

## Expectations of B'nai Mitzvah students:

### Meetings with the Rabbi

A B'nai Mitzvah is an opportunity for a family to draw closer to the rituals, wisdom and spiritual depth of Jewish tradition. Often, the preparation involves a learning process for parents as much as for children. Meeting with the rabbi gives families a chance to reflect on personal and spiritual goals in preparing for b'nai mitzvah.

To help families along the path to b'nai mitzvah, we recommend a structure of at least three meetings:

1. **A family meeting:** 12 months before the b'nai mitzvah, with time for everyone together as well time individually for the parents to meet with the rabbi. This meeting should last 1 hour.
2. **Two or more between the student and rabbi:** Two meetings, 8-10 months before the b'nai mitzvah to study the meaning of the parashah (Torah portion) and Haftarah (prophetic reading). These meetings give a young person an experience in exploring a part of the Torah and making it their own, with the help of commentaries ancient and contemporary. Each of these meetings should run 45 – 50 minutes. By the end of the second meeting, the child will most likely leave with an outline of their ideas, to be worked on at home. The final draft must have the approval of the rabbi.

*(Please know that, outside the structure of these meetings, the rabbi is available to families and B'nai Mitzvah at any time.)*

### Scheduling Meetings with the Rabbi:

Please contact Amy Stein [amy@cbinorthampton.org](mailto:amy@cbinorthampton.org) to schedule times to meet with the Rabbi

### Attendance at Shabbat services:

Rabbi David welcomes and highly encourages you to make a habit of attending Shabbat morning services with your family in preparation for your upcoming simcha. Doing so can help you understand the service and feel the warmth and energy of the community so that you can more fully experience the joy of celebration and ongoing connection.

While there is no magic number of services to attend that “makes” a person or family feel comfortable, years ago we settled on the number 13. It's symbolic, but especially if that is the goal in the year before b'nei mitzvah, it allows the family to develop a foundation by joining the community once a month throughout the year.

We are in the process of revisioning Alma in the B'nai Mitzvah years to allow these classes to attend several services in the sanctuary rather than family services.

It is especially helpful to attend B'nai Mitzvah services. Please ask the B'nai Mitzvah coordinator to provide a list of upcoming B'nai Mitzvah. We also encourage families to invite the entire Alma class and their families, if the student is in CBI's religious school. This is a wonderful opportunity for the entire family to attend B'nai Mitzvah services and to celebrate fellow classmates.

All of our services are available on Livestream, so you have the option of attending in person or virtually from the comfort of your home.

### **Take an honor or lead part of Torah service in months leading up to B'nai Mitzvah:**

Have your b'nei mitzvah get their feet wet by taking an honor or leading something on a Shabbat morning. We have many opportunities each week that require varying levels of skill - everything from opening the ark and holding the Torah scroll to leading a prayer in the service or even part of the service itself - either by partnering with the Rabbi or solo. Amy Stein will be in touch with more details.

### **Cohort meeting attendance:**

All students and parents from Alma and LGA are encouraged to attend 3-4 cohort meetings each year during 5th, 6th, and 7th grade. These meetings create an opportunity to build community among peers and families, to learn together with the Rabbi, and to share thoughts and concerns throughout the B'nai Mitzvah process.