



Mazel Tov on this fabulous *simcha* (special occasion)!

Celebrating the milestone of becoming BMitzvah¹ is a very special moment for our young people, their families, friends, and our community. Temple Shalom is proud to provide personal support and care for every family in crafting a meaningful experience.

At Temple Shalom, students typically become a BMitzvah close to their 13th birthday in the context of a Shabbat (Saturday) morning service. The service begins at 10:45 a.m. in our Sanctuary and is also broadcast to the Temple Shalom community and the family's invited guests online using our [Live Stream](#). In addition to the Saturday morning service, students participate in the Friday evening service the night before their BMitzvah by leading the community in the blessing over the wine and lighting candles as a family.

Our BMitzvah team works closely with each family to match students with an appropriate tutor and to create a meaningful experience that encourages students to grow and stretch while feeling supported. Celebrating this milestone has four main components:

- **Torah** - Learning and sharing insights with the community with a D'var Torah speech
- **Avodah** – Leading the congregation in prayer
- **Gemilut Hasadim** – This phrase is translated as “acts of loving-kindness.” In the context of your child's BMitzvah this means designing and implementing a mitzvah (service) project
- **Kehillah** - Being part of community through participation in our MINCHA middle school program and Temple Shalom BMitzvah family programming experiences

We are committed to crafting an experience that recognizes the uniqueness of each of our students. Inclusion is a core value of Temple Shalom and this is shown in how we care for all of our families. Each young person's journey is unique, and we are honored to act as guides in this process.

This handbook is meant to serve as a reference and resource to you throughout the process; the BMitzvah team will guide you along the journey. **Should you have questions at any point, please reach out to [Rabbi Gubitz](#) and/or [Simone Bordage](#) (contact information below).**

¹ Why do we call it BMitzvah? With effort to be inclusive of students across the gender spectrum, we've chosen this gender neutral term. You are, of course, welcome to continue referring to your child's BMitzvah as a Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

Temple Shalom BMitzvah Process - At a glance...

The team at Temple Shalom is committed to working in sacred partnership with our students and families. This means that everyone involved in the process has a role in ensuring that the celebration of this important milestone is a meaningful and rich experience, which includes robust participation in reading Torah and prayers, D'var Torah speech and a Mitzvah Project.

Our B'nei Mitzvah Team:

Rabbi Jen Gubitz, (Director of Jewish Experience) - jgubitz@templeshalom.org
Simone Bordage (all scheduling and program logistics) - sbordage@templeshalom.org
Liz Shiro (Director of Hebrew & Administration/Tutor Coordinator) - lshiro@templeshalom.org
Ken Turkewitz (Executive Director) - kturkewitz@templeshalom.org
Eleanor Boschert (site logistics) - eboschert@templeshalom.org

Our Clergy Team:

Rabbi Laura Abrasley - Rabbi Allison Berry - Rabbi Jen Gubitz - Cantor Jen Keren

The BMitzvah Team will:

- Support your child and support you
- Be available to answer any questions you have along the way (**Rabbi Gubitz is the point person**)
- Schedule a meeting at the beginning of the process with our Learning & Engagement team to understand your goals for your child and to discuss logistics so you know what to expect
- Work to match your child to the right tutor (we'll take into account your child's learning style and scheduling needs) and determine the number of tutoring sessions
- Provide learning tools including digital recordings and print materials in our Google Classroom
- Schedule clergy appointments

Our Clergy will:

- Meet with families before the tutoring begins
- Check in regularly with tutors and monitor Google Classroom to track student progress (Rabbi Gubitz)
- Meet with students to discuss the Torah portion - to prep for the D'var Torah (student teaching, speech or project) (Rabbis Berry & Abrasley)
- Check on the progress of prayers and Torah (Rabbi Gubitz)

- Check in with students on D'var Torah/Mitzvah Project (Rabbi Gubitz)
- Check in with parents to discuss family participation and service honors (Rabbis Abrasley & Berry)
- Run 3 rehearsals in the weeks leading up to the service date (Rabbi Gubitz runs the first two rehearsals. The officiating rabbi runs the final rehearsal.)

