



# Writing My Chapter

 הספרייה הלאומית  
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The National Library of Israel

**A Bar/Bat Mitzvah Journey**

You are embarking  
on a journey! >>>



## Mazel Tov!

Chapter

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### "You Are Cordially Invited"

Exploring Identity and Community

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### Reading in Hebrew?!

Exploring Language

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### Say a Little Prayer

Exploring Personal Prayer

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### Save the Date!

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Jewish Calendar

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### Tzedakah and Tikkun Olam

Exploring  
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# 13

### Write Your Own Chapter!

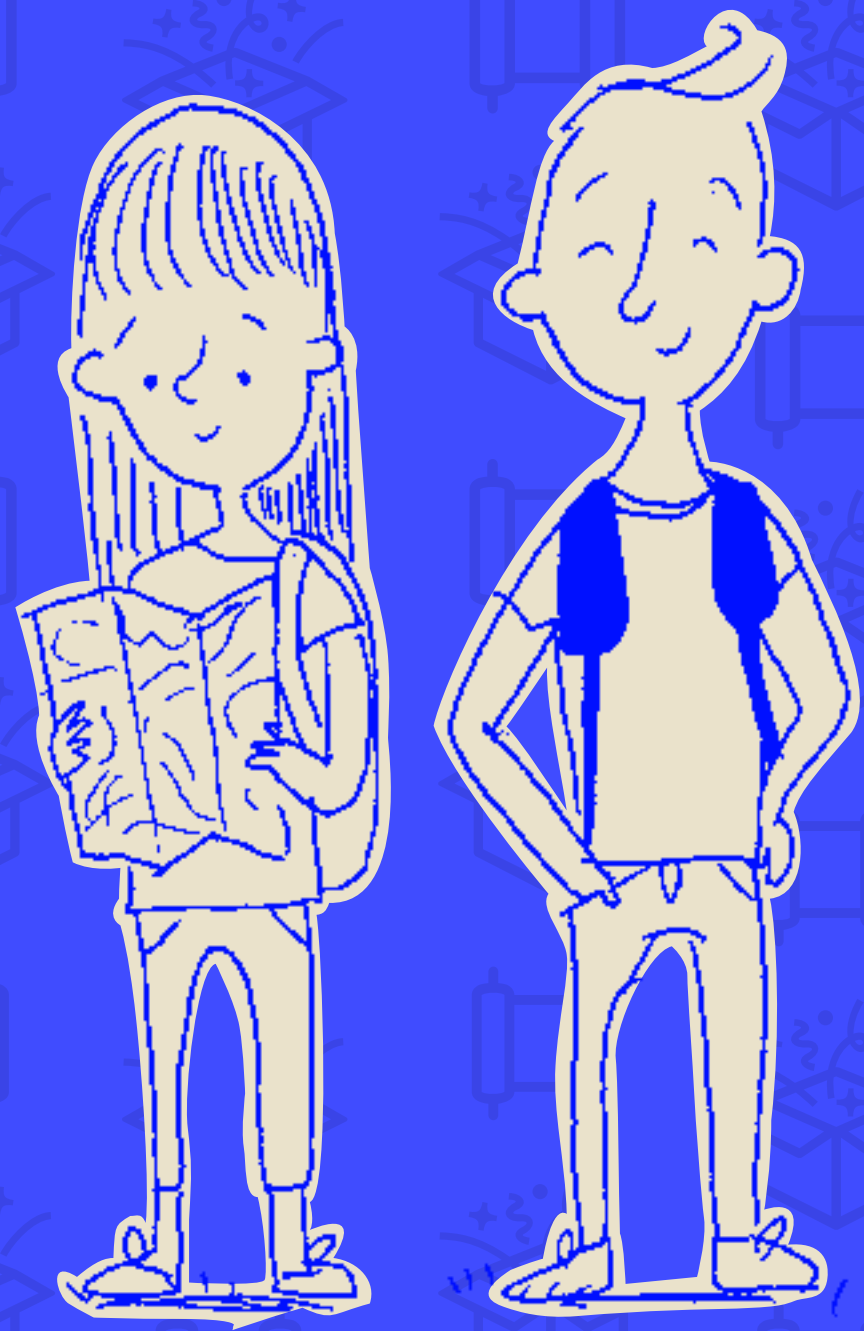
Adding My Piece to the Puzzle

Chapter

# 12

### Thank You, Thank You!

Exploring Gratitude



# Mazel Tov!

You are embarking on a journey!

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Today you are entering adulthood and beginning your journey as an independent member of the Jewish people! This milestone is an

**12  
13**

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.

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- \* 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?
-





Shana Tova Card, New York, 1910



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?





ידית חל'אביב-יפו  
 אגף לתרבות לנוער ולספורט  
 אחיע"ם-איגוד לקידום  
 ההו"י העברי המקורי

**בית יד לבנים**  
 פנקס 63 ת"א

יום שני, ט"ז אייר תשכ"ח 13.5.68, בשעה 8<sup>30</sup> בערב

**בת-מצוה ובר-מצוה**  
**כיצד לחוג וכיצד לא לחוג**

**סימפוזיון**

אסתר אבישר : פסיכולוג  
 אריה בן-גוריון : חבר קיבוץ בית השיטה  
 יקותיאל עזרוני : יחס אחיע"ם  
 ד"ר שלמה קודש : מנהל מחלקה במשרד החינוך, ירושלים  
 יצחק שבטיאל : מחנך ובלשן

**שאלות ותשובות**

בכניסה לאולם (החל בשעה 7.00 בערב) ייגבו 50 אג' לכיסוי ההוצאות  
 איטסיס: 5, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28

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

[Bar and Bat Mitzvah -  
 How to Celebrate 1968](#)



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?



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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?




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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.




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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.)




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Create a timeline of your life

with the milestones you have already experienced and write why they were meaningful to you.

**Activity  
Ideas**

## 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.

”

אם אין אָני לי, מי לי?  
 וכּשֶׁאֶנִּי לְעַצְמִי, מָה אָנִי?  
 וְאם לא עֲכָשְׁיוּ, אֵימָתִי?

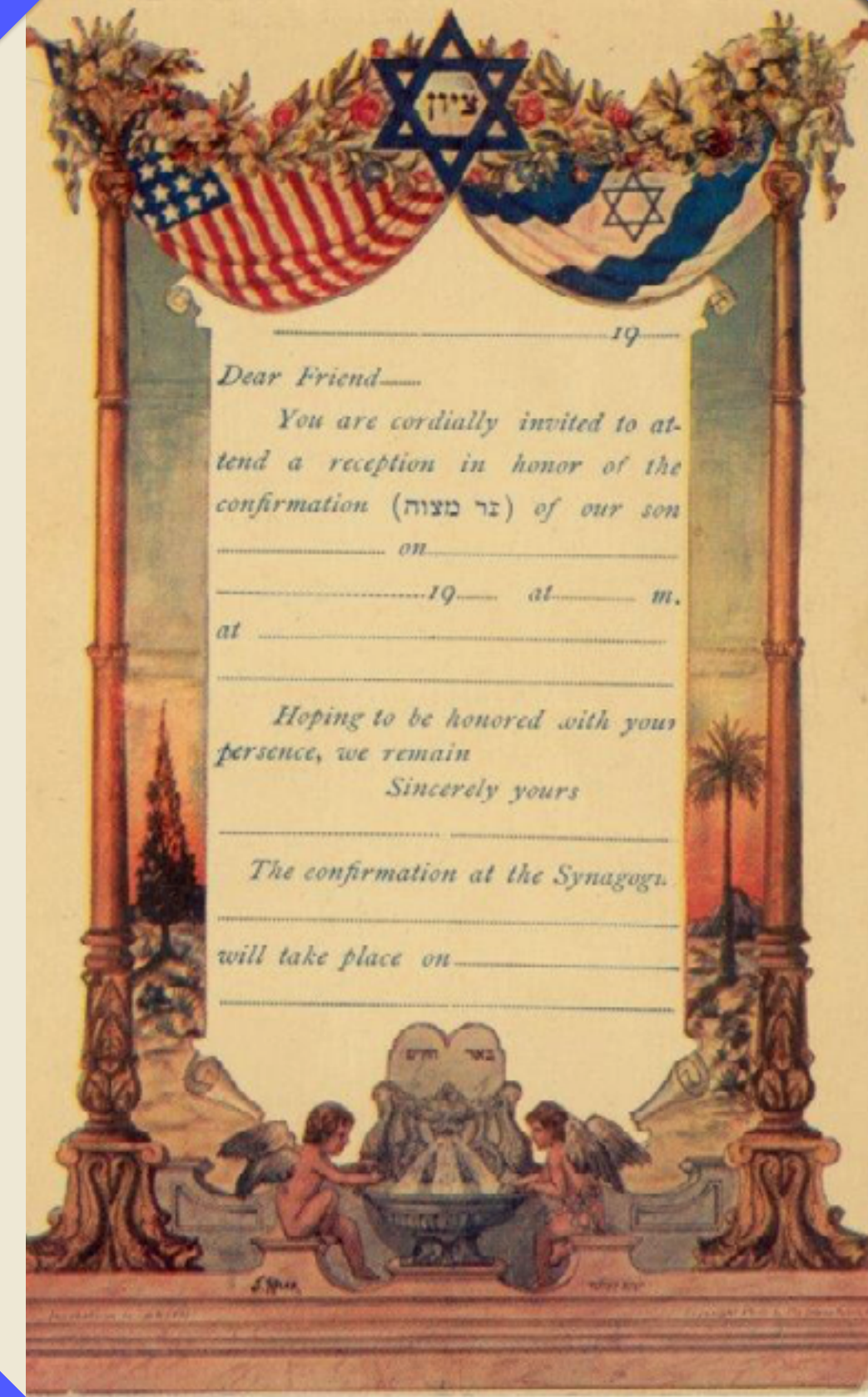
Pirkei Avot 1:14

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?

What do the two flags in this invitation symbolize?



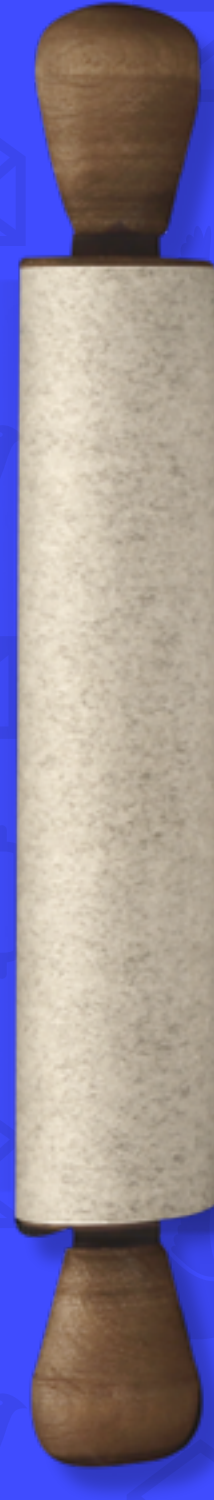
How would you feel about using a set template for your invitation?



