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# B'NAI MITZVAH HANDBOOK

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NOVEMBER 1, 2023  
TEMPLE CONCORD  
910 Madison Street, Syracuse, NY 13210  
[www.templeconcord.org](http://www.templeconcord.org)

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

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*Mazal Tov!* Congratulations on entering the process that leads to becoming *B'nai Mitzvah*! For Jewish families, *B'nai Mitzvah* celebrations are remarkable, life-affirming events. They provide a wonderful opportunity to welcome a new Jewish adult into the community, to affirm a family's commitment to ongoing Jewish living and study, and to gather relatives and friends from everywhere for the *simchah* (celebration).

This guide should answer most of your questions about what *B'nai Mitzvah* is and how a family should approach this milestone in a life of Jewish learning and commitment.

While our Rabbi, Cantor, Religious School and staff will do everything possible to prepare the student, **family cooperation and involvement are essential**. The *B'nai Mitzvah* service should be rewarding and meaningful; **you** help make both the preparation and the ceremony a memorable experience in the life of your family.

The word *mitzvah* means commandment – just as obligation is inherent in that concept, so too **the guidelines in this text are requirements that must be met for a *B'nai Mitzvah* service in our congregation.**

The most effective way to teach a child is to “live the lesson.” The greater your family's level of involvement in the *B'nai Mitzvah* preparation process, the more meaningful the ceremony, and Judaism, will become.

*B'nai Mitzvah* is a beginning, not the conclusion, of a person's Jewish education; it is a passageway to wider learning and observance. If observance is not encouraged, if you do not participate with your child, if he or she never attends a service before or after *B'nai Mitzvah*, then the ritual will have no meaning.

Please read this booklet carefully and compile a list of questions for Rabbi or Cantor.

## 2 HISTORY AND MEANING OF THE *BAR AND BAT MITZVAH*

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### 2.1 A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Our congregation considers *B'nai Mitzvah* services as important in the life of the Temple as they are in the life of a family. The preparation process for the *B'nai Mitzvah* service has been carefully arranged to lead to a most meaningful and successful event and, more importantly, to a deep and abiding family relationship with Jewish learning and practice. Students from past years are called upon to participate in High Holiday Services as a continuing process of Jewish learning and commitment to community.

The following section is an introduction to *Bar and Bat Mitzvah*. Much of it is drawn from *A Spiritual Journey – the Bar and Bat Mitzvah Handbook*, one of the texts you will receive as part of your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* materials. Another book you will receive, *Putting God on the Guest List*, will help you keep the balance between spirituality and celebration. Please read these books and this guide carefully with your child: they will answer many of your questions about *B'nai Mitzvah*.

## 2.2 WHAT IS THE MEANING OF *BAR MITZVAH* AND *BAT MITZVAH*?

The words *Bar Mitzvah* and *Bat Mitzvah* are Hebrew terms indicating that a person has reached the status of an adult member of the Jewish Community. *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* ceremonies mark this transition from childhood to adulthood.

*Bar Mitzvah* is a masculine noun (a “son of the commandments”) and *Bat Mitzvah* (a “daughter of the commandments”) is the same noun in feminine form. Both can be translated as “child of (God’s) commandments.” More precisely, becoming a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* means accepting a transition: as a Jew becomes an adult, he or she accepts God’s commands as binding in much the same way as a child accepts the commands of parents.

The nouns *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* suggest even more. The terms *Bar* and *Bat* denote membership in a group. The Hebrew word *mitzvah* is sometimes used to mean a “good deed,” but here it is used in its technical sense, referring to the commandments found in the *Torah*. A *Bat Mitzvah*, then, is a woman who is “subject to the commandments”, or, even better, “a woman of responsibility.” Similarly, a *Bar Mitzvah* is “a man of responsibility.” The term is applied to every Jewish man and woman from the age of thirteen, whether or not the ceremony takes place. At this age, one becomes a woman of duty or a man of duty, committed to the ideals of Judaism. The purpose of the ceremony is to make this passage into Jewish adulthood, with all the privileges and responsibilities of that new status. The ceremony enables family, friends, and the religious community as a whole to celebrate together the continuity of tradition and faith.

## 2.3 WHEN DOES THE CEREMONY TAKE PLACE?

The celebration marking a *B’nai Mitzvah* takes place when the boy or girl reaches the age of thirteen. The egalitarianism of Reform practice today requires that girls become *Bat Mitzvah* at the age of 13, which Temple Concord supports. The *Mishnah* (the oldest post-biblical collection of Jewish laws) states that vows made by a boy who is thirteen years and one day old are considered valid; he is eligible to lead the congregation in prayer, to serve on a Jewish court, and to buy and sell property. Girls too were eligible for all the obligations and privileges of Jewish women. It should be noted that many of the ritual obligations traditionally fell upon men, whereas women were not obligated to observe commandments that had to be carried out at fixed times. Jewish tradition has always respected the roles of both sexes and today the role of women within Judaism has greatly expanded. As strides toward achieving full equality continue, women now serve as rabbis and cantors within the Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist movements. Reform Judaism has always recognized the full equality of women and men in Jewish education, ritual and practice.

The Rabbis of the *Talmud* – completed in the 5th century – believed that, after *B’nai Mitzvah*, girls and boys could tell right from wrong and could be held responsible for their own actions. Today, although we may consider thirteen as too young for people to be held responsible for *all* their decisions, we recognize the entry of youngsters into the teenage years as significant. As children reach their teens, they mature physically and intellectually and begin to relate to the world in new ways. They begin to examine adult beliefs with varying degrees of skepticism. If a young person is properly prepared, the *B’nai Mitzvah* ceremony can help reach independence in an impressive spiritual experience which speaks both to the intellect and to the soul.

