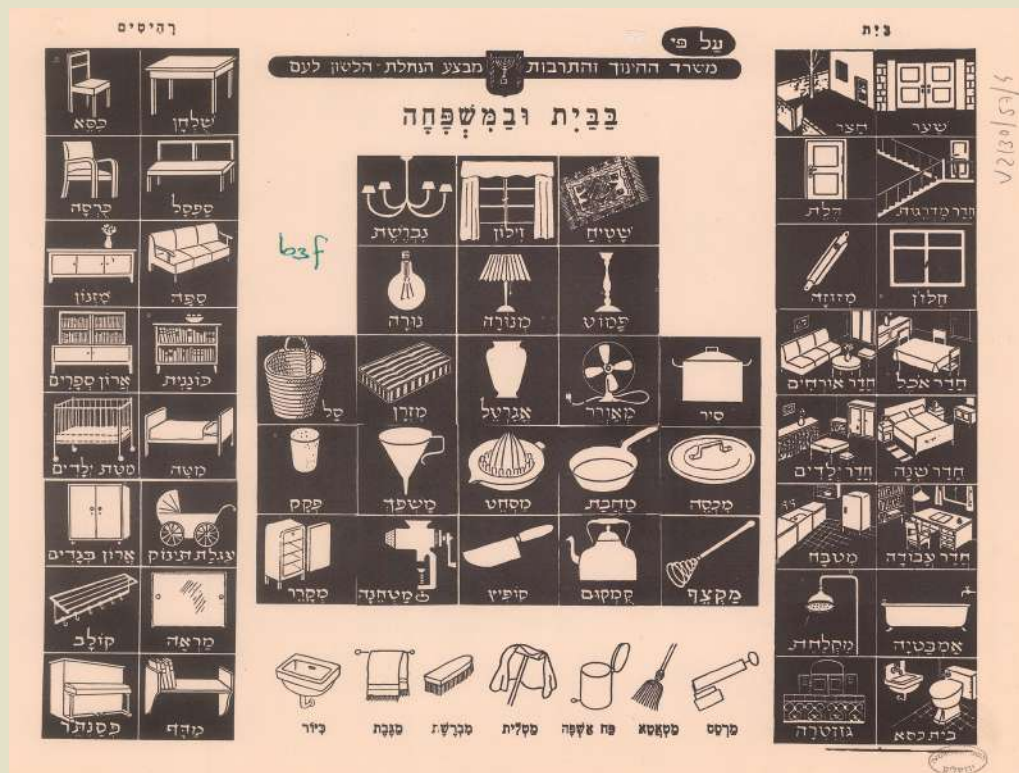


Hebrew Alphabet Practice Page
Baghdad, 1920
The Ephemera Collection
The National Library of Israel

Did you also have
a workbook like
this for learning
the Hebrew letters?



Do you know any of
these words in Hebrew?



Poster for Learning Hebrew, 1950s
The Ephemera Collection, The National Library of Israel



Photo from Mario Modiano's Bar Mitzvah, Greece, 1939
Centropa.org

"What I remember more vividly from my bar mitzvah is the hard time I had trying to learn enough Hebrew to be able to read the text. I had a teacher who came home and taught me how to parrot the text from the Torah that I was supposed to read at the service in the synagogue. I very much regret that I never really learned Hebrew."



**Can you relate to Mario's sentiment?
Why or why not?**

Why do you think Hebrew is typically so central to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony? Can reading texts in Hebrew be meaningful even if you do not actually understanding their meaning?





Why do you think the study of Hebrew has always been so important to Jewish communities? Below are a number of reasons people give for the importance of teaching and learning Hebrew. Which do you agree/disagree with? Are there other possible reasons?

- Access to Jewish texts in the original
- Connection to the State of Israel
- Competence in Jewish ritual life
- Common connection with Jews around the world

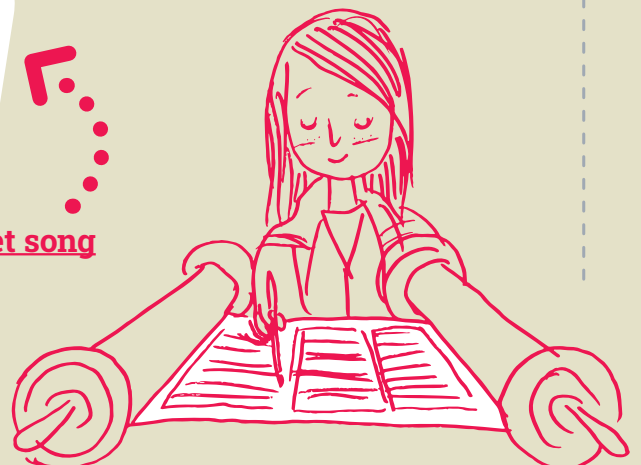


Click [here](#) to read more about how Jewish children learned to write a thousand years ago!



Activity Ideas:

- Often the child's name is prominent in their invitation and sometimes the Hebrew letters of their name are highlighted in a biblical verse or incorporated in the design. Design a logo with your Hebrew name that reflects its family history, meaning, or connection to a Jewish text.
- Create a 30-second video with your own reasons for learning Hebrew.
- Watch this video of Victoria Hanna's [Aleph-bet song](#) that highlights the physical pronunciation of each sound and letter. Do you know any other Hebrew songs? Add your favorite one to your scrapbook!



Chapter 5

Say a Little Prayer

Exploring
Personal
Prayer

There are many different ways to express our hopes and dreams for the future, and at times we search for the words to encompass our thoughts. Also, when we experience difficulty or uncertainty, we often seek assurance and inspiration. Our culture is full of texts and rituals that were created to meet those exact needs. In this chapter, we will explore our personal connection to prayer and spirituality.

