

Becoming a Bar Mitzvah at Temple Sinai

Introduction

Mazal Tov! Soon you will become a Bar Mitzvah. Becoming a Bar Mitzvah signifies that you are willing to take your place in Jewish tradition as a responsible member of the Jewish community. We are thrilled to be able to help you and your family to honor this special time in your life.

In this packet, you will find everything you need to know about the philosophy, history, requirements, and procedures for the entire process that is yet to come. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask Rabbi Segal, Rabbi Levenberg, Rabbi Shabman, Beth Schafer or Sharon Clark, the B'nei Mitzvah Coordinator. We are all here to make this a great experience for you and your family.

T.A.G.

T - Torah

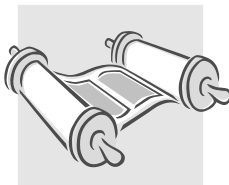
A - Avodah

G - G'milut Chasadim

עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד, עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְעַל הָעֲבוּדָה וְעַל גְּמִילוּת חַסְדִּים:
Al shlosha devarim ha'olam omed: al ha'torah, al ha'avodah, v'al g'milut chasadim.

“The world stands on three things: Torah, Sacred Service, and Acts of Loving Kindness.”
(Pirkei Avot 1:2)

These three pillars of Jewish living serve as the organizing principle for Temple Sinai's B'nei Mitzvah program. Every student preparing to become a Bar Mitzvah must meet requirements across the spectrum of: Torah (Sacred Text, Jewish Learning and Jewish History); Avodah (Holy Service to God); and G'milut Chasadim (Acts of Loving Kindness). Our detailed expectations are included on the following pages.



TORAH – Sacred Text, Jewish Learning and Jewish History

Required:

1. Learn and prepare your Torah / Haftarah portion (with an assigned tutor)
2. Study your Torah portion and what it means to you (with one of the Clergy)
3. Participate in Temple Sinai's **Special Torah Study**. Designed with our 6th and 7th graders in mind, these Torah study sessions will take place several dates during the year from 9:00-10:00 on Saturday mornings. You will study the weekly Torah portion and afterwards be able to attend a morning service that same day! **Participants must attend at least 5 of the sessions.**

4. Plus - Choose 1 of the Following Options (feel free to do more):

- Research your personal family history. If you have not already done so, consider making an oral history by interviewing at least one member of your family from a different generation. **Write a paragraph** describing the most interesting thing that you learned about your family's past. If it's relevant, include an explanation of your Hebrew name and the person after whom you are named.
- Play **Israel T.A.G. Bingo!** (See Appendix A for the game board and more details). The goal of the game is to learn more about Israel by learning more about several key organizations that support Israel in various ways.
- Honor the memory of a child who died in the Holocaust through the "Remember Us" project. Dedicate part of your Bar Mitzvah ceremony to this child and share his/her story during your service. For more information, visit www.remember-us.org.
- If you have your own idea for a different project *related to Jewish learning*, please feel free to discuss it with one of the Clergy for approval.

AVODAH – Holy Service to God



Required:

5. Learn and prepare the prayers to lead your Bar Mitzvah service
6. Attend 10 Shabbat services at Temple Sinai (5 Friday Evening; 5 Saturday Morning or Havdalah)
 - a. *At least 2* of your morning services must be the 10:30AM B'nei Mitzvah service.
 - b. Please be sure to record each date that you have attended a service on the T.A.G. form provided in this binder.
7. Read “Becoming a Bar Mitzvah” essay (See Appendix B) about the meaning and history of becoming a Bar Mitzvah. **Write one or two paragraphs** answering the question: “What does it mean to become a Bar Mitzvah?”
8. Plus – Choose 1 of the Following Options (feel free to do more):
 - Choose a prayer from the *siddur* and learn how to play it on a musical instrument. Then schedule a special music mentoring session with our Bunzl Family Cantorial Chair, Beth Schafer, to play what you have learned. (See Appendix C for sheet music.)
 - Complete one of the “Machzor Companion” activity packets during the High Holy Day services and turn it in to Sharon Clark. (The *machzor* is what we call the special prayer book used for Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur.) This packet includes questions and games to help you to connect with the High Holy Day worship experience. It will be available electronically and in a hard-copy version in advance of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur.
 - Choose a Jewish ritual object (kiddush cup, tallit, menorah, etc.) that has a special history in your family. **Write a paragraph** including:
 - a) What is the story behind this object?
 - b) Why is it important to preserve the object and its story?
 - Participate in the “Hiddur Mitzvah” program with famous Jewish artist Gary Rosenthal, where you can create a beautiful *yad* to use for your Bar Mitzvah ceremony and beyond. You can also create a mezuzah to give away to someone in need. (Stay tuned for specific date information.)
 - Watch the movie “Keeping Up With the Steins,” a heartwarming coming-of-age comedy about a boy preparing to become a Bar Mitzvah. **Write a paragraph** including:
 - a) A summary of the movie
 - b) What was the most interesting or meaningful message in the story?
 - c) How can you relate to either the plot or the characters?
 - If you have your own idea for a different project *related to Jewish prayer or ritual*, please feel free to discuss it with one of the Clergy for approval.

