

Beth Hillel Bnai Emunah

Bnai Mitzvah Guide



3220 Big Tree Lane
Wilmette, IL 60091
847 256-1213
office@bhcbe.org
www.bhcbe.org

Dear B'nai Mitzvah Families,

Mazel Tov on your upcoming celebration! Becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is one of the greatest events in the life cycle of a Jewish family, and we are honored to share this special milestone with you. We are available to be of help in any way we can, and look forward to working with you and your children over the coming months.

The information included in this manual is designed to help make preparing for a Bar or Bat Mitzvah as smooth and meaningful as possible, and we hope you will read it carefully. Please call any time with questions or concerns.

Again, Mazel Tov and all our best wishes at this exciting time.

The BHBE B'nai Mitzvah Team

Introduction and Who's Who in the BMP (B'nai Mitzvah Programming)

B'nai Mitzvah planning at BHBE is truly a collaborative effort between our clergy, the synagogue's administrative staff, and our B'nai Mitzvah families working together to ensure preparations are smooth, effective, and tailored to the individual needs of each student. Below are key members of the BMP team:

- **Cantor Pavel Roytman**, coordinator of the B'nai Mitzvah Program and point person for any questions or concerns you might have. Working closely with Rabbi Tucker and Aaron Frankel, Director of Education and Family Engagement, Cantor Roytman will assign a B'nai Mitzvah date for each family. The date assignments usually take place three years prior to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Once the date is scheduled, Cantor Roytman will set up annual B'nai Mitzvah meetings for families to attend.

A year before the Bar or Bat Mitzvah, Cantor Roytman will contact each family to set up tutoring sessions. From there on Cantor Roytman oversees preparation of your child until the actual day of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Our goal is for each child to take a leadership role that is meaningful and to feel confident and well-prepared on his or her special day. Cantor Roytman ensures this occurs, providing guidance and support and can be contacted at cantorroytman@bhcb.org or by phone at 847-256-1213 x13.

- **Rabbi Annie Tucker** works with Bar or Bat Mitzvah students, teaching in the BMP program and meeting with students individually to prepare their D'var Torah. Rabbi Tucker conducts the Bar or Bat Mitzvah service and has the privilege of speaking to each child from the Bimah. Our goal is for students to understand his or her Torah portion well and to be able to find meaning in it, demonstrating how the text is personally relevant.

Rabbi Tucker is excited to meet B'nai Mitzvah families and to begin getting to know one another. Rabbi Tucker will contact you individually to set up personal meetings, but you should feel free to be in touch with her at any time. Rabbi Tucker can be reached at rabiannietucker@bhcb.org or by phone at 847-256-1213 ext. 12.

- **Aaron Frankel, Director of Education and Family Engagement** is involved with the educational component of the BMP and is responsible for working with students on their Mitzvah projects. Our goal is for each child to combine learning with action, giving back to the community in a way that speaks to his or her individual interests and talents. Aaron helps guide students in the appropriate direction and meets with each student a year in advance of their Bat or Bat Mitzvah. He can be reached at aaronfrankel@bhcb.org or by phone at 847-256-0755.
- **Chuck Kahalnik, Executive Director** manages the financial arrangements and is available to discuss any other issues that may arise. Also, he is responsible for all of the Kiddush menu-planning and food related elements of the day, as well as, any additional room reservations for a Shabbat dinner or private party. Chuck can be reached by phone at 847-256-1213 ext. 15 or at executive@bhcb.org.

Policies and suggestions for Bar/Bat Mitzvah

ADVANCE PREPARATION

A) Setting Date and Time

The date of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is set by the Cantor in coordination with the synagogue calendar and the B'nai Mitzvah families.

B) Religious/Educational Requirements

Five years of attendance at the BHBE Academy or the equivalent (day school) is required. Students must successfully complete each year of the Academy and demonstrate good attendance. In extenuating circumstances whereby a student joins the Academy less than 5 years before their Bar or Bat Mitzvah date, additional outside tutoring might be required.

During the year of Bar/Bat Mitzvah instruction, students are encouraged to attend Shabbat services on a regular basis. We also hope that parents will attend services along with their children in order to support them.

All B'nai Mitzvah receptions at Beth Hillel Bnai Emunah must be kosher and we encourage outside celebrations to similarly observe Jewish dietary customs and not be held on Shabbat. This policy reflects religious values of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

C) Tutoring

During the year before Bar/Bat Mitzvah, your child will meet individually with Cantor Roytman. Usually lessons begin seven to nine months in advance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date and focus on skills necessary for the celebration. Based on individual circumstances, it is often possible to begin lessons earlier. The Cantor is open to discuss your particular situation in order to set up a schedule that fits your family's needs.