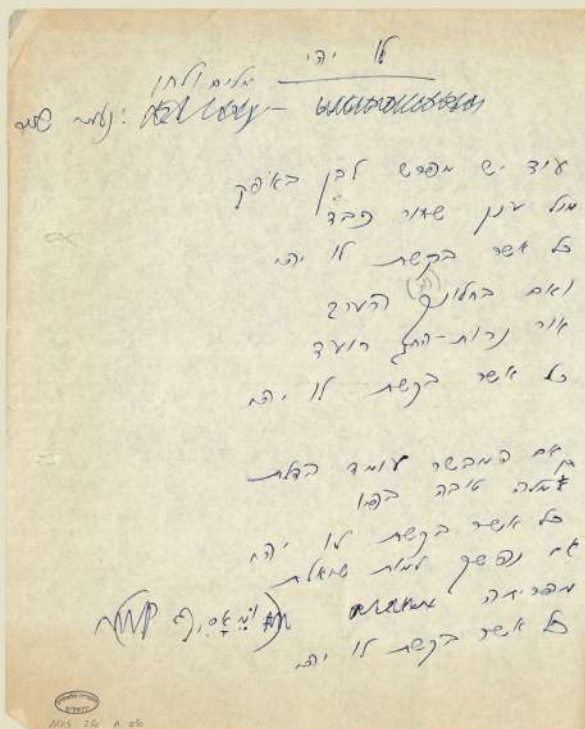
“

May my prayer come to You, O LORD,
at a favorable moment; O God, in Your abundant
faithfulness, answer me with Your sure deliverance.

(Psalms 69:14)

”

וְאֲנִי תַפְלְתִּי לָךְ ה' עַתָּה רְצוֹן אֱלֹהִים
בְּרַב חַסְדְּךָ עֲנֵנִי בְּאַמֶּת יִשְׁעֶךָ.
(תהלים ס"ט, י"ד)



Draft of Naomi Shemer's "Lu Yehi", 1973
Naomi Shemer Archive, The National Library of Israel

There is still a white sail on the horizon
Opposite a heavy black cloud
All that we seek – may it be
And if in the evening windows

The light of the holiday candles flickers
All that we seek – may it be
May it be, may it be – please – may it be
All that we seek – may it be.

(Translation from the final version)



Naomi Shemer's prayer is associated with the Yom Kippur war. What is the connection between crisis and prayer?

Compose your own version of "Lu Yehi" (Let It Be) or use the same structure but change the stanzas to reflect your own wishes, hopes, and prayers.



Why did women in the 15th century have special prayer books? Do you think that there is a difference between male and female prayer?



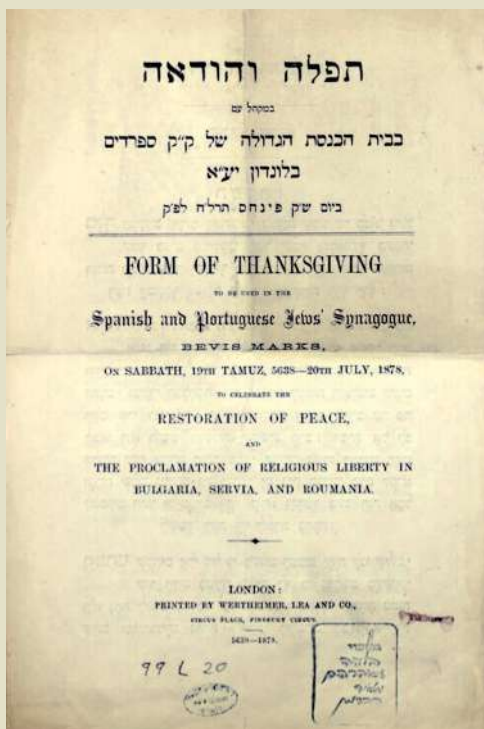
Women's Siddur, 1480
"Ktiv" Project, The National Library of Israel



Wayfarer's Prayer, Amsterdam, 1743
"Ktiv" Project, The National Library of Israel



**Have you ever been on a journey and prayed
to arrive safely at your destination??**



Bevis Marks Thanksgiving Prayers, 1878
"Ktiv" Project, The National Library of Israel

This prayer booklet from the Bevis Marks Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue was written to celebrate the restoration of peace and the proclamation of religious liberty in Bulgaria, Serbia, and Romania (Treaty of Berlin, July 13, 1878).

**What is the connection
between thanksgiving
and prayer?**



- Use one word to describe your relationship with prayer.
- Do you think that prayer should have a set formula or be spontaneous and individual?
- Do you ever use methods such as yoga, music, journaling, mindfulness, or meditation as a way of being attentive to your needs, inner thoughts, reflections, and hopes?



Activity Ideas:

- It is traditional to put a note in the Kotel (Western Wall) with one's prayers. If you were to write a note, what would it say? Stick it in your scrapbook!
- Today some people (both men and women) say the blessing traditionally said only by women but eliminate any reference to gender by saying: "sh'asani kirtzono" (You made me according to Your will). Jewish artist Hillel Smith used this phrase to illustrate [gay pride mural](#). Why do you think he chose these words?
- Design your own street art expressing a blessing or prayer that is close to your heart.



Chapter 6

Smile for the Camera!

Exploring
Family

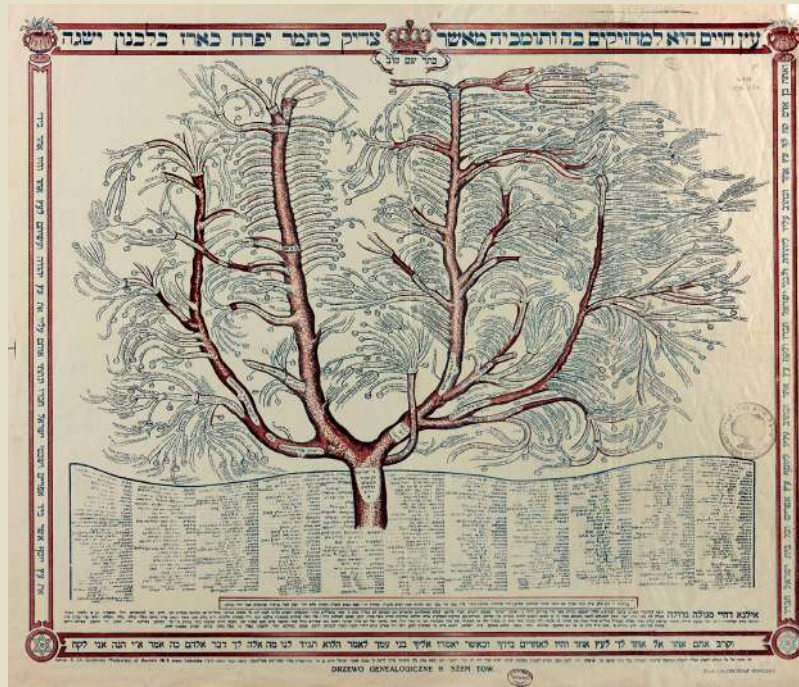
It is through our family that we establish our first connection with the world and experience our primary relationships. Our family members are a central part of our lives (for better or for worse!) and have a huge impact on our identity. In this chapter, we will explore the importance of family in our lives and learn about our roots.