G'MILUT CHASADIM – Acts of Loving Kindness



Required:

9. Participate in the one of our B'nei Mitzvah Workshops designed for students and their parents in the year preceding your Bar Mitzvah ceremony. An invitation will be issued to you at the appropriate time of year.
10. Tzedakah: Giving tzedakah is a commandment in Jewish Tradition. Dedicate a percentage of your B'nei Mitzvah gifts (amount to be determined by you) to a worthy cause or organization of your choosing.
11. “Tzedek” Project: “Pursuing justice through social action, advocacy, philanthropy, and acts of loving kindness.” Dedicate yourself to an individual Tzedek project. Choose a worthy cause or an organization that needs your help and volunteer your time and talents.
 - a. You should do this because it is a *mitzvah* and because you are passionate about a particular cause - you can't accept money or school credit for doing this project. If you are looking for inspiration, some recommended organizations are included in Appendix D.
 - b. After you have completed your volunteer service, **write one or two paragraphs** describing:
 - a) What you did
 - b) Why it was meaningful to you

Plus – Choose AT LEAST 1 of the Following Options (feel free to do more):

- Volunteer with your parent(s) to do a Second Helpings run.
- Volunteer to bring a meal or stay overnight to support the homeless families who stay at Sinai during the Family Promise program.
- Contribute to a *tzedakah* box every Shabbat during the year leading up to your Bar Mitzvah ceremony. When the date of your ceremony approaches, donate the money you've collected to a charity or cause that is important to you.
- Participate in one of the many walks to benefit charitable causes in the community. Examples include the annual Hunger Walk to benefit the Atlanta Community Food Bank, the Walk to Cure Juvenile Diabetes, the Pride Parade, etc. (Check the Sinai calendar and D'var Sinai Newsletter for dates and details.)
- Volunteer with the Sandy Springs Community Assistance Center. The CAC responds to needs in our local community. Go through your closet and donate some clothing or toys to the CAC. Make sure you go to drop off the donation (don't have a parent do it for you!) and take a look around. Make sure to ask one of the CAC staff members how many people they serve and the types of assistance they provide. For more information: www.ourcac.org
- Help one of your friends with his/her Tzedek project. This would be time spent to support someone *else* to achieve their goals.
- Participate in one of Temple Sinai's “Social Action Sundays.” (Check the Sinai calendar and D'var Sinai Newsletter for upcoming dates and projects. Even if you have Hebrew Chavurah or youth group, you should be able to find at least one available Sunday!)

T.A.G. CULMINATION

Required:

12. What should you do with all of your written reflections from each aspect of T.A.G.?

Please plan to bring all of your typed written reflections to your 8-week rehearsal appointment where one of the Clergy will review all of your completed projects with you.

You will also have a chance to incorporate your written reflections into the D'var Torah that you compose and share during your Bar Mitzvah ceremony.

Temple Sinai's B'nei Mitzvah Program: T.A.G.

Name: _____

Bar Mitzvah date: _____

Please initial upon completion:

BM Initials Parent Initials

TORAH

- | | | |
|---|-------|-------|
| 1. Learn Torah/Haftarah portion | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Torah Study with one of the Clergy | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Five Saturday Morning Torah Study Sessions | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Option: _____ | _____ | _____ |

AVODAH

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------|
| 5. Learn Service Prayers | _____ | _____ |
| 6. Shabbat Service Attendance | _____ | _____ |

Friday Evening – DATE

Saturday Morning / Havdalah – DATE

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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|---|-------|-------|
| 7. Read & Reflect on: <i>“Becoming a Bar Mitzvah”</i> | _____ | _____ |
| 8. Option: _____ | _____ | _____ |

G’MILUT CHASADIM

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|---|-------|-------|
| 9. Attend a B'nei Mitzvah Workshop | _____ | _____ |
| 10. Tzedakah: Choose your Cause or Organization | _____ | _____ |
| 11. Individual <i>Tzedek</i> project | _____ | _____ |
| 12. Option: _____ | _____ | _____ |

