

Shomrei Torah

Wayne Conservative Congregation

Bat Mitzvah

בת מצוה

and

Bar Mitzvah

בר מצוה

Handbook

“Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths, but the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands.”

— Anne Frank

Message from the Rabbi

Dear *B'nai Mitzvah* Families,

Let me begin by wishing you a *Mazal Tov* on your *simcha*!

Celebrating a child becoming a *Bar or Bat Mitzvah* is an exciting and an important milestone in the life the entire family. I believe very strongly that this is a time of family celebration and that all the members of your family need to educate and prepare themselves to get the most out of this time in your lives.

I would recommend that all of you begin attending Shabbat services **NOW** on a regular basis, if you are not already doing so. Being actively involved in your child's preparation and leading them by example throughout this process is important. It is not that you did or did not do this as a child that makes an impression upon them, but rather what they see you do now.

The greatest obstacle to Jewish involvement today is lack of time and lack of knowledge -- if you are willing to work on the first problem, then I am here to help you with the second. Let this be a time of growth and celebration for everyone in the family.

Lifecycle events are very exciting, but they can also be very stressful. Try to remember that you are having a religious celebration and that everything else is just trimming to make it nice. Relax and enjoy. Learn, participate and grow Jewishly.

B'simcha,

Rabbi Randy Mark
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Message from the Director of Congregational Learning

Dear *B'nai Mitzvah* Families,

Mazal Tov on this very important milestone!

Our goal, in the Religious School, is to foster a strong Jewish identity and provide the tools for a proud Jewish life. Prayer, the study of Torah, and more are woven into our curriculum, designed to guide our children and help them prepare for their *Bar and Bat Mitzvah* and their whole life. We encourage our children to become active learners, engaged members of our Shomrei Torah community, and find personal meaning. *Bar and Bat Mitzvah* is an important step along a life of Jewish leaning and living.

Thank you for all your support and know we are always here to support you.

B'shalom,

Judith Kuper Jaffe
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LearningDirector@ShomreiTorahwcc.org

The Meaning of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*

ה:כה - הוא הָיָה אֹמֵר: בֶּן שְׁלֹשׁ עָשָׂרָה לְמִצְוֹת.

At age thirteen one becomes subject to the commandments.

Mishnah Avot 5:25

Becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is beginning to assuming responsibility for one's own Jewish life. This is first mentioned in the *Mishnah*. At that time, the father of the thirteen-year-old boy recited a blessing thanking God for relieving him of his religious responsibility for his son. The ceremony as we know it today dates back to the fifteenth century. A boy was called to the Torah, indicating his willingness to participate in Jewish communal life. A *Kiddush* or *se'udah*, a festive meal, followed. A girl became *Bat Mitzvah* when she turned twelve years old. Celebrating a *Bat Mitzvah* in the same manner that we celebrate a *Bar Mitzvah* is a 20th century innovation by Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan z"l*.

Upon becoming a *Bar or Bat Mitzvah*, a young person joins the fellowship of Jews who count in the minyan, study Torah and perform mitzvot. *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* practices differ from congregation to congregation, even within the Conservative Movement. The philosophy and practices spelled out in this booklet represent those of Shomrei Torah.

To get the most out of this special time, it is important that both the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* and their family be a part of Shabbat services here at our synagogue on as regular basis as possible.

Being called to the Torah for the first time before the Congregation can be a very exciting, but also nerve wracking moment. It is Judaism's way of saying to every young person: You are important to us; what you do matters; we hope and pray that you will continue to make your parents, your synagogue and the entire Jewish people proud by the way you behave.

The joy in being the parent of a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is highly personal. Only you can appreciate precisely how you feel at that special moment and what your child's affirmation of Jewish tradition means to you. But the joy is also shared with the entire community, for this day is possible only because you are a member of our community.

**Zichronah l'vrachah – May their memory be a blessing*

From Generation to Generation

והעולם עומד על שלשה דברים, תורה, עבודה וחסד
 עומד על שלשה דברים

*The world stands on three things; Torah, Avodah and Gemilut Hasadim.
 (Study, Worship/Service to God and Deeds of Loving Kindness)*

Pirkei Avot 1:2

Preparation and Instruction

T = *Torah* (Study in our Religious School or GBDS & with a Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutor)

A = *Avodah* (Service attendance requirements)

G = *Gemilut Hasadim* (Mitzvah Project, 20 Mitzvah hours minimum)

T = Torah (Study in our Religious School or GBDS)

Learning our rich Jewish legacy and life skills are as important as learning for one day and as a result, attendance in our Religious School or GBDS for at least five years directly preceding the B'nai Mitzvah date is a requirement.

It is a much nicer experience when the students in the class feel connected to each other. Signing your child up for Kadima and having them participate in the programs helps to create community bonds and friendship.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Tutoring Policy

1. *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* students are provided with 18 hours of tutoring which is the equivalent of nine months of tutoring. The cost of these lessons is included in the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* fee. Some students can prepare in nine months, but others need more time; if you think your child would benefit from starting earlier, please let us know. Their tutor should keep accurate records of your attendance at regularly scheduled appointments; and we also encourage parents to keep track. Once the 18 lessons are over it becomes a private tutoring arrangement between the parents and the tutor.
2. If your child has an IEP on file with our school, they are given extra tutoring time at no extra cost to the family. Children with learning issues may begin their lessons one year in advance of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah date and receive an additional six (6) hours; but only if arranged in advance.
3. Tutoring may not be scheduled to conflict with Religious School or services and ideally not during Kadima events. When a lesson is scheduled for a time when the synagogue office is closed and no one is in the building or a lesson is given off premises, a parent or other responsible adult must remain at the lesson for the entire session. No dropping off is permitted. It is against synagogue policy for a tutor to be alone with a student.
4. The following is a description of our "no-show" policy:
 - Cancellations must be made 24 hours in advance.
 - "No-shows" are billed as if the lessons took place.
 - Exceptions can be made in the case of emergencies.

Be advised that it is our policy that all students are tutored by one of the synagogue B'nai Mitzvah tutors. The students are assigned their tutor by the Rabbi. Anyone wishing an exception, must petition the Executive Board for permission.

The D'var Torah

Each *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is asked to prepare a *D'var Torah* which literally means, “words of Torah”. It is our expectation that they will read through their Torah portion and their Haftarah (from the Book of Prophets) in English and be familiar with the content. They will meet with the Rabbi to select a topic. A *D'var Torah* is not a summary of the Torah portion, but rather uses the Torah or Haftarah as a jumping off point to teach the congregation something that they have learned about their parsha. They can get help from family, friends and teachers, but in the end it is an oral presentation that they give alone, so when it is their own work, it makes the process much easier. After a first draft has been read by the Rabbi, comments will be given to help with the final editing. Since it is a verbal presentation, even after the written document has been approved, it won't become a finalized document until it has been heard.

