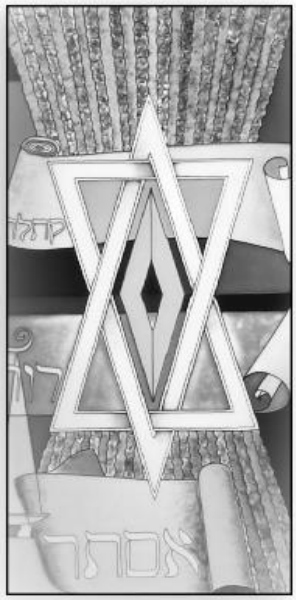
CONGREGATION GATES OF HEAVEN



B'NAI MITZVAH FAMILY GUIDE

Dear Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah Families,

You are about to embark on a timeless journey—a milestone in the life of your family and for you as an individual. It is a process that links you to Jews around the world and throughout history. This occasion—the ceremony and celebration—is more than a culmination. It is a key which opens a door to a more mature appreciation for what faith truly has to offer each of us as we go through life building a better world.

Rabbi Matt Cutler
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BAR/BAT/B MITZVAH FAMILY GUIDE
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview…… 3
Frequently Asked Questions…… 4
B'nai Mitzvah Process & Timeline…… 6
Tzedakah—Justice……..7

Attachments:
Excerpts from the CGOH Rental Contract ……8
Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah and Confirmation Covenant ……9
Directions to Congregation Gates of Heaven ……10
Congregation Gates of Heaven Rental/Non-Rental Form……11
Congregation Gates of Heaven Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah Usher Instructions…….. 12

CONTACTING THE TEMPLE
518-374-8173

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Tammy Van Valkenburgh: Administrative Assistant: tammy@cgoh.org

B’nai Mitzvah Overview

B’nai Mitzvah dates are handled by the Rabbi’s Administrative Assistant, Michelle Warren. The B’nai Mitzvah tutoring is arranged by Arnie Rotenberg, the Director of Congregational Jewish Living. All financial matters are managed by Josh Cooper-Ginsburg, Director of Administration and Operations.

During the year preceding the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah, students and their families are asked to attend the *Path to Bar/Bat/B-Mitzvah* sessions where they receive important information about the B’nai Mitzvah process as well as helping each child connect to stories, prayers, and ritual objects from another time—to find their place in the chain of tradition. Alongside honoring the past, a new story unfolds. The journey is both wonderful and challenging.

On Sunday mornings during *Gates Quest*, seventh grade students learn the prayers associated with Friday evening and Saturday morning services. B’nai Mitzvah tutoring begins approximately 4-6 months prior to the Bar/Bat/B/ Mitzvah date where they will learn their Torah and Haftorah portion and continue to practice the prayers. Six weeks prior to the date, the student and family meet with the Rabbi and work on their *D’var Torah* or speech.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **WHAT TIME IS THE SERVICE?** – Shabbat morning service is from 10:45 am to 12:15 pm. The service begins promptly, so you may wish to put 10:30 am on your invitation. Shabbat morning service is considered a regular congregation service and members other than your guests may be present for worship.

2. **WHAT ARE THE SYNAGOGUE HOURS?** - Monday - Friday 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. Friday evenings the building is reopened at 6:30 pm for Services. The Saturday of your B'nai Mitzvah the building is open at 8:30 am.

3. **SHOULD I ORDER FLOWERS** – Some families provide flower arrangements to decorate the Bimah and the Oneg Shabbat table, but this is not mandatory. To arrange for flowers call Felthousen's Florist and Greenhouse for Bima flowers. If you choose to use another florist, please note the following:
   - Two flower arrangement for the Bimah, not to exceed 36" in height & 24" in width
   - One flower arrangement for the Oneg Shabbat table – you may wish to use an Oneg Shabbat table centerpiece that is something other than flowers.

4. **WHAT TIME CAN DELIVERIES BE MADE** – If flowers or food cannot be delivered during the week from 8 am to 4 pm or Saturdays from 8:30 am to the end of your event, please make arrangements with the Temple office. You will be **billed for custodial time** if your delivery does not fall within the custodian's regular work schedule.