## 2.4 WHAT SHOULD A *B’NAI MITZVAH* LEARN?

For more than two thousand years, Jewish parents have had the responsibility to educate their children, to raise them to become links in the chain of Jewish tradition. The best known of all Jewish prayers, the *Sh’ma*, contains a commandment to all Jewish parents, “You shall teach the

commandments diligently to your children.” The rabbis of the *Talmud* maintained that the world was dependent on this education. In their words, “The world exists only through the breath of school children.”

A Jewish legend says that God withheld giving the *Torah* to the Jewish people until they could provide some form of guarantee. Only when they pledged their children did God accept their guarantee. Therefore, the legend concludes, each new generation must be taught the *Torah* and all that is in it, for the vitality of *Torah* depends upon its interpretation and transmission from generation to generation.

Today Jewish children study Judaism either in supplementary schools specializing in the transmission of Jewish subjects, or in day schools where Jewish studies are integrated into the curriculum. In either case, Jewish parents demonstrate their devotion to an ancient ideal in modern times.

Jewish tradition regards education as a life-long concern leading to the ideal goal of study for its own sake. *B’nai Mitzvah* is a milestone in a lifetime of study. During eight years of formal instruction, girls and boys acquire knowledge about Jewish customs and ceremonies, Jewish history, values, the Hebrew language, and Bible. Hebrew reading is an important component of *B’nai Mitzvah* training and its mastery gives students great satisfaction.

The study of Hebrew is valued among Jews for several important reasons.

- The *Torah* and other books of the Bible are written in Hebrew;
- Jews throughout the world pray in Hebrew;
- Hebrew is the spoken language of the modern state of Israel,
- The Hebrew language unites Jews throughout the world in a shared culture.

Therefore, a demonstration of Hebrew reading ability is central to *B’nai Mitzvah* ceremonies.

## 2.5 WHAT DO THE OBJECTS IN THE SYNAGOGUE SYMBOLIZE?

*B’nai Mitzvah* ceremonies usually take place in the synagogue. The drama of the celebration is heightened by the presence of the *Torah* scroll and other religious symbols. Many of the ritual objects seen in Jewish sanctuaries date back to the beginning of Judaism. They are intended to remind worshippers of basic beliefs, values, and a shared history.

The Holy Ark or *Aron ha-Kodesh* dominates one wall of the synagogue. The arrangement reminds us of the Ark containing the tablets of the Ten Commandments that was carried by the Israelites during their years of wandering in the wilderness. The *Aron ka-Kodesh* is on a *bimah* (raised platform), which includes a speaker’s podium. It is placed on the eastern wall so that as congregants face it they look toward Jerusalem.

The *Sefer Torah* (*Torah* scroll) stored in the Holy Ark contains the Five Books of Moses, the first five books of the Bible. The *Torah* is written on parchment made from animal skins, usually sheepskin. No vowels appear in the *Torah* scroll because the vowel system as we know it was introduced to the Hebrew language many years after the text of the scroll was written. The parchment is attached to two wooden rollers, each of which is called a *Etz Hayyim* (Tree of Life), and is clothed in a mantel of embroidered fabric.

Silver ornaments, or *rimonim* may adorn the top of the handles, or a crown may be used to cover them. A silver breastplate, or *magen* is placed at the front of the scroll. Also, a carved silver *yad* or “hand” is attached. The reader uses the *yad* to follow the text.

## 2.6 WHAT ARE A KIPPAH AND A TALLIT?

*B'nai Mitzvah* ceremonies use all the elements of liturgical drama. The words and actions are carefully prepared, as is the music. But these ceremonies should not be seen as “theatrical” performances. Rather, they are religious moments designed to enhance spiritual goals. Those seated in the synagogue are not an “audience” but a community of faith gathered in congregation.

Careful attention is paid to two items of traditional attire: a skullcap, or *kippah* (also called a *yarmulka*), and a prayer shawl, or *tallit*. They are worn by most *B'nai Mitzvah*. While their use is sometimes optional in Reform practice, it has become the general standard in our congregation for both boys and girls to receive a *tallit* and *kippah* at their *B'nai Mitzvah* service.

The *tallit* is a four-cornered garment which is draped around the shoulders. At each corner are knotted fringes called *tzitzit*. Their purpose is explained in the *Torah*: God spoke to Moses saying, “Speak to the children of Israel and enjoin them to make themselves *tzitzit* on the corners of their garments throughout the generations... So shall you be reminded to observe all My Commandments and be holy to your God” (Numbers 15:37-40).

- The *tallit* may be large or small, or any color, and made of any material, although wool and linen are never used together.
- The *tallit* has to meet only two requirements: it must have four corners, and each corner must have a knotted fringe made of wool or of the same material as the *tallit*.
- Since the *Torah* commands that we be able to “see” the *tzitzit*, the *tallit* will be worn only in the daytime, although those who lead the prayer service may wear one in the evening. Once a year on *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, the *tallit* will be worn in the evening as well giving this service a special atmosphere of purity.

The wearing of a *tallit* is a privilege and mark of adulthood, serving as a constant reminder of the commandments. A boy or girl officially wears a *tallit* for the first time on the occasion of becoming *B'nai Mitzvah*. **It is highly appropriate for the family to seek out and acquire a *tallit* as a special, life-long gift to the *B'nai Mitzvah*.** We also hope that your child will continue to wear their *tallit* at Shabbat morning and Holiday morning services throughout their lives!