A = Avodah (Service attendance requirements)

It has become increasingly evident that the significance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony is more meaningful when everyone in the family comes to this occasion adequately prepared. The ceremony has greater meaning when the parents and children view it as something more than a ritual carried out in a spiritual vacuum.

In addition, Bar/Bat Mitzvah instruction is supplementary to Religious School education and service attendance. Therefore, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student may be at the synagogue more often than in the past to be adequately prepared for their special day.

Since our children learn more from **what we do** than what we say, it is important that our actions reflect a concern for Judaism and Jewish education. Therefore, it is a requirement that all students attend a minimum of ten (10) Shabbat morning services and three (3) Friday night services a year, for five (5) years at Shomrei Torah, so that they become familiar with our Shabbat services. **It is highly recommended that in the year leading up to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration that the entire family come to a minimum of 10 Friday night and 20 Shabbat morning services.**

The purchase of kippot, tallit and tefillin is required for boys and strongly recommended for girls. They may be acquired through the synagogue gift shop. You can also order *kippot* for your *simcha* through the gift shop. When ordering kippot please keep in mind to order not only kippot for your invited guests but also for the members that attend Shabbat services.

Each child is unique and so what will be mastered will differ. We encourage every Bar/Bat Mitzvah to do as much as possible. How much material covered depends upon the child's background knowledge, learning style, available time, as well as his/her commitment and desire to achieve. We provide the tutor that will take them as far as they are willing to go in the preparation process, **you must provide the time and the motivation.** You are encouraged to look upon this event as a family *simcha*. It is nice to see family members get up and read Torah. Members of the family are encouraged to study and prepare those parts of the service that the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* will not be doing.

Prayer Before the Ark

Each *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is invited to offer a prayer before the open Ark early in the Torah service. Many have done the prayer on page 140 of our siddur. However, that is not the only option; you can request to see others, find your own or even write one. In the end your choice of prayer will need to be approved by the Rabbi.

Monday/Thursday Morning Minyan

On the Monday and/or Thursday morning prior the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* the family is encouraged to come to morning *minyan* which begins at 7 AM and lasts about an hour. This is when *tefillin* are worn and your child can be on the *bimah* in front of a small crowd. They will be able to lead the Torah service and read from the Torah. You are also encouraged to host breakfast following *minyan*. Please contact the Synagogue Administrator to arrange.

Honors Available to the Family

You will be celebrating your simcha during a Shomrei Torah service. As such, you are allowed to participate in the distribution of honors. **You must remain aware of the fact that this is a synagogue function and not a private service and must adhere to the synagogue's rules for assigning honors.** Every person is limited to **one part** in the service. For example, someone can have an aliyah to the Torah or can carry a Torah, but cannot do both. In addition, we also have English readings in our service that can be done by non-Jewish participants and parts that children who are not yet *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* can do, please coordinate this with the Rabbi.

The Rabbi will meet with you prior to your child's *simcha* to discuss the necessary information needed to help distribute your aliyot and other honors. The distribution of these honors is not final until approved by the Rabbi. For your convenience we have included a worksheet that lists the aliyot and other honors available to you and your family during a typical Shabbat morning service. Please fill it in and return it to the Rabbi two - four weeks prior to your *simcha*. **If you are preparing a program to hand out, it is recommended that you have it reviewed by the Rabbi prior to having it printed.**

To avoid any embarrassment or awkward moments, please inform, in advance, any relatives and/or friends who are receiving honors the day of your *simcha*. We **strongly** recommend that you stress the importance of reviewing what is expected of them, especially the Torah blessings. We also have included a guide for those who may need help. We will be happy to supply you with copies of the blessings in Hebrew and English transliteration.

The honor of *Hagba*, the lifting of the Torah, is particularly challenging. If you have someone in mind that you would like to do *Hagba* at your *simcha*, please contact the Rabbi. *Hagba*, like Torah reading or an aliyah to the Torah is something that should only be done by someone who knows how to do it and may be asked to demonstrate proficiency prior to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Additionally, you may have family or friends that you would like to lead a part of the service or Gabbai; this can be done, however it must be arranged with the Rabbi in advance.

It is essential that the people who are receiving honors come to services **on time**. They need to identify themselves to our ushers who will then instruct them. We also suggest that you have alternates in mind, should some of your honorees be unable to attend or if last minute changes be required.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration covers the entire Shabbat. The family of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah are expected to be present at the Friday night service prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. This is true even when the Bar/Bat Mitzvah occurs at Mincha or during the week.

As Parents of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Your child's attitude towards becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is most often a reflection of your attitude towards it. The value your son or daughter places on participation in the religious service is also a reflection of the values you place on this event. The following suggestions are offered to make this day a memorable milestone in your child's life:

1. Preparation for the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* begins well in advance of that day. The necessary preparations are partially outlined in the handbook. Even as dates are selected, facilities and caterers booked, guests invited and honors distributed, so should certain Jewish observances and activity patterns be introduced into the home to emphasize the seriousness of the forthcoming religious event. Since each family's pattern of Jewish observance varies, what your family introduces is highly personal. Perhaps it might include observing Shabbat at home on Friday nights: lighting candles, or making *Kiddush and motzi*.
2. The goal of our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* tutors is to insure that your child is well prepared. However, if your child does not invest the maximum time and effort at home in his/her studies, the tutor's effort will not be as effective. Please get involved in your child's studies at home. Encourage them to study every day. Be present when the studying is going on, regardless of your expertise in reading Hebrew. Your presence and encouragement will make a difference!
3. Among the important elements of your child's *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* instruction is an explanation of the meaning and significance of tefillin, and how they are used in daily worship. It is essential for this part of the instruction that your child has his or her own pair of tefillin. The Rabbi is available for help and instruction. Every boy must own and every girl should have access to a set of *tefillin*. *Tefillin* are available for purchase from our gift shop.
4. Just as college preparation begins prior to high school graduation, so should continued participation in Jewish life be discussed before *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Shomrei Torah options include:
 - Participation in our Hebrew High School (TAST-e) leading to Confirmation in 10th grade.
 - Participation in our synagogue's Middle School youth group, Kadima; leading to involvement in USY in High School.

