



Har Sinai - Oheb Shalom Congregation

B'NAI MITZVAH MANUAL

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Mazal Tov on taking this next step as your family begins the *B'nai Mitzvah* process!

After many years of studying Hebrew, our ancient traditions, holidays, and history, it is now time for you and your family to take this important step toward becoming an adult member of the Jewish community. This right of passage begins with a process of study and exploration to prepare you to lead our congregation in prayer and read from and interpret a portion of the *Torah*.

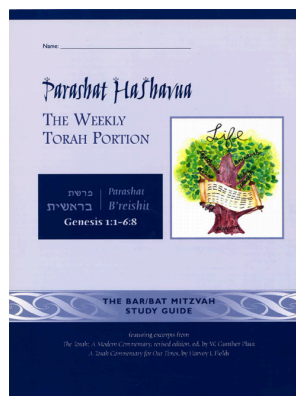
Becoming *B'nai Mitzvah* is an important part of who we are as a Jewish people. As you take on the responsibilities of this process, you become a link in the unbroken Chain of the Jewish People and our traditions. You are part of a village of people who came before you, starting with your parent(s) and spanning all the way back to our forefathers and foremothers. This *B'nai Mitzvah* process embodies the value of *l'dor vador* (from generation to generation) and the continuity of the Jewish People

We are so excited and honored to be a part of this special journey with you and your family.

At your first meeting with the clergy, you will receive the following study guides:

Your ***Torah & Haftarah Portions Booklet and Study Guide***: This includes your *Torah* portion in Hebrew, a translation, commentary, your *Haftarah* Portion, and the accompanying blessings.

A copy of ***Mishkan T'filah***, the Reform Movement's blue *siddur* (prayerbook) that we use during every worship service at Har Sinai – Oheb Shalom Congregation.



Though you are a part of our expansive Har Sinai – Oheb Shalom Congregational family, this process is individualized to meet your interests and needs. In the months leading up to becoming a *B'nai Mitzvah*, you will:

1. Learn key prayers;
2. Learn to chant your *Torah* portion, first with vowels and then with no vowels;
3. Learn to chant your *Haftarah* portion;
4. Write a *D'var Torah* (Words of Torah/brief speech);
5. Participate in a *Mitzvah* Project of your choosing in conversation with Rabbi Sabath.

**A more detailed checklist found on page 5.*

Rabbi Sabath, Cantor Marcus, and your tutor are looking forward to working with you to help you and your family make the very most out of this amazing journey!

What is a Bar and Bat Mitzvah (Plural: B'nai Mitzvah)?

The term *B'nai Mitzvah* literally means "children of the commandment." Technically, a Jewish person becomes a *bar/bat/b'nai mitzvah* when she/he/they turn twelve-thirteen years old. Generally, the process of becoming *B'nai Mitzvah* coincides with the biological shifts of puberty and allows for important discussions about Jewish identity, responsibility, and privileges.

Our tradition teaches that when a child reaches that age, they are commanded to observe the ethical and ritual laws of our Jewish tradition. The *B'nai Mitzvah* ceremony is actually *not* a requirement of this tradition; however, over the past few centuries, this rite of passage has come to be celebrated in a religious ceremony which focuses on 'owning' and having a deep personal connection to a particular part of the *Torah*, a specific reading from a *Haftarah* portion, and to the basic Shabbat prayer service and rituals.

Becoming B'nai Mitzvah Today:

Today, we recognize that young people 12-13 years of age have usually not yet reached the age of full spiritual maturity or responsibility. The rite of passage of becoming *B'nai Mitzvah*, however, is an essential step toward Jewish adulthood. The ceremony marks the moment when teenagers will be expected to make more decisions on their own and assume greater personal responsibility and accountability for their actions. The ceremony also provides an added incentive for continued religious education. The Posner JEM Religious School curriculum at Har Sinai – Oheb Shalom Congregation is designed to prepare the *B'nai Mitzvah* candidate for a fulfilling experience within a positive and joyful Reform Jewish framework. We tailor our program to the uniqueness of each student and family while maintaining the highest standards of excellence. The *B'nai Mitzvah* ceremony provides an opportunity for the *B'nai Mitzvah* candidate to demonstrate some of what they have learned at Har Sinai – Oheb Shalom Congregation as well as who they are, what they have learned about life, and what they want to teach us, their community, about how we can live according to the most important values.

