



Put **Your** Art
In Our Walls!

**ArtHouse: the Award
Winning Educational
Toy Dollhouse from
Storyboard Toys!**

What I love best of all about ArtHouse is the open-ended adaptability to become so many different and individual play environments. ArtHouse provides the backdrop, and children fill in the blanks according to their age, interest, skill and imagination.
- Julie Creighton,
Contributing Editor,
Parenting magazine

An all around toy for everyone. They all loved it! I would highly recommend this product for its exceptional quality and educational value.
- judge's report,
Teachers' Choice Award

I love how the children use their imagination and play together!
- Linda Scauzillo,
Site Coordinator,
Cambridge Elementary,
Brevard Public Schools

I am very pleased! ArtHouse allows children to use their skill and imagination to bring their visions to life.
- Tracey Barrios,
Educational Regional
Manager
ChildrenFirst Inc.



Religious Education: an Example ArtHouse Student Project on Jewish Bar Mitzvah Traditions

ArtHouse is entirely appropriate and valuable for project-based lessons in Jewish elementary schools, Shabbat schools, JCC day-care and after-school programs, and for Hebrew language instruction.

In this example student project, Sam presented memories of his recent Bar Mitzvah. Jewish tradition teaches that parents are responsible for the behavior of their sons until the age of 13 years and one day (and daughters until age 12). After that, boys automatically become Bar Mitzvah, girls become Bat Mitzvah, and collectively they become B'nai Mitzvah. Importantly, as mature members of their community they become eligible to read the Torah publicly and obligated to fulfill the responsibilities of Jewish life. Traditions grow and multiply. The ceremony that marks this rite of passage has developed into an important event.

The Torah is the first five books of the Bible, and an "aliyah" is a public blessing of (or reading from) the Torah on behalf of their synagogue congregation. The centerpiece of B'nai Mitzvah celebrations is the youth's first aliyah. Today it's common practice for Bar Mitzvah celebrants to do even more. They usually learn and deliver the haftarah portion of the Shabbat service. This is a reading from the prophets, concluding with a traditional chant.

To do all this well, the youth must first learn some Hebrew language. Sam's Rabbi explained the importance of Hebrew school: The curriculum is designed to teach students the prayers they need for the B'nai Mitzvah service. The Rabbi further explained that the Hebrew school program teaches students that we *practice* prayer. When we practice prayer, like practicing an instrument or a sport, we get better at it and it deepens our experience and renews our souls. During his Bar Mitzvah, Sam read in Hebrew from the Torah and explained his interpretation of the passage, both generally and personally.

During the service, the synagogue's Torah is symbolically and literally passed from the hands of one generation to another. Above, in the left-hand panel, three generations of family are shown. Sam is illustrated carefully carrying the Torah scrolls. It's another tradition, in their synagogue, to carry the word out through the congregation. Each worshipper gently touches their prayer book to the precious scrolls.

In the center panel above, Sam's proud father is shown holding the Torah. Traditionally, after the youth's first aliyah the parents recite blessings too.



At Sam's synagogue, B'nai Mitzvah celebrations coincide with regular Saturday Shabbat services, and they're followed by the offering of a Kiddush (a blessing of wine, that in this case precedes a reception) that the entire congregation attends. After the Kiddush reception, the party moves to another location for a meal, dancing, and celebration. These pictures show elements from both receptions. In the center panel Sam is shown lifted up in a boisterous traditional "chair dance". In the right-hand panel Sam thanks family and friends for support given throughout the Bar Mitzvah process.

Sam's Bar Mitzvah was the first I ever attended, and it moved me deeply. After the Kiddush, I overheard Sam quietly tell his younger sister that it was the best day of his life and he hoped her Bat Mitzvah would be the best day of hers. That joy was evident throughout the day!

Sam had appeared so comfortable leading the congregation in prayer, and reading from the Torah. The celebration of Shabbat occurs each and every week, but it's never a show or spectacle. In leading the congregation in prayer, Sam simply joined the community in a very profound way.

(Note: Sam is the son of Donnie and Ellen, dear friends of ours since high school. When we told Sam we'd been invited to present ArtHouse to a conference of Jewish educators, he volunteered to create demonstration decorations. He wanted to help us show how incredibly versatile ArtHouse is as a teaching aide for all sorts of Jewish cultural and religious education programs.)