“

**Remember the days of old,
consider the years of ages past.**
(Devarim 32:7)

”

**זְכוֹר יָמֹת עוֹלָם בֵּינוּ שָׁנוֹת דִּרְ-יָדָר...
(דברים ל"ב, ז')**



Family Tree of Hasidim, 1946
The Ephemera Collection, The National Library of Israel



The image of a tree is used to represent the spiritual family of the Hasidic movement. Why do you think trees are typically used as a symbol of family and ancestry?



Hagit and Dorothy Wolk Bat Mitzvah Invitation, 1995
The Invitations Collection, The National Library of Israel



According to Hagit's invitation, she shared her Bat Mitzvah with her 80-year old grandmother. What was your grandparents' relationship to Judaism and what was their Bar or Bat mitzvah experience?



Family photo from Wacek Kornblum's Bar Mitzvah, Poland, 1939
Centropa.org

In his testimonial, Wacek says "Everyone wanted to be in that photo; they were pushing themselves... I had a non-religious Bar Mitzvah. The family came to our house and we ate something. My parents were anti-religious."



**Why would someone have a Bar Mitzvah with no religious content?
What other meaning could the milestone have in a family?**

Activity Ideas:

- Your Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a perfect time to do a family history project! Use [National Library of Israel's guide](#) to help you create your own family tree.
- Print your favorite family photos with corresponding captions and add them to the photo reel in your scrapbook.



Chapter 7

Trip of a Lifetime

Exploring
Israel



Some families choose to celebrate their child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah with a trip to or celebration in Israel. In this chapter, we will explore our connection to Israel and think about other adventurous activities that could be part of the celebrations.

“

**My Heart is in the East;
But I am at the Edge of the West.**

(Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, 12th century, Spain)

”

**לְבִי בַּמִּזְרָח וְאַנְכִי בְּסוֹף מַעֲרָב.
(רבי יהודה הלוי, ספרד, המאה ה-12)**



El Al Board Game
Marvin G. Goldman EL AL Collection



This El Al advertisement includes 55 Israeli sites and attractions. How many of these are familiar or meaningful to you in some way?

**בר-מצוה
בת-מצוה
בלב ים**

צ'ים
ZIM

חברת "צ'ים" מזמינה אותך לחגוג את חגיגת בר-מצוה/בת-מצוה בלב ים, על סיפון אחת מאוניותינו "מולדת", "דן", "ת. הרצל" – ביחד עם משפחתך.

כדאי וכדאי לנצל ההזדמנות של שילוב הפלגת נופש להרחבת אופקים על ארצות ועמים, עם הנאה לכל המשפחה בעריכת חגיגת בר-מצוה/בת-מצוה על סיפון אניה.

כשי בר-מצוה/בת-מצוה, תעניק לך חברת "צ'ים" הנחה בשעור של 50% ממחיר הנסיעה הלוך וחזור.

סוכן הנסיעות שלך וסניפי הנוסעים של "צ'ים" בחיפה, תל-אביב וירושלים ישמחו לאחל לך ברכת מזל-טוב ולמסור לך פרטים נוספים.

להתראות.

Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah at Sea
Zim Archive, The National Library of Israel

The Zim company [...] invites you to celebrate your Bar mitzvah/Bat mitzvah at sea on board one of our cruise ships, "Moledet", "Dan", "T. Herzl" – together [...] with your family.

What do you think is the ideal location or destination for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah trip? What other adventures and activities would you like to experience this year?



How do you define your connection to Israel? How is it different from your connection to your home country?



Activity Ideas:

- Create an itinerary or a travel brochure for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah trip to Israel. Include what sites you will visit, where you will sleep, what you will eat, who will join you, what experiences you want to have, etc.
- Write a letter to a friend, a family member, or a peer in Israel, asking them any questions you have about Israel and telling them how you feel about Israel.

Chapter 8

Words of Wisdom

Exploring Scripture
and Torah Study

Over the centuries, Jewish thinkers have been in constant dialogue with the texts that preceded them through commentary and interpretation (also referred to as **midrash**). Every generation and every individual are invited to offer their interpretation and to take an active role in the grand conversation by tying current events, dilemmas, and existential questions to the chain of discourse that is so central to Jewish culture. It is the combination of these diverse, multigenerational voices that create the ever-changing story of the Jewish people. In this chapter, we will explore our connection and contribution to this shared endeavor.

“

There are seventy faces to the Torah.

(Numbers Rabbah 13:15)

”

שבעים פנים לתורה.

(במדבר רבה י"ג, ט"ו)



Dayenu Cartoon, The Sentinel, 1976
Historical Jewish Press founded by
The National Library and Tel Aviv University



Yako Izidor Yaakov, Bulgaria, 1933
Centropa.org

"My bar mitzvah was an exciting day for me. I was 13 years old. It was quite hard preparing for the speech I had to deliver. At that time there was a literature teacher in Ruse who wrote very nice speeches on demand, and I had to learn the speech she wrote for me by heart; there were a lot of foreign words, which meant I could not understand it and I found it very hard to remember it."



