

BES Bar and Bat Mitzvah Booking Policy – v1.2 – April 2016

Introduction

It is the policy of Borehamwood and Elstree Synagogue (BES) to ensure that Bar Mitzvahs and Bat Mitzvahs (herewith known as BarM and BatM, and collectively BM) are reserved and confirmed in a manner that is fair and transparent to Simchah families, to BES and, where relevant, to Yavneh College

As a member of the United Synagogue, BES is bound by the US's rules on the prioritisation for the booking of BMs. A summary of the relevant points is included later in this policy, and the full rules can be found in Schedule 4 and in Schedule 1 Paragraph 3 of the United Synagogue's Bye Laws for Member Synagogues, which can be read at

<http://www.borehamwoodshul.org/ByeLaws>

BES however is more complicated than most other US Shuls, partly due to its size, but more significantly due to its operating on two sites (Croxdale Road and Yavneh College), one of which we don't always have full use of (due to school Shabbatons).

We have therefore produced this policy document to explain the procedures we will follow when taking BM bookings across all of BES. There are also some general notes relating to BarMs and BatMs in the appendices at the end (eg teachers, dates etc).

It should be noted that this policy document does not include other Simchahs which may also take place on a Shabbat morning (eg an Auf Ruf).

Initial booking – no more than 3 years and no less than 18 months before the Simchah

1. A Simchah family contacts the BES Office to reserve a Shabbat at either Croxdale Road or Yavneh College for either a BarM or a BatM.
 - A BarM can be reserved for a Shabbat morning service at either Croxdale Road or Yavneh College.
 - A BatM can be reserved for a Shabbat morning service at Croxdale Road, or a Friday night or Shabbat morning service at Yavneh College.
 - If a BES Shabbat service is not required for a BatM, it is still useful for the BES Office to know when (eg on Sunday) the BatM will take place.
2. For a Simchah at Croxdale Road, weeks can be booked as follows:
 - Up to two BarMs, or one BarM and one BatM can be reserved per Shabbat morning.
3. For a Simchah at Yavneh College, weeks can be booked as follows:
 - One BarM or one BatM can be reserved per Shabbat morning.
 - One BatM can be reserved per Friday night.

Please note, though, that bookings are not confirmed until 18 months before the Simchah date, in line with the US Bye Laws. More information on this is below.

Borehamwood & Elstree Synagogue

PO Box 47 Croxdale Road, Borehamwood, Herts WD6 4QF

Tel: 020 8386 5227 **Fax:** 020 8386 3303 **Email:** info@borehamwoodshul.org **Web:** www.borehamwoodshul.org

Borehamwood & Elstree Synagogue is under the umbrella of the United Synagogue, Registered Charity No. 242552



Emeritus Rabbi: Rabbi A. Plancey
Senior Rabbi: Rabbi C. Kanterovitz
Rabbi: Rabbi B. Boudilovsky
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Bookings made later than 18 months before the date of the Simchah are taken at the discretion of the Honorary Officers. In the case of there being no clash with another Simchah or other major event, though, there is no reason in general why they would be refused.

Booking restrictions at Yavneh College

The following constraints apply for certain months of the year to allow Yavneh College to plan for their school Shabbatons.

November	Reservations for the Shul can only be taken for the first week, and either one other week (in a four Shabbat month) or two other weeks (in a five Shabbat month)
December	Reservations for the Shul can only be taken for the last two weeks (unless the Shabbat falls on a bank holiday in which case the school may be closed), plus an additional week in a five Shabbat month
January	Reservations for the Shul can be taken for any two weeks (in a four Shabbat month) or any three weeks (in a five Shabbat month), unless the Shabbat falls on a bank holiday in which case the school may be closed
February	Reservations for the Shul can be taken for the school's half-term week, and either one other week (in a four Shabbat month) or two other weeks (in a five Shabbat month)

Reservations can be taken beyond the weeks above but the Simchah family will be informed by the BES Office that they should not plan to use the Shul for their Simchah service as Yavneh College may have a Shabbaton on that week. Assuming they still want to go ahead with their Simchah at Yavneh, other rooms will be made available although they may be less than ideal for a Shabbat morning service, and especially a Simchah. Shabbaton weeks will also limit the use of other facilities at Yavneh (eg the dining room would not be available for a lunch).

If it turns out that the school does not plan a Shabbaton on the Simchah week then BES Office will inform the Simchah family during the October before their Simchah that they can use the Yavneh Shul after all.

18 months before the Simchah

At the 18 month point, the BES office will confirm the booking with the Simchah family, and a letter containing some additional information will be sent out. Some of this information is also contained in this document.

Until 18 months before a Simchah, a reservation cannot be confirmed. This is because (to align with the US Bye Laws) a family has higher priority to request and reserve Croxdale Road or Yavneh College for a particular week and time (Friday night or Shabbat morning) based on the following criteria to be assessed in order at the 18 month point:

- For a BarM, they are booking for the Shabbat immediately after the actual date of their son's Bar Mitzvah, or for a BatM the Shabbat immediately after the actual date of their daughter's Bat Mitzvah.