Bar Mitzvah Invitation, United States, Twentieth Century







והכל לקחה את התרומים, ותשטם בבר הנגיל-והשב עליהם; וישש לבו את-כל-  
ההוא, ולא טמא. וה' ותאמר אל אביה, אל-יחר בעיני ארלי בני לא אוכל קטום  
הקטן, מי-יחד וישם לי; וישש, ולא טמא את-התרומים. ה' ויחר ליעקב, וירב  
לבנו; ושש ושקב, ויאמר לבנו, מה-ששעי מה שטאורי, כי דלקת אהני. ה' כי-  
מששית את-כל-כלל, מה-קצאת מכל-כלל-ביתך--ישם מה, נד ארי ואתיך; ויטווח  
בין שניש. ה' וז עשויים שנה אגבי שנה, רחליך ועיני לא ששע; והשש צאנו, לא  
אלהי; וז טרפה, הא-תבאחי אלתי--אגבי אחשקה, מידו תבקשה; ונבתי יום,  
ונבתי לילה. ה' הייתי ביום אגלתי חרב, וקרב בלילה; ונבתי שנותי, שניני. ה' וז  
לי ששנים שנה, בביתך, צבדותיך ארמנישתי שנה בשתי בנותי, ושש שנים  
באונן; ותחלף את-משקרתה, עשרת מנים. ה' להלי אליה אבי, אנקס  
וסחו עינס, חנה לי-כי שנה, ריקם שלחתי; את-עניי ואת-ליני בני רמה  
--וינכח אקש. ה' וש לבו ויאמר אל-יעקב, תפוח בנתי והקנים בני  
והצאן צאני, וכל אשר-אנח ראה, לי-חוא; ולבתי מה-אשח לילה, היום. ה'  
לכניתי, אשר לבנו. ה' ותה, לבח נברתה בריתי-אני ואמה; ותה לעד, בני  
וביני. ה' וישק יעקב, אבו; ויריקם, מכות. ה' ויאמר יעקב לאמו למה אכנס  
ויקחו אכנים ונשו-גל; ויאכלו שם, על-הגל. ה' וישכא-לו לבו, נגר שלחתי;  
ועקב, קרא לו לבנו. ה' ויאמר לבנו, הגל הזה עד בניי וביני היום; על-כיו קרא  
שמו, גלעד. ה' והמצפה אשר אפר, וכן יהנה בניי וביני; כי קסור, איש נכסתי.  
אם-השנה את-בנתי, ואם-השח נשים על-בנתי--אין איש, עשני, ראה. ה'  
כניי וביני. ה' ויאמר לבנו, לעקב: הח חל חנה, והח המעבת, אשר נריתי, בני  
וביני. ה' עד חל חנה, וענה המעבת: אם-אני, לא-אנבר אלק את-חל חנה,  
ואם-אנח לא-תנבר אלי את-חל חנה ואת-המעבת הזאת, לרעה. ה'  
אברתם ואלהי נחור, ישפט ביני--. ה' צביתם; וישש יעקב, ביה אביו  
יעקב. ה' וינכח יעקב וזו פתו, ויקרא לאמו לאכל לחם; ויאכל לחם, וילט  
פתו. ה' וישש לבו בפרו, וישש לבניו ולבנותיו--ויבדד אתהם; וילך וישב לבו,  
לסעוד. ה' ויעקב, חל לדרכו; וישש-בו, מלאכי. ה' ויאמר יעקב לאמר  
רשם, סעוד. ה' ויקרא שם הקטום החוא, סעוד.

לאדם שטוב לפניו נתן חכמה ודעת ושמחה קהלת ב' כו  
With great joy and gratitude to Hashem  
we have the honor to invite you to join us at  
the celebration of the Bar Mitzvah of our dear son

*Natanel*

On Saturday November 17 2007,  
at nine o'clock in the evening  
at the Salon Emperador Marquis Reforma Hotel  
Paseo de la Reforma 465 Mexico City

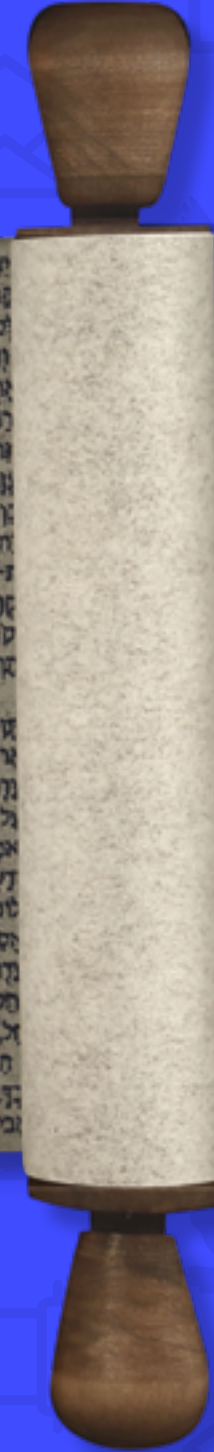
Elie and Ariela Gugenheim  
Marcos and Adina Katz Claude Annie Gugenheim  
RSVP arielakg@yahoo.com.mx

מתוך שבח והודיה להשיית  
על כל הטוב אשר גמלת  
מתכבדים אט להזמין את קרובי וידיני  
להשתתף עמו בשמחת הבר מצוה  
של בנו היקר

שמחה נ"י

שתתקיים בעוהשיית  
במוצאי שבתיק, ח' כסלו, תשס"ח  
בתשע בערב, באולם אמפרודור מלון מרקו רפורטה  
בעיר מנסיקו  
נוכחותכם תהיה לנו לכבוד  
אוריאל ואריאלה גוגנהיים  
מרדכי דוד ועדינה כ"ץ חנה גוגנהיים

בא עקב, סבאר ששני, וילך, חננה. -- וישש בששם וילך שם, כי-בא הששט,  
הח סבאני הששום, וישם סבאשתי; וישקב, בששום מהוא. ה' ויחלם, וישש  
זו ששב ארצה, וראשו, שניש הששומה, והח מלאכי, עלים ויכדים. ה'  
והח, קב עליו, ויאמר, אני, אברתם אבתי, יעקב;  
ארי, אשר אנה ששכ עליה-לך אקנה, וילרע. ה' והיה ורעו למר הארי,  
לכח שש נשמה וצנח ננכה; ונכרש בך כל-מששח הששמה, וברוע. ה'  
מה אבתי ששך, ושמרתיך בכל אשר-הלך; ושמתיך, אל-הששמה הזאת; כי, לא  
ונבתי, עד אשר-אם-ישיתי, את אשר-דברתי לך. ה' וישש ששכ, ששנתו, ויאמר,  
א' יש, בששום חנה; ואגלי, לא-ינעתי. ה' ויבא, ויאמר, מה-טרא, הששום  
ה' אין זה, כי-אם-בית, וזה, ששח השששים. ה' וישש ששכ, על-ראשה. ה'  
ששכבו אשר-שם סבאשתי, וישם אתה, מנכח; וישש ששכ, על-ראשה. ה'  
קרא את-שם-הששום מהוא, בית-אלי; ואולם לזו שם-השש, לראשונה. ה' ויש  
שכ, נדד אמר: אם-יהיה, עשדי וששני בדרך הזה אשר אבתי הולך,  
א-לי חס לאכל, וקב לבש. ה' ושכתי בששם, אל-בית אבי; וסתי, לי,  
ה' וסאבו הזאת, אשר-ששתי מנכה-יהיה, בית; וכל אשר  
א-לי, ששח אשכתי לך. ה' וישש ששכ, רגלי; וילך, ארצה-בי-קנס. ה' ויהי ויהי  
ג' כשדה, והח-שם שלש עשרי-צאן רבצים עליה-כי מן-הסאר מהוא, ישש  
וירים; והאבו גילי, על-פי הסאר. ה' וישש-ששמה כל-הששנים, ויללו את-האבו  
לו פי הסאר, והסכו את-הצאן; והששם את-האבו על-פי הסאר, למשקה. ה'  
אמר לשם ששכ, אשר סאבו אתה; ויאמר, סכחו אנוח. ה' ויאמר לשם,  
ששם את-לבנו מן-חור, ויאנחור, נעשו. ה' ויאמר לשם, הששם לו; ויאמר  
לם--והח רחל סעו, צאח עם-הצאן. ה' ויאמר, הן עד היום נדול-לא-שח  
הח הששמה; השכו הצאן, ולכו רעו. ה' ויאמר, לא-טבל עד אשר יאסו-כי  
נדרי, ויללו את-האבו סעל פי נבאר; והששתי, הצאן. ה' עדתי, מדבר עקב  
לל כאה, עם-הצאן אשר לאבתי-כי רעה, הוא. ה' ויהי כששך ראה ששכ את-  
א, סת לבו וחי אמו, ואת-צאן לבו, אתי אמו; וישש ששכ, וילך את-האבו סג  
הצאן, וישש, את-צאן לבו וחי אמו. ה' וישש ששכ, לרעה, וישש את-חל  
ה' נדד ששכ לרעה, כי אחי אבתי הוא, וכי נר-רשעה, הוא; וישש, וישש  
וביה. ה' ויהי כשמע לבו את-ששע ששכ בן-אחיתו, ונרץ לסראתו ויחבק-לו



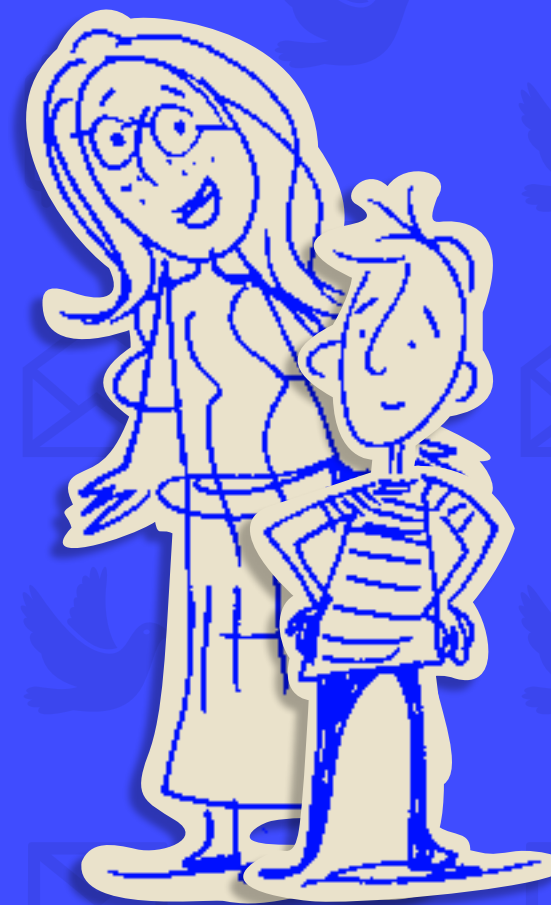
Bar Mitzvah invitation  
printed on a "Torah scroll",  
Mexico City 2007