Yako Izidor Yaakov recollected working hard to memorize the speech that his literature teacher wrote for him, which included many foreign words that he did not understand.

What do you think the content of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah speech should be? Do you think that you should write your speech on your own?

Dr. Heschel Advises Fellow Jews Not To Stop Pursuing Justice For The Blacks

GROSSINGER'S, N.Y. — Jews were advised this week by one of their most revered rabbis not to withdraw from the pursuit of justice for blacks because of "the rude and murderous rhetoric of black demagogues."

Addressing some 400 delegates to the 58th annual meeting here of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, Dr. Abraham Joshua Heschel declared that Jews who themselves have had the experience of being "despised" must understand the pain and suffering of the Negro people who "cannot obtain emancipation without the help of whites."

Denouncing black power and its rhetoric as a "desecration of the Negro cause," Dr. Heschel said that Jews must not permit themselves to be rebuffed and must understand that "blacks are speaking out of their agony and despair."

Declaring that "defamation" translates into Hebrew and Yiddish as "speaking evil," he said that guarding against it is a uniquely Jewish concept.

Going on to say that Jews have learned a lesson that "words kill," he pointed out that "the Nazi Holocaust did not start with building crematories but with a few cheap jokes."

Dr. Heschel asserted that Jews are so concerned with the problem of "words" that they pray three times a day, "guard my

tongue from speaking evil and my tongue from guile."

Nevertheless, he said that many Jews, like other whites, are guilty of prejudice when they blame blacks, who are the victims, for social ills perpetrated by others.

Recalling that he came from Poland and therefore "knows what it means to live in a country where you are despised," he said that "blacks have the same feelings here."

Dr. Heschel called upon Jews "to keep our tongues and souls clean" by not participating in such defamation. He said that Jews must "pursue justice justly under all circumstances" by continuing to be active in the struggle for human rights.

"Be like the woodpecker," he said "who uses his head and keeps pecking away until he has finished his job."

The Sentinel, 1971

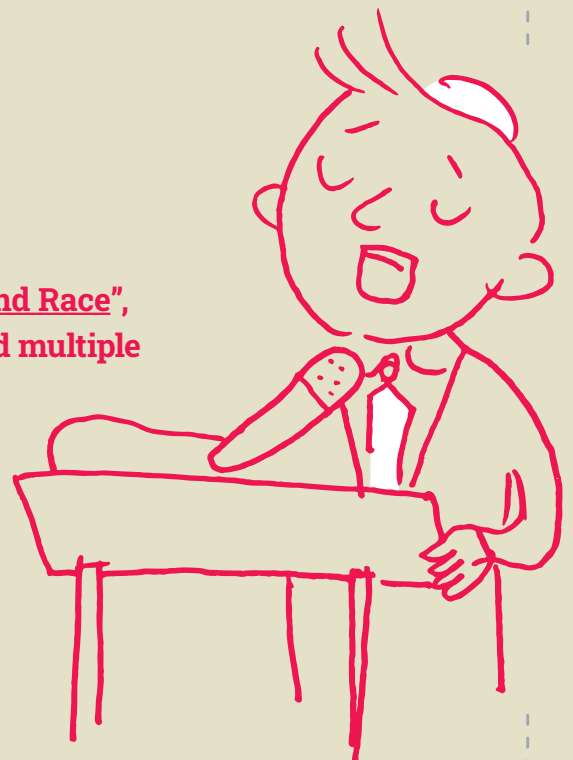
Historical Jewish Press founded by The National Library and Tel Aviv University



In Hebrew, a speech about Torah or Judaism is referred to as a dvar Torah (a word of Torah) or a drasha (an interpretation) and typically begins with a philosophical or linguistic question on some aspect of the Torah's laws or narrative. What topic, law, or story in Judaism do you have questions about?



In his famous 1963 speech "Religion and Race", Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel evoked multiple biblical verses and stories to make his argument for civil rights. Why do people evoke ancient texts when talking about contemporary issues?



In a speech Henrietta Szold delivered on the radio in 1940 in honor of her 80th birthday, she remarked:

"You can see the many incredible changes that have occurred over the eighty years of my life, however, one thing has stayed consistent, untouched by the hand of time. As in the past, today there are generous men and women who do good deeds. Today, as in the past, educated men and women express great ideas. Today, as in the past, active men and women work and create. Today, as in the past, we, the people of the Jewish nation, cultivate the spirit and aspirations which have served as the foundations of our life since we became a nation. The human soul stands forever; it just finds new and better paths to the soul of the other."



Postcard of Henrietta Szold, 1985

The Joseph and Margit Hoffman Judaica Postcard Collection
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Read about [Henrietta Szold's amazing life story](#) and choose one accomplishment of hers that speaks to you.

Activity Ideas:

- Use the template in your scrapbook to compose a Bar/Bat Mitzvah speech.
- This Talmudic [analysis](#) of Martin Luther King's famous "I have a dream" speech highlights his many references to biblical and rabbinic concepts.
- Choose a verse from the Tanach (Bible) or another Jewish text you feel connected to. What most interests you about this text? How do you feel about what the issue the text refers to? How do you make sense of the traditional commentaries on this text? How does this text relate to you and your world today?



Chapter 9

Time to Party!

Exploring
Jewish food

Food, eating, and cooking have always played an important role in Jewish life, law, and culture. There are detailed laws of **kashrut**, various blessings before and after eating, symbolic holiday foods, and local Jewish cuisines. Every Jewish life cycle event is celebrated with a festive meal (referred to as **seudat mitzvah**). In this chapter, we will explore the role that food plays in the Jewish experience.

“

You shall eat,
and be satisfied, and bless.
(Deuteronomy 8:10)

”

וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ.
(דברים ח', י')



Osem Cheesecake for Shavuot Recipe
The Ephemera Collection, The National Library of Israel



Matzah Balls, Kneidlach, and Matza Gnepflish, France, 1903
The Ephemera Collection, The National Library of Israel



Do you think there is such a thing as Jewish cooking? What makes something a "Jewish" food?



