



Congregation Bet Haverim Bar/Bat Mitzvah Guidelines

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Guidelines are subject to change, and you will be made aware of any changes.



Congregation Bet Haverim Bar/Bat Mitzvah Guidelines

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Philosophy

Our congregation welcomes and encourages Jewish members of any age (13 or over) to prepare for and to celebrate a bar/bat mitzvah. It is our hope that through the process of preparing for the event and through their involvement in our community, participants will discover their Jewish voice and bring a fuller meaning to their practice of Judaism. Adults desiring to prepare for a bar/bat mitzvah ceremony may arrange a course of study with the Rabbi.

We are grateful that you have chosen our community to guide you on this important journey. The following guidelines provide a framework to ensure that the B'nai Mitzvah experience consistently adheres to the values of our community. In cases where the guidelines create a barrier rather than a challenge, we invite families to talk with the Rabbi about designing an experience that will be meaningful, challenging, and appropriate for the child and the circumstances.

It is important that the b'nai mitzvah process be respected and valued. In the unfortunate circumstance that all of the following guidelines (Guidelines for Educational Foundation, B'nai Mitzvah Year, and Family and Community) are not met, the Rabbi, the Education Committee, and/or the Board can elect to delay the bar/bat mitzvah service to provide the family with time to focus on the missing aspects of the preparation process. This is not meant to be punitive, but rather to uphold the value and meaning of the b'nai mitzvah process.



Study and Preparation

School Attendance: Children must attend the CBHCS for the two years prior to their b'nai mitzvah year. While a student is enrolled at CBHCS, consistent attendance is expected. Students must continue at CBHCS through the completion of seventh grade, regardless of when their ceremony dates occur.

Service Attendance: In the two years leading up to the bar/bat mitzvah, students and their parents must attend at least fifteen (15) Shabbat morning services at CBH. We advise attending Shabbat morning services particularly in the 6 months before the bar/bat mitzvah.

Students may attend 2 Saturday Shabbat morning services at another synagogue that will count towards their 15 required services. It is the family's responsibility to notify the CBH Administrator of these attendances. Please include the date, synagogue name and location. *Please note that Rabbi Josh has final approval on alternate services and if they will count towards requirements.

B'nai Mitzvah Class: During the semester preceding the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony, students will attend a midweek class. In this class, they will concentrate on the meaning of the ceremony, the prayers of the Shabbat service, and becoming a Jewish adult.

Trope Tutoring: The child will require outside study or tutoring to learn trope (how to read the musical notation which tells the reader how to chant the Torah portion). Depending on your child's level of Hebrew, many begin this process 6-9 months before your date. Some of this preparation can be aided by trope tutoring software such as Pocket Torah <http://www.pockettorah.com/> or Trope Trainer <http://www.kinnor.com/>. Families may obtain a list of tutors familiar with our community from [the Office Administrator](#) admin@cbhatlanta.org. The cost of tutoring is the responsibility of the family. Often families invite the trope tutor to serve as Gabbai Sheni for the ceremony.

Tikkun Olam Project: Each bar/bat mitzvah student will engage in a tikkun olam (repairing the world) community service project related to the bar/bat mitzvah's developing sense of ethical/Jewish obligation. The project should occur over the course of the bar/bat mitzvah year, and requires a 12–15 hour minimum time commitment. The b'nai mitzvah will choose a service project; the Rabbi must review all project choices.

D'var: Each bar/bat mitzvah will prepare a d'var Torah (a word of Torah) which they will present at the b'nai mitzvah service. The d'var can take many forms (i.e. speech, play, etc.) and should communicate a discussion of key ideas in the Torah portion for that Shabbat as well as comment on the personal significance to the bar/bat mitzvah. After an initial meeting with a CBH staff member to get started, parents serve as the primary support for their children in this process. The rabbi will meet with each child to offer guidance as well.

Families desiring an exception to the guidelines must submit a petition to the Executive Director. Please contact the office for additional information.

The Role of Family and Community

While the student is certainly at the heart of the b'nai mitzvah preparation and celebration, at CBH we believe firmly that this process and celebration are most meaningful when they take place in the context of the student's family and the CBH community every step of the way. Just as we are not a community with a "drop off" Sunday school, we are not a community where you can drop a child into the b'nai mitzvah process and meet them at the end. This is truly a lifecycle for the family - your child cannot do this without you!