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- The family (or one of the parents) who have been continuous members of a US Synagogue (including affiliate Synagogues and Synagogues which may not have been members of the US at the time but have since joined the US) for the longer period of time. Note this is not the length of their BES membership.

For Yavneh College bookings, the same priority assessment applies if a family requests a week between November and February and there are no more weeks available to use the Shul during that month (as defined in the table above).

If Family A requests to make a reservation and they have priority over Family B who already has a reservation then Family A is given the reservation and the BES Office should inform Family B that they no longer have the reservation. Family B would then have the option of requesting a different venue, week and/or time.

For Croxdale Road bookings, on a week with two BarM reservations, the family with priority is given "first refusal" on reading Maftir and Haftarah. The other family are also able to hold their BarM at Croxdale Road on the same week but they should discuss with the BES Office and the wardens to determine which portions of the Parashah to read. There may be occasions where it would be appropriate, due to the capabilities of the boy himself, for the family with priority to offer the other family Maftir and Haftarah (and they then read some of the Parashah itself) although this is up to the family concerned.

The BES Office will then inform the BES HOs of all Simchah reservations and confirmations, including the Simchah family, venue, date and time (ideally by using an online communal calendar).

Confirmation of bookings with Yavneh College in April and October

For bookings at Yavneh College, at the start of every April the BES Office informs Yavneh College of the Simchah bookings that have been confirmed for the following November to February, whether each booking is a booking for the Yavneh Shul or not, and whether each booking is for a Friday evening or Shabbat morning.

At the start of every October, Yavneh College will inform the BES Office which weeks they have confirmed as Shabbaton weeks during the following November to February timescale.

For any simcha that had been confirmed for a Potential Shabbaton Week:

- For a Simchah which is not on a Shabbaton week, the BES Office informs the Simchah family that they can use the Yavneh Shul for their Simchah.
- For a Simchah which is on a Shabbaton week, the BES Office informs the Simchah family that they are unable to use the Yavneh Shul for their Simchah and confirm the alternative arrangements that will be put in place.

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Appendices

The following sections contain further information which may be useful to you when considering the options available for celebrating your Simchah at BES, and some other things which you should be aware of now and in due course.

Prioritisation of BM bookings from the United Synagogue Bye Laws for Member Synagogues

Schedule 4 – “Regulations Relating to Barmitzvahs”, Paragraph 5

The priority of a member who wishes his or her son to read the Maphtir and Haphtorah on the Shabbat immediately after his thirteenth Hebrew birthday supersedes the priority granted by Schedule 1 paragraph 3 if the Barmitzvah of the son of the other claimant or claimants to the date is being delayed beyond the Shabbat immediately after his thirteenth Hebrew birthday for whatever reason.

Schedule 1 – “The Rights and Privileges of Membership”, Paragraph 3

For the purpose of these Bye-Laws and the exercise of the rights of membership, members of the Synagogue shall subject as herein provided be entitled to exercise their rights in accordance with their seniority as members of the Synagogue, PROVIDED THAT for the purpose of determining the seniority of individuals as members of the Synagogue, such seniority shall be calculated by reference to the continuous membership of the person concerned from the date on which that person first became a member of the Synagogue, or any other Member or Affiliated Synagogue or any other Synagogue which should become a Member Synagogue of the United Synagogue.

The full Bye Laws can be read at <http://www.borehamwoodshul.org/ByeLaws>.

Calculating the date of your child’s BM

Boys become Bar Mitzvah when they are 13 years and 1 day old, and girls become Bat Mitzvah when they are 12 years and 1 day old, calculated from their Hebrew birthday.

To calculate the date yourself, you can use a converter website such as <http://www.hebc.com/converter/>. Please note this will ask if your child was born after dark, because the Jewish day starts at sunset of the previous day.

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Using this site you can get the Hebrew date of birth, add 12 or 13 years, and convert it back to the English date. The earliest day a BM can be celebrated is then one day after the actual 12th or 13th Hebrew birthday. For example:

- A boy born after dark on 6th January 2005.
- This converts on the above website to 26th Tevet 5765.
- The 13th Hebrew birthday is therefore 26th Tevet 5778.
- This converts back to the English date 13th January 2018.
- The earliest date for the BM is therefore the 14th January 2018.
- This is a Sunday, so the BarM priority date would be Shabbat 20th January 2018.

However, please always tell the BES office when making the booking the English date of birth of your child (and whether it was before or after dark) so that this can be checked.

Weekday Bar Mitzvah Callups

As well as Shabbat morning, we also Lein (read from the Torah) every Monday and Thursday morning, and sometimes on other days (eg Rosh Chodesh, the first day of a Jewish month). It may therefore be that the first opportunity for your son to be called up to the Torah comes before the Shabbat (eg if his Hebrew birthday is the Tuesday, he can be called up from the Wednesday so the first opportunity would be the Thursday morning).