Bukharan Kashrut Stamp

Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem



Tnuva Advertisement, 1930s

The Ephemera Collection, The National Library Of Israel



Do you think that it is important for Jewish celebrations such as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah to be kosher? Why or why not?

In addition to the many rules of kashrut, Judaism has numerous blessings to say before and after eating. What is the purpose of so many blessings?



Activity Ideas:

- Ask your parents or grandparents for the recipe of a food that was an essential part of their family celebrations. Try to make the recipe yourself and include it in your scrapbook along with any stories or memories associated with it.
- Create a collage of foods that you associate with your family, religion, holiday, or celebrations. Check out this [list](#) for some inspiration.
- The many Jewish laws relating to food may encourage more mindful eating. In your scrapbook, make your own list of rules for mindful eating.



Chapter 10

Tzedakah and Tikkun Olam

Exploring
Jewish
Values



In Judaism, all moments of celebration require us to consider those with less fortunate circumstances. This milestone is an opportunity to explore what financial or social contributions we can make to improving the world. In this chapter we will explore values of charity, compassion and helping others – values that are central to Jewish culture.

“

**It is not your duty to complete the work,
but neither are you free to desist from it.**

(Pirkei Avot 2:16)

”

**לא עליך המלאכה לגמור ולא
אתה בן חורין לבטל ממנה.
(פרקי אבות ב', ט"ז)**

	קרן קיימת לישראל		אגרת התמורה קודש לגאולת הארץ ע"י הקרן הקיימת לישראל
	עיר תל-אביב	מספר כתובת הלשכה	
תאריך י"ד סיון תרצ"ח		ירושלים	
חברת ויצ"ו הנבי קסלמן ובעלה הנכבדים			
לכבוד			
ברכתנו החמה שלוחה לכם לחגיגת הבר-מצוה של בנכם אריה.			
יהיה בן נאמן לעמנו וארצנו ותזכו לראות יחד אתו בתקומת ישראל על אדמתו.			
בברכת חברות			
ויצ"ו, סניף רמת-גן			
דפוס ליכנהיים את בני ירושלים			

Bar Mitzvah Donation to KKL-JNF, 1938
 The Ephemera Collection, The National Library of Israel

Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael (Jewish National Fund)
Jerusalem

City: Tel Aviv

Date: 14 Sivan 5698

To:

Our warm blessings are extended to you on the occasion of your son Aryeh's bar mitzvah. May he be a loyal son to our nation and our land and may you merit to see, together with him, the rebirth of Israel on its land.

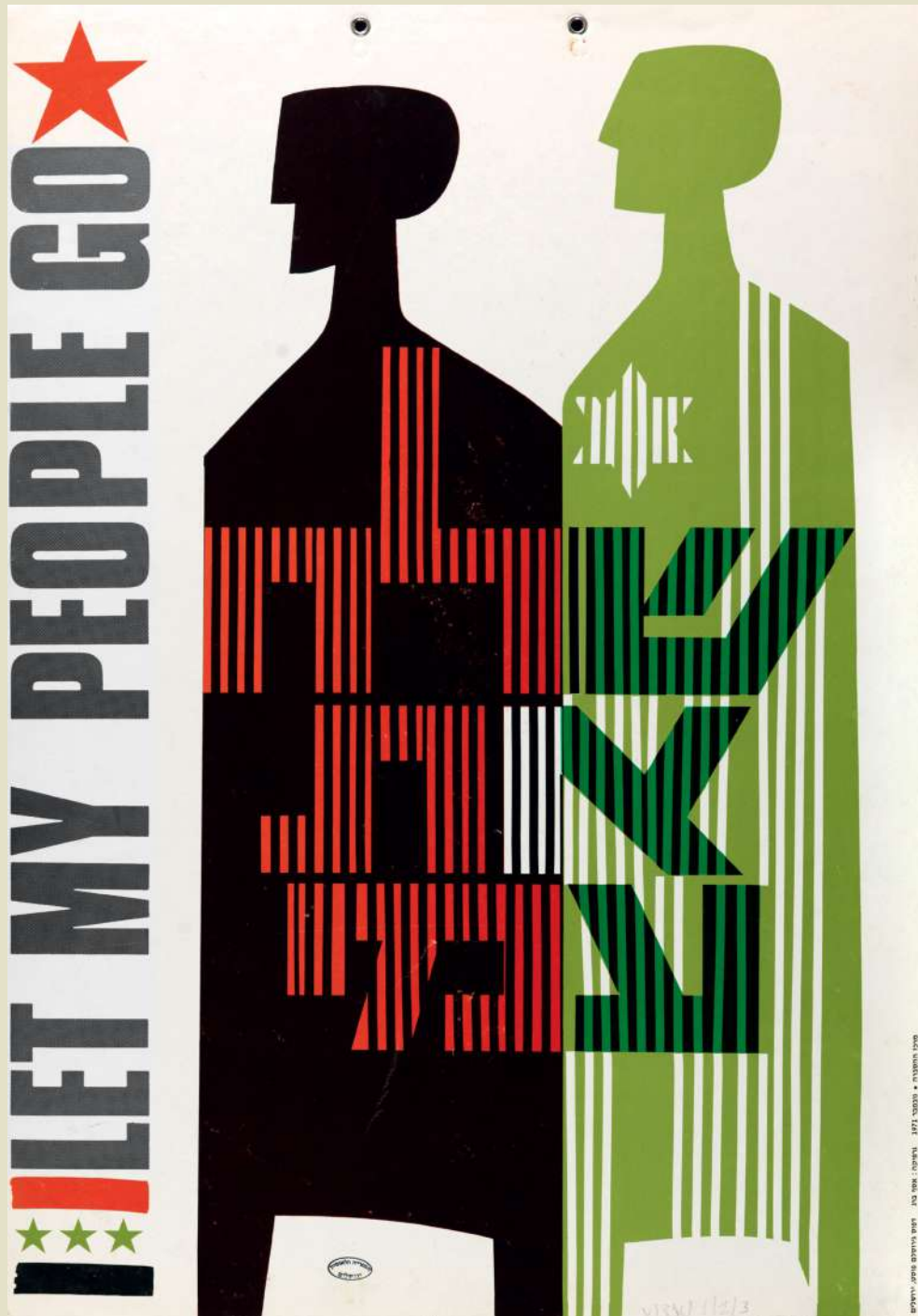
With Regards,

WIZO members of Ramat Gan



Donating to JNF is an example of a charitable donation given in honor of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah instead of a gift.