Similarly, we believe that one of the most compelling aspects of Jewish identity is connection to Jewish community. Throughout the preparation process and beyond the simcha itself, we want our children and young adults to feel that they have a place at CBH -- to have relationships here, to understand the communal nature of Jewish life and ritual, and to have experience balancing personal interests with communal interests.

As an expression of our commitment to family and community involvement, the following guidelines were developed:

1. It is important that the family be members of CBH for a minimum of a full year prior to the bar/bat mitzvah year so that they have an opportunity to form relationships and understand the customs and needs of our community -- and have an opportunity to feel at home with them -- prior to beginning the b'nai mitzvah course of study.
2. The *family* (not just the bar/bat mitzvah student) should attend at least 15 CBH Shabbat morning services in the two calendar years leading up to the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony. This will both help everyone to feel oriented in CBH traditions and liturgy, and help families to build upon their relationships in the community.
3. While some aspects of the service will reflect the personality and passions of b'nai mitzvah and their families, this must always be balanced with the needs of the community. The Shabbat morning service is our community's Shabbat service, and we are honored to call upon our b'nai mitzvah to help lead our community's Shabbat service as we honor their lifecycle.
 - It is customary for the rabbi to reserve two aliyot for CBH community members to recognize other lifecycle events and celebrations in our community.
 - There will be several opportunities for the b'nai mitzvah family to offer honors to friends and family. Some ritual honors are reserved for Jewish people, while others are available to all: Any loved one can open the ark, stand on the bimah during an aliyah, present the tallit, or offer a reading. Reading the blessing during an aliyah, reading from the Torah, and lifting and dressing the Torah are honors reserved for Jews. Non-Jewish parents and relatives are invited and encouraged to participate in meaningful ways. CBH wishes to honor the entire family's contribution to the growth and development of the child.

- The b'nai mitzvah family will choose two adult greeters for the beginning of the service. It is strongly recommended that these greeters be members of CBH. Greeters need to be familiar with the space where your b'nai mitzvah is taking place and able to answer questions. They need to be able to warmly welcome guests, hand out programs and siddurim. Non-member guests will come with questions, and for this reason we ask that your greeter be an adult. We do ask that the greeter stay in their position until 9:45 as guests may come late and need instruction.
- It is customary at CBH to include readings or, occasionally, songs that are meaningful to the b'nai mitzvah family *and* serve our community as a Shabbat offering. Please bring your ideas or wishes to Rabbi Josh so that he can determine what will best serve our community and Shabbat while also honoring the simcha.



Minhag HaMakom: CBH Traditions/Customs

Here are some of the customs that make b'nai mitzvah at CBH different and special.

- Many families at CBH request particular settings of prayers or individualized **musical enrichment** for their b'nai mitzvah celebrations as an expression of their connection to Judaism, to their families, and to the CBH community. If you would like to make such a request, please contact our music director, Gayanne Geurin, approximately three months prior to the date of the service. She and Rabbi Josh will determine if the content requested is appropriate to the service and whether there will be sufficient volunteer resources on your date to provide the requested music.
- Each b'nai mitzvah **family puts together a booklet/program** with information regarding the service, the *parsha* (Torah portion), and our congregation's practices, for distribution on the day of the event. Copies of past booklets are available in the synagogue office and a template can be emailed to you from the CBH Office Administrator. Please plan to have programs for $\frac{3}{4}$ of your expected headcount.
- As a Reconstructionist shul, we use the **Reconstructionist Torah blessing** for an *aliyah*. (This version of the blessing takes out the idea of the Jews as the "chosen people.") However, if you have friends or family doing an *aliyah* who are more comfortable with the traditional version of the blessing, they may use that version. We will have copies of both version of the prayer up on the bima.
- **We shower our b'nai mitzvah with (soft, certified kosher) candy** after they read their d'var. CBH provides the candy.
- It is a CBH **tradition for the *B'nai Mitzvah* class parents to provide Sunday brunch for the bar/bat mitzvah family and their out-of-town guests the day after the ceremony**. Parents volunteer to serve as co-brunch coordinators for another b'nai mitzvah family at least once after their own ceremony. (This typically entails talking with the family about how many are coming and any food restrictions, making a list of food needed, creating a "BringIt" page and circulating to CBH members to sign up, coordinating drop off of food, and setting up, serving, and cleaning up brunch at the family's home on that Sunday morning.) Please watch for these announcements and help contribute to brunches! Also, please note that the CBH staff does not coordinate these brunches - they are voluntary offerings from the community.
- As your child attends CBHCS and b'nai mitzvah class, they will be sharing this experience with their classmates. We truly hope that you will consider inviting all of their classmates to their simcha. Please be mindful that their classmates from CBHCS may be different from the b'nai mitzvah class.