In keeping with the ideals of Reform Judaism, Temple Concord encourages each congregational family to find meaning and relevance in Jewish rituals. Therefore, the *B'nai Mitzvah* family has the option to wear either a *kippah* or *tallit*, or both. However, **all *B'nai Mitzvah* are strongly encouraged to wear a *kippah* (or other head covering) AND a *tallit*.** Usually, a family member presents the *B'nai Mitzvah* with his or her *tallit* at the beginning of the service.

## 2.7 WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CALLED TO THE TORAH?

It is always an honor to be called to recite the blessings before and after the *Torah* scroll is read. This act is known as *aliyah*, literally, “ascending.” It takes its name from the fact that the worshipper ascends the *bimah*, the platform. But this physical act of going up is symbolic of a greater spiritual one. The act of moving from the Diaspora to the Land of Israel is also called *aliyah*. And, for those who are in Israel, all travel in the direction of Jerusalem is referred to as “ascending.” The synagogue worshipper called to the *Torah* makes a symbolic spiritual ascent.

On the day of a young person’s first *aliyah*, family and friends have the opportunity to share the honor. On the Sabbath, the *Torah* portion is traditionally divided into sections. In the Talmudic period, each person who was called for an *aliyah* read the *Torah* portion. Today, the reading is

generally done by a trained individual. The person who is honored with an *aliyah* recites a blessing before the reading and another after it. In our congregation, an *aliyah* can be shared.

There are many occasions on which a Jewish adult may be honored with an *aliyah*: an engagement, the birth of a child, recovery from a serious illness, a child becoming *B'nai Mitzvah*, a wedding anniversary, a *yahrzeit* commemorating the death of a relative.

All are called to the *bimah* by their Hebrew names. The family of the *B'nai Mitzvah* has the privilege of choosing most of the people called for these honors. It is necessary to find family and friends who are capable of chanting *Torah* blessings in Hebrew, and also to find out their Hebrew names in advance of the Shabbat of the *B'nai Mitzvah*. A Hebrew name has three parts: One's first name in Hebrew, one's father's first name in Hebrew, one's mother's name in Hebrew. Again, the Rabbi and Cantor can be of assistance in providing photocopies and recordings of the blessings.

Reciting the *Torah* blessings is symbolic of a young person's acceptance of adult Jewish responsibilities. In this way, the young person makes the journey upward officially for the first time – the first *aliyah* – an act that echoes the very first *aliyah*, when Moses ascended Mount Sinai to receive the *Torah*. This connection transforms all the arduous preparation into a sacred religious act as the youngster becomes a full participating member of the Jewish community committed to its historic Covenant with God.

## 2.8 WHAT IS THE HAFTARAH?

A prophetic section from the Bible is assigned to each Torah portion and is read at the conclusion of the Torah service. The *B'nai Mitzvah* generally chant this section taken from the Book of Prophets, called the *haftarah*, the “additional” (part.) Each selected reading is related to the ideas in the particular *Torah* portion or to the time of the year.

Special blessings are recited before and after the *haftarah* is read. The blessing before reading stresses the divine inspiration of the Prophets. After reading, the reader thanks God for giving *Torah*, *Shabbat*, Israel, and the Prophets, and for the chance to pray.

## 2.9 WHAT IS A D'VAR TORAH?

During the Shabbat morning service, each *B'nai Mitzvah* prepares and presents a *d'var Torah*, an interpretation or sermon that includes an evaluation of the weekly *Torah* reading. It is prepared by the students themselves, working closely with the Rabbi. It is a demonstration of the *B'nai Mitzvah's* immersion in the texts they have prepared for their ceremony, and the first “adult” *Torah* study that they have completed.

## 2.10 WHAT ROLE DOES THE B'NAI MITZVAH PLAY IN THE FRIDAY NIGHT SERVICE?

In our congregation, the *B'nai Mitzvah* also leads part of the Friday night service with Rabbi and Cantor. It is also customary for the family or Jewish relatives of the *B'nai Mitzvah* to light and bless the *sabbath* candles at the beginning of the service and for the family to sponsor the *oneg* on the Friday night preceding the *B'nai Mitzvah*.

It is important to understand, however, that the *B'nai Mitzvah* family does not “own” the Friday night or Saturday morning service. These are normal evening and morning services and may include participation by a particular grade of the religious school, baby namings, guest speakers, and other elements of the religious life of our Temple.



## 2.11 HOW IS A MORNING PRAYER SERVICE ARRANGED?

A Rabbi was asked by his students, “What do you do before praying?” He answered, “I pray that I may be able to pray properly.” For most of us, praying with devotion is a challenge. To help us, the morning Jewish prayer service begins with meditations, songs, and blessings designed to create the proper mood in the mind of the worshipper. The length of the introductory sections called *Birchot Hashachar & Pesukei d’zimrah* varies from congregation to congregation.

The main portion of the service begins with a two-sentence “Call to Prayer,” the *Bar’chu* (translated as *Bless Adonai, Who is to be blessed*). In ancient times, the priests would sing this prayer over the walls of the Temple to call the people from the marketplace. Modern Jews sing or chant this same call at the beginning of the service.