Bat Mitzvah invitation inside wooden box, Mexico City 2009

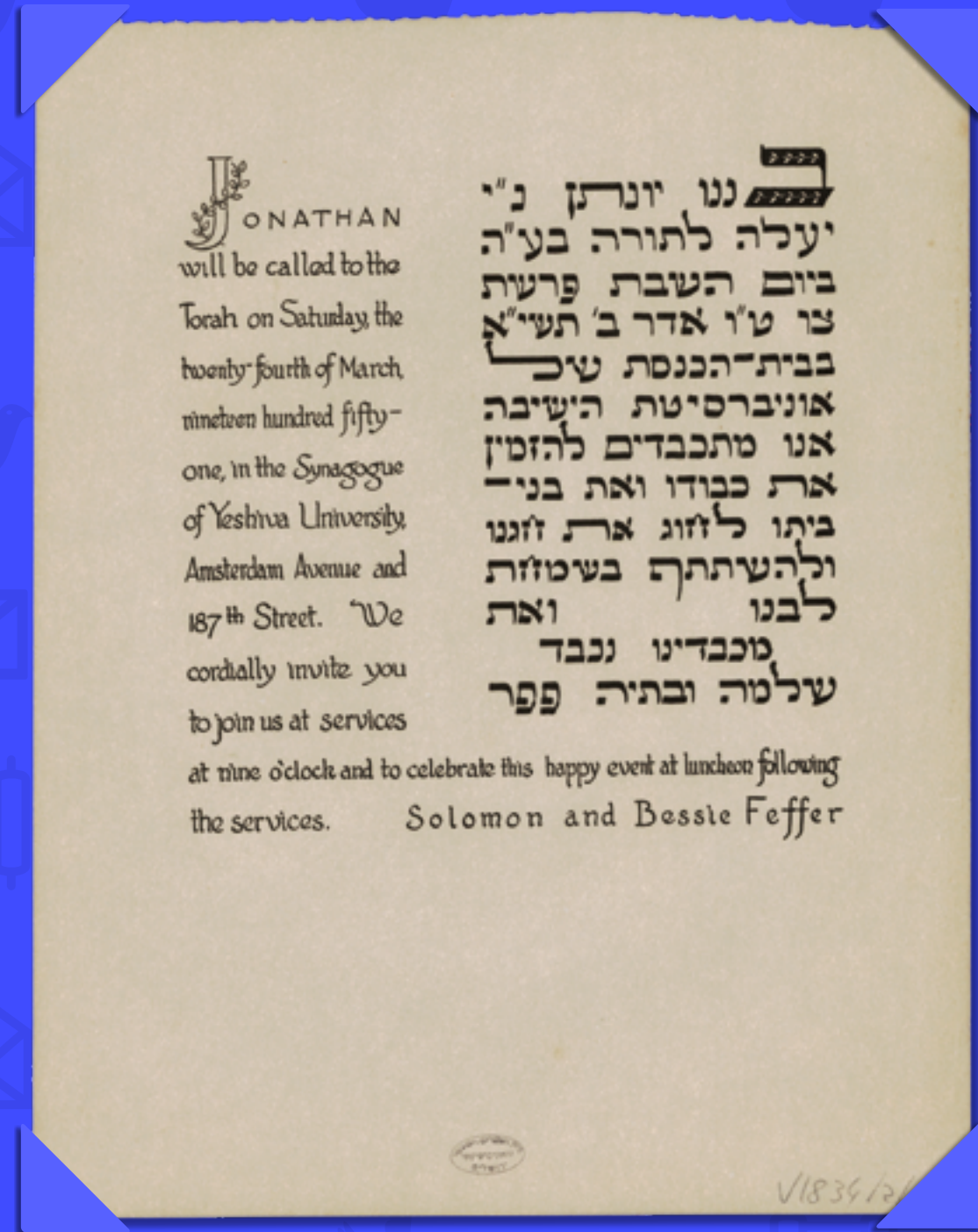
What can we learn about the personal identities of the celebrants and their communities from their invitations?



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







Bar Mitzvah invitation, New York, 1951



Design your own Bar/Bat Mitzvah invitation incorporating language and symbols that reflect your own identity and the communities you belong to.



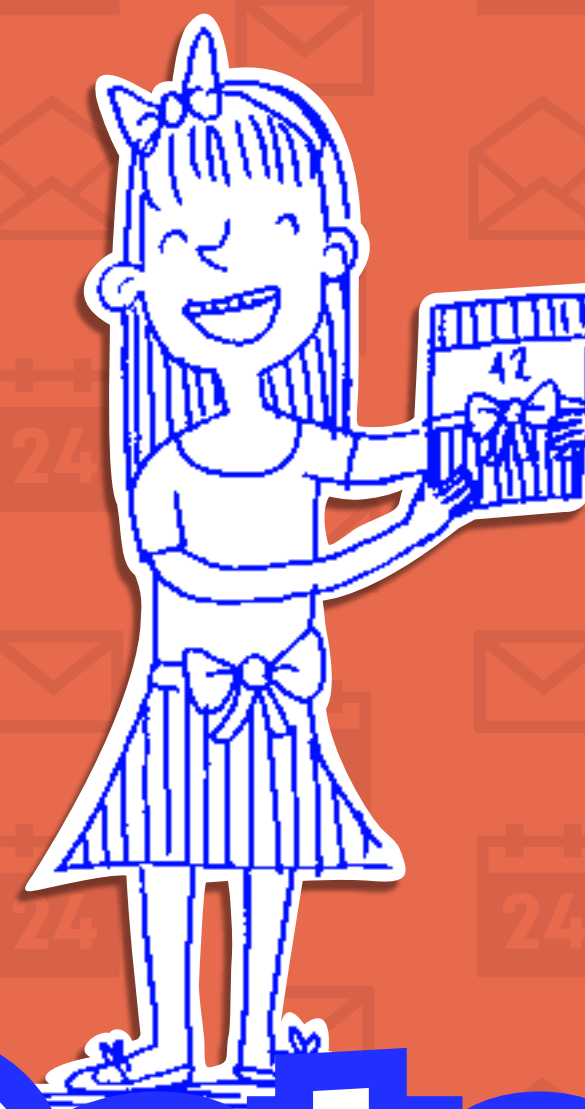
When writing a guest list, you need to take into consideration all of your various community circles (for example: neighbors, classmates, family, childhood friends, teammates, etc.). In your scrapbook, fill in each concentric circle, starting with the names of the communities closest to you and expanding out.

**Activity Ideas**

## 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.

”

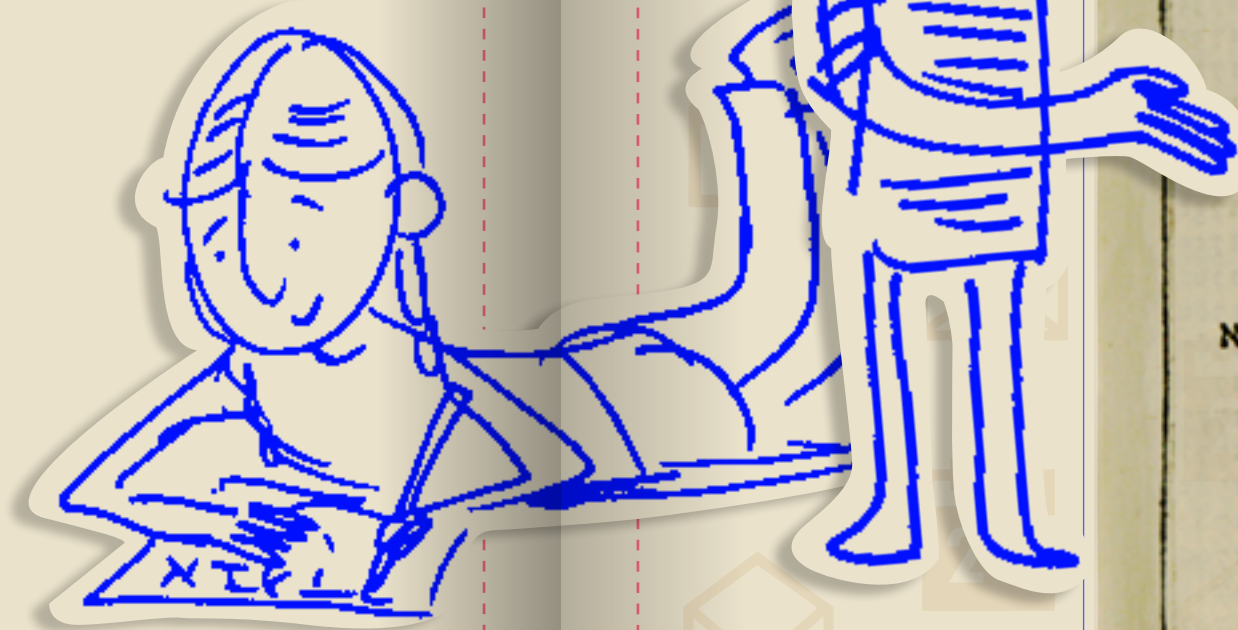
לְכֹל זְמַן  
וְעֵת לְכֹל חֶפְץ׃  
תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם.

Kohelet 3:1

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



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



JAMAICA ALMANACK. 17

KALENDAR

of MONTHS, SABBATHS, and HOLIDAYS, which the HE  
BREWS or JEWS observe and keep, for the Years 5558 and  
5559 of the CREATION.

EVERY Sabbath throughout the Year.