The Jewish Adolescent Survey was a large-scale investigation made by the Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA) in conjunction with Brandeis University. Among its many findings was that:

- a. **“For each year past Bar/Bat Mitzvah that a teen is involved in something Jewish, there is an incremental increase in the likelihood that s/he will continue to be involved in things Jewish as an adult;” and**
- b. **“Parents are critical to teens’ decision to stay involved.”**

Ushering Responsibilities

Members of other families who will be celebrating a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* will serve as ushers at your *simcha*. Similarly, you will be expected to serve as ushers for two other families. We refer to you as “Family Ushers”.

When possible, both parents should come to fulfill this obligation. In the year prior to your celebration, you will receive a letter from the synagogue giving you the dates that you will be expected to usher, usually the two *simchas* before yours. If you cannot make the ushering date assigned to your family, ***it is your responsibility to switch with another family and then notify the synagogue office.***

Ushering Responsibilities include:

- Ushers should sit among the peers of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child in order to monitor the movement and behavior of the children to insure that it is appropriate at all times.
- One of the more difficult parts of the ushering responsibility is controlling the unsupervised friends of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Experience has taught us that the farther back children sit, the louder and more disruptive they become. Therefore, you should endeavor to seat them in the pews rather than the chairs in the back of the sanctuary, if possible.
- Large groups of children should not be allowed to leave together, nor should they be allowed to remain out of the service for an extended period of time.
- Ushers should not congregate in the lobby and should exhibit proper synagogue behavior.
- Please remember that on Shabbat – the use of cell phones, cameras, electronic games, etc. is not permitted in or around the synagogue. **YOU MAY WARN CHILDREN AND THEN, IF NECESSARY, CONFISCATE ELECTRONIC ITEMS AND PUT THEM IN THE OFFICE UNTIL AFTER THE SERVICE IS OVER.**

G = *Gemilut Hasadim* (Mitzvah Project)

We encourage every Bar/Bat Mitzvah to do a Mitzvah Project as part of their preparations. We want them to understand that becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah is more than just learning some prayers and having a party; it is about taking your place in the world. A Tzedakah Project is one where you give money and a Mitzvah Project is one that requires you to actually do something with your own two hands. They are not mutually exclusive, but clearly a Mitzvah Project is more meaningful. Great resources include: www.ziv.org.il, www.goodpeoplefund.org or speak with the Director of Congregational Learning or the Rabbi for ideas.

“The work is great, it is not for you to finish,
but neither are you free to desist from it altogether.”

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Lo alecha ha-m'lakha ligmor...

Pirkei Avot 2:21

Gifts and Donations

Learning to give *tzedakah*, as part of a *simcha*, is an important part of becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Discuss this with your child. Encourage your child to give to a cause of his/her own choosing. If you need direction, please contact the Rabbi.

It is fitting that you, as well, express your gratitude by giving *tzedakah*. You are encouraged to contribute to any of the various congregational funds.

A leaf on the Tree of Life may be ordered by contacting the synagogue office. If you wish to order a leaf and have it presented at your *simcha*, please order it well in advance.

The Kiddush

It is our hope that you will participate in the *Kiddush* Luncheon that is held weekly in the Pittel Social Hall at the synagogue together with all your guests as well as our Shabbat regulars who have come to celebrate with you.

However, if in spite of Jewish law's explicit position against going out on Shabbat, a family chooses to leave after services, there will still be a *Kiddush* of light refreshments in the lobby for your guests and you will also be responsible for sponsorship of the usual *Kiddush* Luncheon held in the Pittel Social Hall.

1. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* family should contact the Synagogue Administrator six to eight months prior to the *simcha* to review all *Kiddush* preparations that are needed. Of course you are free to contact him at any time with any questions, but you should have your final plans in place four to six weeks prior to your *simcha*. In this way, the Synagogue is aware of your plans and can meet the needs of your family.
2. As a Conservative synagogue, the laws of Shabbat and *kashrut* must be observed when planning your *simcha*. Therefore, smoking, photography, audio/visual recording, and the use of cell phones and pagers is not permitted in the synagogue during Shabbat, nor can any supplies be brought into or taken from the building on Shabbat.
3. By paying your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* fee you become a co-sponsor of the *Oneg Shabbat* (up to 50 people) on Friday evening and the *Kiddush* lunch for the congregation (up to 50 people, including both your guests and Shabbat regulars) on Shabbat morning. **If you are expecting additional guests or want additional items, these items will be your financial responsibility.** It is your responsibility to insure those items will be delivered to the synagogue prior to Shabbat.
4. When ordering food from a caterer, do not forget that we average 30-35 Shabbat Regulars; they will be your guests at the *Kiddush* as well. We average 10-12 people on Friday night; and they may be joining you at your *Oneg Shabbat*. There is always the prospect that a greater or lesser number of congregants will be present. **Most Friday night services are at 6 pm and the *Oneg Shabbat* precedes it starting at 5:30 pm.**
6. If you choose to utilize a commercial caterer for your *Kiddush* or *Oneg Shabbat*, it must be one from our list of approved kosher caterers or be approved by the Rabbi. If a caterer is to do the *Kiddush* or *Oneg Shabbat*, please advise the office at least six to eight weeks in advance. **No deliveries will be accepted after 12 noon on the Friday afternoon of your *simcha*. IT IS**

IMPORTANT THAT THE SYNAGOGUE ADMINISTRATOR BE KEPT INFORMED OF YOUR CATERING PLANS.

7. If the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* family chooses to have flowers on the *bimah* delivery **MUST** be made before 12 noon on the Friday afternoon of your *simcha*. Many families chose to forgo flowers and instead use this as a mitzvah opportunity. We have had items from nonperishable food to sports equipment in lieu of *bimah* flowers.

8. No food may be prepared by the family in their own kitchen and brought into the synagogue; this includes fruit and vegetable platters. The family may order fruit and vegetable platters from ShopRite or any of the approved caterers.

9. All deliveries, whether they be food, fruit, flowers, decorations, kippot, or other items must be in the synagogue by 12:00 noon on Friday. **Under no circumstances will the synagogue allow any items to come in to or leave the synagogue on Shabbat.**

Oneg Shabbat & Kiddush Fee Schedule

On Friday night there will be an Oneg Shabbat. If it is a 6 PM service, then the Oneg Shabbat will be at 5:30 PM and if it is 6:30 pm service, then the Oneg Shabbat will be after the service. We also have a Kiddush immediately following the morning service. As a Bar/Bat Mitzvah parent, you are the sponsor of both of these functions.