5. **CAN WE HAVE A PHOTOGRAPHER OR VIDEOGRAPHER**– Picture-taking without a flash and video recording is permitted during the Service but must not interfere with the Service by staying in the back of the Sanctuary. No special lighting is allowed. Family photos on the Bima and in the Sanctuary should be taken prior to or after the Service. Family and photographer will have access to the sanctuary at 9:00 am for flash photos. At your request, the Temple can provide a recording of the livestream of Friday night and/or Saturday morning.

6. **WHERE IS THE EVENT PUBLICIZED**- Approximately two months before the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah date the Temple Office will send you a form so that you can provide the type of information that you would like publicized for the following: Temple Bulletin Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah Listing, acknowledgement of Oneg Shabbat Sponsor, and acknowledgement of flowers for the Bimah, as well as *Jewish World* announcement.

7. **WHAT ARE THE DIRECTIONS TO CGOH? —**You will find directions 10 of this packet.

8. **CAN WE HAVE DINNERS, LUNCHES, PARTIES, OTHER EVENTS?** – The ***Excerpts from the Congregation Gates of Heaven Facility Rental Contract*** is enclosed on page 11 of this packet. If you would like to have an event at the Temple during the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah weekend, contact the Temple Office for additional materials and a Rental Contract. All rental arrangements must be finalized no later than 6 months before the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah. Please check with the office for approved caterers as this list is changes during this time.

9. **DO WE NEED USHERS? -** The Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah family must designate two ushers for the Saturday Morning Service. Please choose ushers to pass out prayer books who are familiar with your friends and family. Usher Instructions are included in this packet. You do not need to designate ushers for Friday Night.

10. **MAY I ARRANGE FOR TRANSPORTATION TO OFF-SITE CELEBRATION**? – Please inform the Temple office if you are planning to have a bus pick your guests up at the end of the service on Saturday morning.

11. **WHO DOES THE SHABBAT MORNING PROGRAM BOOKLET?** – The office prepares a program booklet for Shabbat morning. If you wish to prepare and print your own, please notify the office so that Rabbi can review and approve it.

12. **WHAT ABOUT THE SHABBAT MORNING PHOTOS?** – If you wish to have family/student photos on the electronic board in hallway playing on Saturday, please provide by email up to 12 photos in jpg format to Michelle at mwarren@cgoh.org by the Monday prior to event.

13. **WHAT IS THE CLASS GIFT? -- The Seventh Grade Fund** is an exciting new program that will help Gates of Heaven's students actively learn about philanthropy and take part in tikkun olam through tzedakah. A charitable foundation run by the students and interested parents of Seventh Grade class of Gates of Heaven is set up. Families and others are asked to donate to the cause identified by the students and the monies are donated to that organization/cause as a class gift.

14. **SHOULD I/WE GIVE EACH CHILD A GIFT? –**We believe that the donation to the Seventh Grade Fund and an invitation for each child to your ceremony shows support and caring for each Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah student.

FRIDAY ONEG SHABBAT AND SATURDAY SIMPLE KIDDUSH
Note: the following may be changed based on COVID and other considerations

Every B'nai Mitzvah celebration includes:

1. An *Oneg Shabbat* on the Friday evening preceding service.
2. A simple Kiddush of grape juice, wine, and challah following the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah service.

The cost of each is as follows:

- **All-Inclusive Oneg Shabbat Package--$350:** The Temple will provide everything you need for the Oneg Shabbat. Add a fruit tray for **$30.**
- **Oneg Shabbat Package excluding Pastry--$250:** This package is ideal for those who love to bake or who wish to purchase pastries from their favorite bakery. The Temple will provide everything you need for the Oneg Shabbat except for the pastry. Please bring in your fresh baked pastries by 6:00 pm Friday.
- **Simple Kiddush Package with Large Challah--$100**: Following the Saturday morning service, wine, grape juice, and challah are served after the service in the foyer.

Please let the office know if you are planning on bringing in a caterer for either of the above.