The section that follows is called the “*Sh’ma and its Blessings*.” There are two prayers before the *Sh’ma* and one after it. The first prayer praises God as the creator of all things. The second speaks of the Covenant between God the Jewish people, embodied in the document of the Torah, which expresses God’s love for Israel as a people. The *Sh’ma* itself includes biblical passages which tell what we must do to be part of the Jewish Covenant and what God promises in return. The prayer after the *Shema*, which includes the *Mi Chamocha*, highlights God’s power of redemption. This whole section of the prayer service emphasizes the Holy One’s relationship to Israel.

The next section of the service has several names. It is sometimes called the *Sh’moneh Esray*, the eighteen Benedictions. It may also be called the Amidah, the “Standing Prayer”, since the prayer is said while standing. Most commonly, however, it is known as the *T’fillah*, “The Prayer”, because it serves as the central prayer of the service. The blessings in the *T’fillah* on Shabbat, encourage us to appreciate what we have, so the weekday petitionary blessings are replaced by one blessing that thanks God for the gift of the Sabbath.

On days when we read publicly from the Torah scroll, a special service is inserted for removing the Torah from the Holy Ark, reading it, hearing the *haftarah*, and replacing the scroll in the Ark.

The service concludes with several prayers and a closing hymn. One of these is the *Aleinu*, a prayer for the perfection of the world. Another closing prayer is the “Mourner’s Prayer”, the *Mourner’s Kaddish*. Originally said only for sages who had died; today this prayer is said by our congregation and recited by a mourner following the passing of a close relative and on the anniversary of a death. Remarkably, this prayer does not speak of death at all, but rather praises God and asks for the speedy coming of the age of peace.

This is a simplified outline of a Jewish prayer service. Looking at the construction of the service, we perceive it moving in an intentional direction; we prepare to pray, we hear the call to formal prayer, and we reflect on our living relationship with God. We are drawn closer to God through our sacred texts, and hope to rise from prayer as better persons.

## 3 EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

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### 3.1 STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for *B’nai Mitzvah* preparation at Temple Concord, a student must meet the following requirements.

- a. The student’s family must be members in good standing of Temple Concord.

- b. The student must have regularly attended religious school either at Temple Concord or another synagogue religious school for at least **two years** prior to the year of preparation for *B'nai Mitzvah*. The student must also attend religious school while studying for their *B'nai Mitzvah*. *B'nai Mitzvah* training is in addition to regular attendance in religious school. In certain special cases, such as recent immigration to the United States, tutoring over a period of time culminating in testing for a suitable knowledge level may be substituted.
- c. The student must have regularly attended at least **two years** of Hebrew School (at The Syracuse Community Hebrew School, Temple Concord, another synagogue religious school or day school) prior to the year of preparation for *B'nai Mitzvah*, and must attend Hebrew School (or have comparable Hebrew tutoring) while studying for their *B'nai Mitzvah*. *B'nai Mitzvah* is in addition to regular attendance in Hebrew School.

### 3.2 *B'NAI MITZVAH* ORIENTATION MEETINGS

Each year, the Rabbi and Cantor conduct three *B'nai Mitzvah* Orientation Meetings (one meeting a month for three months) for the families of fifth-graders. Only parents need attend the first two meetings to receive this handbook and other books; to receive a ceremony date request form; to ask questions; and to get to know the other *b'nai mitzvah* families.

At the last meeting, parents are joined by their fifth-grader(s) to learn each child's *B'nai Mitzvah* date and to sign the *B'nai Mitzvah* brit (contract). Once the ceremony dates are set, the Clergy Assistant will schedule dates for each family's meeting with the Rabbi and for the ceremony rehearsal. Parents will be informed of these dates at least six months in advance of the ceremony.

Note that Rabbi and Cantor supervise all *B'nai Mitzvah* preparations at Temple Concord, and make the final determination on every aspect of the student's participation in the ceremony.

- a. While continuing attendance at Hebrew and Religious School, all *B'nai Mitzvah* students will work directly with Cantor to prepare. Approximately two months before the *B'nai Mitzvah*, students begin studying with the Rabbi **in order to prepare a d'var Torah**.
- b. During the nine months of preparation, *B'nai Mitzvah* students must practice one-half hour every day, completing their weekly assignments from Cantor. Students should expect to spend one hour every day during the last month of preparation.
- c. The best educational results occur when parents demonstrate involvement, caring and concern by supporting their children's work. In that spirit, parents are encouraged to attend the Cantor's tutoring sessions along with their children. You do not need to know Hebrew or the service to verify that your child is practicing and making progress, or to help them with d'var Torah preparation.
- d. ***B'nai Mitzvah* candidates and their parents are required to attend a minimum of nine Shabbat evening and nine Shabbat morning services during the year leading up to the *B'nai Mitzvah*.** Your ability to relax and enjoy the experience is related to your familiarity with the ritual process. This means that regular Shabbat service attendance is a central part of the *B'nai Mitzvah* process. Please be aware of this and plan for it. Children who attend services regularly with their parents are essentially guaranteed a great *B'nai Mitzvah* experience.
- e. In the week before the *B'nai Mitzvah* service, the family and Rabbi will hold an hour-long rehearsal of the Friday night and Saturday morning services. Parents **must** attend this

rehearsal. The Clergy Assistant will send parents the rehearsal date well in advance of the ceremony.

### 3.3 SUPPLIES

Students must have the following materials for the first lesson with Cantor:

A computer, tablet, or smart phone to access the audio and pdf files of their Torah, Haftarah, and prayers of the service. The Rabbi and Cantor will provide all other necessary materials.