PRIOR TO ACCEPTANCE INTO THE B'NAI MITZVAH PROGRAM

The Har Sinai – Oheb Shalom Congregation Board of Trustees has adopted the following policies:

1. *B'nai Mitzvah* is a privilege that accompanies membership in a congregational community. Accordingly, *B'nai Mitzvah* families are expected to have been members of our congregation or another congregation for three years prior to the *B'nai Mitzvah* date.
2. *B'nai Mitzvah* candidates must be enrolled and in good standing in the Posner JEM Religious School or its equivalent (such as a Jewish day school) at the time of the life cycle event.
3. *B'nai Mitzvah* candidates must complete a minimum of three years of Religious School or its equivalent through their *B'nai Mitzvah*, as determined by the Senior Rabbi, to be eligible for *B'nai Mitzvah*.
4. All Religious School fees, *B'nai Mitzvah* fees, and congregational dues must be current prior to commencement of *B'nai Mitzvah* training. Membership dues must remain current, or the *B'nai Mitzvah* ceremony will not be permitted to take place.

5. Each student is required to fulfill a *Mitzvah* Project (community service, *tzedakah*, and/or good deeds). The *Mitzvah* Project will be determined in consultation with the clergy approximately eight months prior to the *B'nai Mitzvah* Service.

Har Sinai – Oheb Shalom Congregation is committed to lifelong Jewish learning. For this reason, we strive to ensure that every *B'nai Mitzvah* student continues their formal and informal Jewish education at least until the end of the 10th grade (Confirmation) and continues their involvement in the congregation and broader Jewish community throughout their lives.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Meetings with the Tutor:

- Cantor Marcus will assign tutors after initial meeting with clergy;
- You will be connected via email with your student's tutor and will schedule your meetings directly with your tutor;
- Tutoring sessions will begin about 10 months prior to service date;
- Meetings with the tutor should be approximately once a week for 30 minutes;
- Tutoring sessions are to take place **in-person only** (with exception for sickness, inclement weather, etc);

General Schedule of Meetings with Clergy

Please note that the below suggests an approximate schedule. We work around holidays, clergy schedules, and student/family schedules to put a schedule together for your family.

Meetings with Rabbi Sabath & Cantor Marcus together:

- About one year prior to date, you will meet with both clergy to celebrate your official beginning of this exciting process [whole family];
- Around 3 weeks prior to date, you will meet with both clergy to talk through family honors and other logistics [*B'nai Mitzvah* and parents].

Meetings with Rabbi Sabath:

- First meeting occurs approximately 9 months prior to service date [parents/guardians and *B'nai Mitzvah* student's family];
- Next meetings are roughly 6 and 4 months prior to date [in-person, phone, or Zoom meeting with parents & in-person meeting with student only];
- About 3 months out from date, the *B'nai Mitzvah* student will meet with the Rabbi on a bi-weekly basis to study and prepare for the *D'var Torah*.
- To schedule meetings with Rabbi Sabath, please contact Marlene Pachino at Marlene@HSOSC-baltimore.org.

Meetings with Cantor Marcus:

- First meeting occurs approximately 10 months prior to service date [student only];
- Meetings continue once every couple of months, increasing in frequency as service date approaches [student only];
- Beginning about 2 months prior to date, intensive meetings begin and are scheduled for every 1-3 weeks [student only, frequency varies from student to student].

If you are unable to make your scheduled meeting with Rabbi Sabbath or Cantor Marcus, please email Marlene Pachino (marlene@hsosc-baltimore.org) with 24 hours notice if at all possible.

