

Important Information Regarding the Celebration of Caleb Becoming Bar Mitzvah.

Dear CSZ Family,

We pray that you and your loved ones are healthy.

In celebration of Caleb becoming Bar Mitzvah, we are delighted to have invited the entire congregation as well as many others to join us for a Shabbat morning service at which Caleb was to be called to the Torah, and for celebratory meals both in Caleb's honor and in gratitude to you, our amazing CSZ family, for your help in raising our children. It does take a village to raise a child, and our "village" is truly the very best.

More than the Yiddish expression, "Man plans and God laughs," the Talmud tells us that the world operates the way the world operates. We are in the midst of a pandemic that prohibits us from gathering in large groups and especially for meals. As such, with sadness, we are writing to inform you that there will be no congregational Shabbat lunch, nor, for that matter, will there be a large Shabbat dinner that we had originally planned to mark Caleb becoming Bar Mitzvah.

But we will celebrate. God willing, we will celebrate.

The Bar Mitzvah Celebration Is ON! It's Just ... Online

As we have reminded Caleb regularly over the last year and a half of his studies in preparation to become Bar Mitzvah,¹ his learning was and is geared not just in preparation for one weekend, but for the rest of his life. Therefore we plan to continue to celebrate Caleb as originally scheduled, though most certainly not quite as we originally planned. **As such, God willing, Caleb will join the CSZ clergy team in leadership of morning prayer on Monday, May 18, at 7:30 a.m.; of Kabbalat Shabbat on Friday evening, May 22, at 6:00 p.m.; and on Shabbat morning, May 23, at 10:00 a.m., when he will be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah.** All prayer experiences will take place on Zoom.

¹ The phrase "Bar/Bat Mitzvah" does not describe a service, but rather a state of being: Becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah indicates that one has reached an age of maturity at which s/he is subject to God's commandments and therefore can fulfill those commandments on another's behalf by leading prayers and chanting Torah and Haftarah.

We invite the congregation to join us virtually for each of these experiences:
<https://zoom.us/j/8167572328>. If you prefer, you are welcome to access the service through our livestream, <https://video.ibm.com/channel/shaarey-zedek-sanctuary>.

A Favor from the Congregation

But, humbly, we have one more favor to ask. This is most certainly not the week of celebration that we had originally planned to mark Caleb becoming Bar Mitzvah. Moreover, Caleb has gained a tremendous number of skills and a large body of knowledge in preparation for becoming Bar Mitzvah; Jewish adulthood, however, also requires wisdom. And here is where we are looking to you, our CSZ family. **We are kindly asking you to write Caleb an “old-fashioned” letter** wishing him *mazel tov*, along with a paragraph or two of the life wisdom that you have accumulated, suitable for a 13-year-old. Perhaps you will include in the letter thoughts on life’s meaning, life’s purpose, or the values and priorities that you have come to see as most important. In this way, though he will not see a sanctuary full of love, he will at least have a mailbox full of love in the form of personal letters from you, our family and friends!

Please send those letters to our home: 22960 Kenwyck Drive, Southfield, MI 48034. In place of photographs, these letters will be the keepsakes that help him to remember this special time in his life and this unprecedented time in all our lives. For this and for so, so many other reasons, you have our thanks and our gratitude.

As the Psalms say, “It is time to work for the LORD.” The Psalms also remind us to serve God with joy. God willing, we will do both of those things, and we are excited and grateful to invite you to join us.

In friendship,

Rebecca and Rabbi Aaron Starr

P.S. If you would like to watch Caleb’s bar mitzvah video montage that he made himself: <https://youtu.be/P7UEkMmAmVA>.