7. Financial Obligations

As you commit to the bar/bat mitzvah process, be aware there are some fixed costs associated with each student's preparation and each bar/bat mitzvah service at CBH.

If the family is unable to meet the financial obligations, a meeting should be scheduled with the Administrator to discuss payment plan options. Contact admin@cbhatlanta.org

Preparation Costs

1. Education tuition for the child having their Bar/Bat Mitzvah and family membership dues must be up to date prior to the bar/bat mitzvah date in order to have the ceremony.
2. Families are financially responsible for trope tutoring if needed. The Office Administrator admin@cbhatlanta.org or the Rabbi's Assistant awalker@cbhatlanta.org can assist in providing names of trope tutors, as well as online resources if needed. Trope tutors typically charge \$50–60 per hour; plan on roughly half a year of weekly lessons.

CBH offers an in-house tutoring program for students. Similar to independent tutoring, CBH in-house tutoring will prepare students to leyn Torah at their b'nai mitzvah. We will have a particular focus on teaching students to read the trope markings themselves, rather than relying on a recording. All tutoring will take place either at CBH or at The Friend's School. For additional information please contact admin@cbhatlanta.org

3. The mid-week bar/bat mitzvah class fee is \$250.
4. Families will need to purchase a Reconstructionist Siddur before the mid-week B'nai Mitzvah class. They are available at http://stores.jewishreconbooks.org/search.php?search_query=Reconstructionist+siddur&x=0&y=0 for (\$35).

Event Fees

For your convenience, CBH processes the building rental, deposit, and security and childcare fees on your family's behalf. These are all pass-through expenses. Three weeks before the service, all fees are due.

Total b'nai mitzvah fees are comprised of space rental fees, security, custodial, and childcare fees, and a small amount to help cover the cost of staff time at the event. Most venues require a down payment of 50% of the venue cost at the time of booking.

CBH requires a \$150 non-refundable location payment which will be applied towards your balance. This payment secures CBH for your date.

A \$250 refundable damage deposit is required.

In 2018, the total cost at our synagogue building is \$1295 (\$250 is refundable) and the total cost at CCUCC is \$2245 (\$250 is refundable).

Please note that fees are subject to change based on vendor charges.

CBH families are responsible for hosting a catered, post-ceremony *oneg* (refreshment) or *kiddush* lunch for their guests and community members. This offering can range from a light snack to a full lunch, but must include challah and juice for *motzi*, must be vegetarian or kosher fish only, and kitchen help or servers that are not guests of your simcha must be hired. Once we have determined your venue for the service, the office staff would be happy to offer suggestions regarding the best food set-up for the space.

A rough estimate for numbers is the number of invited guests plus 30 community members.

These are some commonly used caterers:

Sweet Melissa's, CBH members Glen & Liz Gurevitch: 404-370-1111
Goldberg's: 404-256-3751

Post-Simcha Donations

The above mentioned fees do not generate operating funds for CBH; therefore it is customary to make a donation to CBH at the time of Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The suggested minimum for bar/bat mitzvah donation is \$360, which can be made out to CBH General Fund or to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund.

We ask that families who have requested special music make an additional gift of \$180 to CBH in honor of the music program, in recognition of the additional planning and rehearsal time that special requests require.

Both b'nai mitzvah and their families are encouraged to fulfill the mitzvah of tzedakah, sharing their joy and good fortune with others by making a charitable contribution to an organization of their choosing.



Appendices

Who Has the Answers?

At critical points in this process, either the Administrator or the Rabbi's Assistant will contact you directly about information concerning date selection and appointments with the Rabbi.

For all other inquiries, please reference the list.