Other Points to Consider:

- Formal photos with family members may be taken during this week. If you wish to do so, please contact our Executive Director, Lee Sherman (lsberman@hsosc-baltimore.org), to coordinate.
- Photography is not permitted in the main area of the sanctuary during the service. However, the services are generally recorded on Zoom and can be downloaded upon request during the week following the service. If you would like a copy of the Zoom recording of the service, be sure to let Lee Sherman know at least a month in advance. Unfortunately we do not have the resources to maintain a video library of the recordings of all of our services.
- **Friday Evening prior to the *B'nai Mitzvah* service:** we strongly encourage your entire family to attend Shabbat services the evening before the *B'nai Mitzvah* to kick-off the celebratory weekend with your HSOSC community. The student will lead *Sh'ma*, *V'ahavta*, and *Kiddush*, and your family will be invited to light the Shabbat candles and recite *Motzi* at the beginning and end of the service. This is an important experience for the student to begin to feel more comfortable leading in front of the congregation.

EXPECTATIONS

Throughout the Process:

Becoming *B'nai Mitzvah* is a significant and long-awaited milestone. It is, therefore, meant to be a process that is exciting, accessible, and appropriately challenging. For many students, it is the first time they are given such a large and long-term responsibility. We hope that our students and their families will feel a great deal of achievement throughout and at the conclusion of the formal *B'nai Mitzvah* process. We want nothing more than for each student to exude confidence with everything they're saying, chanting, and speaking from the *bimah*.

The path there involves practice and responsibility. The following is expected of each student throughout the process:

- Arrive to each tutoring session and clergy meeting on time;
- Bring your *Siddur*, *Torah & Haftarah* Portions Booklet and Study Guide, and folder with you to **every session**;
- In between sessions, student should be practicing *at least 5 days/week* for **20 minutes** each day;
- If a student cannot attend the meeting, please let the tutor, Cantor, or Rabbi know via email at least 24 hours in advance if it all possible and reschedule the meeting;
- Due to unforeseen circumstances (for breaks, illness, etc,) there may be cases when the tutor, Cantor, or Rabbi will need to reschedule a meeting. We are grateful to you for your understanding and flexibility throughout.

The Service

Our *B'nai Mitzvah* process is individualized to meet the needs of each student and family. Each student is expected to learn some of our tradition's most fundamental prayers, chant from the *Torah*, and lead the service alongside the clergy.

The list below is a starting point; we modify the list as needed based on each student's strengths and unique learning styles.

Friday Night Service

- ___ Candle Blessing
- ___ *Sh'ma & V'ahavta*
- ___ Friday Night *Kiddush* (blessing for the wine/grape juice)
- ___ *Motzi* (blessing for the *challah*)

Shabbat Morning Service

- ___ *Tallit* Blessing
- ___ *Nissim B'chol Yom*
- ___ *Sh'ma & V'ahavta*
- ___ *Avot V'imahot*
- ___ *G'vurot*
- ___ *Torah* Blessings (Before & After)
- ___ *Torah* portion
- ___ *Haftarah* Blessings (Before & After)
- ___ *Haftarah* portion
- ___ *D'var Torah*

Parent Blessing:

You will have the opportunity to offer words of blessing to your child during the service. This should be 3-5 minutes long. A draft should be shared with Rabbi Sabath (RabbiSabath@hsosc-baltimore.org) a week prior to the service date. There are also optional readings in the prayer book for your consideration.

Mitzvah Project:

Each student is required to participate in a *Mitzvah* project. This can consist of any type of volunteering in the community related to a Jewish value. It's important that each student chooses something that they are passionate about so that they help make our world a more just place. Rabbi Sabath must approve the project in advance. As you explore possible projects please know that Rabbi Sabath and Cantor Marcus are here to provide ideas, connections, and support. Often these projects carry deep personal meaning, and continue to be a way of living out one's Jewish values far beyond the *B'nai Mitzvah* year.

EXTENDED FAMILY PARTICIPATION: OPTIONS & HONORS

On the next page, you will find the honors sheet. Please fill it out and give it to Rabbi Sabath or Cantor Marcus in the weeks leading up to the *B'nai Mitzvah* service. Explanations of each can be found below:

Tallit: A *B'nai Mitzvah* service is typically the first time a Jewish person wears a *tallit* (prayer shawl), and many choose to continue to wear the *tallit* on *Shabbat* mornings and holidays following the *B'nai Mitzvah*. Because it's a cornerstone of the *B'nai Mitzvah* service, we invite someone from the family to come forward and present the *tallit* to the *B'nai Mitzvah* at the beginning of the service.