### 3.4 TUTORING

While most students receive complete preparation for *B'nai Mitzvah* through our congregational program, some children may need extra assistance. The *B'nai Mitzvah* includes 9 months of tutoring for your child. *The cost of extra tutoring is the family's responsibility.* The Cantor will assist in finding a tutor should that be necessary.

### 3.5 HELPING YOUR CHILD PREPARE

These simple suggestions will be very useful. They are compiled from the advice of *B'nai Mitzvah* families from past years.

- a. Confer with the Rabbi and Cantor on the amount of preparation your child will need.
- b. Help your child schedule time for preparation and then assist him or her in keeping on schedule. **A minimum of ½ hour a day, every day, is normally required.** If your child is not practicing this much, find out why.
- c. Preparing to chant from the *Torah*, lead prayer and teach the congregation by presenting a *d'var Torah* takes months of intense preparation. Be cognizant of your child's extra-curricular activities and plan accordingly in the year leading up to the ceremony.
- d. Let your child know constantly that you have faith in his or her ability to complete the work. Maintain your sense of humor as tension and excitement mount.
- e. If you have any questions regarding the *B'nai Mitzvah*, do not hesitate to call the Rabbi, or Cantor or the Temple office.

### 3.6 POSTPONEMENT

Occasionally, and only under the most extreme or unexpected circumstances, it becomes necessary to postpone a *B'nai Mitzvah* due to the student's slow progress. If so, the Rabbi and Cantor will inform you well in advance.

## 4 CEREMONIAL REQUIREMENTS

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### 4.1 OFFICIATING

The Rabbi and Cantor will officiate at all *B'nai Mitzvah* services at Temple Concord. We welcome the participation of visiting rabbis and cantors who have a relationship with the family, and the Rabbi and Cantor will be very pleased to coordinate that participation.

## 4.2 EVENT GUIDELINES

All financial obligations to the Temple shall be current prior to the service. All costs will be explained to you during your meeting with the Executive Director.

Music: Any special musical arrangements should be made with Cantor and Rabbi at least **one month in advance**.

Guest Book: You may wish to have a guest book. It is best to have it available as people enter the sanctuary or the reception.

Recording:

- a. Since the service will be available on zoom, Temple Concord will provide a copy of the recording.
- b. Families are welcome to make other still and video arrangements as long as they respect the sanctity of the service and proper decorum.
- c. **Photographers and Videographers must be stationed in the back of the Sanctuary. No artificial lighting (such as flash) may be used and no clicking of cameras should be heard.**

Presentations: The *B'nai Mitzvah* is given gifts by Temple Concord's Board of Trustees, Sisterhood, Brotherhood, and the Epstein School.

These are presented by a member of the Board of Directors, a past president, or a teacher who is a Temple member, along with a Certificate of *B'nai Mitzvah* from the congregation.

Please indicate your request on the Honors form you received from the Clergy Assistant.

## 4.3 CONDUCT OF SERVICES

Rabbi and Cantor are responsible for the content and quality of all religious services at Temple Concord, and have control over that content, including that of *B'nai Mitzvah* services, *Torah* readings, *Haftarot*, and *drashot* (speeches).

Rabbi and Cantor supervise all *B'nai Mitzvah* preparations at Temple Concord, and make the final determination on every aspect of the student's participation in the ceremony.

## 4.4 DRESS CODE

**Dress Code applies to ALL those on the bima.**

Boys

- Suit or Jacket & Pants
- Dress Shoes

Girls

- Skirt & Blouse, Suit, or Dress
- Dress Shoes: flats are best for walking around the Sanctuary with the Torah scroll

#### 4.5 HONORS AT SERVICES

The honors available for family and friends during the *B'nai Mitzvah* service include:

- a. 3-7 *aliyot* (chanting the blessing in Hebrew before and after each reading of the Torah). This honor can be given to 1, 2 or even 3 people on each *aliyah*. The honor can be given to individuals or to the group. The final *aliyah* is the *B'nai Mitzvah aliyah*. Typically, the parent(s) of the *B'nai Mitzvah* have the honor of the next-to-last *aliyah*. All *aliyah* honorees must be Jewish and at least 13 years old, though they may be accompanied by non-Jews.
- b. Opening the Ark. As many as 4 people can be honored by opening the Ark both at the beginning and end of Torah service. Children may have this honor.
- c. *Hagbah* (lifting) and *Gelilah* (dressing) the Torah. One fairly strong person is honored to raise the Torah and one person dresses the Torah. The lifter must be Jewish. Children may assist in dressing the Torah.

Any other distribution of honors should be arranged with the Rabbi.

### 5 TZEDAKAH

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#### 5.1 THE MITZVAH PROJECT

In fulfilling the requirement incumbent on every adult Jew to strive to “repair the world” through the process of *tikkun olam*, each and every *B'nai Mitzvah* student is obligated to complete a **Mitzvah Project** to improve the world through social action. Projects have ranged from assisting in a food pantry, to visiting the elderly on a regular basis, to working on our Mitzvah Day, to tutoring in local schools, to working at animal shelters or the zoo.

Please remember that this is the child’s project, and while parents should help the child choose the most appropriate project, they should not do it for them.

Parents and *B'nai Mitzvah* students should begin planning the Mitzvah Project early, preferably about **nine months before** the *B'nai Mitzvah*.