B'NAI MITZVAH PROCESS & TIMELINE

8-12 Months Prior to Ceremony

- Submit the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah and Confirmation Covenant which is attached to this document. We ask that entire family to understand that Jewish Education does not end at Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah but is a lifelong process that will continue through Confirmation in the 10th grade, and hopefully, beyond.
- Attend the Path to B Mitzvah sessions with the Rabbi as part of the B'nai Mitzvah process.

Twelve Months Prior to Ceremony

- Submit the Rental/Non-Rental Form to notify the Temple whether you would like to hold any dinners, lunches, or parties at the Temple. Upon receipt of this form, you will be sent the rental package.
- You will be billed $775 for B'nai Mitzvah tutoring at this time.
- Students are registered for the 7th grade *Gates Quest* classes.

Six Months Prior to Ceremony

- Assess that all financial obligations are up to date. Call Josh Cooper-Ginsburg to make any arrangements necessary.
- If you have chosen to rent space in our building, a 25% deposit is due at this time. We cannot reserve a room without the required deposit.
- Arnie will arrange for the tutors to contact you to set up the individual tutoring time. If you would like to start earlier, please contact Arnie.

Two Months Prior to the Ceremony

- You will receive a letter from the Rabbi's Administrative Assistant, Michelle, with the times your family will meet with the Rabbi. For any changes in meeting times, please let Michelle know.
- The balance of rental fees is due. If you are using a caterer, please provide the office with the name of the caterer and the certificate of insurance.
- If you choose to honor your child with a leaf on the Tree of Life, please provide the text in writing. Your account will be billed $250.
- Return the Publicity Form to Temple office.
- Notify the Temple office of your plans for the Oneg Shabbat and Simple Kiddush.

One Month Prior to the Ceremony

- Notify the Temple if you are providing flowers for the bimah and a centerpiece for the Oneg Shabbat table.
- If you are preparing and printing your own program, bring in the proof for the Rabbi's approval.
- Assigned usher for the Saturday morning service.

Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah Ceremony

Congratulations! You and your child have worked hard to prepare for this day! Enjoy this special right of passage by celebrating with family and friends.

TZEDAKAH—JUSTICE

You and your child should consider sharing this Simkha by making a charitable contribution or volunteering with local service partners and connecting Jewish approaches to justice through your actions. Here are some ideas, there are many more:

- **Contributions to the Temple-** Donation to the Jewish Vibrancy Fund or purchase a leaf on the Temple's "Tree of Life." To purchase a leaf for the Tree of Life, simply notify the Temple Office at least 2 months in advance and you must provide, in writing, the exact inscription that you would like on your leaf. The cost is $250.
- **Mazon** – Founded in 1985, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger is the only national Jewish nonprofit organization exclusively dedicated to preventing and alleviating hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds. MAZON's advocacy works to ensure that hungry people have access to nutritious food today and demands government policies assure no one goes hungry tomorrow.
- **Jewish National Fund** – A Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah celebration is one of a family's most joyous occasions and a milestone of a Jewish child's life. JNF knows that you want this day to be meaningful and memorable and there's no better way to bring meaning to such an impactful day than with JNF's B'nai Mitzvah Program including mitzvah projects, travel to Israel, custom invitations and more. It is very appropriate to choose a JNF project for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah; you can choose a JNF project that is important to you. Mitzvah Project Options Include:

  Project Baseball
  Therapeutic Riding Center
  Special in Uniform: Help IDF soldiers with special needs
  Aleh Negev Petting Zoo
  Sderot Indoor Recreation Center
  Adopt a Firefighter
- **Schenectady Inner City Mission (**SiCM)--addresses public health needs such as food insecurity and nutrition education, racism and diversity concerns, and summer recreation through community collaborations and exceptional services and programs.
- **Regional Food Bank--** Honor your Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah with a special gift from the Regional Food Bank! Your donation will help provide food for families, children, and seniors facing hunger, and the Food Bank will send a Mazel Tov card or email to the designated recipient notifying them of the unique gift made in their name.
- **Share Your Soles--** The mission of Share Your Soles is to educate, enlighten and expand the hearts and minds of those blessed with so much, reaching out to those around the world with so little...sharing a gently worn pair of shoes can bring nations together, break down walls of prejudice and create awareness of working together for the greater good of humanity.
- **Daughters of Sarah--**Daughters of Sarah Senior Community enhances the quality of life, assure the safety and dignity, and foster the independence of those we serve through residential, personal care, health, and other services, consistent with Jewish values and traditions. Volunteer opportunities include helping staff transport residents to and from activities, helping to serve them snacks and beverages at activities.
- **APT**-The Animal Protective Foundation promotes and protects the human-animal bond by providing resources to our community and humane care to companion animals. They are a humane society providing services to Schenectady County and the greater Capital Region. Since 1931, the APF has held true to the mission of its founders. We have an open admission policy which ensures that animals are not turned away based on their breed, age, condition, or circumstance.

EXCERPTS FROM THE CONGREGATION GATES OF HEAVEN FACILITY RENTAL CONTRACT

Food and Beverages

No pork or shellfish may be cooked, served or eaten at Congregation Gates of Heaven. Alcoholic beverages may be served only by a caterer with a valid liquor license. The caterer must provide a certificate of Liquor Liability Insurance. If a caterer is not used, alcoholic beverages cannot be served. Wine can be served at the Simple Kiddush. All left-over food and beverages must be removed from Congregation Gates of Heaven at the end of your event.

Decorations, Party Favors, Furnishings, and Other Related Restrictions:

Decorations must be fireproof, and no candles or other open flames are permitted as decorations. Candle-lighting ceremonies are permitted, but the candles must be extinguished immediately at the end of the lighting ceremony. No tape, staples, tacks, nails or screws may be used to attach decorations, signs, banners, etc. CGOH property such as furniture, plants, etc. may be moved or altered only upon written approval by CGOH. All decorations must be removed at the end of the event.

The following articles are not allowed: bubbles, bead necklaces, any thrown items, silly string, party favors with small candies or other small items and/or any potential party favor which presents a risk of damage to an individual or the facility or CGOH property or could result in excess clean-up requirements (such as confetti and glitter). No "smoke" or bubble machines (e.g. used by DJ's, bands or magicians) may be used.

Balloons are acceptable decorations but must **not** be brought into the building until the day of the event, and must be removed when the event is completed. If it is necessary to bring in balloons the day before the event, they must be stored on the stage of the auditorium, behind the curtain, in order to avoid their movement setting off motion detectors. All balloons must be weighted so that they do not float up to the ceiling. It is the responsibility of the Renter to ensure that the balloons are not cut from their weighted base. Loose balloons, bubbles, and smoke will set off the smoke alarms and security alarm motion detectors. No animals, other than service animals, may enter the premises or grounds of CGOH.

Smoking:

CGOH is a smoke-free facility, and smoking is prohibited throughout the grounds and building, including the restrooms.

Supervision of Children

No one under the age of 21 may rent the facilities. An adult age 21 or older must be present at all times, in the same room, to supervise children. The ratio of adult to children must be at least 1 adult to every 10 children, in the same room.

Approved Caterers

Only caterers who are on the Congregation Gates of Heaven list of Approved Caterers may work at the Temple. The list of approved caterers includes Gershons, Glen Sanders, Turf Tavern, Omlette King and Saati Catering. If you would like to request that another caterer be added to the list, the staff will review our prior experience with that caterer to determine if they are eligible to be included on the Approved Caterers list.

CONGREGATION GATES OF HEAVEN
852 ASHMORE AVENUE
SCHENECTADY, NY 12309

BAR/BAT/B MITZVAH AND CONFIRMATION COVENANT

It is our desire to observe the Life Cycle event of Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah. By signing below, we agree that the child named on this form will attend Congregation Gates of Heaven Religious School through the end of tenth grade to attain Confirmation. We understand that our family must maintain our membership in the Congregation through confirmation.