T.A.G. CULMINATION

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|--------------------------------|-------|-------|
| 13. Write D'var Torah (speech) | _____ | _____ |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|

B'nei Mitzvah Year Timeline

1 Year Meeting: Approximately 1 year before Bar Mitzvah date, student with at least one parent meets with one of the rabbis to review the year ahead. At this time students will receive the Bar Mitzvah binder with Torah portion (and Haftarah, for Shabbat Morning service), discuss B'nei Mitzvah "T.A.G." requirements including Chessed projects, discuss the Parent Manual, and any questions about the upcoming B'nei Mitzvah year.

7-8 Months before date Begin Tutoring

	<u>Prayers</u>	<u>Torah</u>	<u>Haftarah</u>
7 Months before date	All Prayers	Start Torah	

6 Months before date	All Prayers	1 st Aliyah completed, with vowels	
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5 Months before date	All Prayers	2 nd Aliyah completed; 1 st without vowels	Start Haftarah
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Torah study and Speech appointments with one of the Clergy: Approximately 3 months before ceremony, (typically 2 meetings Torah Study and 2 for Speech) the student will read through his Torah portion, study its meaning and begin to formulate his speech (D'var Torah) for ceremony.

8-9 Week Rehearsal: Student and partner meet typically with Beth Schafer and run through the prayers, Torah and Haftarah to essentially make sure everyone is "on track" for the next two months, and to plan what steps need to be taken to assure competency of all material.

6 weeks prior to date	Bimah Ready	4 Aliyot; 3 w/out vowels	
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4 weeks prior to date	Bimah Ready	4 Aliyot: bima-ready	Finish Haftarah
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1 week rehearsal	Bimah Ready	All Torah	All Haftarah
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Student and partner meet with a Rabbi, typically in their office. Students will receive a *siddur* (prayerbook), run through the prayers, Torah (and Haftarah) and be assigned specific readings and bimah directions for the ceremony. Parents should have their Honors and Aliyot sheets finalized by this meeting so that they can get a good idea of how everyone participating in the service will "fit together."

Final Ceremony Rehearsal	Bimah Ready	All Torah	All Haftarah
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Typically one day prior to the ceremony, student, partner and families meet in the Sanctuary with the rabbi who will be officiating at the service. Students run through entire service, Torah (and Haftarah), and speech. All family Honors must be final before this rehearsal.

Ceremony Date	Bimah Ready	All Torah	All Haftarah
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Service Procedures

On the Friday evening prior to the Saturday service, you and your parents are invited to participate in the Shabbat evening worship by kindling the candles and leading one or two prayers with the congregation. Your family may also choose to sponsor Kabbalat Panim that evening in honor of your becoming a Bar Mitzvah.

During the Shabbat morning service, you will:

- Lead the congregation in prayer.
- Chant, in Hebrew, the Torah portion and Torah Blessings.
- Chant, in Hebrew, the Haftarah portion and Haftarah Blessings.
- Deliver a D'var Torah (speech) reflecting on your studies over the past year, including a commentary on your Torah portion and reflections on your T.A.G. experiences.

The Havdalah service will include all of the above with the exception of the Haftarah portion and Blessings. Instead, you will lead the congregation in the Havdalah blessings, bidding farewell to Shabbat and welcoming in a new week.

Preparation for the Bar Mitzvah Candidate

Winston Churchill once said: "Continuous effort is the key to unlocking our potential." How perfectly he described the B'nei Mitzvah experience! Becoming a Bar Mitzvah takes a lot of time and hard work, but through your efforts, not only will you learn a lot, but you will achieve a great sense of accomplishment! The more you put into this process, the more you will get out of it, so be prepared to discover your potential.

We recommend that you study every day. For the best results, try reading aloud with the recordings provided by Temple Sinai. Having your parents listen to you is the best way to study. Your parents should be monitoring your progress and communicating regularly with your tutor and Sharon Clark. Even if your parents don't know how to read Hebrew, they can help you by listening for clarity and confidence.

Recommended Reading

As you begin to envision your Bar Mitzvah ceremony and celebration, we recommend a few books for you and your parents:

- Putting God on the Guest List by Jeffrey Salkin
- Raising Your Child to Be a Mensch by Neil Kurshan
- Teaching Your Child about God by David Wolpe
- Gates of Mitzvah: A Guide to the Jewish Life Cycle by the CCAR

