

B'NAI MITZVAH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TUTORS AND STUDENTS

The practice of bat/bar mitzvah varies widely from community to community, family to family, and even from one generation to the next. Conducting these short interviews will give you a chance to learn about one another's b'nai mitzvah experiences.

I. Questions to ask a tutor:

Did you have a bat/bar mitzvah when you were 12/13?

If yes to either question, go to set A. If no, go to set B.

A. Yes bat/bar mitzvah

- What do you remember most about how you felt that day? About preparing for your bat/bar mitzvah?
- What bat/bar mitzvah customs or traditions were most meaningful for you?
- What customs or traditions did you not like?
- Were you involved in any new ritual practices in your community, e.g. the first girl to wear a *tallit*?
- How, if at all, was your bat/bar mitzvah different from others' b'nai mitzvah at the time? (Think about when it was [e.g. Friday night vs. Saturday morning], whether you read from the Torah, or any special traditions you added, was it different for boys and girls?) If gender did play a role, did that bother you? Why or why not?
- What advice do you have for me when I become bat/bar mitzvah?

B. No bat/bar mitzvah

- At the time, were you aware of *not* having a bat/bar mitzvah, or was it not an issue for you?
- If you were aware, what was that experience like? Did you want to have a bat/bar mitzvah? Why or why not?
- How do you feel about it now?
- Why didn't you have a bat/bar mitzvah? (Possibilities might include: I didn't grow up Jewish; my family didn't belong to a synagogue; girls did not have bat mitzvah ceremonies in my community; I didn't want to have one; it wasn't even something we thought about.)
- Is there an important Jewish experience in your life that you would like to share? Tell me a story that can help me learn more about you.
- What advice do you have for me when I become bat/bar mitzvah?

II. Questions to ask a student:

- What are you most looking forward to about your bat/bar mitzvah?
- What are you most nervous about?
- What do you expect will be most memorable about your bat/bar mitzvah?
- If you could change one thing about your bat/bar mitzvah experience, what would it be? Why?
- Why do you think Jewish tradition considers that young people become adults at the age of 12 or 13? Why is this different from other milestones (for example, learning to drive)? Do you feel like you have more responsibilities now than you did a few years ago? What are they?
- What makes you "feel Jewish"? What do you like about being Jewish? Is it ever hard for you to be Jewish? Why or why not?

III. Questions for after the interview:

- What did you learn that surprised you?
- What new questions do you have?
- **For students:** How, if at all, did learning about your tutor's bat/bar mitzvah experiences change the way you are thinking about your own bat/bar mitzvah?
- **For tutors:** How, if at all, did talking about your bat/bar mitzvah experience change the way you are thinking about your students' b'nai mitzvah?