The BMitzvah Tutor will:

- Meet with the student weekly
- Provide regular communication with family outlining student progress and assignments via Google Classroom
- Communicate with BMitzvah team regarding student progress

Parents will:

- Work with the BMitzvah team to arrange a consistent tutoring time for their children, and to schedule all meetings with clergy and staff
- Communicate in a timely fashion with tutors regarding scheduling changes - *Please see our tutoring cancellation policy below.*
- Work with the BMitzvah Team, the clergy, and the student to craft a meaningful BMitzvah experience
- Support students through the process in preparation of D'var Torah, Mitzvah Project and service participation
- Maintain student's participation in MINCHA programming
- Familiarize themselves with resources & stay aware of student's progress and weekly assignments on Google Classroom
- Communicate openly with the BMitzvah Team, Clergy and tutor
- Celebrate this amazing milestone in their child's life

Students will:

- Work with the BMitzvah Team, the Clergy and their parents to craft a meaningful BMitzvah experience
- Be fully present during tutoring sessions and clergy meetings
- Familiarize themselves with learning resources on Google Classroom
- Maintain attendance in MINCHA programming
- Practice tutor assignments each week for at least 15 minutes a day in order to arrive prepared for tutoring sessions
- Choose and complete a Mitzvah Project and D'var Torah with guidance
- Attend 4 Shabbat services and at least one Torah Study session in the year preceding their BMitzvah service.

BMITzvah Meetings & Approximate Timeline

Simone Bordage will be in touch to schedule meetings that your family will attend through the process of becoming BMITzvah. Here is a rough timeline for these appointments:

MINCHA Participation (Students enroll all year long.)	Throughout the process, our MINCHA program supports the experience of becoming BMITzvah through interactive learning about Jewish values, lifecycle celebrations, Torah stories, Israel and Jewish spirituality.
Learning & Engagement (L&E) Team Meeting (2-4 weeks before tutoring begins)	Meet with the L&E team who will provide an overview of the tutoring process, Google Classroom resources, and discuss current service options/protocols. Parents required, student attendance optional. <i>45 minutes</i>
Family Prep Meeting (2-4 weeks before tutoring begins)	Get to know the rabbi who will be officiating at your BMITzvah service, learn about BMITzvah, discuss expectations and brainstorm ideas for your Mitzvah project. Student and family attendance required. <i>45 minutes</i>
D'var Torah Planning Meeting (approx. 3 months before the service)	Meet with your officiating rabbi to discuss the meaning of your Torah portion and how it connects to today's world/your own experience. Together we'll consider how you want to share your teaching with the congregation. Student w/ family attendance encouraged. <i>30 minutes</i>
Prayer, Torah, & Mitzvah Project Progress Checks (approx. 3 months to 8 weeks before the service)	With Rabbi Gubitz. Student only. <i>30 minutes</i>
D'var Torah Progress Check (approx. 6 weeks before service)	With officiating Rabbi. Student only. <i>30 minutes</i>
Family Honors and Service Prep Meeting (approx. 6 weeks before service)	With officiating Rabbi. Preview of the service order. Discuss family participation and assignment of service honors. Parents required, students optional. <i>45 minutes</i>
Rehearsals #1 and #2 (3 and 2 weeks before service)	With Rabbi Gubitz in the sanctuary. Run-through of the service, including prayers, Torah portion and D'var Torah. Student and at least one parent present. <i>60 minutes</i>
Final Rehearsal (Week of the BMITzvah date)	With the officiating Rabbi in the sanctuary. Full run-through of prayers, Torah, choreography. Immediate Family required. Other service participants may join via Zoom. <i>Approx. 1 hour</i>

Quick Links

[Current Service Protocols](#) • [Temple Shalom B'nei Mitzvah Webpage](#)
[Live Stream Video Samples](#) • [Family Honors Form](#) • [B'nei Mitzvah Hub](#)

BMitzvah Fees, Tutoring Policy, and Google Classroom

BMitzvah Fees

The BMitzvah fee defrays the cost of 25 BMitzvah tutoring sessions, preparation materials, and programming. The BMitzvah fee is increased periodically to cover rising costs; however, you will not be affected by any increase once your child begins the BMitzvah process. Families can pay this fee in two installments and we are happy to work out further payment plans as needed.

The total fee for BMitzvah occurring prior to July 1st, 2025 is \$2,150.

The total fee for BMitzvah occurring after June 30th, 2025 is \$2,279

Tutoring Cancellation Policy

Temple Shalom has a fabulous team of tutors who help our students prepare for the BMitzvah service. Students meet with tutors for 30 minutes in person or on Zoom, depending on student need.

Our BMitzvah fee covers 25 sessions of tutoring. Like scheduling in other aspects of life (extra curricular activities, doctors appointments), Temple Shalom also has a cancellation policy.

- For cancellations and rescheduling, please give your tutor 24 hours notice.
- We understand that “life happens” and scheduling your family is incredibly difficult. As such, every student is permitted one last-minute cancellation without penalty.
- Please note that if last minute cancellations become habitual, families will need to pay additional fees.