CHILD'S NAME _____
First Middle Last

CHILD'S JEWISH NAME _____

CHILD'S BIRTH DATE _____

PARENT'S NAME _____

PARENT'S JEWISH NAME _____

PARENT'S NAME _____

PARENT'S JEWISH NAME _____

CHILD'S SIGNATURE _____

PARENT'S SIGNATURE _____

PARENT'S SIGNATURE _____

ASSIGNED DATE _____

DIRECTIONS TO CONGREGATION GATES OF HEAVEN

Congregation Gates of Heaven
852 Ashmore Avenue
Schenectady, NY 12309
(518) 374-8173

From the Mass Turnpike and the NYS Thruway:

Take Mass Pike to NY Thruway (Route 87)

Exit NYS Thruway at Exit 25 (Schenectady)

Follow Routes 890 & 7 East

Go 1.6 miles and take the Route 7 East exit.

Go 2 miles and turn left onto Route 146 (Balltown Road)

Go 1 block and turn left on to Eastern Parkway

Proceed west on Eastern Parkway for .4 mile.

Entrance is on the left, just after the Van Buren Apartment office.

From the Northway

Leave the Northway at Exit 6, Route 7

Take Route 7 West (Troy-Schenectady Road) approximately 7 miles to Route 146 (Balltown Road)

Turn right onto Balltown Road (Route 146)

Go 1 block and turn left on to Eastern Parkway

Proceed west on Eastern Parkway for .4 mile.

Entrance is on the left, just after the Van Buren Apartment office.

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SCHENECTADY, NY 12309

RENTAL/NON-RENTAL FORM

Please submit this form to the Temple office for us to reserve the Social Hall and/or Hatkoff room for your child's Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah. This form should be returned to the Temple office at least 2 months in advance of the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah.

Check the appropriate selection below and sign the bottom of the form:

_____ I/We **will** use the Temple facilities on **Friday** for a family dinner prior to services.

_____ I/We **will** use the Temple Facilities for a lunch, reception, party or other event on **Saturday afternoon** following the Bar/Bar Mitzvah Service and simple Kiddush. I/We understand that we must finalize the rental plans 6 months prior to the event by signing the Rental Contract and paying a 25% deposit. The balance of rental fees will be paid 6 weeks prior to the event.

____ I/We **will** use the Temple Facilities for a dinner, party, or other event on **Saturday Night**

The simple Kiddush immediately following the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah is considered part of the Service and is not considered a rental. Anything more extensive on Saturday than grape juice, wine, challah, and a few small pastries is a rental.

_____ _____
Child's Name Date of Bar / Bat Mitzvah

_____ _____
Signature of Parent Date Signed

CONGREGATION GATES OF HEAVEN
Ashmore Avenue and Eastern Parkway
Schenectady, NY 12309-6497
(518) 374-8173

BAR/BAT/B MITZVAH USHERING INSTRUCTIONS

We are pleased to learn that you have accepted the honor of being an usher at this Sabbath morning's Service. You have the responsibility of representing both the host family and Congregation Gates of Heaven, as you welcome worshipers to our Synagogue.

Kindly plan to arrive by 10:15 am and join the other ushers inside the main Sanctuary doors (leave the doors closed). You will hand out the *Mishkan T'filah* prayer books at the Sanctuary entrance. Please do not open the doors to the Sanctuary until you are prepared and instructed to do so by the Rabbi, usually at 10:30 am

When you open the doors, please invite the people in the lobby to enter and take their seats. Service pamphlets are on a pedestal at the door. Each person should receive one upon entering.

The service begins promptly at 10:45 am. Please follow the service in the prayer book, and as latecomers arrive, inform them of the correct page.

If people arrive with young children, please direct them to sit on the right side on the aisle, close to a door. If a child becomes noisy or unruly, you will need to inform the parent(s) that the child should be taken into the lobby, to avoid disturbing the service. Please tell the parent(s) that the Service can be heard through the speakers in the lobby, so that they can remove the child and still keep up with the Service.

By 11:15 am. Most of the latecomers should have arrived, and you can sit with the congregation. If you do notice any newcomers, please provide them with a prayer book. (Also, continue to be "on duty" in case of disruptive children.)

On behalf of the Congregation, thank you for your participation in enabling us to worship together.

Sincerely yours,

Ritual Committee