רח שבט	Month Sebat, Thursday,	January 18
רח אדר	Month Adar, Friday, Saturday,	Feb. 6, 17
צום אסתר	Fest of Esther, Thursday,	March 1
פורים	Purim, Friday and Saturday,	2, 3
רח ניסן	Month Nisan, Sunday,	18
פסח	Pasover, Sunday, Monday,	April 1, 2
רח אייר	Month Iyar, Monday, Tuesday,	16, 17
ליל לעותר	55 Omer, Friday,	May 4
רח סיון	Month Sivan, Wednesday,	16
שבועות	Shabbath, Monday, Tuesday,	21, 22
רח תמוז	Month Tamuz, Thursday, Friday,	June 14, 15
צום תמוז	Fest Tamuz, Sunday,	July 1
רח אב	Month Ab, Saturday,	14
תשעה באב	Ninth Ab, Sunday,	22
רח אלול	Month Elul, Sunday, Monday,	August 12, 13

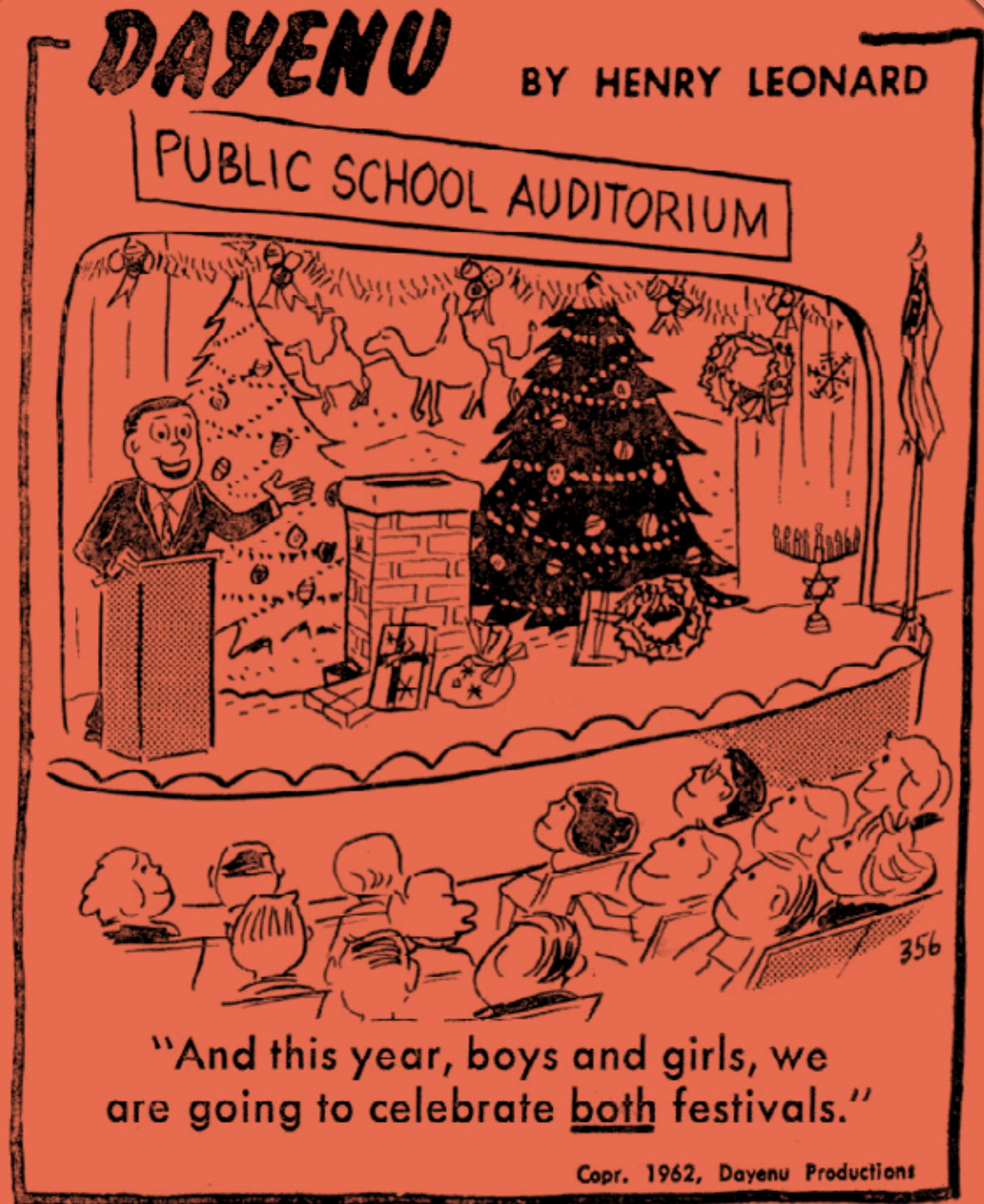
5559.

אשנחש	Month Tisri, Tuesday, Wednesf.	Sept. 11, 12
צום גדליה	Fest Gedalya, Thursday,	13
כפור	Kipur, Thursday,	20
סוכות	Tabernacles, Tuesday, Wednesday,	25, 26
הושענה רבא	Hofahana Raba, &c. Mond. Tuesf.	Wednesfday, - - - Oct. 1, 2, 3.
רח חשוון	Month Heshwan, Wednesf. Thursfday,	10, 11
רח כסליו	Month Kisliwe, Friday,	November 9
חנוכה	Maccabeus, Monday,	December 3
	Barab Aleno,	3
רח פסח	Month Tebeth, Saturday, Sunday,	8, 9
צום שבט	Fest Tebeth, Tuesfday,	18

B 2







Dayenu Cartoon, 1962



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?

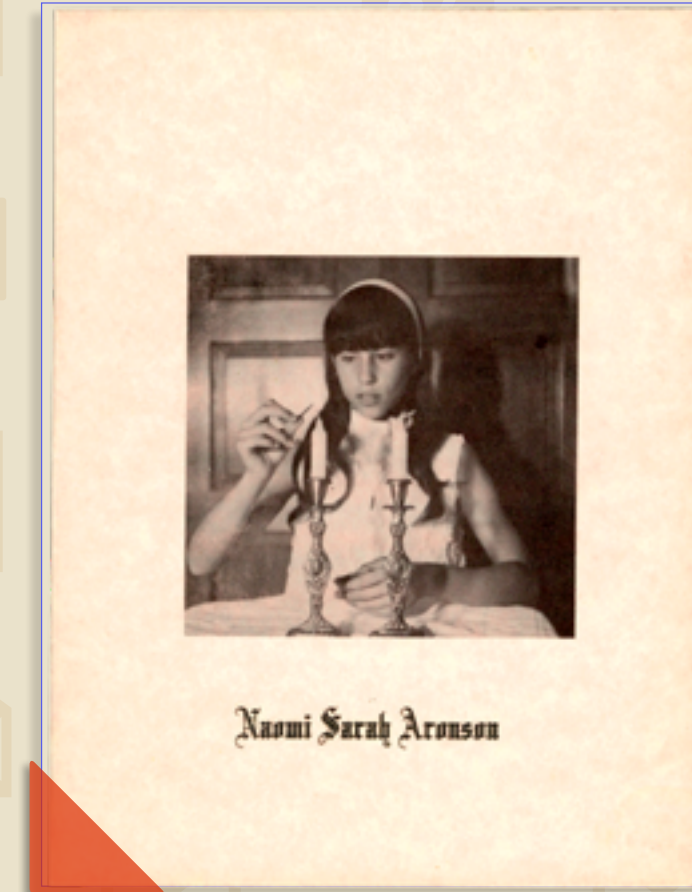


The **“Sabbath Manifesto”**\*  
presents ten key principles  
designed to help people slow  
down and bring the spirit of  
Shabbat into their lives: **1** Avoid  
technology, **2** Connect  
with loved ones, **3** Nurture  
your health, **4** Get outside,  
**5** Avoid commerce,  
**6** Light candles, **7** Drink wine,  
**8** Eat bread, **9** Find silence,  
**10** Give back.

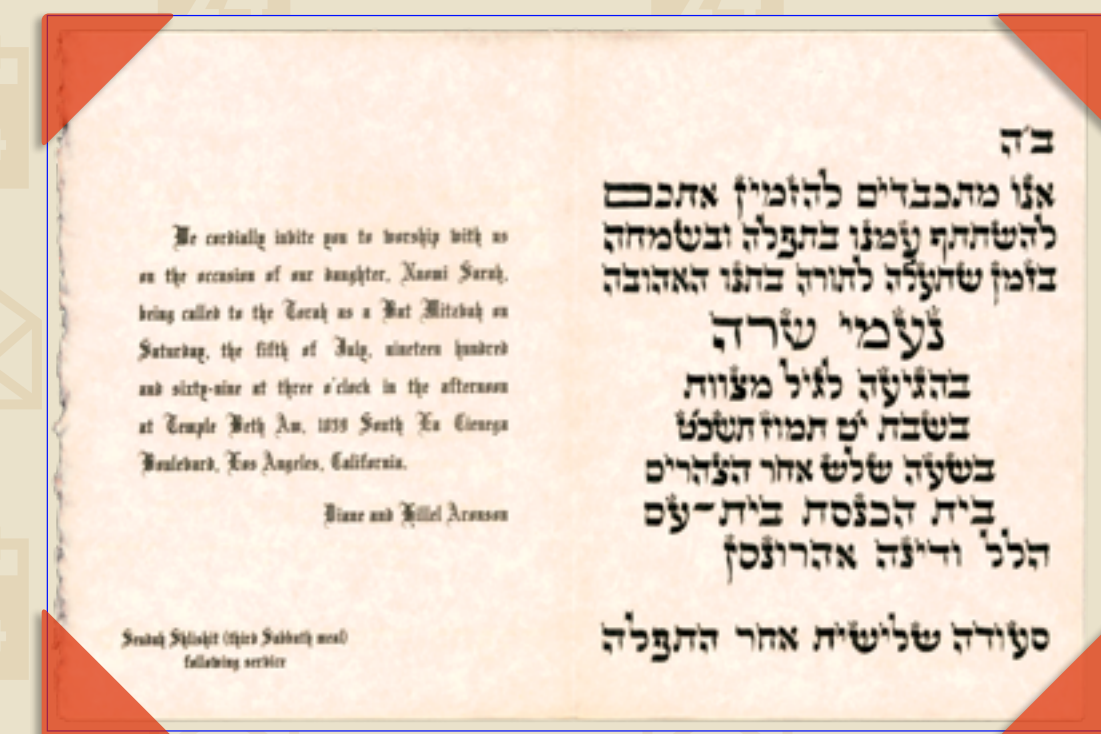


Which items on this list are  
you most drawn to and why?

\* A project of the “National Day of Unplugging”



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.



Bat Mitzvah Invitation, California, 1969

# 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](http://hebc.com) date converter, determine the date of your Hebrew birthday and add it to your scrapbook.



Which Jewish holiday are you? Take this [Personality Quiz](#) to find out!



## Chapter 3

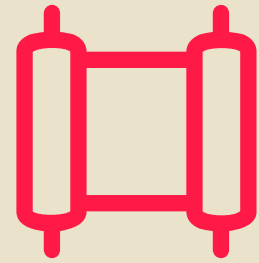


# Called to the Torah

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).