A *Kiddush* must be done at the synagogue regardless of where your social function will be held. Each family needs to provide a count of all guests attending, so that we may adequately provide food. We ask that you carefully consider the number of guests you are planning to have in order to avoid any embarrassment.

Use of Synagogue Facilities

If you wish to reserve the Social Hall for other than the standard *Kiddush* you must notify the Synagogue Administrator. You may use the Social Hall until 3:00 PM for a Standard Kiddush. A Room Preparation form must be filled out and given to the Synagogue Administrator at least 10 days prior to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. If you wish to use the Social Hall after 3:00 PM on Shabbat, or at any other time (e.g., Friday Night Dinner, Saturday night or Sunday party), you must sign a Rental Contract and pay an additional charge to reserve and rent the room. It is to your benefit to do this as soon as possible to avoid a conflict with any other group wishing to reserve the room for the same date.

In planning any function at Shomrei Torah, caterers and their employees must observe the rules of Shabbat and the rules of the synagogue:

1. The use of photography and/or video equipment, cell phones, pagers and electronic games are not permitted on Shabbat in the synagogue or on the grounds.
2. The synagogue office must be notified in advance of all deliveries.
3. All deliveries to the synagogue must be made by 12 noon on Friday: including kippot, party favors, food, flowers, etc.
4. Photographs may not be taken on Shabbat. The family may schedule another time to take all their Bar/Bat Mitzvah pictures in the Sanctuary. This is often done on Thursday evening or Friday morning.
5. The family may not remove any food, flowers, centerpieces, etc. from the synagogue on Shabbat.

6. Security for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah is available. If you desire to have security present, contact the Synagogue Administrator to arrange this. The family is responsible for the cost of security.
7. You must remain on the premises or have a responsible adult in your place until every child has been picked up.

If you will be using the building on a Saturday night, the building will be available to you 30 minutes following the conclusion of Shabbat so that you can begin to prepare for your guests. You may not be in the building on Shabbat to prepare for an event that will follow Shabbat. During daylight savings time this can be very late; therefore, please check with the Rabbi to find out when the building will be opened.

Publicity

We encourage you to submit to the office an article written by your child, along with a photo that will be included in our monthly L'Chaim newsletter.

Invitation and Guests

How many people you invite to your *simcha* will vary from family to family. We ask you to remember that you are part of a community and your child is part of a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* class. **You are expected to invite all the members of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah class. It is inappropriate and hurtful to exclude only a few children**

Appropriate Dress: You and your guests are attending a religious service. In order to help contribute to the dignity of the event, you and your guests should dress with appropriate modesty, dignity and good taste. Extremely short skirts/dresses, low cut or strapless tops are deemed inappropriate as are casual clothing such as jeans, sweats, shorts or athletic attire. All men are expected to wear a *kippah* and women are encouraged to do so. All Jewish males, post-*Bar Mitzvah* are expected to wear a *tallit* and women are encouraged to do so as well.

Guests should be informed in advance as to what is expected of them during services. They should be sent a copy of our rules of decorum (available from the office) and they should be instructed **not** to bring gifts to the service.

The Day Itself

Shabbat morning services begin promptly at 9:30 AM. Friday night services start at either 6 or 6:30 PM. Please check to see the start time for the week of your *simcha*. If it is a 6 PM service, then the *Oneg Shabbat* will be at 5:30 PM and everyone will leave after the service unless there is a Shabbat dinner that night. If it is a 6:30 PM service, then the *Oneg Shabbat* will follow the service. **Once services begin, please refrain from getting up and greeting guests.** Those guests receiving honors should be at the synagogue on time and should identify themselves to the ushers on duty.

1. Remember to bring your *tallit* on Shabbat morning and remind your guests to bring their *tallit* as well. If it is a Sunday *Rosh Hodesh*, then remind them to bring *tallit and tefillin*.
2. We allow the custom of "gently tossing" candy on the bimah to wish your child a sweet life. It is not intended to be an attack on your child. We recommend a maximum of 12 individually wrapped, soft, kosher candies (such as fruit gems) be tossed. The candies can be distributed to adults in the front by an usher. Extra candies can be placed in a second basket to be kept on the bimah to be given out by the Rabbi
3. Some parents want the opportunity to address their son/daughter from the bimah during the ceremony. It can be done by reciting a Parent's Prayer that the Rabbi can make available to you or you can find or write your own brief prayer and have it approved by the Rabbi. It should take

no more than two or three minutes and it should be appropriate for the congregational setting. A long personal address, while often moving, is better suited for the reception than the service.

4. Following the service, there can be a receiving line where you can greet your guests together with the Rabbi, if you so desire.

Rules of Decorum

1. On Shabbat, there is no smoking, photography, use of cell phones or pagers allowed in or on the synagogue grounds including the social hall. Texting has become a problem at services; phones should be off and out of sight in the synagogue on Shabbat. If a teen is seen using a phone, they will be warned first and then their phone may be confiscated until their departure.
2. All men are asked to wear a kippah and women are strongly encouraged to wear a kippah or head covering. Women called to the bimah are expected to wear a head covering. Kippot is to be kept on during the time in the social hall too.
3. It is appropriate for Jewish men to wear a *tallit* (prayer shawl) during morning services. Women are not required, but are encouraged to wear a *tallit*, especially if they will lead a part of the service or read from the Torah.
4. No one is permitted to enter or leave the sanctuary during Torah reading, when the Bar or Bat Mitzvah is chanting their Haftarah or giving their D'var Torah, the Rabbi's sermon or when the Ark is open.
5. During the Shema, the Amidah (Silent Prayer), and the Kedushah, there is no entering into or exiting from the sanctuary.
6. Children may come up to the bimah only if accompanied by a parent who has an honor or if specifically invited by the Rabbi.
7. We like children present! Parents of crying or agitated children should calm their children outside the sanctuary at which time they are again encouraged to return to their seats. we want children present.
8. Teenage guests of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah are encouraged to sit in the pews and not the chairs in the back of the sanctuary, if possible.
9. Large groups of teenagers are not allowed to leave the sanctuary together. Guests are expected to return to services promptly.
10. Our teenage guests are expected to follow all the rules and not be disruptive. Should their behavior warrant it, an usher may ask two or more children to sit separately.

Payment Responsibilities

You are required to be current in all your financial obligations including dues, building fund, Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee and Religious School tuition. Unless you are in good standing, you may not contract for the Social Hall, schedule Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring, or even celebrate the Bar/Bat Mitzvah in the synagogue.

