

MITZVAH PLANNING GUIDE

The Complete Guide to Planning a Pittsburgh Bar/Bat Mitzvah

by Kelli Burns Entertainment

Introduction



Planning a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a true balancing act: honoring a sacred family tradition while throwing a party that feels fresh, exciting, and completely unique to your family. **Trusted by more than 300 families across the region**, Kelli Burns Entertainment does not just plan Mitzvahs—we curate an experience built entirely around your child's personality, their passions, and the milestone they've worked so hard to reach/achieve.

Tonight, they step into the room as young adults, and the guest of honor deserves nothing less than legendary. The single most essential element to get right is finding an entertainment team that can adapt to fit the exact vision of both the young person taking center stage and the parents guiding the process. The right talent sets the tone, keeps every generation engaged—from energetic young adults to grandparents—and crafts a celebration tailored precisely to your family.

The KBE Difference

- **The Signature Duo:** Our "tuned-in" professional MC and DJ work in perfect sync to keep energy at its peak and the dance floor packed all night long. We're experts at reading the room and keeping your guests connected to the celebration.
- **Customized for Every Generation:** We create music that moves the young adults while keeping every family member, from grandparents to cousins, on their feet.



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- **Custom Game Interaction:** We have designed several interactive games from which they can select. Such physical challenging games (Coke or Pepsi) to fun mental games, such as trivia about the guest of honor.
- **Immersive Guest Experiences:** Beyond the music, we bring the "wow." Our on-site experiences include:
  • Arcade games like Skee-ball, basketball, and foosball
  • Caricature illustrators and live artists
  • Airbrush artists & custom apparel
  • Interactive photo booths.
- **Live musicians such as saxophonist and percussion.**
  • Through-the-years video montage production



From sacred Torah readings to a high-octane celebration, Pittsburgh's trusted, award-winning entertainment team manages every detail. Relax and enjoy—with our commitment to excellence, your Mitzvah will be unforgettable.

What to Look For: The Key Checklist

When exploring your options, the ideal entertainment team should feel like a partner ready to bring your family's distinct vision to life. Look for teams offering these foundational elements:



- **The Dedicated MC & DJ Duo:** A dual setup where the Master of Ceremonies drives floor energy, leads crowd interactions, and manages seamless transitions, while the DJ focuses entirely on mixing tracks and keeping the music flowing.
- **Cross Generational Music Curation:** A dance floor that welcomes everyone, blending current hits and viral tracks for young adults with timeless classics that pull parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents out of their seats.
- **Immersive On-Site Experiences:** Customizable add-on activities to keep guests entertained all night, such as Skee-ball, arcade basketball, or foosball; live caricature artists or illustration stations; airbrush stations for custom swag; photo booths and interactive video setups; and custom "through-the-years" photo or video montage production.

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Step-by-Step: From Research to Booking

Phase 1: Gathering Recommendations

- **Tap Into Recent Mitzvah Families:** Connect with friends whose celebrations your child genuinely loved attending.
- **Consult Your Venue & Planner:** Local event venues and planners collaborate with entertainment providers weekly and know who consistently delivers professionalism, reliability, and warm energy.
- **Explore Regional Directories:** Specialty showcase events and local vendor listings can highlight experienced talent in your area, including Pittsburgh-specific vendor guides and synagogue vendor lists.

Phase 2: Vetting & Portfolio Review

- **Request Full Event Recaps:** While short highlight clips are fun, ask to view unedited video segments of grand entrances, the Horah, and open dancing to see genuine crowd interaction.
- **Confirm Mitzvah-Specific Experience:** Mitzvahs require a unique skillset, including timeline management, specialized crowd engagement, and kid-friendly enthusiasm, that general wedding or club DJs may not possess.
- **Read Detailed Client Reviews:** Look for consistent mentions of punctuality, clear communication, adaptability, and care for the family's experience.

Key Questions to Ask During Your Consultation

Focus Area	Question to Ask	What to Listen For
Crowd Dynamics	How do you engage shy young adults without making them feel put on the spot?	Natural, low-pressure techniques like icebreaker group games, or taking requests to build confidence gently.
Tradition & Flow	How do you oversee custom elements like the blessings, The Horah, and the Havdalah service?	A detailed preparation process confirming name pronunciations, custom music choices, and timeline cues well in advance.
Backup Plans	What contingency plans exist for equipment failure, emergencies, or harsh weather at an outdoor or tented event?	Redundant backup equipment on-site, on-call team coverage, and a clear power/tent plan for outdoor Pittsburgh-area venues.
Venue Familiarity	Have you worked at our venue? Knowing load in and sound.	Specific familiarity with the venue's layout.