”

וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָם...  
 וְקִשַּׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל יָדְךָ  
 וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ.  
 וְכָתַבְתָּם עַל מְזוּזֹת בֵּיתְךָ  
 וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

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

Synagogue is also referred to as shul (school in Yiddish), temple, *beit keneset* (house of gathering), and *beit tefila* (house of prayer).

What are the different meanings and connotations of each of these terms?



Does the photograph look staged or spontaneous?



Avraham Sheifeld, Romania, 1945



How does this Bat Mitzvah photo differ from the Bar Mitzvah photo on the left?



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



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."

Vera Tomanic's Bat Mitzvah, Osijek, 1930







Medric Milu, Romania, 1930s



“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.”

---

What role does the synagogue play in your life and your parents' life? Is the synagogue still the center for Jewish community life?



[“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 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!



Play our [“Shul Crawl”](#) to learn more about synagogues around the world!



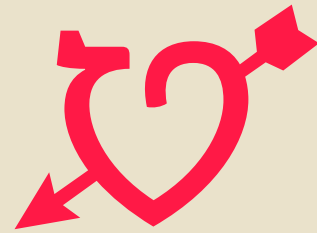


## Chapter 4

# 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.

”

עשרים ושתים אותיות  
חקקן, חצבן, שקלן,  
והמירן. צרפן וצר בהם  
נפש כל היצור ונפש כל  
העתיד לצור.

Sefer Yetzira, Chapter 2

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



Why do you think the study of Hebrew has always been so important to Jewish communities?

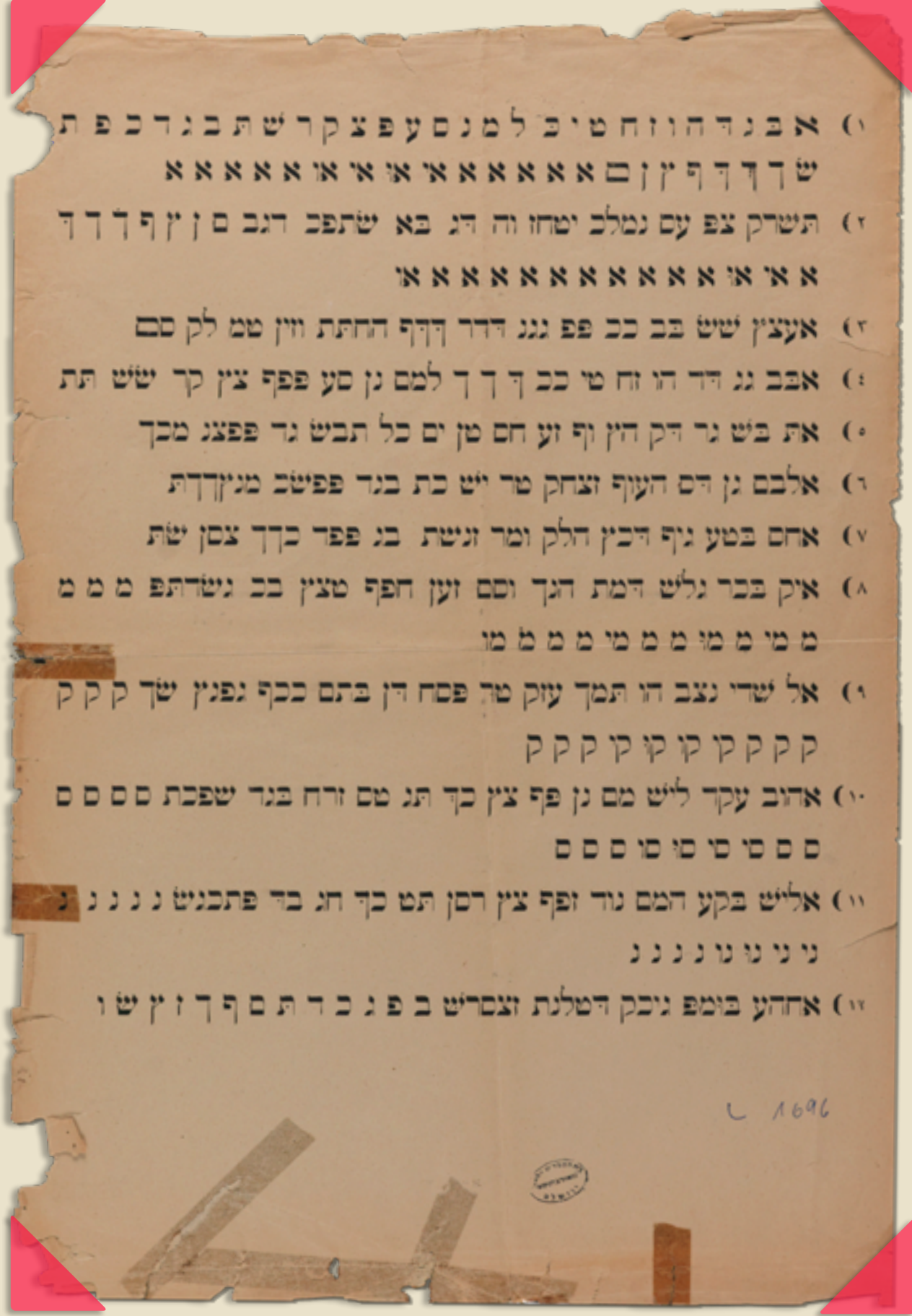
Below are a number of reasons people give for the importance of teaching and learning Hebrew. Which do you agree/disagree with? Are there other possible reasons?

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



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

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



Hebrew Alphabet: A Practice Page to Learn Hebrew, Baghdad, 1920







Do you know any of these words in Hebrew?



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?







[Photo from Mario Modiano's Bar Mitzvah, Greece, 1939](#)



“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?

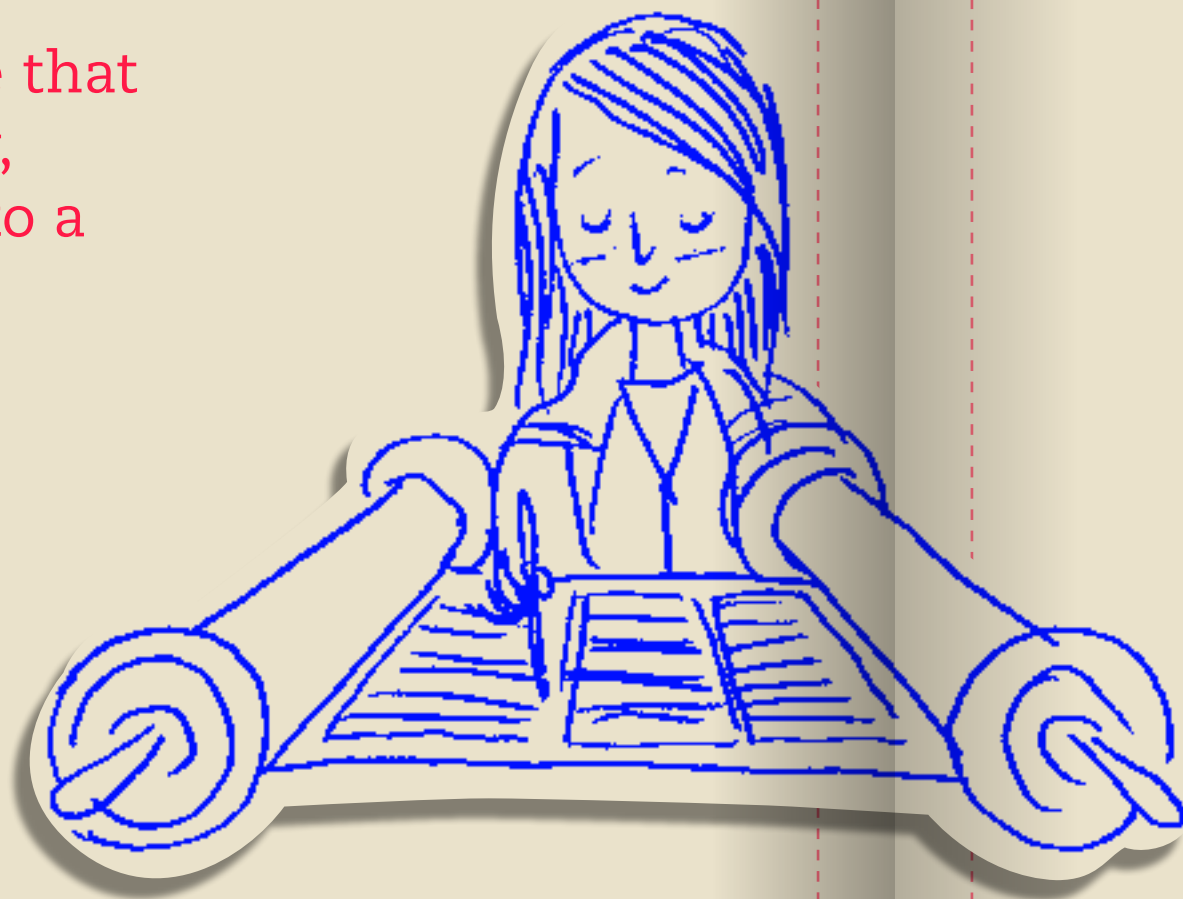


## Activity Ideas

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!



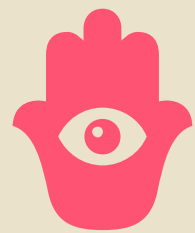


## Chapter 5

# Say a Little Prayer

Exploring Personal Prayer

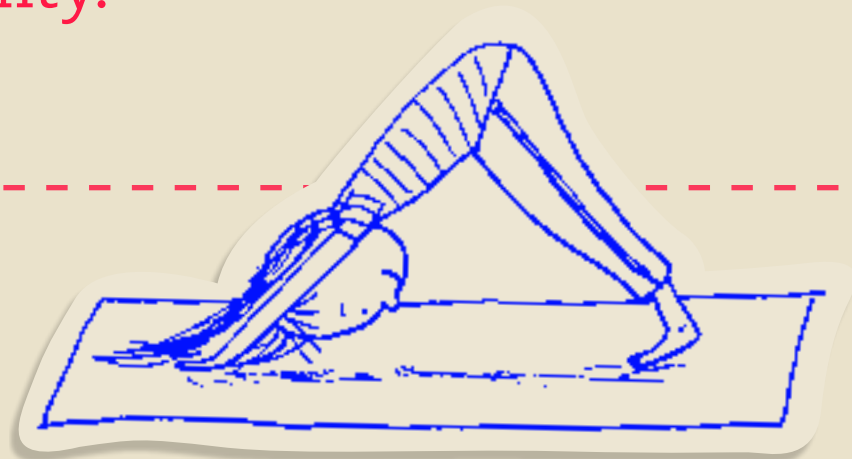
There are many different ways to express our hopes and dreams for the future, and at times we search for the words to encompass



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.