#### 5.2 DONATIONS

Many families choose to show their appreciation to the congregation for the services rendered during this time of *simchah*. Most families thank the Rabbi & Cantor with gifts to their discretionary funds. Another way to commemorate the *simchah* is through the purchase of a Simchah Tree Leaf. The Simchah Tree is a beautiful sculpture, designed exclusively for our Temple Concord and generously donated by Dr. and Mrs. Stanley D. Leslie, and is a focal point in the Libbian and Ives Jacobs Social Hall.

It is customary to donate to an existing congregation fund. We encourage you to help others even as you celebrate. One of the primary obligations of all Jews is *zedakah*, the righteous provision of charity for those in need. Temple Concord has funds that address spiritual & physical needs of those inside and outside the congregation. The funds are categorized as follows:

- Temple Concord General Fund
- Building and Facilities
- Children and Youth

- Clergy Discretionary
- Disability Support
- Endowments
- Good Works and *Tikkun Olam*
- Program Support
- Religious and Ritual

The Funds Form attached lists all the Temple funds. Traditionally, 3% is added to the cost of celebrations as an offering to help those less fortunate. Three percent (3%) of a food cost of \$3,000 is \$90; of \$8,000, just \$240; of \$20,000, just \$600. Think how meaningful it can be for a young person to know that a portion of his or her joy is set aside to include those in need – and that our joy is thereby increased. Think how meaningful it can be for all of us to know that our good times are also times of good. Organizations to which you may wish to donate include:

- MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger. MAZON funds projects proposed by other agencies not only to alleviate hunger, but to end it. MAZON will, of course, be responsive to hunger among Jews, but in keeping with the best of our traditions, it will respond to all who are in need. You may simply send your tax-deductible check to MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger – North LaSalle Street, Suite 4300, Chicago, IL 60602-2584
- The Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York has created the *B'nai Mitzvah* Fund Program. The program involves our upcoming generation in the joy of *tzedakah* with a fund that encourages charitable giving. It is designed to teach Jewish teens about the world of philanthropy and social action through hands-on involvement. The benefits for this program are enormous. As *B'nai Mitzvah*, teens will have a chance to learn at an early age to become involved in the important work of our community.

## 6 ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

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### 6.1 SCHEDULING THE CEREMONY

All scheduling of *B'nai Mitzvah* ceremonies is arranged by the Clergy. As an egalitarian, Reform synagogue, Temple Concord celebrates all *B'nai Mitzvah* ceremonies at the age of 13.

For religious, congregational and community reasons, we do not schedule *B'nai Mitzvah* ceremonies during these Jewish holidays: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Purim, Pesach, 9th of Av. In general, we do not schedule *B'nai Mitzvah* ceremonies during Thanksgiving weekend, during July or August or during the last ten days of the year.

### 6.2 INVITATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

In keeping with our philosophy of inclusion, we expect *B'nai Mitzvah* students to **invite all their classmates to the ceremonies and to any party** that will take place in celebration of the *B'nai Mitzvah*. Therefore, when planning this event, you should include **all religious school and Hebrew School classmates in your child's class**. A copy of this list with names and addresses will be made available to you by the religious school closer to the time of your child's event.

- a. To have your child's *simchah* written up in our Temple Bulletin, you must complete the form provided by the Clergy Assistant and provide a head shot of the student preferably in color, by the deadline set by the Temple Bulletin.
- b. To have your child's *simchah* written up in the Jewish Observer, you must complete the form provided by the Clergy Assistant and provide a head shot of the student preferably in color, by the deadline set by the Clergy Assistant. Please note, for security purposes, the Jewish Observer will only publish *B'nai Mitzvah* announcements after they take place.

### 6.3 YOUR OBLIGATIONS TO OUR CONGREGATION ON SHABBAT

Each *B'nai Mitzvah* has the option to sponsor the *Oneg* before the Friday night Shabbat service, and it may hold a Kiddush lunch after service Saturday at Temple Concord.

*Shabbat* celebrations at Temple Concord include two very important requirements.

- a. *Shabbat* occurs every week and includes our entire congregation. Hospitality is an important Jewish value and therefore **everyone attending a *Shabbat* service must be included in some way in your *Oneg* and/or *Kiddush*.** Here are some suggested ways to do this:
  - i. Invite all in attendance to take wine and challah at *Kiddush*.
  - ii. Count the regular Shabbat *minyan* when figuring the number of servings and seating's for your *Kiddush* lunch or party.
  - iii. Consider an inclusive *oneg* between the conclusion of the service and the beginning of your *Kiddush* lunch or party.
- b. **No shellfish or pork products in any form may be served at Temple.**
  - i. **Meat and dairy may not be served together in the same dish.**
  - ii. **We strongly suggest a dairy meal so that all those with dietary restrictions may comfortably eat here. We're happy to suggest caterers to you.**

The Temple provides, at no additional charge, challah and wine for the *Kiddush* immediately following Friday and Saturday *Shabbat* services.

- i. To ensure physical accessibility for all attendees, challah and wine service will be arranged accordingly.
- ii. Everyone attending service—not just family and invited guests—must be invited to take challah and wine.

If the *B'nai Mitzvah* family chooses to sponsor the *Oneg* before the Friday night Shabbat service, an *Oneg* fee of \$150.00 will be billed one year prior to the ceremony.

- i. The *Oneg* can be fairly simple or quite elaborate. You may either provide your own baked goods or arrange with the Temple to have the baked goods provided for you.
- ii. Contact the office approximately **six months before** the event to discuss specifics of the *Oneg* and other communal obligations and requirements.
- iii. We will also help you fill out the necessary form so custodial staff can set up for all events. If you choose to hold a reception in our Social Hall following the Saturday service and *Kiddush*, the Temple can provide tea and coffee, tables and chairs for up to 200 people.