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Pittsburgh-Area Considerations



- **Venue-Specific Experience:** Pittsburgh mitzvah celebrations happen across a wide range of venue types, from downtown hotel ballrooms to country clubs, community spaces, and (why is North Hills in this? Is it for SEO?) event spaces. Ask whether the team has worked at your specific venue before, since load-in coordination, sound restrictions, and preferred-vendor lists vary a lot property to property.
- **Synagogue & Community Ties:** Many families are coordinating closely with a specific congregation, from Squirrel Hill to Fox Chapel to Sewickley. Ask whether the team has experience coordinating with the family's rabbi or cantor on service-to-party transitions, since some congregations have their own timing customs around the Horah or blessings.
- **Seasonal & Weather Logistics:** Spring and fall events here often involve an outdoor component or a tent. Confirm the team's backup weather plan and power or generator needs and make sure this is addressed directly in the "Backup Plans" conversation during your consultation.
- **Local Vendor Cross-Referencing:** Pittsburgh's Mitzvah and event vendor community is tight knit. Ask your entertainment team for referrals to photographers, caterers, and event designers they have worked well with locally, which can save significant research time.

Budget & Pricing Transparency



- **Base Package:** What is typically included: standard MC and DJ hours, core sound system, and basic dance floor lighting.
- **Common Add-Ons:** What is typically extra: additional hours, extra dancers or hype team members, premium or upgraded lighting, and specialty add-ons like photo booths, caricature artists or airbrush stations. Party Enhancers, such as light-up foam sticks, hats, and sunglasses always bring a party atmosphere.
- **Fee Transparency:** Ask directly whether travel fees, overtime rates, and taxes are billed.

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Team Size & Roles Beyond MC/DJ

- **Lighting & AV Technicians:** Larger events may have dedicated lighting or audio-visual technician separated from the DJ, especially where a video montage or livestream is involved.
- **Day-Of Coordinator:** Ask who is the single point of contact on event day if a question or issue comes up.

Insurance & Licensing

Reputable entertainment companies carry general liability insurance, and many Pittsburgh-area venues now require a certificate of insurance before they will allow load-in. Confirm this early so it does not become a last-minute scramble and ask whether the company can provide a certificate naming your venue as an additional insured party if required.

Post-Event Follow-Up

Ask whether the team or DJ provides any of the following after the event, since many families value these for sharing with extended family who could not attend:

- **Event Recap:** A short recap video or photo gallery from the event.
- **Custom Assets:** Copies of any custom montage or graphics created for the celebration.
- **Feedback Loop:** A quick post-event check-in call or email to review how the night went.

Sample Event Timeline

Time / Phase	What's Happening
Cocktail Hour	Background music, MC greets arriving guests, interactive games or a caricature artist set up.
Grand Entrance	MC introduces the family and the mitzvah child; high-energy entrance song and lighting cues.
Candle Lighting / Montage	Scripted, personalized segment; DJ cues pre-approved music per candle or per honoree. Slideshow along with Music usually 3–5 minutes.
The Horah	Live band or DJ leads traditional dancing; MC manages safety and crowd participation. Selects family or friends to hold the chair.

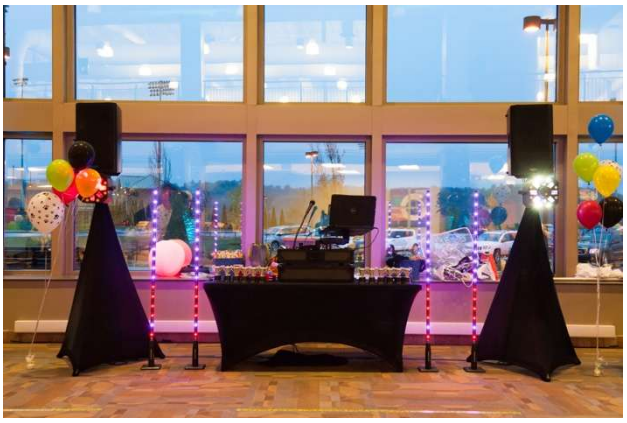
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Dinner Service	Lower-volume background music; MC handles toasts, blessings, and any video montage.
Open Dancing	Full DJ set blending current hits with classics; dancers/hype team keep multiple generations engaged.
Interactive Activities	Photo booths, airbrush station, or arcade games run alongside the dance floor.
Last Dance & Send-Off	Closing song, final thank-you from the MC, guests sent off.

Securing Your Team & Finalizing Details

Once you find the team that feels like the right match, securing the details ensures a smooth, stress-free countdown to the big day:

- **Specify Your Talent:** Ensure your agreement explicitly names your chosen MC and DJ, guaranteeing the exact personnel you met will be on-stage.
- **Itemize Equipment & Production:** Confirm that sound systems, wireless microphones, dance floor lighting, and any interactive extras are clearly detailed.
- **Establish Your Planning Calendar:** Set clear check-in dates for sharing playlist preferences, "do-not-play" lists, grand entrance lineups, and final schedule reviews, typically mapped out 4 to 6 weeks prior to the event.



If you are looking for guidance on bringing your vision to life or would like to schedule a personalized consultation for your upcoming Mitzvah celebration, Kelli Burns Entertainment is always here to help tailor an unforgettable event experience for your family.

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