Passing the Torah: When we take the *Torah* out of the Ark, it is common for the generations of a family to gather in front of the Ark or *bimah* and pass the *Torah* from generation to generation. The purpose of this is to represent the main purpose of *B'nai Mitzvah* visually and literally: to pass the heritage of Judaism on to the next generation.

Opening the Ark: Twice during the *Torah* service, two or more people may be invited to open the Ark doors. This honor can be given to anyone, Jewish or non-Jewish.

Aliyah: An *Aliyah* is when a person is called up to the *Torah* and given the honor of chanting the blessings that frame the *Torah* reading. Those reading these blessings must be Jewish and at least age thirteen (because these blessings explicitly state that the one reciting it is Jewish and obligated to perform that particular ritual).

Lifting/Holding & Dressing the Torah: After reading from the *Torah*, the *Torah* is lifted into the air and dressed in preparation to be put back in the Ark. For a similar reason, the one lifting the *Torah* should be a Jewish adult who has experience lifting a *Torah* scroll and/or is willing to learn.

Mi Shebeirach: This is our prayer for healing. We typically recite names of those who need healing during each service. We recite blessings of healing for all those people who the family would like to name. These names can certainly include people who are not Jewish.

Mourner's Kaddish: This is our prayer to remember those who have died. Typically, we read the names of those who have died recently and the names of those for whom we are observing their *yahrzeit* (anniversary of death). On the occasion of this family *simchah*, it is our custom to read the names of any of your family members or friends, regardless of when they died. These names can certainly include people who are not Jewish.

A note about Hebrew names: The *B'nai Mitzvah* student's Hebrew name is an important part of the service, as they will be called up to the *Torah* by the Hebrew name. A Jewish person's Hebrew name consists of their given Hebrew name and each of their parents' Hebrew names. Please fill these out on the honors form carefully and thoroughly. If you have further questions about Hebrew names, need help locating your family's Hebrew names, or never gave your child a Hebrew name, contact Rabbi Sabath (RabbiSabath@hsosc-baltimore.org).

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B'nai Mitzvah Service Honors – Shabbat Morning, pg 1 of 2

As is our tradition at Har Sinai – Oheb Shalom Congregation, our goal is to make each *B'nai Mitzvah* service participatory, personalized, and meaningful. As such, you are welcome to invite family and close friends to take part in the service. Please fill this out as you are able, and Rabbi Sabath and Cantor Marcus will discuss with you as the date gets closer.

B'nai Mitzvah English Name: _____

B'nai Mitzvah Hebrew name:

_____ *ben/bat/b'nai* _____ *v'* _____
(B'nai Mitzvah name) *(parent/guardian name)* *(parent/guardian name)*

Parent(s) English Name(s): _____

Sibling(s) English Name(s): _____

Honor	Name(s)	Relationship(s) to BM	@HSOSC or zoom?
Tallit Presentation			
Ark Opening (<i>beginning of Torah service</i>)			
Torah Undressing			
Passing of Torah L'dor Vador (<i>from generation to generation</i>)			
Hagbah & G'lilah (<i>lifting and dressing Torah</i>)			
Ark Opening (<i>putting Torah in Ark & Aleinu</i>)			
Kiddush & Motzi			

Names to remember before *Mi Shebeirach*:

Names to remember before *Mourner's Kaddish*:

Torah Service Aliyah Honors (Torah Blessings)

Please list each person on their own line

English Name	Hebrew Name (____ ben/bat/b'nai ____ v'____)	Relationship to BM	In-person or zoom?

English Name	Hebrew Name (____ ben/bat/b'nai ____ v'____)	Relationship to BM	In-person or zoom?

English Name	Hebrew Name (____ ben/bat/b'nai ____ v'____)	Relationship to BM	In-person or zoom?

English Name	Hebrew Name (____ ben/bat/b'nai ____ v'____)	Relationship to BM	
		B'nai Mitzvah	

Additional *aliyot* and honors:

Additional Service Details

- *B'nai Mitzvah* Services begin at 10:00 AM and last for approximately 1.5 hours;
- Other options are available upon request of the family;
- Our services are held in the Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Sanctuary or the Gordon Chapel.