- i. Contact the office approximately **six months before** the event to discuss specifics of a Saturday *Kiddush* lunch or party and other communal obligations and requirements.

6.4 FEES AND FEE SCHEDULE

We believe that every child should be able to enjoy both the ceremony of becoming a *B'nai Mitzvah* and the celebration that comes with this achievement. Please contact Rabbi or the Executive Director with any financial concerns.

**The tutoring fee for 9 months of *B'nai Mitzvah* training is \$1150.00.**

**This fee INCLUDES:**

- 9 MONTHS of group and individual lessons for the *B'nai Mitzvah* year

**This fee DOES NOT include:**

- ADDITIONAL LESSONS OR TUTORING. These are available at an extra charge.
- Religious and Hebrew School fees

**This fee is billed** one year prior to the *B'nai Mitzvah* and **must be paid in full** one month prior to the *B'nai Mitzvah*.

Contact the Executive Director as early as possible with questions about payment.

Tutoring/School Fees:

Tutoring Fee for the <i>B'nai Mitzvah</i> Year	\$1150
Additional Tutoring as needed	TBA
Seventh Grade Tuition	\$485
Hebrew School Tuition	\$275
Eight Grade Tuition @ Epstein	\$395

Other Fees:

Friday Night Oneg Sponsorship	\$150
Room Rental for Party*	TBA

\*Rental fees are for the facility and setup, and do not include food.



## 6.5 ACTIVITY TIME TABLE

### 2 Years Prior to Ceremony

- Parents attend 3 meetings with Rabbi and Cantor to discuss, learn, receive handouts, schedule the ceremony date and complete *B'nai Mitzvah* brit (contract)

### 1 Year Prior to Ceremony

- Student begins attendance at 9 evening and 9 morning Shabbat Services
- Parents are billed for 9 months of tutoring; for ceremony and *Oneg*
- Student chooses *Mitzvah* Project with Cantor; begins *Mitzvah* project

### 9 Months Prior to Ceremony

- Student continues attending Shabbat services
- Begin individual studies with Cantor
- Student begins thirty minutes daily study

### 6 Months Prior to Ceremony

- Student continues attending Shabbat services
- Student continues thirty minutes daily study
- Parents meet with the Executive Director to discuss fees, facility use, *Oneg*, and other requirements
- Parents receive dates for the family meeting with Rabbi and for the ceremony rehearsal

### 2 Months Prior to Ceremony:

- Student and parents meet with the Rabbi to get to know one another and discuss *d'var Torah*.
- Student begins individual study with the Rabbi (including *d'var Torah*)
- Student continues attending Shabbat services
- Student continues thirty minutes daily study
- Second meeting with the Executive Director if necessary
- Finalize special music with Cantor and Rabbi
- Parents receive honors, *B'nai Mitzvah* room reservation form, and bulletin form to complete and return to the Clergy Assistant
- Parents receive the Jewish Observer form and return to [JewishObserverCNY@gmail.com](mailto:JewishObserverCNY@gmail.com)

### 1 Month Prior to Ceremony

- Student continues attending Shabbat services
- Student begins one hour daily study
- Tutoring fee paid in full
- Parents return all forms to Clergy Assistant

### 1 – 2 Weeks Prior to Ceremony

- Family rehearsal with Rabbi

## 6.6 WHOM TO CALL AND WHEN

<i>B'nai Mitzvah</i> speech	Rabbi
<i>B'nai Mitzvah</i> room reservation	Executive Director
Bulletin announcement and photo	Clergy Assistant
Catering and Kitchen	Executive Director
Ceremony schedules	Clergy Assistant
Financial questions and concerns	Executive Director
Food—what is permitted in Temple	Clergy Assistant
Honors at the ceremony	Clergy Assistant
Jewish Observer forms/photo	Clergy Assistant
Meetings with Rabbi	Clergy Assistant
Recording System	Executive Director
Ritual, trope, <i>parsha</i>	Rabbi, Cantor
Set-up for <i>Oneg</i> , luncheon	Executive Director
Tables and chairs	Executive Director
Tutoring	Cantor

## 7 B'NAI MITZVAH HONORS FORM

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Appendix I (attached)

## 8 RULES & GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL USE OF BUILDING

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### 8.1 STANDING RECEPTION & CASUAL RECEPTION

- Refer to room reservation form

### 8.2 FULL SERVICE RECEPTION

- Refer to room reservation form

### 8.3 GENERAL EVENT AND FOOD LIMITATIONS

- Private Friday Night Dinner is NOT available on night when congregational dinners are scheduled.
- In keeping with the religious spirit of the occasion, the synagogue and our beliefs, **NO pork or shellfish products are to be served at ANY time.** Additionally, **meat and dairy may not be served in the same dish.**
- **Catering:** It is the host's responsibility to arrange for a caterer in consultation with the Executive Director. Caterers must be able to provide proof of adequate insurance coverage and be responsible for a kitchen use fee, if applicable.
- **Caterers** may be used without a kitchen fee but shall assist Temple staff in kitchen cleanup.
- **Kitchen fee** applies, regardless of event type, for any cooking (not simple re-heating) activity by a caterer.
- **Temple Maintenance Personnel** will be available for the duration of the event to set up and remove tables and chairs as required. They will supervise the use of Temple china, glassware, and silverware. Temple silver hollowware can be used by congregants for private affairs that are not catered.
- Gratuities are suggested for the Maintenance Staff if they perform in a deserving and satisfactory manner.