”

Psalms 69:14

וְאָנִי תְפִלָּתִי לְךָ  
ה' עֵת רְצוֹן  
אֱלֹהִים בְּרַב חַסְדֶּךָ  
עֲנֵנִי בְאַמֶּת יִשְׁעֶךָ.

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



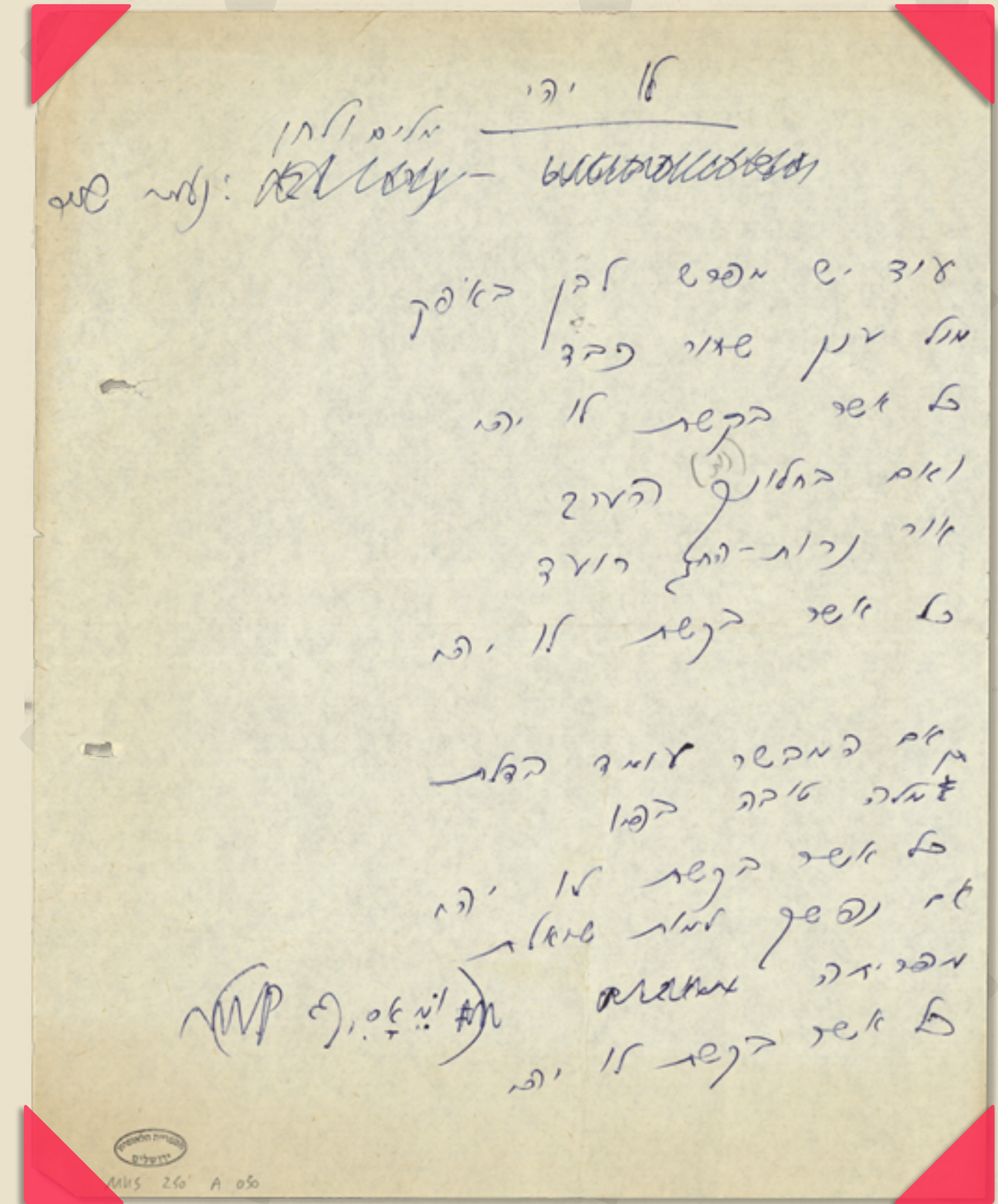
There is still a white sail on the horizon  
 Opposite a heavy black cloud  
 All that we seek – may it be  
 And if in the evening windows  
 The light of the holiday candles flickers  
 All that we seek – may it be  
 May it be, may it be – please – may it be  
 All that we seek – may it be.

Translation from the final version



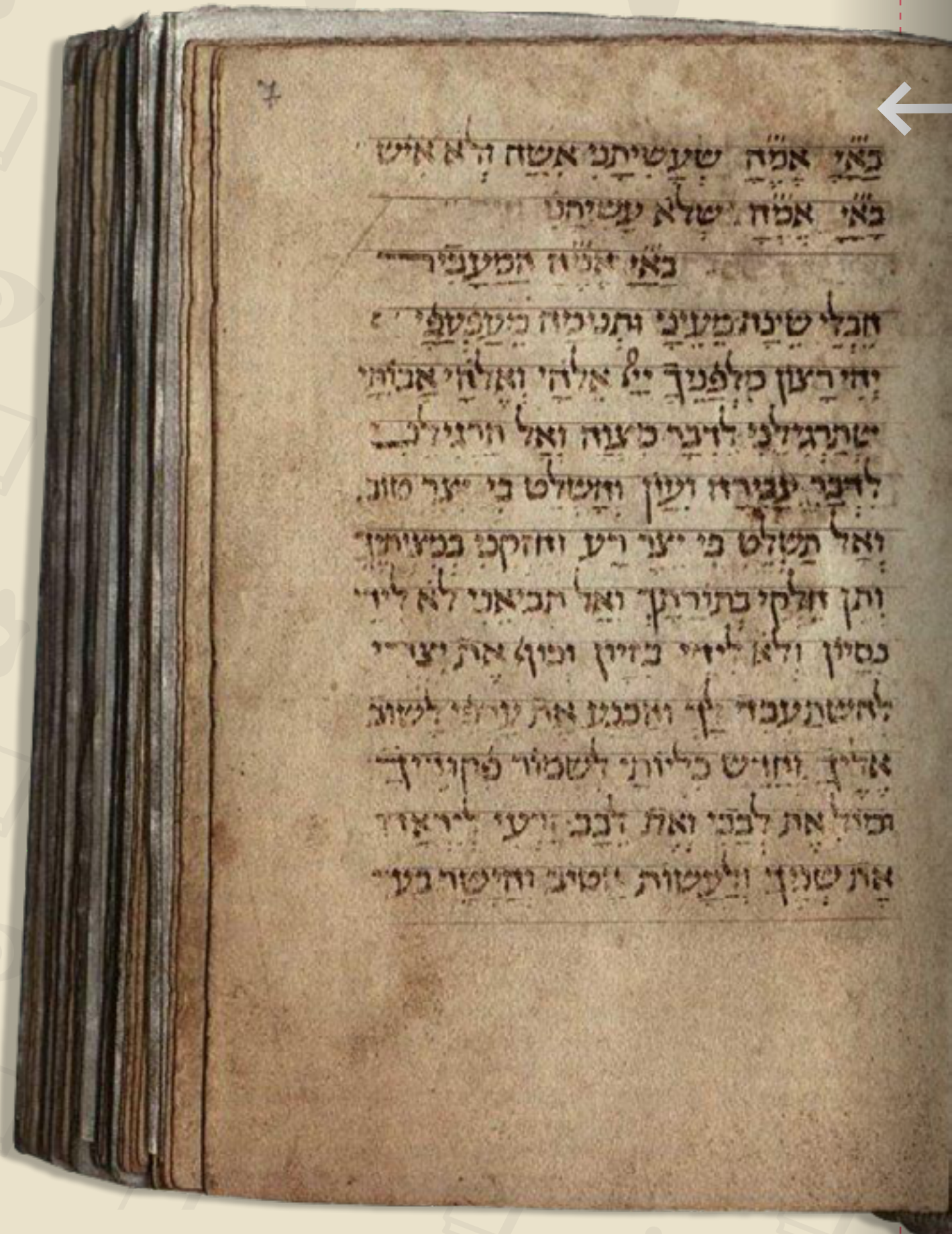
Compose your own version of “Lu Yehi” (Let It Be) or use the same structure but change the stanzas to reflect your own wishes, hopes, and prayers.

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



Draft of Naomi Shemer's “Lu Yehi”, 1973





“Blessed are You, Lord our God,  
King of the Universe, who has  
made me a woman and not a man”

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



Do you think that prayer should have a set formula or be spontaneous and individual?



[Women's Siddur, 1480](#)





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



Use one word to describe your relationship with prayer.