FINANCES

In order to have a child enter training to become *B'nai Mitzvah*, the family must be a member in good standing at Har Sinai – Oheb Shalom Congregation, up to and including the membership year in which the event takes place. Our Board of Trustees has passed a ruling that lifecycle events cannot be performed for members who owe money from either a prior year or the current year of the event, including the current school tuition, facility use fees, and any other additional fees that have been assessed.

Failure to maintain an account in good financial standing may result in the surrender of the date, interruption of *B'nai Mitzvah* instruction, and cancellation of facilities reservations. All charges are payable upon billing unless a special payment schedule is approved and confirmed in writing by the synagogue's Executive Director. Questions or concerns should be directed to Lee Sherman (LSherman@hsosc-baltimore.org).

Har Sinai – Oheb Shalom Congregation is strongly committed to Jewish education – the ability to pay will not be an obstacle for your child becoming *B'nai Mitzvah*. Do not hesitate to discuss this matter with our Executive Director.

For more information about specific fees, contact our Executive Director, Lee Sherman at LSherman@hsosc-baltimore.org.

***B'nai Mitzvah* Fee**

Har Sinai – Oheb Shalom Congregation assesses your membership account with a *B'nai Mitzvah* fee that is determined on an annual basis. Communication will be shared prior to the charge being added to your account. This fee covers all materials (prayerbook, *Torah* & *Haftarah* Portions Booklet, etc.), the cost of weekly private instruction with your tutor, and meetings & rehearsals with our clergy.

Tree of Life

Perhaps you want to honor the weekend with a lasting memory? As you come into the synagogue from the Chapel entrance, you may have noticed the beautiful Tree of Life. A leaf costs \$350.00 and can be a lasting memento of a very special time in the life of the family. To purchase a leaf, contact Marlene Pachino (Marlene@hsosc-baltimore.org).

Tzedakah

In Jewish tradition, it is customary to celebrate happy occasions by giving *tzedakah*. Contributions are the lifeblood of any religious organization. Without the generosity of our members and friends, Har Sinai – Oheb Shalom Congregation would not be able to function at the high level of excellence that our membership has come to expect. The congregation is always grateful for contributions made in honor of the *B'nai Mitzvah*. You may also wish to make a donation expressing appreciation to those who have helped your child in preparation.

At your discretion, you may choose to make a commemorative or general contribution to our congregation. The commemorative contribution can honor the occasion by memorializing deceased

family or friends. The general contribution honors the occasion and refers to living family members or friends. Please contact Lee Sherman (LSherman@hsosc-baltimore.org) for any questions or assistance with donations.

A Note About the Coronavirus Pandemic

We remain vigilant about staying updated on the latest COVID guidelines and working with top medical professionals. In addition, we hope to be able to accommodate each *B'nai Mitzvah* family so that you and your guests feel safe in our building. Please contact Lee Sherman (LSherman@hsosc-baltimore.org) with specific questions and requests. Visit our website (hsosc-baltimore.org/covid-policies) for our most up-to-date policies.

We look forward to embarking upon this exciting journey with your family. Do not hesitate to reach out to any of us as questions arise!

Rabbi Rachel Sabath Beit-Halachmi, Ph.D., Inaugural Senior Rabbi

RabbiSabath@hsosc-baltimore.org

Contact Marlene: 443-278-9342

Support: Guidance and support for families and student, *D'var Torah* (sermon) writing

Cantor Alexandra Marcus, Inaugural Cantor

CantorMarcus@hsosc-baltimore.org

443-278-9340

Support: Point person for most things B'nai Mitzvah related, general questions, service support

Bill Bronstein, Director of Religious School and Lifelong Learning & B'nai Mitzvah Tutor

bill@hsosc-baltimore.org

410-294-4262

Lee Sherman, Executive Director

lsherman@hsosc-baltimore.org

443-278-9348

Support: Financials and policies

Marlene Pachino, Executive Administrative Assistant

marlene@hsosc-baltimore.org

443-278-9342

Support: Scheduling with Rabbi Sabath & Cantor Marcus

Stacy Smith, Day of Event Organizer

ssmith@hsosc-baltimore.org

443-278-9360

Support: Day of Logistics of service and celebration and contact for the photographer to schedule family pictures