Google Classroom

We use Google Classroom to manage our students' learning. Parents are invited to the classroom to receive regular updates on student progress. Please make sure you accept the Google Classroom invitation when your child begins their studies. We also recommend downloading the google classroom app on your phone for easy access to BMitzvah prep materials.

Planning for the Service

Service Attendance Expectation

To help prepare students to become a BMitzvah, we ask our students and their families to attend four Friday night Shabbat services, three Saturday morning (BMitzvah) Shabbat services, and one Torah study session via Live Stream and Zoom. Regular attendance at tefillah (prayer services) and MINCHA will support students' learning. Links to all of these services and study sessions can be found on the Temple [website](#).

What to know about the Final Rehearsal

This rehearsal will take place in the Sanctuary with the officiating rabbi the week of your child's BMitzvah. The child becoming BMitzvah and parents/caregivers are expected to attend. Siblings are welcome to come to the rehearsal, but their attendance is not necessary. During the rehearsal, we will rehearse all the components of the Shabbat morning service including prayers, Torah reading, and the D'var Torah.

Please be sure to assign all honors in advance of the Final Rehearsal. The form to complete the [honors](#) assignments can also be found in the [BMitzvah Hub](#). This will be addressed during the Family Honors Meeting, approximately 6 weeks before the BMitzvah. More information regarding honors on the following page.

For families partnered for a Double BMitzvah, students will rehearse together and the service will be structured in a way that honors both families.

The Friday Evening Before the BMitzvah Service

Friday Evening Shabbat worship begins at 6:30 p.m.

The child becoming BMitzvah will be invited to lead the congregation in the Kiddush (blessing over the wine) or the V'ahavta. The congregation looks forward to welcoming you!

Families will also be invited to light Shabbat candles at the beginning of the service.

The Special Day Has Arrived...What will happen?

For current protocols for in-person events please click [here](#). This is a working document and is subject to change as Massachusetts guidelines and Temple policies on gatherings during COVID-19 are adapted.

The Temple has a recording system in the Sanctuary to provide a video recording of the service to each BMitzvah family. No other photography or recording is permitted during the service. You will receive a digital copy of your service.

The Temple has hearing loops available for any in-person guests who require use of an assisted listening system during the service. Please notify us in advance if needed.

The morning service will be pushed to Live Stream and begin at 10:45 a.m.

How can family members participate in the service?

We welcome members of the BMitzvah family to participate in portions of the service in-person. Families will meet with their officiating rabbi to help plan and assign these honors. Families will complete this [form](#) once honors have been finalized. Current service honors include:

- A [reading](#) that prefaces the Torah service
- A [reading](#) that concludes the Torah service
- **Being honored with an aliyah** – reciting the [blessing before and after](#) a section of the Torah is read. Each family will receive aliyot (in addition to one for parents and one for the BMitzvah). Having an aliyah is a very special honor which is commonly given to grandparents, aunts or uncles, or siblings, but may be given to any family member or friend. More than one person is welcome to share each aliyah.

We ask that within each group who receives an aliyah, that at least one person be Jewish. We are thrilled to welcome family and friends who are not Jewish to participate as well. The clergy are happy to spend time discussing with family members or friends the significance of the aliyah and the meaning of the blessings, to ensure the people being honored are comfortable with what they will be reciting. We invite you to speak with the clergy about specifics with your family.

Please note: The aliyah blessings are in Hebrew. Please plan accordingly, assigning these honors to people who feel comfortable reciting or chanting the blessings in Hebrew or who are willing to learn them. Family members who do not know the blessings or are not comfortable reciting them but would like to participate are also welcome to join other family or friends on the bima and stand next to them and the BMitzvah child during the aliyah.

The text of the Torah blessings can be found in the link above, and the audio recordings of these can be found on the [Temple Shalom website](#).

- **Reading the English translation of the Torah portion** – You may choose one or two participants to read the English translation of the Torah portion. You will find a translation of the Torah portion in your child's BMitzvah binder and in their Google Classroom. This translation corresponds to the translation available to worshippers in the sanctuary. Be sure to assign the readers prior to the Final Rehearsal, and please provide the participants with copies of what they are to read.
- **Leading the Kiddush (blessing over wine)** – You may designate one or two members of your family to lead the Kiddush at the conclusion of the service.
- **Leading Ha-Motzi (the blessing over challah)** – You may designate one or two members of your family to lead Ha-Motzi at the conclusion of the service. These can be the same people who lead Kiddush.