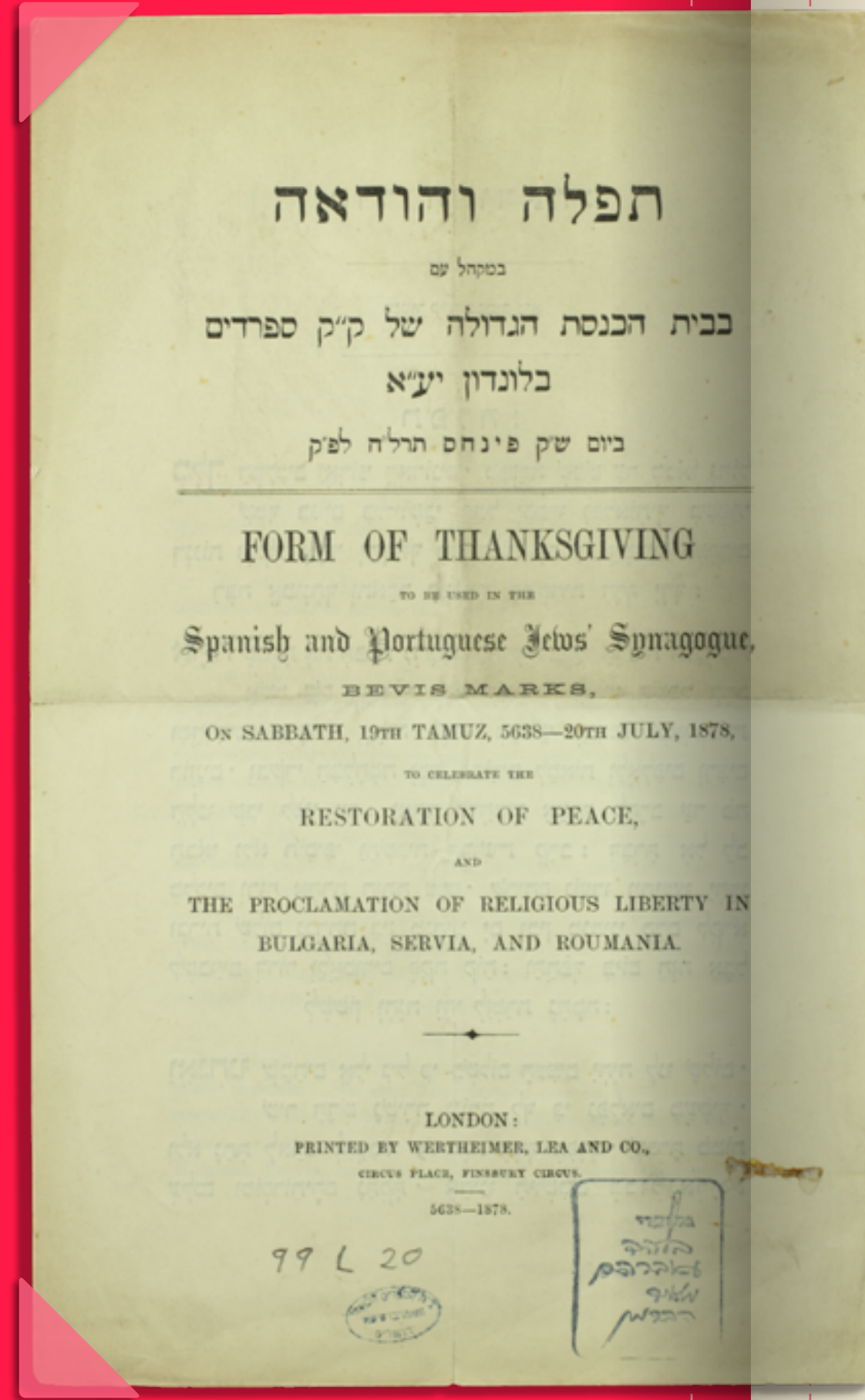


Do you ever use methods such as yoga, music, journaling, mindfulness, or meditation as a way of being attentive to your needs, inner thoughts, reflections, and hopes?





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?



## 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 a 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.



זְכוֹר יָמֹת עוֹלָם  
בֵּינֵנוּ שָׁנוֹת דֶּרֶךְ-וָדֹר.

Devarim 32:7

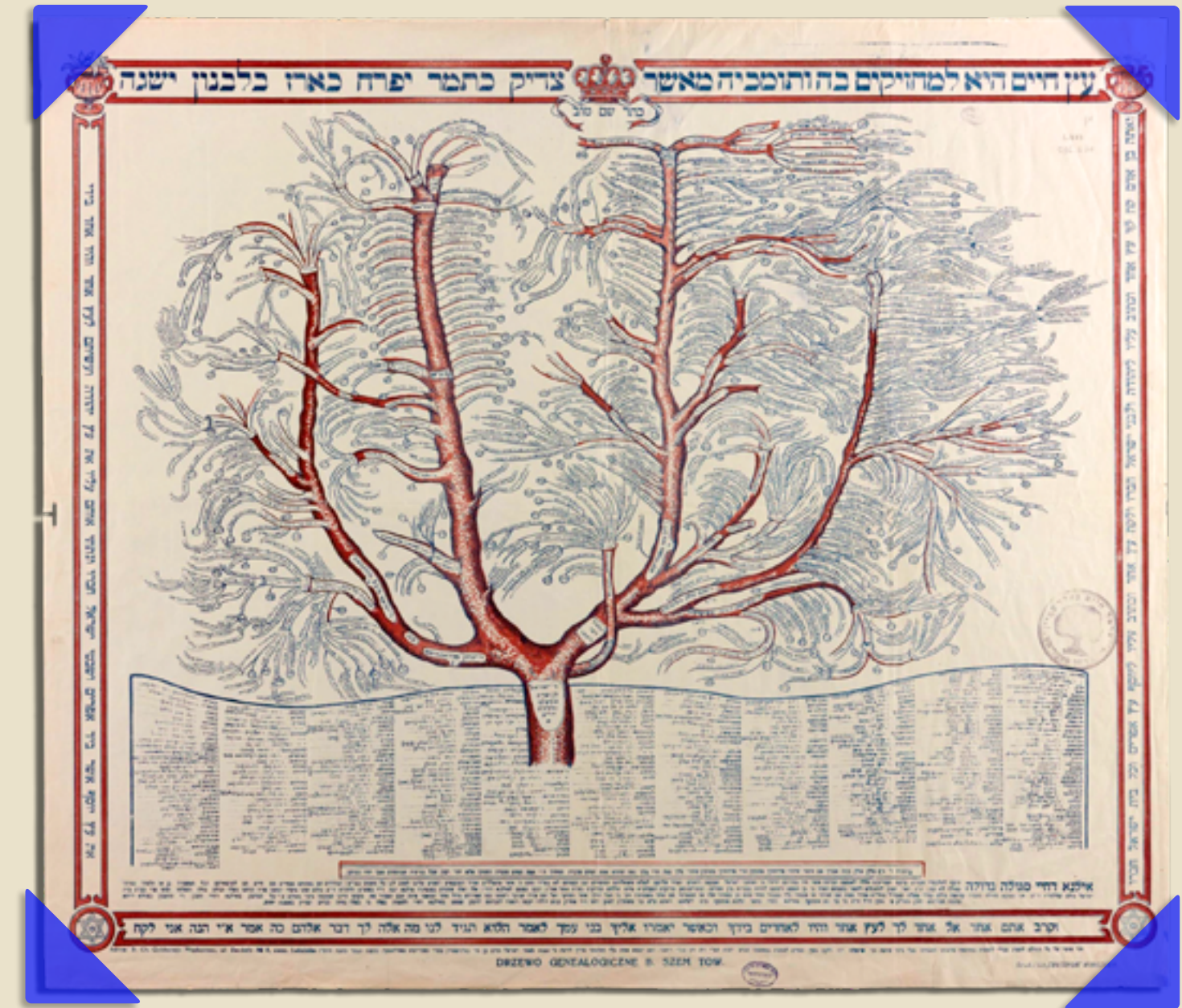
Remember the days  
of old, consider the  
years of ages past.



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?



Hagit and Dorothy Volk Bat Mitzvah Invitation, 1995



Family Tree of Hasidim



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?





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?



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





## 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.



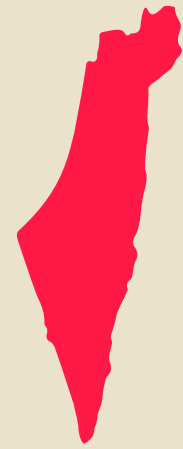
## Chapter 7



# 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.

”

לְבִי בְּמִזְרָח  
וְאָנְכִי בְּסוּף מֵעָרָב.

Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, 12th century, Spain

My Body in the East;  
My Heart in the West.





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





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



Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah at Sea



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.

”


שִׁבְעֵים  
פְּנִים  
לְתוֹרָה.

Numbers Rabbah 13:15

There are  
seventy faces  
to the Torah.





[Bar Mitzvah Speech Cartoon](#) 

## 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."

[Dr. Heschel, Chicago Sentinel, 1971](#) 

 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.”

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





“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?



[Yako Izidor Yaakov, Bulgaria, 1933](#)




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?



## Activity Ideas

 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?



Use the template in your scrapbook to compose a Bar/Bat Mitzvah speech.



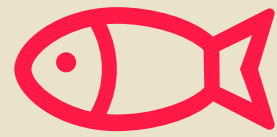
## Chapter 9



# 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.



”

וְאָכַלְתָּ  
וְשָׂבַעְתָּ  
וּבֵרַכְתָּ.

Deuteronomy 8:10

You shall eat,  
and be satisfied,  
and bless.





Matzah Balls, Kneidlach, and Matza Gnepfish, France 1903



[Osem cheesecake for Shavuot recipe](#)

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







[Tnuva Advertisement, 1930s](#)

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



Bukharan Kashrut Stamp



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.

”

לֹא עָלֶיךָ הַמְּלָאכָה לְגַמּוֹר  
וְלֹא אֶתָּה בֵּן חוֹרִין  
לְבַטֵּל מִמְּנָה.

Pirkei Avot 2:21

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



Bar Mitzvah Donation to KKL-JNF, 1938



Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael  
(Jewish National Fund)  
Jerusalem

City: Tel Aviv  
Date: 14 Sivan 5698

To: The esteemed WIZO member Mrs. Kesselman  
and her husband

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.