- All Bar/Bat Mitzvah fees must be paid no later than six (6) months prior to the event.
- A deposit of **\$250 is required when you agree and reserve the date for your simcha.**

- Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring usually begins nine months before the event but in some cases eleven (11) or twelve (12) months before the event. \$625 is due at the time tutoring begins. A final payment of \$625 is due no later than six (6) months prior to the event.
- The family using the synagogue is responsible for any damages to the facilities.

Shomrei Torah Rental Rules and Regulations

1. Hours of use are limited to those specifically noted in the rental contract.
2. Alterations, additions or rearrangements of furnishings, draperies or decorations shall not be made without prior approval of the administrator.
3. The use of tacks, nails and screws is prohibited.
4. Minor children are not permitted on the Synagogue's property or in the building unless directly under authorized adult supervision.
5. The Congregation assumes no responsibility or liability for damage or loss of personal property of anyone while on the Synagogue premises. Personal property, including motor vehicles brought or left on the premises shall at all times be left at the owner's risk.
6. Rental applications cannot be approved unless the administrator is satisfied that the caterer is properly insured and in "Good Standing" with the synagogue and satisfies the standards of use and conduct established by the Ritual Committee and the Rabbi as to kashrut.
7. All persons, organizations and/or their caterers shall leave the utilized facilities in an undamaged and clean condition **immediately** after the function, **both inside and outside** the synagogue.
8. Use of kitchen facilities is limited to range, oven, refrigerator, sink and counters. Coffee urns may be used only by prior arrangement with the office.
9. All deliveries to and/or removals from the kitchen shall be made by way of the rear entrance to the kitchen. **All Friday deliveries must be made before 12 noon.**
10. A refundable security deposit of \$200 is required prior to the event in addition to the room rental fee and deposit.

Time Table

12 Months Prior to *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*

- Begin attending Shabbat services regularly.
- Begin reading your Torah and Haftarah portion in English.
- Meet with the Synagogue Administrator to discuss Bar/Bat Mitzvah plans.
- Select a caterer, music and photographer. (Have the caterer complete the Caterer's Contract and return it with your Rental Contract)
- Meet with Rabbi.
- Tutoring begins (11-12 months prior)

9 Months Prior to *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*

- Prepare preliminary guest list.

- Begin to review Friday Night Kiddush and Torah Blessings.
- Discuss Torah readers with the Rabbi.
- Choose your Mitzvah Project.

6 Months Prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah

- Schedule a meeting with Rabbi Mark to go over specifics of the service.
- Review guest list.
- Order invitations, *kippot*, *tallit* & *tefillin*.
- Make sure that all financial obligations to the synagogue are paid in full.

6-8 Weeks Prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah

- Mail invitations.
- Order flowers for reception.
- Contact the office to make arrangements for scheduling your photographer.
- Write a D'var Torah and have it approved by the Rabbi.
- Schedule picture taking session with the Synagogue Administrator.
- Submit an article and photo to the Administrative Assistant for L'Chaim.
- Order a leaf for the Tree of Life.

4 Weeks Prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah

- Review Honors' List with the Rabbi; as well as program & Parent's Prayer.
- Confirm Honors
- Schedule *Bimah* run through, pictures & Monday or Thursday breakfast.

2 Weeks Prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah

- Give completed Honors' List to the Rabbi.
- Meet with the Synagogue Administrator to finalize the number of guests that will be attending, review all plans and preparations and ask any last minute questions.
- Caterer should email room setup requirements to admin@shomreitorahwcc.org.
- Prepare the Room Preparation Form and return it to Synagogue office.

The Week of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah

- Do *bimah* run-through of service with the Rabbi.
- *Tallit and Tefillin* for Monday or Thursday morning minyan and breakfast
- Take *Bimah* pictures

Suggestions for After the Bar/Bat Mitzvah

- **The week after** the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* – Come to Shabbat services, show that your service is the start of something, not a onetime affair.
- **One month after** the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* – Come to services for an aliyah to the Torah.
- **One year after** the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* – Come participate in honor of the first anniversary of your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* and every year thereafter. If there is no *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, you can do your haftarah again; otherwise, you can do a Torah reading or participate in some other way.

Mazel Tov

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Honors List – One Honor/Person!

Open Ark: _____

Remove Torah: _____

Close Ark: _____

Carry Torah: _____
(Can be the Bar/Bat Mitzvah)

ALİYOT (Include complete English and Hebrew name including parent's Hebrew names)

Rishon/Kohen: _____

Sheyni/Levi: _____

Shelishi: _____

Revi'i: _____

Hamishi: Congregational Use, you do not assign this one

Shishi: _____

Shevi'i (Usually the Parents): _____

Maftir (The Bar/Bat Mitzvah): _____

Hagba (Lifting the Torah): Available upon request, please speak with the Rabbi

Gelila (Dressing the Torah): _____

Prayer for the Community: _____

Prayer for Our Country: _____

Prayer for Israel (Hebrew): _____

Prayer for Peace: _____

Carry Torah: _____

Open Ark: _____

Return Torah: _____

Close Ark: _____

Aleinu Ark Opening (2): _____

Shomrei Torah Room Preparation Order

Please submit this order to the Synagogue Office at least 5 to 14 days prior to the Bar / Bat Mitzvah in order to allow for proper preparation of the room.

DATE AND TIME OF EVENT _____

EXPECTED ATTENDANCE _____ CATERER _____

ROOM DESIRED:

SOCIAL HALL ___ LIBRARY _____ CLASSROOM _____

KITCHEN Yes/No SUPERVISING MASHGIACH _____ DAIRY/MEAT/PARVE

ROOM ARRANGEMENT:

NUMBER AND TYPE OF TABLES _____
WITH _____ CHAIRS EACH

NUMBER AND TYPE OF TABLE FOR BUFFET _____

NOTE: IF NECESSARY, PLEASE SUBMIT A SET-UP DIAGRAM.

