

MAZAL TOV ON YOUR BAR MITZVAH

As we mark 100 years since the Rebbe's bar mitzvah, we present a collection of letters from the Rebbe with special hora'os regarding a bar mitzvah.

TANYA PEREK MEM-ALEF

In response to your letter, in which you write that you have started putting on Tefillin, as your Bar Mitzvah is in two months:

It would be proper that you learn—either on your own or with someone else—what is written in Shulchan Aruch [siman 25, se'if 5 (in the Shulchan Aruch of the Beis Yosef) and se'if 11 (in the Shulchan Aruch of the Alter Rebbe)], and is also included at the beginning of Tanya *perek* 41, regarding the התבוננות (contemplation) associated with the mitzvah of tefillin. [Do this] until the words are engraved in your memory, and certainly then they will have their desired effect on your Torah study, observance of mitzvos, and your overall conduct. This also includes influencing your friends to do the same. And being that the above-mentioned conduct enhances your spiritual wellbeing, it will certainly help your physical wellbeing as well.¹

CHOL HAMOED IN PREPARATORY MONTHS

In response to the question of when to begin putting on tefillin if *chol hamoed* is between the *hanochas* tefillin and the bar mitzvah, reducing the amount of days to practice putting on tefillin, the Rebbe writes:

The beginning of putting on tefillin can begin a week earlier than usual; may it be in a good and auspicious time.²

PREPARING KRIAS HATORAH

Regarding that which you wrote that the [bochur Ha]bar mitzvah is preparing to *lein* the entire *parsha*:

My opinion in this regard has been known for some time.

Unfortunately, in our generation the main component [of becoming bar mitzvah] has become secondary, and vice versa. Additionally, as they prepare to accept the yoke of Torah and mitzvos, they decrease the study of fundamentals and essentials—*halachos* needed for day-to-day life—and substitute it with studies that are certainly not fundamental. More importantly, this was never the *minhag*. Although Chazal say that “When one comes to a city, one should follow its customs,” there are many customs in each city, and [the proper thing to do] is self-understood.

Obviously the above is merely a suggestion and an observation. You should look into it again, and determine whether this is the right course for you. Whatever you decide, may it be for the best.³

TO BE “AL HATZIYUN”

Regarding your second question, about the bar mitzvah of your son, which will take place on Shabbos *parshas Beshalach* of this year:

In general, I'm puzzled by your uncertainty, and that you aren't trying to come up with reasons to be at the *tziyun* of the Rebbe, of sacred memory. Since [the date of] your son's bar mitzvah is in proximity to Yud Shevat, it would seem to be an indication that you should seize this opportunity to be at the *tziyun*; to relive the many celebratory occasions that you merited to be present [with the Rebbe], while you were in yeshiva, and with *anash*. If you don't take advantage of this opportunity, when will you? If, for whatever reason, it is not possible—or at least it seems impossible [to come to the Ohel]—then the bar mitzvah should take place at your current location. May it be in a good and auspicious time. May you, your wife, and your family celebrate together with true joy—*simcha shel mitzvah*.⁴

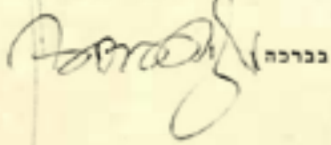
RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON
Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11213
Hyackloft 3-9250

מוחם מנחם שניאורסאהן
ליובאוויטש
770 איסטערן פארקוויי
ברוקלין, נ.י.
כ"ה,
ברוקלין, נ.י.

שלום וברכה!

במענה על ההודעה ע"ר הכנסו בקרוב
לגיל מצות,

הנה יה"ר מהשי"ת אשר סבן שלש עשרה
למצות יגדל לבן חמס עשרה וכו' כספך המסנה
(אבות פרק ה') ויוסיף התמדה ושקידה בלימודו
בחורה, בחורה הנבלה וכן בחורה החסידות ויהדר
בקיטום המצות, והשי"ת יצליחו להיות חסיד ירא
שמים ולמדן.

בברכה


TRAVELLING TO ERETZ YISRAEL

Your trip to Eretz Yisrael [to celebrate the bar mitzvah] will cost, round trip, (even if it's **only** yourselves and the [bochur ha]bar mitzvah traveling) a minimum of \$1,500. It will certainly be a **great zechus** for the [bochur ha]bar mitzvah to **not allow** all this waste of money on the trip. The bar mitzvah should take place **specifically here**. That way **all his friends, with whom he learns Torah**, will be able to participate in the *simcha*. **On the actual** day [of the bar mitzvah] he should visit the *tziyun* of the Rebbe, etc. May it be in a good and auspicious time.⁵

TACHANUN ON THE DAY OF THE BAR MITZVAH

The following is a letter written by the Rebbe to his Cousin, Reb Menachem Mendel ben Reb Shmuel Schneerson.

My dear cousin Menachem,

For your 13th birthday, your bar mitzvah, it is my wish to speak with you a bit, as if we were sitting next to each other, conversing face to face. Until we see each other [again], I am forced to express my words in writing, and I hope that in a short while, after reading through my letter, you will answer me—in writing or by word of mouth—your feelings about what I've written, and all your thoughts and ideas on this [subject].

Ostensibly, the day of the bar mitzvah—when a Jewish boy becomes obligated to keep the mitzvos like an adult, and

from then on is considered a man—should be a day on which *tachanun* is not recited, *melacha* should be forbidden, and so on, just like a Yom Tov. Because from this point on the *Yetzer Tov* enters into him, and the boy becomes part of *Klal Yisroel*. However, Actually, the fact is that it is not so! *Tachanun* is recited, and learning takes place like every other day, etc.

The reason for this is that we were not created to celebrate Yom Tov every day. Rather we are obligated to work and toil [as the *possuk* says] “Man is born to toil” (“אדם לעמל יולד”). The world isn't a ballroom; a person is not a guest, who puts on Shabbos clothing and comes to a feast, and [man's] days are not [all] Yom Tov and Shabbos. This world is a place of action and work; the days [of our lives] exist for action (היום לעשותם), and there is much work to be done. Man was not created for any purpose other than to serve, guard, and work; he is not free to idle around. When a person becomes obligated to keep Torah and mitzvos, it doesn't become a Yom Tov. Instead it is a day of action and accomplishments.⁶

FARBRENGEN

In response to your letter of Erev Sukkos: I was pleased to read in it that you made a farbrengen in connection with the bar mitzvah of your son, and that it was a *chassidisher farbrengen*. May the affect of the spiritual awakening continue in the coming weeks and months. This will also add in Divine assistance (סייעתא דשמיא) for your son, the [bochur ha]bar mitzvah, who was the cause for this [farbrengen].⁷

SEVERAL HORA'OS ABOUT A BAR MITZVAH

In general, I am displeased with the way bar mitzvahs take place, because of several issues:

- [1] That the [bochur ha]bar mitzvah davens at the *amud*.
- [2] That he *leins* the Torah.
- [3] The waste of money on a hall, etc.
- [4] It is proper for a *dvar Torah* be said, not just a speech etc.⁸

1. Igros Kodesh vol. 14 p. 533
2. Likkutei Sichos vol. 21 p. 357
3. Igros Kodesh vol. 20 p. 118
4. Ibid. vol. 5 p. 95
5. Ibid. vol. 26 p. 20. Emphases are in the original.
6. Reshimos 59.
7. Igros Kodesh vol. 12 p. 49.
8. Shevach Yekar p. 197.