D) Derech Eretz (Considerate Behavior)

Beth Hillel Bnai Emunah nurtures a sense of caring, kindness and sensitivity. We encourage families to invite all students in their child's Academy class to their celebrations. When this is not possible, we strongly urge you to consider the following guidelines: if fifty percent or more of the class is invited to the celebration, the rest of the class is to be invited as well. If you do not plan on inviting the entire Academy class to your Simcha, please send invitations by mail rather than handing them out at school.

E) Aliyot and Other Honors

We look forward to having your family members and friends participate in your celebration. You can expect the Ritual Chair to contact your family about a month in advance of the B'nai Mitzvah to help you assign honors; please see the Ritual Committee insert for contact info and details. Feel free to reach out earlier if you would like.

Those relatives and guests designated to read Torah or to lead T'filah on the day of Bar/Bat Mitzvah are required to contact Cantor Roytman in advance. He will provide guidance to those in need of help in preparing for the event, and will also make sure the appropriate reading is adequately prepared.

Mitzvah Project

One of the most profound ways of growing is through helping change the lives of others. We believe that by taking the "Mitzvah" part of "B'nai Mitzvah" seriously, we give our participants the chance to better experience what it really means to be a full member of the Jewish community. The Jewish people have a long history of being generous with their time and resources to make the world a better place and we would like your child to take his or her place in that longstanding noble tradition.

Each B'nai Mitzvah student is expected to choose a Mitzvah project that is both personally meaningful and helpful to the community. The more the project is your child's idea, the more likely he or she will find it meaningful. Part of the experience of being a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is growing independence. This is a way for your child to exercise his or her independence productively.

Aaron Frankel, Director of Education and Family Engagement, supervises the projects and is a resource for choosing the right project for your child. He will also check in periodically to see how the project is progressing. We require each B'nai Mitzvah student to participate in at least 13 hours of social justice related work - the majority of which should be in their chosen Mitzvah project.

We look forward to partnering with you and your child in putting the "Mitzvah" back in B'nai Mitzvah!

Model B'nai Mitzvah Preparation Timeline

3 Years

- Attending the "three -year out " meeting where the initial introductions are made and the B'nai Mitzvah Packet is received
- Setting up/finalizing Bar or Bat Mitzvah Date with Cantor Roytman

2 Years

- Attending the "two- year out " meeting for additional info and details

1 Year

- Begin collecting information from Chuck Kahalnik, Executive Director, at 847-256-1213 ext. 15 or at executive@bhcbe.org.
- Connect with Aaron Frankel regarding your child's B'nai Mitzvah Project.
- Connect with Cantor Roytman regarding tutoring.
- Contact photographer and or videographer, sign venue contracts

7 Months

- Connect with Chuck Kahalnik regarding Kiddush

3 Months

- Email picture of your child to office@bhcbe.org for the Bulletin
- Consider ordering Kippot, and tallit and tefillin through the BHBE Sisterhood. When ordering, Kippot should be shipped to the synagogue.

2 Months

- Connect with Rabbi Tucker regarding D'var Torah

1 Month

- Schedule pictures with synagogue and rehearsal day with Cantor Roytman
- Connect with the Ritual Chairperson regarding assigning honors (aliyot, ark openings, etc...)
- Finalize all catering with Chuck Kahalnik

The Week Before

- The Saturday before, each Bar/Bat Mitzvah and their family are invited to serve as greeters at Shabbat morning services
- If the child is preparing the first three readings of the Torah they are encouraged to read those during Saturday night (Mincha) and Monday and Thursday morning (Shacharit) services of the week leading up to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The family is encouraged to attend as well. It is a good time to take pictures or videos during the actual service.

The Day Of

The day of Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a very exciting but understandably stressful day for all those involved. So, here are some guidelines and tips on how to go through it successfully.

- Get a good night's sleep
- Before leaving the house check and make sure to bring all B'nai Mitzvah materials (D'var Torah, copies of the blessings, etc.) with you
- Be at the synagogue at the beginning of services at 9:30 AM
- Sit on the right (cantor) side of the Bimah
- Participate in the service to the best of your ability
- If unsure feel free to ask questions. Everyone is there to help you and to cheer you on
- Relax and enjoy!

BHBE Sisterhood wishes you a mazel tov on your child's Simcha.

It is a very special time in the life of your family and we want to make the "other" details easy for you. Sisterhood offers you one stop shopping for your bar/bat mitzvah needs.

You can purchase personalized invitations for 25% off the retail price. The invitation books are in the office and can be taken home to browse. Contact: Marsha Lyons roarmbl@gmail.com

The Judiaca Shop sells Bar/Bat Mitzvah Tallit and they can order a Tallit if you find something elsewhere . Contact Joan Meyers 847-602-2257 or Robin Smulson 847-982-1233

Personalized kippot can also be purchased through Sisterhood.

There are knowledgeable women who can help you navigate through the process.

Please support Sisterhood on your Simcha as Sisterhood always supports
Beth Hillel Bnai Emunah.

Mazel Tov



From all of us at BHBE!

