

Why This Special Bar Mitzvah?

One of the projects of Rabbi Leib Heber, Jewish Chaplain at 7 State Institutions, is an effort to train those who are retarded for the ceremony of Bar and Bat Mitzvah. Many of them understand well what is symbolized, and to them it is especially significant since the ceremony signifies their ability to be like other children and to participate in a normal way.

A few parents are against the idea for their children, but 90% of the parents are for it. The letters they wrote express their satisfactions. For example, they write: (1) Your Bar-Mitzvah idea will have a big impact on the whole community. It will be a blessing for the retarded. It will dramatize to all the religious principle of including the retarded in the activities of the community.

(2) The Bar-Mitzvah idea is the greatest. Joe is 29 years in Polk, since he was 7 years of age. He was never in a synagogue. People like you who care about the forgotten people have my respect and great admiration for your dedication to them and for your care and concern.

(3) You stopped my tears and bad dreams. Why should my son, who is retarded, be punished not to have a Bar-Mitzvah as the other children had. May the Almighty give you strength to continue your work. (4) It is very gratifying to know of your heartfelt endeavor to bring a measure and reminder of our religion to those unfortunately in our institution.

The Bar-Mitzvah project helps the communities to fulfill their religious and humanitarian obligations and helps with a serious social problem which is all too often neglected.

The group Bar-Mitzvah for the residents of Western Pennsylvania Institutions takes place on Sunday Rosh Chodesh Nisan, March 24, 1974, at 10:30 a.m., at the Beth Shalom Synagogue, Beacon and Shady Avenues, Pittsburgh, Pa. Luncheon will be served following services to all who share in this "special" occasion.

Through this ceremony we hope to give these participants a deeper feeling of identification with their faith and an experience which they know they share with every other young person of the Jewish religion.

On behalf of this great Mitzvah, I appeal to you now, in the name of the Bar-Mitzvah boys and girls, to be present at the services and luncheon.

The presence of every person will only add to the significance of this occasion and we hope that at this early date you will be able to set aside March 24 to be with us.

Please call or write for reservations:

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