DIAGRAM SUBMITTED _____

WILL FORMAL COAT CHECKING BE REQUIRED? _____
(not available on Shabbat)

SPECIAL REQUIRMENTS:

NAME AND PHONE NUMBER OF PERSON RESPONSIBLE:

Print Name

Signature

Date

Rental Fee _____ (If applicable)

Date of Deposit _____ Amount of Deposit _____

Date of \$200 Security Deposit _____

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Checklist:

DATE OF BAR / BAT MITZVAH: _____

NAME OF BAR / BAT MITZVAH: _____

NAME OF PARENTS: _____

- SECURITY :** We obtain security guards for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and the family will be billed directly by the security company.
- FLOWERS/FOOD BASKETS/CENTER PIECES ***
- KIPPOT/TALLIT/TEFILIN:** Should be ordered at least 8 weeks in advance – contact Lee Ann Beck if interested – 973-628-1388.
- TREE OF LIFE LEAF:** should be ordered at least 6-8 weeks in advance – contact the synagogue office
- PICTURES & RUN THROUGH:** time and date set with Rabbi
- CANDY: 12 pieces ONLY** -can be thrown at Bar/Bat Mitzvah - must be soft - additional candy can be placed on the bimah for distribution
- DECORATIONS** (balloons, etc.) *
- LINENS** *
- PROGRAM OF SERVICE** (optional)

***All deliveries and any set up must arrive and be completed
no later than 12 noon on Friday.**

Bar or Bat Mitzvah *Gemilut Hasadim* Project Paperwork

Candidate's Name _____ Date Submitted ___/___/___

Proposed Topic for *Gemilut Hasadim* Project _____

Specific Mitzvah Concept _____

Action Plan _____

Parent's Signature _____

Estimated Completion* Date ___/___/___ Estimated hours ___/___/___

DOCL (Judy) Signature _____

We encourage that the Bar/ Bat Mitzvah *Gemilut Hasidim* Project continue past this date, but we expect a proposed project deadline.

Approved Kosher Caterers' List

Foremost Caterers
65 Anderson Avenue
Moonachie, NJ
201-664-2465

Foster Village
469 S Washington Ave,
Bergenfield, NJ 07621
Phone: (201) 384-7100

Kosher Express (Chinese)
22-16 Morlot Ave
Fair Lawn, NJ 07410
201.791.8818
www.locu.com

Kosher Nosh Deli
894 Prospect Ave.
Glen Rock, NJ
201-445-1186

Lindalicious
River Road
Fair Lawn, NJ 07410
201-791-2900

The Lox, Stock & Deli
228 Ryders Lane
East Brunswick
732-214-8900

Ma'adan Caterers
446 Cedar Lane
Teaneck, NJ
1-800-Maadan

Manhattan Bagel*
163 Hamburg Tpke
Wayne, NJ 07470
manhattanbagel.com
(973) 925-4000
*Uncut bagels only

Noah's Ark
493 Cedar Lane
Teaneck, NJ
1-800 772-NOAH

Perfect Pita
13-22 River Road
Fair Lawn, NJ
201-794-8700

Petak's
19-03 Fair Lawn Ave
Fair Lawn, NJ
201-797-5010

Signature Creations /
Deli King Linden
Eddie Levy
628 St. George Ave
Linden, NJ
908-925-3909
Cell: 908.486.7889

Take A Break Catering
Yoni Siletski
20 N. Beverwyck Rd
Lake Hiawatha, NJ
201-674-0396

If you would like to use a caterer that is not on this approved list please present a Certificate of Kashrut to the Rabbi and a Certificate of Insurance to the Synagogue Administrator for approval. The office will then contact the caterer and send them a contract.

Useful Contact Information

- Rabbi Randall Mark, 973-696-2500 x18, rabbi@shomreitorahwcc.org
- Jay Hirschhorn, Synagogue Administrator, 973-696-2500 x12, admin@shomreitorahwcc.org
- Judith Kuper Jaffe, Director of Congregational Learning, 973-696-2500 x13, Learning Director@shomreitorahwcc.org
- Suzanne Zofi, Administrative Assistant, 973-696-2500 x10, office@shomreitorahwcc.org
- Lee Ann Beck, Gift Shop, 973-628-1388, beck30@optonline.net
- Seth Bader, Ritual Committee Chairperson, sethbader@gmail.com; 201-818-0573

For Further Reference

* Indicates items of special interest to parents

Overview and Preparation

***Cohen.** The Ultimate Bar/Bat Mitzvah Celebration Book: a Guide to Inspiring Ceremonies and Joyous Festivals. (2004).

***Davis.** Whose Bar/Bat Mitzvah is This, Anyway? A Guide for Parents Through a Family Rite of Passage (1998).

***Greenberg.** Mitzvah Chic: A New Approach to Hosting a Bar or Bat Mitzvah that is Meaningful, Hip, Relevant, Fun & Drop Dead Gorgeous (2006). 246.2

***Isaacson.** Bar & Bat Mitzvah in Israel: The Ultimate Family Sourcebook (1998).

Leneman. Bar/ Bat Mitzvah Basics: a Practical Guide to Coming of Age Together (2001).

Lewitt. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planbook (1996). 246.2

Metter. Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah: The Ceremony, the Party & How the Day Came to Be (2007). Clearly and concisely traces history and changing customs. J246.2

Milgram. Make Your Own Bar/ Bat Mitzvah: A Personal Approach to Creating a Meaningful Rite of Passage (2004) Creative, well-organized guide for kids.

***Moskovitz.** The Complete Bar/Bat Mitzvah Book (2000).

Ouaknin. Bar Mitzvah: A Guide to Spiritual Growth (2006) Thoughtful and stylishly designed.

***Salkin.** Putting God on the Guest List: How to Claim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah (2005). 246.2

Salkin. For Kids- Putting God on Your Guest List: How to Claim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Revised edition. (2007). 246.2

Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Goldin. Bat Mitzvah: A Jewish Girl's Coming of Age (1995) History, explanation, ritual. J246.2

Kimmel. Bar Mitzvah: A Jewish Boy's Coming of Age (1995) History, explanation, ritual. J246.2

Schwarz. "This One's for You " Poems for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Candle Lighting Ceremony (2003) Suggestions for the poetically challenged.

Weiss. Becoming a Bar Mitzvah: A Collection of Stories (2005) A collection of fast-paced, inspiring personal stories. YA246.2

Weiss. Becoming a Bat Mitzvah: A Treasury of Stories. (2004) A collection of personal stories that show the power and meaning of becoming a bat mitzvah. YA246.2

To Be a Mensch (Mitzvot and Middot)

Artson. It's a Mitzvah: Step-by-Step to Jewish Living. (1995).

Artson. Making a Difference: Putting Jewish Spirituality into Action, One Mitzvah at a Time. (2001).

Blumenthal. A Kid's Mensch Handbook: Step By Step To A Lifetime Of Jewish Values. (2004).

Grishaver. You be the Judge: A Collection of Ethical Cases and Jewish Answers, Bk. 1, 2, 3. (2000, 2002, 2004).