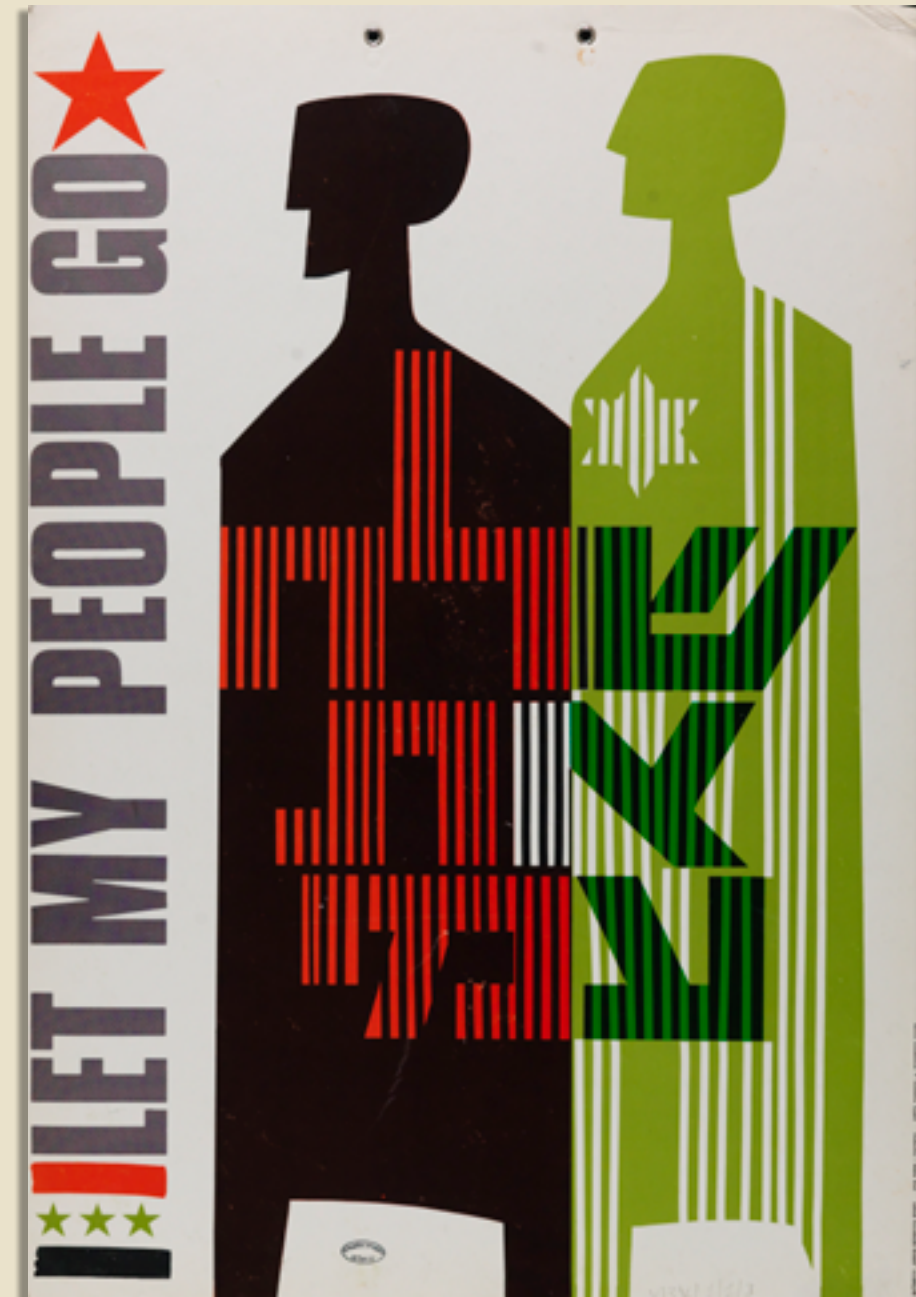
How do you feel about  
this practice? Would  
you be disappointed  
or grateful for such  
a gift? Would your  
reaction depend on  
the cause donated to?





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?



[Let my People Go Poster, 1971](#)



## Activity Ideas



Create a fundraising page for an organization that matters to you (you can use a site like [depositagift.com](https://www.depositagift.com)).



Design a poster or infographic about a social cause that is important to you.



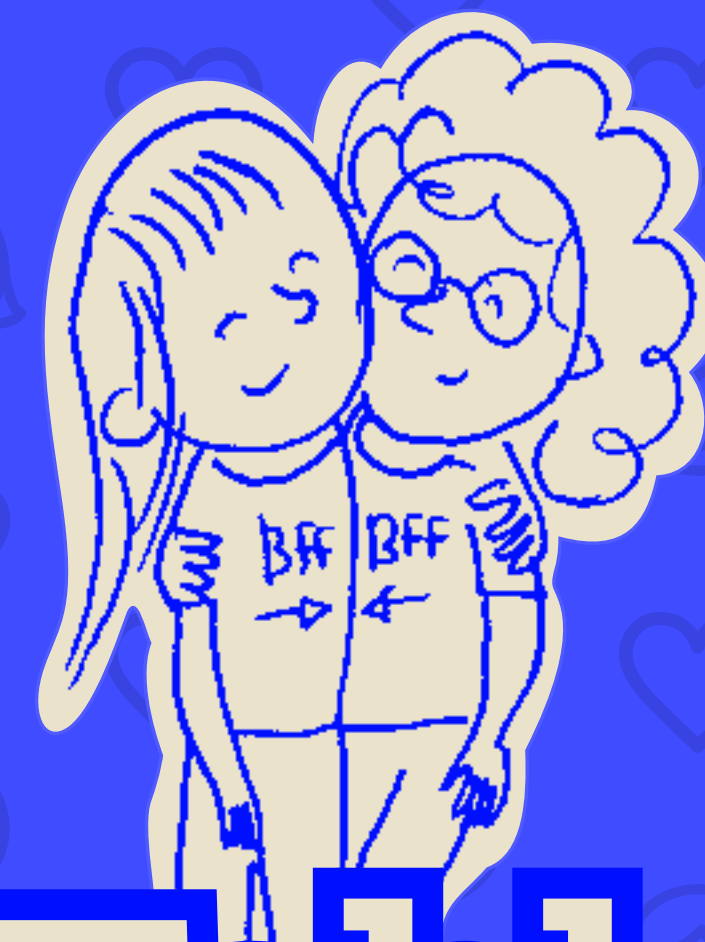
A creative way to add a *tzedakah* or *tikkun olam* component to a celebration is to decorate the tables at a celebration with “*tzedakah* centerpieces.” These include items such as flowers, books, or canned foods which are later given as donations.

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.

”

טוֹבִים הַשְּׁנַיִם מִן הָאֶחָד, אֲשֶׁר  
יֵשׁ לָהֶם שְׂכָר טוֹב בְּעֵמְלָם. כִּי אִם  
יִפְּלוּ, הָאֶחָד יִקִּים אֶת חֲבֵרוֹ, וְאִילוּ  
הָאֶחָד שָׁיפֹל וְאֵין שְׁנֵי לְהַקִּימוֹ.

Kohelet 4:9-10

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.

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



Group confirmation (Ruth Greif), Brasov 1940s



Group Bat Mitzvah, Monastrioton Synagogue, Greece, 1990



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



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







[Children at a Youth Village, 1957](#)




---

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.




---

Write or draw a metaphor expressing what friendship means to you. Start with the words: “Friendship is like...”




---

Dedicate a page in your scrapbook to your best friend or to a group of friends. Include photos, memories, and quotes.

## 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.

”


אֵיזָהוּ עֹשֵׂיר?  
הַשֵּׂמֵחַ בְּחֻלְקוֹ.

Pirket Avot 4:1

Who is rich?  
He who rejoices  
in his lot.

My dear George! <sup>4</sup>  
 I send you again a short letter  
 to make you know, that I am  
 quite "O.K." and that's all. I  
 guess all my acquaintances and rela-  
 tions are cross with me, that I  
 never write and are perhaps even  
 angry with me, please try to ex-  
 plain the situation, if possible,  
 if not, they will forgive me later.  
 To mother I do not write now  
 either and your letters must replace

the mine. For this reason I give you  
 the right even to forge my signature,  
 hoping you will not make a use of it  
 for "high financial obligations."  
 No use writing that I would like  
 to see you, to talk to you and at  
 least to write more detailed letters—  
 I hope you know that very well,  
 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. Thousand kisses to you and warm greet-  
 ings to friends from Hanna.

Hannah Senesh Letter to her Brother, 1944 

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.

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





January 31, 1895

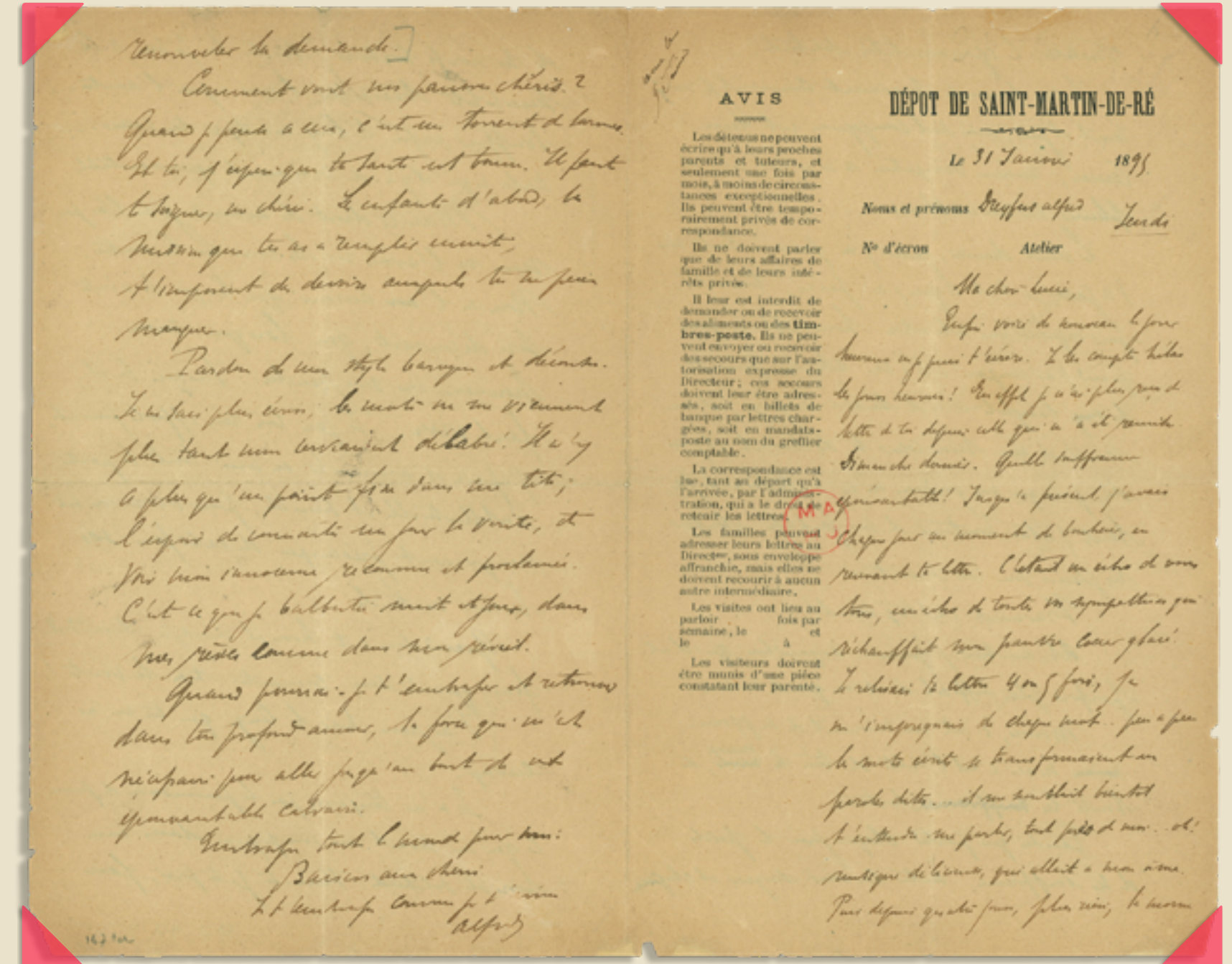
My Dear Lucie,

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?



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



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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?




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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

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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.



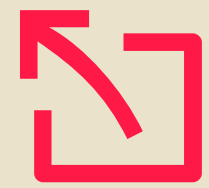
## Chapter 13

# 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.