How do you feel about this practice? Would you be disappointed or grateful for such a gift? Would your reaction depend on the cause donated to?



Let my People Go Poster, 1971
The Ephemera Collection, The National Library of Israel



Between the 1960s and 1980s, it was common in America for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah child to “twin” with a Jewish child in the Soviet Union who was not able to celebrate their own Bar/Bat Mitzvah due to religious oppression.

If you were to create a twinning program today, who would you twin with?

Activity Ideas:

- Create a fundraising page for an organization that matters to you (you can use a site like www.depositagift.com).



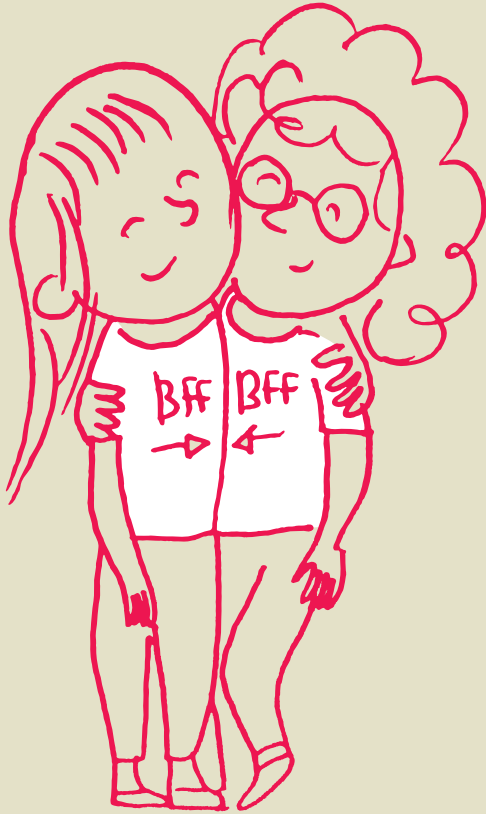
- Design a poster or infographic about a social cause that is important to you.
- A creative way to add a **tzedakah** or **tikkun olam** component to a celebration is to decorate the tables at a celebration with “tzedakah centerpieces.” These include items such as flowers, books, or canned foods which are later given as donations. What would you put in your tzedakah centerpieces? Document it in your scrapbook!



Chapter 11

At The Friends' Table

Exploring
Friendship



Friendships are one of the primary relationships in our lives. Beyond companionship, fun and meaningful memories, friends provide each other with love, support, and guidance. In this chapter, we will explore the meaning of friendships in our lives.

“

Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falls, for he has not another to help him up.

(Kohelet 4:9-10)

”

טובים השנים מן האחד אשר יש להם שכר טוב בעמלם.
כי אם יפלו האחד יקים את חברו ואילו האחד שיפול
ואין שני להקימו.
(קהלת ד', ט'-י')



Group Bat Mitzvah, Monastirion Synagogue, Greece, 1990
Centropa.org

**What is the added value of celebrating
a Bar/Bat Mitzvah with a group of peers?
What are the disadvantages?**



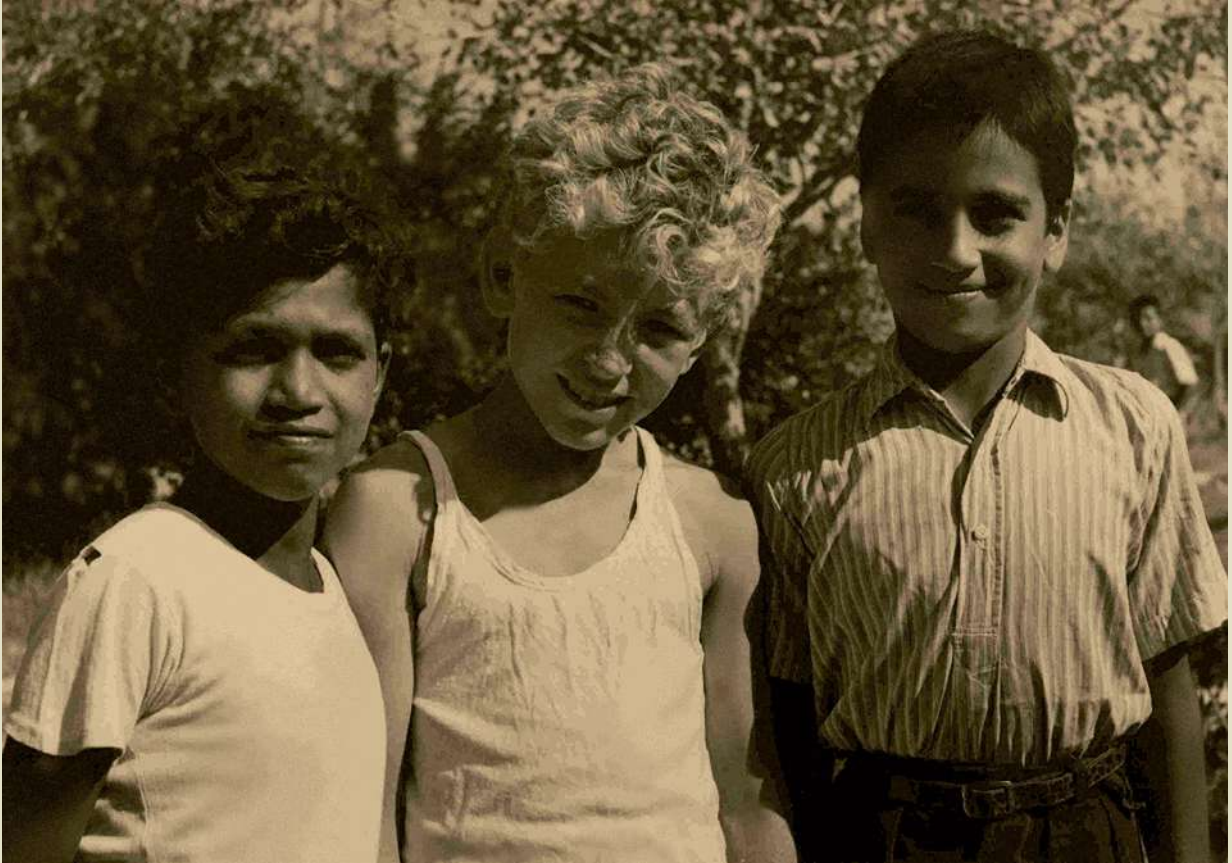
**What are the three most important qualities
you look for in a friend?**