***Olitzky.** The Rituals and Practices of a Jewish Life: A Handbook for Personal Spiritual Renewal. (2002).

***Rosenberg.** Raising a Mensch: How to Bring Up Ethical Children in Today's World. (2003). 304.5

Siegel. Danny Siegel's Bar and Bat Mitzvah Book: A Practical Guide for Changing the World through Your Smirch. (2004).

Siegel. Mitzvah Magic: What Kids Can Do to Change the World. (2002) **True stories that offer a multitude of ways to do mitzvot.** *J256*

***Telushkin.** The Book of Jewish Values: A Day-by-Day Guide to Ethical Living (2000).*170*

Wolfson. God's To-Do List: 103 Ways to Be an Angel and Do God's Work on Earth. (2006). A practical guidebook to repairing the world.

Tzedakah in Action

Blessing. **New Old Shoes.** (2009). How old shoes can become a tzedakah project.

(www.soles4souls.org)

Bridges Outreach, Inc (www.bridgesoutreach.org) **Bridges began in 1988 with just one suburban couple. Today, Bridges' outreach includes over 1,500 kind and caring volunteers delivering over 100,000 bagged brown lunches, 40,000 breakfast bags, literally tons of clothing and toiletries and other necessities each year. Since 1988, Bridges has not missed a weekly Run into New York City. Recognizing the need closer to home, Bridges expanded its operations in 1996 to Newark and in 2002 to Irvington. Lots of opportunities for involvement.**

Clark.

77 Creative Ways Kids Can Serve. (2008). Describes how to get involved in community projects.

Lewis. **The Kid's Guide to Service Projects: Over 500 Service Ideas for Young People Who Want to Make a Difference.** (2009). An up-to-date youth service guide.

McBrier. **Beatrice's Goat.** (2001). How The Heifer Project International changes lives.

Milway. **One Hen: How One Small Loan Made a Big Difference.** (2008).

Mortenson. **Listen to the Wind.** (2009). How kids can make a difference.

Mortenson. **Three Cups of Tea.** (2009). Young reader's edition of how one person can change the lives of hundreds.

Winter. **Trees of Peace.** (2008). Activism in action.

Spirituality

Canfield. Chicken Soup for the Jewish Soul. (2001).

***Cardin.** The Tapestry of Jewish Time: A Spiritual Guide to Holidays and Life Cycle Events. (2000). *240*

Feinstein. Tough Questions Jews Ask: A Young Adult's Guide to Building a Jewish Life. (2003). *YA250*

***Fuchs-Kreimer.** Parenting as a Spiritual Journey. (1998).

Kushner. The Book of Miracles: a Young Person's Guide to Jewish Spirituality. (1987). *J251*

Neusner. Mitzvah. (1982) **An introduction to Jewish theology, emphasizing the concept of mitzvah, or commandment, and the meaning of the ceremony of bar or bat mitzvah.** *J256*

Smith. Every Tallit Tells a Tale. (2005). **Short personal essays about the meaning of wearing a tallit.** *240*

Literature

Brown. 13 (2008) **Evan realizes what "becoming a man" means.** *YAFIC*

Bush. Emma Ansky-Levine and Her Mitzvah Machine. (1991). **For her twelfth birthday, Emma receives a special Mitzvah Machine which helps her discover her Jewish identity and the true meaning of becoming a Bat Mitzvah.** *JFIC*

Cohen. King of the Seventh Grade. (1982) **Thirteen-year-old Vic hates Hebrew school and is indifferent to his upcoming bar mitzvah, until he is suddenly disallowed from participating in either.** *JFIC*

Cooper. Sam I Am. (2004) **Sam grapples with his religious affiliation.** *JFIC*

Curtis. Gabriel's Ark. (1999) **Despite being disabled, Gabriel becomes a bar mitzvah.** *JFIC*

Friedman. Importance of Wings. (2009). **Roxanne "wings" her way toward maturity and self-esteem.** *JFIC*

Kacer. Diary of Laura's Twin. (2008) **Laura is "twinned" with a child of the Holocaust with surprising results.**

Littman. Confessions of a Closet Catholic. (2006) **Jussy wrestles with all kinds of issues including her search for spirituality.** *YAFIC*

Martin. Abby's Lucky Thirteen. (1996). **While preparing for her Bat Mitzvah with her twin sister, Abby is falsely accused of cheating on a math test and is suspended from school. She decides to hide the truth about the test and the suspension.**

Ostow. So Punk Rock and Other Ways to Disappoint Your Mother. (2009). **A funny, graphic novel hybrid which confronts a host a growing up issues.** **FOR MATURE READERS.** *YAFIC*

Rahlens. **Prince William, Maximilian Minsky, and Me.** (2004). Funny, heartfelt tale of a determined teen as she makes some surprising discoveries about life, loss, love, and faith.

YAFIC

Rosenbloom. You Are SO Not Invited to My Bat Mitzvah! (2007). **Funny, exaggerated story of Stacey's bat mitzvah year.**

Wolff. Pink Slippers, Bat Mitzvah Blues. (1994). **After becoming a bat mitzvah, Alyssa struggles with the need to examine personal priorities and commitments.** *JFIC*

Miscellaneous

Adelman. **The JGirl's Guide: The Young Jewish Woman's Handbook For Coming Of Age.** (2005). Practical, real-world advice on what becoming a Jewish woman means. **YA246.2**

Blumenthal. Life Cycle. The Time of Our Lives: A Teen Guide to the Jewish (2003) **This consumable book discusses major Jewish life cycles.**

Cohen. Torah for teens: Growing Up Spiritually with the Weekly Sidrah. (2008). **Well organized, clear and understandable.**

***Danan.** The Jewish Parents' Almanac. (1997). *240*

***Diamant.** How to Raise a Jewish Child: A Practical Handbook for Family Life. (2000).

Diamant. Living a Jewish Life, Updated and Revised Edition: Jewish Traditions, Customs, and Values for Today's Families. (2007).

***Eisenberg.** **The JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions.** (2004). *240*

***Gordis.** **Becoming a Jewish Parent: How to Explore Spirituality and Tradition with Your Children.** (1999).

***Segal.** **Why Didn't I learn this is Hebrew School? Excursions Through the Jewish Past and Present.** (1999). *250*

Tabick. **Growing Into Your Soul: A Celebration of Jewish Life for Your Bar or Bat Mitzvah.** (2005).

MORE THAN JUST A PARTY

CREATING MEANINGFUL B'NAI MITZVAH

Reprinted from *United Synagogue Review*, Spring 1998.