Additional honors may be discussed as needed with the clergy. All honors that involve a reading, as well as the text of the Torah blessings, may be found on our [BMitzvah webpage](#). Translation of the Torah portion may be found on Google Classroom.

The Role of Parents/Caregivers in the BMitzvah Service

For the penultimate aliyah (penultimate section of the Torah that is read), both parents will come forward to stand with the BMitzvah at the reader's desk. One or both parents will recite the blessings before and after the reading of the Torah. The BMitzvah will be called to the Torah by their Hebrew name for the fourth aliyah for which parents remain at the reader's desk to witness this special moment.

Following the child's D'var Torah (teaching in the form of a speech or project), parents will have a chance to offer a personal blessing to their child at the reader's desk (more info below).

Parents accompany the BMitzvah to the Ark for a blessing from the clergy.

The Parents' Blessing

The parents will have an opportunity to offer a personal blessing to their child during the service. It is important to keep in mind the following guidelines:

- Your child has just finished leading the congregation in prayer and has become an adult in the Jewish community. Your remarks should reflect the lifecycle transition we are celebrating, the spiritual and ethical messages that you take from the BMitzvah experience, as well as their commitment to Judaism and Jewish responsibility.

- Use this as an opportunity to speak directly and personally to your child. What are the values and lessons gleaned from becoming BMitzvah that you want to communicate?
- Please be aware that in times such as this, less is often more. The most meaningful parent blessings are concise and direct. Each parent should plan on speaking no more than two minutes.
- This is a personal and sacred moment. Prepare your thoughts in advance, make some notes or a text, and speak from your heart. Your child will love what you share with them and remember this moment in the years ahead. You've got this!

What Else is important for me to know and think about BEFORE the BMitzvah Service?

Photography

You are welcome to hire a photographer to take family photos. You can arrive at 9:30am to take family photos. You are invited to carefully open the ark and take a Torah out for photos. Please ensure it does not touch the ground and is treated respectfully. You may also choose to take photos on another day (before or after the final rehearsal, for example). Photography is not permitted during the rehearsal or service itself. To arrange to take photos on a day other than the date of the service, please be in touch with our Executive Director.

Kippah and Tallit (head coverings and prayer shawls)

The wearing of *kippot* (headcovering) and *tallit* (prayer shawl) at Temple Shalom is the personal choice of each worshiper. The congregation makes kippot available to those who want them. They are in a basket in the entranceway of the Sanctuary.

Traditionally, the tallit is worn by Jewish adults at all morning services. The shaliach tzibbur, the prayer leader, also wears a tallit when conducting these services. Reform Judaism affirms the right of men and women and people of all gender identities to choose to make the tallit a part of their religious lives. Accordingly, the BMitzvah is invited to wear a tallit if the custom feels meaningful.

Service Booklet

The Temple does not provide a service booklet for the morning of the BMitzvah. While there is no requirement to do so, some families choose to prepare a booklet which includes some or all of the following: a photo, family participants, page numbers, information about and background/history of the BMitzvah service, the architecture of the Sanctuary, etc. Often there is a message from the BMitzvah student welcoming their friends and family and sharing a little about what the day means to them. We encourage families who welcome guests who are not Jewish to add information that will give their guests a sense of how a service works, what to expect and some of the definitions of the ritual moments (what is the

Torah? Why do we care for the Torah the way we do? What is the meaning of being honored with an aliyah, etc). Families sharing the Shabbat morning service should collaborate on the booklet. We will provide sample programs during the Family Prep Meeting. Our clergy will assist you with the page numbers, and are available to proofread your program before you print it.

Gemilut Chasadim (Acts of Loving Kindness) – Putting the Mitzvah (Good Deeds) in the BMitzvah

As part of becoming a BMitzvah at Temple Shalom, we ask our students, along with the guidance of their family, to pick a BMitzvah service project that is meaningful and worthy of their time. This mitzvah project should be student driven and parent supported and be a justice based cause that the student cares about. The project could be one chosen specifically in connection with becoming a BMitzvah or be the continuation of a project you are already involved in via school or another organization. Mitzvah projects can be done in the 6th or 7th grade year, based on your family's schedule and the parameters of the project. We understand that during the pandemic, it may not be possible to do a service-based Mitzvah Project and it is okay to wait until certain activities are possible again. We also welcome creativity when it comes to doing a remote project. The Mitzvah project will be discussed with your officiating rabbi at the first family meeting.

End of Year Celebration with Classmates

At the end of the year, we will invite all students who became BMitzvah throughout the year to celebrate together with our Clergy and Learning & Engagement team!

Mazel Tov! Please be in touch if you have any questions or concerns along the way.