Office phone	(404) 315-6446
Office hours	Monday–Thursday, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.
Mailing address	P.O. Box 29548, Atlanta 30359
Office location	2074 Lavista Rd, Atlanta, GA 30329

The **CBH Administrator**, admin@cbhatlanta.org, is your first line of communication concerning

- Any question where it is unclear who to ask
- Picking a date
- Questions about fees and payments
- Facility reservation
- Event policy questions
- B'nai Mitzvah Guideline questions
- Registration for the B'nai Mitzvah Class (occurs with school registration process)
- Finding a Trope or Hebrew tutor
- Creating a program for the service

The **Director of Education**, education@cbhatlanta.org, assists with

- Community school issues and attendance
- Writing a d'var Torah (can also ask a tutor, parent, or teacher)

The **Rabbi's Assistant**, awalker@cbhatlanta.org, assists with questions or appointments concerning

- B'nai Mitzvah Class Schedule
- Spiritual issues connected with the bar/bat mitzvah
- Role of interfaith parents and family members
- Choosing and preparing a Gabbai Rishon (Torah Service Leader)
- Tikkun olam project (Can also ask CBH Tikkun Olam Committee, parents, teachers)
- Assisting with the b'nai mitzvah template/outline

The **CBH Music Director**, gayannegeurin@gmail.com, can provide guidance with:

- Choral and instrumental music and musicians for the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony

The **CBH Programs Coordinator**, programs@cbhatlanta.org, is your first line of communication concerning:

- Event questions
- Catering and logistics arrangements at the event

Resources and General Information

CBH Website

The B'nai Mitzvah section of the CBH website – www.congregationbethaverim.org – contains links to many important resources, including a copy of the most recent b'nai mitzvah guidelines, service templates, and checklists.

B'nai Mitzvah Prayer MP3 Files

A link to an audio (mp3) set of Shabbat Morning Prayers from the Siddur will be emailed to you before your child begins the b'nai mitzvah class. Torah blessings are included here for those honorees who may need practice.

Trope Tutors

For options please contact the Office Administrator at admin@cbhatlanta.org

Specific Prayers and Blessings

The following list of Hebrew learning goals is recommended. (Note: For children and adults with special learning needs, modifications may be made)

1. Learn to chant Torah portion (3–7 aliyot/sections)
2. Learn to chant the blessings before and after reading the Torah (CBH siddur 399)
3. Learn to lead the prayers taught in the b'nai mitzvah class. These typically include
 - Birchot HaShachar (CBH siddur 153 – 161)
 - P'sukei D'zimrah (selected verses, CBH siddur 177 – 241)
 - Full Shabbat Kiddush (CBH siddur 119)
 - Hatzi Kaddish (CBH siddur 245)
 - Barechu (CBH siddur 247)

- Sh'ma and V'ahavta (CBH siddur 277)
- Amidah (selected sections CBH siddur 295 - 321)
- The beginning and the end of the Torah service
- Aleynu (CBH siddur 445)
- Adon Olam (CBH siddur 459)

Glossary of Hebrew Terms

- Aliyah: literally “going up.” The ascent to the bimah to say the blessings over the Torah.
- Bar or Bat Mitzvah: A person in the process of accepting the responsibilities of Jewish adulthood.
- B'nai mitzvah: plural of bar/bat mitzvah.
- Chumash: the Five Books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy)
- D'var Torah: “a word of Torah”; an exposition of the Torah portion of the week, or sermonette.
- Gabbai Rishon: person who guides us through the Torah service and calls on family and friends to make blessing over each reading.
- Gabbai Sheni: person who helps the Torah readers keep their place and ensures Hebrew is read correctly.
- Haftarah: literally “completion.” The weekly reading of a section from the Book of Prophets. At CBH, this is optional. It can also be done in English.
- Kavannah: sacred intention, directing the heart, the goal of Jewish prayer.
- Midrash: literally “searching out” A post-biblical, rabbinic interpretation of a biblical verse. (There is also a current trend to create contemporary Midrash today, using the arts to react to Torah.)
- Mitzvah: act of connection; commandment.
- Parsha: The Torah portion of the week. At CBH we chant one-third of the parsha each week, completing the full Torah readings in a three-year cycle.
- Tanakh: acronym for the three sections of the Hebrew Bible: Torah (the Five Books of Moses), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings)
- Tefilah: Prayer/worship.
- Tikkun olam: literally “repairing the world”; tikkun olam is social action work in the world that brings healing and justice. Its original kabbalistic meaning was more mystical/cosmological.

- Torah: literally “teaching”. Narrowly, the first part of the Hebrew Bible that is read from the scroll; broadly, all Jewish sacred literature and all Jewish learning.
- Trope: cantillation system for chanting Torah
- Tzedekah: justice; the mitzvah of sacred giving; similar in action to charity, but fundamentally different in principle.