**What are three qualities you bring
to relationships as a friend?**



Group confirmation (Ruth Greif), Brasov 1940s
Centropa.org



Children at a Youth Village, 1957

The Pritzker Family National Photography Collection The National Library of Israel

If you have lost a friend, what was the reason for the “break-up”?



How have your ideas about friendship changed, as you have gotten older?

Activity Ideas:

- Write a “Friend Wanted” advertisement in the newspaper. Be sure to include all the qualities you would look for in a friend.
- Dedicate a page in your scrapbook to your best friend or to a group of friends. Include photos, memories, and quotes.
- Write or draw a metaphor expressing what friendship means to you. Start with the words: “Friendship is like...”



Chapter 12

Thank You, Thank You!

Exploring
Gratitude



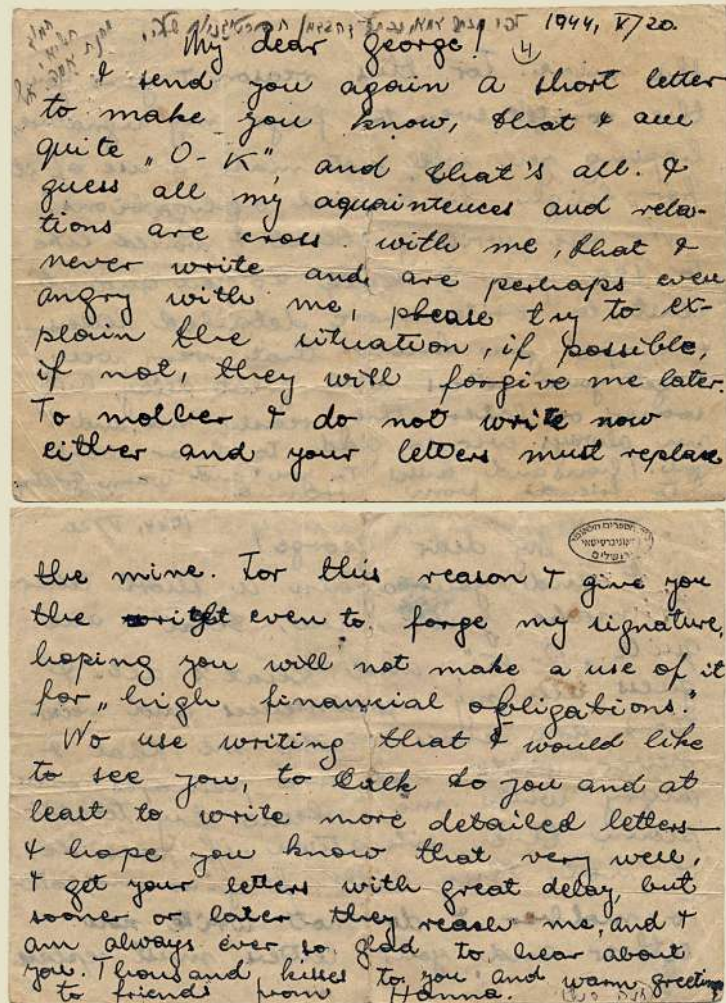
Once the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration is over, there is still one more task that needs to be done: the thank you notes! In this chapter, we will explore the value of gratitude through the practice of letter writing.

“

Who is rich?
He who rejoices in his lot.
(Pirket Avot 4:1)

”

איזהו עשיר? השמח בחלקו.
(פרקי אבות ד', א')



Hannah Senesh Letter to her Brother, 1944
 The Szenes Family Archive, with thanks to Ori and Mirit Eisen

