

Sammy Spider's First Bar Mitzvah

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{ Why do we celebrate becoming responsible? }

Coming of Age

The term *bar/bat mitzvah* literally means “son/daughter of the commandment” in Aramaic, an ancient language once used by the Jewish people. When a child reaches the age of a bar or bat mitzvah, he or she is now obligated to perform the *mitzvot* (Hebrew for “commandments”) that come with adulthood. Simply turning 13 is all that’s really needed (12 for girls in some communities), but many families opt to have a ceremony to mark the event, and to celebrate their son or daughter’s growth and development. As a spider, Sammy will never become a bar mitzvah no matter how old he gets, but the celebration is a joyous event that anyone can enjoy.

No Ordinary Book

Even a spider like Sammy can see that the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) is special: it’s dressed beautifully, it lives in a private chamber, it is held up and paraded around and sung to and kissed, it’s written by hand on rare rolled parchment, and when people read from it, they touch it only with a special silver or wooden *yad* (Hebrew for “hand”). Why does the bar/bat mitzvah read Torah? Because the bar/bat mitzvah is becoming a responsible member of the Jewish people, and the Torah is the story of that people. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/sammyspidersfirstbarmitzvah.

A Social Event with Social Action

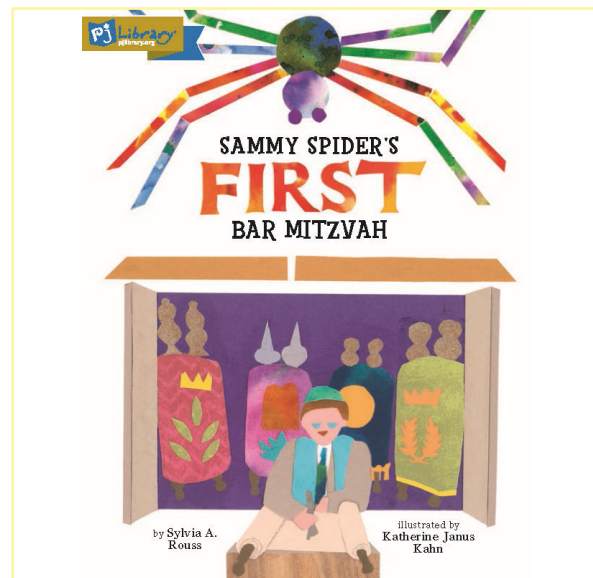
Bar/bat mitzvah celebrations differ from community to community and family to family. Some kids read from the Torah and the Prophets (*haftarah*), or simply receive an *aliyah* (literally, “going up” to recite blessings before and after the Torah reading). Others lead synagogue services, or share thoughts on that day’s Torah portion (called a *d’var Torah*) with the congregation. Some families throw big parties for a child’s bar/bat mitzvah; others mark the occasion more modestly. A growing trend is for the bar/bat mitzvah to engage in a social action project leading up to the big day—organizing a food or clothing drive, for example, or volunteering at an animal shelter. There’s an ancient rabbinic saying: “Study leads to action.” The point is not just to read Torah, but to bring its teachings into the world.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

How do you take on more responsibility as you get older?

The Torah is dressed in beautiful fabrics and lives in a special ark. How do you take care of the things that are most special to you?

Why do you think guests throw candy to celebrate?



HANDS ON!



Make No-Bake Date Candy

This story shows a bar mitzvah boy being showered in candy—a very “sweet” tradition! If it made you hungry for something sweet, make some homemade date candy.



Ingredients

1 1/2 cups tightly packed pitted medjool dates
1/3 cup creamy sunflower seed butter or tahini
1/2 cup shredded unsweetened coconut
Extra shredded coconut for rolling, if desired

Add the dates to a food processor fitted with an “S” blade and pulse until it comes together in a sticky ball.

Add in sunflower seed butter or tahini and shredded coconut, and process again until it forms a thick paste.

Scoop the mixture up with a tablespoon and roll into balls. Roll the balls into extra coconut if desired.

Chill in the fridge for 20 minutes to firm up. Yum!