### 8.4 SPECIAL NOTATIONS

- **No helium balloons** may be used or **attachments** may be made to any Temple wall unless previously authorized by Executive Director. Hosts are responsible for damages to the building and furnishings.
- No use of rental tables and/or chairs will be permitted unless approval by item and number is obtained. The Executive Director **must** give permission.
- Any changes in information on room reservation form, i.e. number of guests, should be submitted to the Temple as soon as possible so that proper arrangements can be made.

**9 B'NAI MITZVAH ANNOUNCEMENT IN TEMPLE BULLETIN AND FRIDAY PROGRAM**

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Appendix II (attached)

**10 JEWISH OBSERVER *B'NAI MITZVAH* ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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Appendix III (attached)

**11 YOUR CHILD'S COVENANT**

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Appendix IV (attached)

**12 TEMPLE CONCORD DONATION FORM**

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Appendix V (attached)



# B'nai Mitzvah Honors Form

Please type in all information as it is to be printed in the Shabbat Program.

Name of Student: ..... B'M Date: ..... Parasha: .....

Grade: .....

Parent(s) Name(s): .....

Siblings Name and age(s): .....

## Friday Night

Candle Lighting: \_\_\_\_\_

Oneg Sponsored by \_\_\_\_\_ in honor, memory, or celebration of \_\_\_\_\_

## Saturday Morning

Opening the Ark: \_\_\_\_\_

Torah Passing: \_\_\_\_\_

## Aliyot

All are called to the *bimah* by their Hebrew names. The family of the *B'nai Mitzvah* has the privilege of choosing most of the people called for these honors. It is necessary to find family and friends who are capable of chanting *Torah* blessings in Hebrew, and to find out their Hebrew names in advance of *B'nai Mitzvah* rehearsal. A Hebrew name has three parts:

One's first name in Hebrew, bat/ben, one's father's first name in Hebrew, v' one's mother's first name in Hebrew.

Ex: Chaya Aharon bat (daughter of) ben (son of) Mordechai Mordechai v'Rivka v'Rivka

Aliyot Order	English Name	Hebrew Name
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

5.		
6.		
7.		

Lifting the Torah: \_\_\_\_\_

Dressing the Torah: \_\_\_\_\_

Second Opening the Ark  
(Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

**Please write down the top three (3) for the Presenter of Gifts:**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Please estimate the number of guests you expect on Friday Night:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please estimate the number of guests you expect on Saturday:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix II



## B'nai Mitzvah Announcement in Temple Bulletin and Friday Program

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We love to brag about our B'nai Mitzvah kids! Please fill out this form & return it to Temple as an email attachment to [lillian@templeconcord.org](mailto:lillian@templeconcord.org).

This is what is needed:

- 1) A picture, ideally a head shot, sent as an e-mail attachment, or delivered to the office.
- 2) And the following biographical information about the student:

Name

Names and ages of siblings

Parent names as they wish to be listed.

Attending what school?

Hobbies and Activities?

Involvement in any mitzvah or tzedakah projects?

Has there been something you are especially fond of in the B'nai Mitzvah preparation process?

How does it feel to be finally ready to conduct the service and read Torah after years of Hebrew School and other preparations?

What are you most looking forward to at your B'nai Mitzvah service?

What would you like the congregation to know about you?



Appendix III

## Jewish Observer *B'nai Mitzvah* Announcements

Please provide the following information for publication in the Jewish Observer. For safety reasons, the publication will take place after the *B'nai Mitzvah*.

Name:

City/Town:

Phone (to verify information only):

Parents:

Synagogue:

Date of service:

Secular School:

Religious School (include Epstein School):

City/state:

(First and last names):

City/state:

Interests and activities:

Please be sure to enclose a sharp photograph, either digital sent to the e-mail address below, black or white or color, of the b'nai mitzvah. It should be a head and shoulders shot and may be a school photo or a b'nai mitzvah photo. If you want the photo returned, please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Send this form, and the photo, to the Jewish Observer, 5655 Thompson Road, DeWitt, NY 13214-1234 or [JewishObserverCNY@gmail.com](mailto:JewishObserverCNY@gmail.com).



## Your Child's Covenant

The commitment to become a *B'nai Mitzvah* is one that we all take very seriously. Primary in that commitment is the continuation of Jewish education after *B'nai Mitzvah*. A decision to become *B'nai Mitzvah* at Temple Concord is also a decision to continue with Religious School. Please note that on our projected cost sheet, we have included the tuition for eighth grade in the Epstein Community High School.

### ***B'nai Mitzvah* Brit (Covenant Contact)**

I have read the *B'nai Mitzvah* Handbook carefully and completely, and I understand it. In keeping with the Jewish belief *talmud Torah k'neged kulam*, "the study of Torah is equal to all other commandments", I agree to abide by the requirements of Temple Concord with regard to *B'nai Mitzvah* in study, preparation, and commitment. I agree to devote myself and my family to a life that emphasizes, encourages, and demonstrates Jewish study and practice.

Prospective <i>B'nai Mitzvah</i> Name	Date
<i>B'nai Mitzvah</i> Date	
<i>B'nai Mitzvah</i> Child	
<i>B'nai Mitzvah</i> Parent	
Rabbi	Date
Cantor	Date
President	Date
Executive Director	Date
Date to Begin Tutoring with Cantor	
Week to Start with Rabbi	