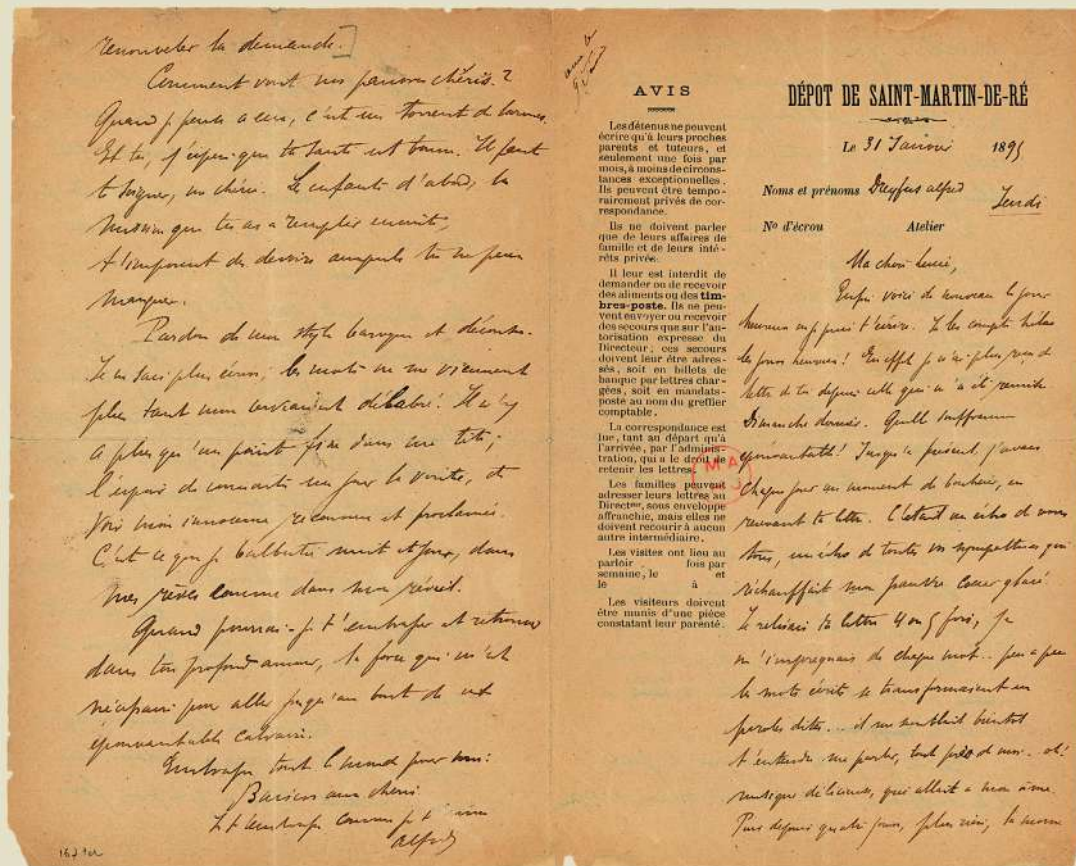
My dear George,

I send you again a short letter to make you know, that I am quite OK and that's all. I guess all my acquaintances and relatives are cross with me, that I never write and are perhaps even angry with me. Please try to explain the situation if possible, if not they will forgive me later.

...

I get your letters with great delay but sooner or later they reach me, and I am always ever so glad to hear about you. Thousands of kisses to you and warm greetings to friends.

From Hanna.



Letter from Alfred Dreyfus to his Wife, Lucie, January 31, 1895

MAPJ

My Dear Lucie,

At long last the happy day has come when I can write to you. I was counting the days! I haven't received your news since the letter was given to me last Sunday. What frightful suffering! Every day that I received a letter from you, I felt happiness. The letters are an echo of you all, an echo of your affection warming my poor frozen heart. I read your letter three or four times, I soak in each word until the written words turn into spoken words and I can hear your voice close to me...

Embrace everyone for me. Kisses to my darlings. I hug you and love you,

Alfred



Dreyfus writes that "The letters are an echo of you all, an echo of your affection". Does this statement resonate with you?

Have you ever waited anxiously to hear from someone? How did you feel when you finally received their message?



Handwritten letters are no longer a common practice. Can you think of reasons why handwritten letters could still be important in our day and age?

Like letter writing in general, writing actual thank you notes has become a rarity (when you can just send a thank-you emoji instead!). Do you think sending thank you notes is still a relevant practice?



Activity Ideas:

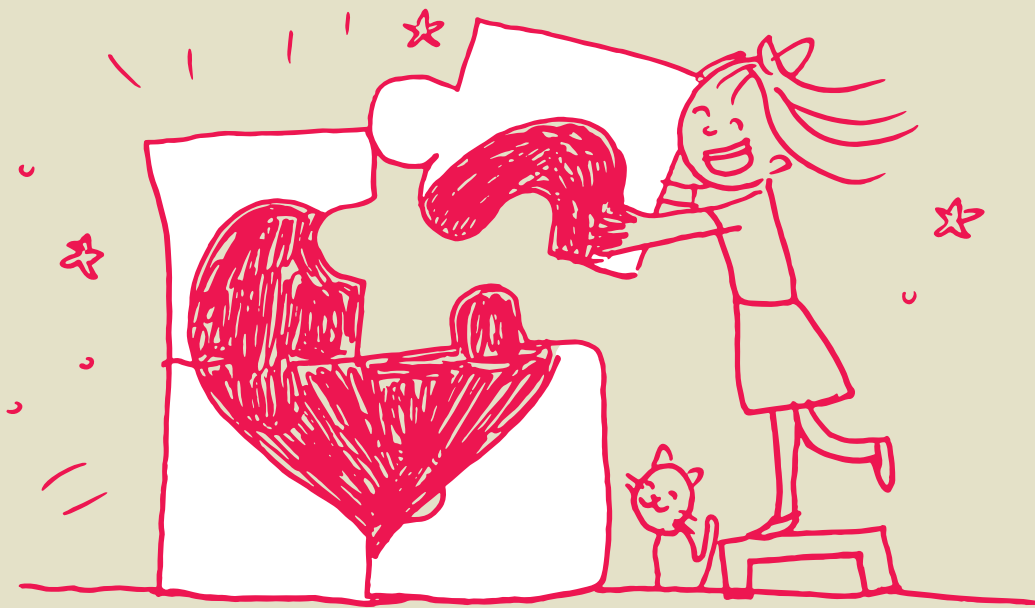


- In this **story**, the Bat Mitzvah girl wrote thank you notes to every guest before her celebration, not for their presents but rather as a way of expressing what the particular guest meant to her. Compose a handwritten letter to a relative, friend, or teacher expressing gratitude for the specific ways in which they have enhanced your life.
- Ask a relative, teacher, or friend to write you a handwritten letter for the occasion of your upcoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah. You can scan a copy and place it in your scrapbook.
- Create a gratitude gallery in your scrapbook presenting people and things you are grateful for.

Chapter 13

Write Your Own Chapter!

Adding My Piece
to the Puzzle



The story of the Jewish people is perpetually being written, and Jewish culture is constantly evolving and changing. Throughout this journey you have learned about various aspects of Jewish history, tradition, and identity. But history is not only in the past, it is happening right now! As you complete this journey, we invite you to document your Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience and share it!



**Share your Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience now
so that others can learn about it in the future!**

After you submit the following form with your primary source, you will receive a personalized certificate of participation in the NLI Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program.

Credits:

Graphic concept and design:

Kfir Malka Visual Communication

Content Development:

Emily Shapiro

Illustration:

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Project Management:

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Workbook concept and design:

Modest Ossipoff

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