Four and a half years ago, on receiving her *bat mitzvah* date, my younger daughter began to plan for the event, putting her imagination in high gear. She liked what her older sister had done, choosing *Lag B'Omer* as the theme of her reception and using both her *D'var Torah* and a garden party “motif” to teach guests something about the holiday. She had also arranged to contribute leftover party food to a local food shelter. After much consideration, her younger sister decided that the theme of *Tu B'Shevat* would suit her February *bat mitzvah*.

Once again, the chosen theme was conveyed both through the *D'var Torah* and the decorations, as guests learned more about *Tu B'Shevat* and how to “fit” an ancient concept into 20th century suburbia. But there was more, and, looking back, Sheryl is especially proud of what she accomplished.

On the day of her *simcha*, during her *D'var Torah*, Sheryl noted that the centerpieces to be placed on each table during the party that evening would contain a “rare breed of flowers called socks and gloves.” Following the party, she said, the “flowers” would be transformed back to their original state (literally socks and gloves), washed, and donated to Jewish families who had recently immigrated and settled in our community.

For six months prior to her *bat mitzvah*, she had enhanced her formal *bat mitzvah* preparation with the secondary task of sock rolling and flower arranging. Following the reception, at the Jewish Community Center of Paramus, New Jersey, Sheryl invited her friends to unroll the socks and gloves, then launder and deliver them to the newly arrived families to help see them through a difficult winter in the Northeast.

Ours is only one family among a growing number striving to deepen the meaning of the *bar* and *bat mitzvah* celebration. Today, many people are asking some important questions: What will remain after the lavish party? Will anyone have gained—other than the band and the caterer? How has this gala celebration helped transform the *bar/bat mitzvah* child into a *mensch*?

Allison Freilich of B'nai Emet in Minneapolis happily recalls her *bat mitzvah*, in which her whole family participated. While several family members chanted from the Torah, Allison and her uncle, a *hazzan*, sang several duets during the service. The centerpieces at the reception were food items that were later donated to a local food shelf, but that was “pretty common that year,” according to Freilich, who credits this phenomenon to former Rabbi Howard Siegel, who strongly promoted the concept.

“I was a flower lover,” says Freilich, “but after hearing what the rabbi said, I decided it was a waste of money when this could really be used for the good of the community.”

But Allison went even further. She invited approximately 40 friends to “A Magical Mystery Tour” on a Saturday night. After dinner and entertainment, the guests were transported to a large supermarket for a “scavenger hunt.” As she recalls, they were clearly confused.

In fact, the Freilichs had planted clues throughout the store during the previous week. The children hunted for specific foods only to have Allison’s family purchase the food and donate it to the local food bank.

According to Allison’s mother, this—rather than the dinner and entertainment—turned out to be the highlight of her daughter’s *bat mitzvah* celebration. Later this year, Allison’s brothers Daniel and Ryan will be celebrating their *b'nai mitzvah*. They are planning to use toy centerpieces at their

reception, which they will later contribute to the local Jewish Family Service and new Crisis Nursery, which holds children for 72 hours in an emergency family situation.

The idea of using centerpieces as items of *tzedakah* is clearly catching on. Education Director Jane Myers of Temple Emanuel in Providence, RI, explains that in her congregation, centerpieces at synagogue events routinely consist of books, food and toys to be donated later to appropriate charities. In a variation of this concept, Temple B'nai Israel in Millburn, NJ, uses food baskets in lieu of *bema* flowers.

Sherry Rutman of Minneapolis wanted to make her daughter Leah's *simcha* "a real *mitzvah*." In the beginning, Leah wasn't too excited about the idea, fearing that friends would think "it was dorky." Now, after seeing their reactions, she feels differently. Leah placed plants on the tables at her reception and subsequently took her friends to the local Ronald McDonald House, where they planted the flowers and learned more about the facility. A few years later, a sign there still bears her name.

Last year, a group of sixth grade parents, including Rutman and Temple B'nai Emet Education Director Missy Lavintman, came together to find ways in which their children, from a variety of communities, could bond in religious school. They hit upon the idea of a "hands-on" *mitzvah* project. Students held a "bowl-a-thon" to raise money, then decided to contribute the proceeds to a local homeless shelter. After purchasing such items as coloring books and crayons for the children residing there, they held an ice cream social that brought together families from the shelter and families from the synagogue.

Nineteen of the 22 *b'nai mitzvah* candidates shared in this experience and created a scrapbook to commemorate it. Lavintman's daughter, Donielle, recalls that when she entered the shelter, she felt "very lucky to have a home and a family." She plans to incorporate her experience into her *bat mitzvah D'var Torah*. Her students in the B'nai Emet religious school also participate in a *Tzedakah* Coop, each contributing \$100 and then researching and investigating different organizations before allocating the money. Families of the *b'nai mitzvah* are strongly encouraged to contribute to organizations such as Mazon. Family Programmer Diane Lasken of Temple Emunah in Lexington, Massachusetts, recalls the recent *Hol Ha Moed Sukkot bat mitzvah* of Hannah Kreiger-Bensen. The service included special prayers for *Sukkot*, including *Hallel* and *Hoshanot*. The family encouraged their guests to bring *lulavim* and *etrogim* and then purchased an additional 18 sets so that everyone would have an opportunity to fulfill the *mitzvah*. Following the service, a luncheon was held in the synagogue. During the meal, Hannah's friends were invited upstairs to complete a social action project. Markers, paper, crayons, and other art materials had been provided by the *bat mitzvah* family. The guests, supervised by both parents and the synagogue USY leaders, decorated gift bags and contributed them later to children at two food pantries. Judy and Jules Gutin of Teaneck, New Jersey, celebrated their daughter Ariella's *bat mitzvah* last year.

Enclosed in the announcement was a letter explaining that the invitation was not a request for a gift. Rather, the family asked that a contribution be made to one of the organizations Ariella suggested, and noted that ten percent of all monetary gifts would be donated to these groups. Ariella also asked each guest to bring one new wrapped toy to be distributed to needy children.

Today, many synagogues are launching *tzedakah* curricula for *b'nai mitzvah*, while other congregations have enthusiastically embraced the concept of community service. In addition, an increasing number of individual families are working to energize this traditional life-cycle event, highlighting specifically Jewish concepts and hands-on experiences in *tikkun olam*. Clearly it takes only a few families to make a difference. Once planted, the "*mitzvah* seed" can blossom and grow in every community.

The author resides in River Edge, New Jersey, and is a member of the Jewish Community Center of Paramus. She is a frequent contributor to Jewish publications.

Reprinted from *United Synagogue Review*, Spring 1998.