Many families like this opportunity to have a small quiet ceremony at our regular weekday morning service (as well as the Shabbat service), although this is early in the morning. If you would like to do this, please contact the BES office. These would only take place at Croxdale Road. It may be possible to organise a weekday BarM callup at Yavneh for Yavneh students – please contact the school directly about this.

Please note that whether this is an option to you (depending on the dates), and whether you take it up, has no bearing on your priority on Shabbat morning.

Bat Mitzvah options

For some years now, many BatM girls have given a "D'var Torah", a brief talk on a point of Torah, at the end of the Shabbat morning service. This is then followed by the address, presentation and Bracha from the Rabbi, before the conclusion of the service and Kiddush.

We are also able to offer the following additional options which some may prefer, especially if the BatM girl doesn't want to talk to a full Synagogue of people.

- Friday night (at Yavneh only)

The BatM service would take place at Yavneh (subject to the booking being confirmed as above), but on the Friday evening. In the winter, it would typically be immediately after the regular Friday night service, and in the summer it would typically be immediately before the regular Friday night service. The BatM service itself would take the same format as on Shabbat morning, and the family would be expected to be at the main Friday night service as well.

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- Shabbat morning, after Kiddush

Rather than speaking at the end of the service, we will go straight through to Kiddush as normal. Then after about 15 minutes, the BatM family and their guests will be invited to return back to the Shul for the BatM service. The BatM service itself would take the same format as before Kiddush, and the family would be expected to be at the main Shabbat service as well.

- Saturday evening

A BatM on Saturday evening (after Shabbat) is considered like any other BatM not celebrated on Shabbat itself (eg on a Sunday evening). Please notify the BES office of your plans, whether you intend to be in Shul with your family and guests on Shabbat morning, and if you would like one of the BES Rabbis to come and officiate at the ceremony itself, which can take the same format as on Shabbat morning.

BarM and BatM teachers

In most cases, your son or daughter will need to spend some time learning with a teacher in advance of their BM.

- For boys this would be for learning how to read from the Torah and how to do the Haftarah
- For girls this would be to help them prepare and write their Dvar Torah.
- For both, this should also include some general lessons on what it means to be a Jewish adult.

The BES office can provide a list of BarM teachers who have been checked and approved by the United Synagogue. All of them are CRB/DBS checked, and many of them are local.

You are welcome to choose your own teacher (eg a member of your family, or someone else on a recommendation). However, please be aware that if we don't know the teacher:

- For a BarM, we may require you to arrange a "check" with the Rabbi, one of the wardens or one of our "senior teachers" around 6 months in advance to verify how things are progressing.
- For a BatM, if you have requested a BES Rabbi to officiate, he will need to check and approve your daughter's D'var Torah in advance.

For a BarM, what Sedra (portion of the Torah) is it and how much can my son read

Always check with the BES office. There are certain things which need to be taken into account which your chosen BarM teacher may not realise in time such as:

- A special Maftir and/or Haftarah for a special Shabbat.
- Certain parts of certain portions which traditionally are not read by a BarM.
- Differences customs on which Haftarah to read or where the breaks in the Torah portion are.

Checking as soon as possible helps to avoid the major embarrassment of learning the wrong portion.

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Subject to approval and the policies concerning booking above, all BarM boys are welcome to Lein the Maftir and Haftarah on their BarM. Many, though, like to do more, and also Lein some or all of the Sedra. This is a major responsibility as he will be Leining on behalf of everybody in Shul, and hence we have some extra requirements before this will be allowed.

- We will require the approval of one of our "Senior Teachers" 6 months' in advance and he may want to meet with you again depending on your son's progress. For example, he may permit your son to Lein, but suggest that he concentrates on learning part of the Sedra perfectly, rather than the whole Sedra less so. Quality is more important than quantity.
- We will require the BarM boy and the immediate family to walk to Shul on the day of the BarM. As your son will be Leining on behalf of everybody in Shul on Shabbat, it is highly inappropriate for him to arrive by car.
- We will require that all the meals associated with your BarM (Shabbat Lunch, evening party etc) are Kosher. For the avoidance of doubt, this means a catered meal must be supplied by a Kosher caterer or restaurant, licensed by the London Beth Din or other recognised Orthodox authority. Fish, vegetarian or "inoffensive" menus supplied by non-licensed caterers are not acceptable. If you have any queries about this, please ask.

Allocation of Mitzvot (including Call ups) on Shabbat morning

There are many different Mitzvot (honours) which can be given out on a Shabbat morning, but also many people who have a "Chiyuv", a right to have one of these Mitzvot. These include:

- A Bridegroom on his Auf Ruf – the Shabbat before his wedding.
- A Bar Mitzvah boy.
- The father of a new baby.
- A man, or the husband of a woman, commemorating a Yahrzeit in the coming week.

The full list of priorities is in the US Bye Laws, Schedule 1 Section 4.

For this reason we aren't able to confirm how many or which Mitzvot will be allocated to your family until the Shabbat morning itself. However, the wardens will do the best they can to give as many as possible. About 6 weeks before the Simchah, please E-Mail the wardens and they will let you know the information they need in advance.

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