

CONGREGATION DORSHEI TZEDEK

B'NEI MITZVAH GUIDELINES

January 2020/Shevat 5780

Introduction

What is b'nei mitzvah? Traditionally, this term (the plural form of “bar” or “bat” mitzvah) does not refer to a ceremony but a time of life: upon reaching the age of 13, a young Jew becomes obligated to take on the *mitzvot* (“commandments”) of Jewish observance. Among the privileges of this new status are being counted in a *minyan* (the quorum for communal prayer) and being eligible to be called up to the Torah for an *aliyah*, to recite the Torah blessings. Although Reconstructionist Judaism is not centered around the observance of *halacha* (Jewish law), and so does not conceive of b'nei mitzvah as a literal entry into a life of traditional observance of the *mitzvot*, becoming b'nei mitzvah remains an important rite of passage, both for the young person and their family. What, then, is the significance of becoming b'nei mitzvah from a Reconstructionist perspective?

A b'nei mitzvah ceremony is an acknowledgment of a commitment to Jewish life and Jewish values. If we understand *mitzvot* as ritual and ethical pathways to meaningful connection with Jewish traditions, Jewish values, and Jewish community, then becoming b'nei mitzvah signifies a young person’s commitment to understanding and exploring these pathways. In addition, the ceremony and preparation leading up to it are opportunities for family education as well as family celebration, and a chance for parents to reflect on what it means to hand on Jewish values and practices to the next generation.

Becoming b'nei mitzvah is an affirmation of Jewish learning. The b'nei mitzvah ceremony is an opportunity for a young person to share the fruits of their study of Hebrew, Jewish prayer, Torah, and Jewish civilization so far, and to explore the role of Judaism in their lives at present and going forward.

B'nei mitzvah is a celebration of community, as we welcome the young person into the Dorshei Tzedek community as a Jewish adult—to be counted in our *minyan* for prayer, and to be called upon to read Torah and take on other responsibilities. We hope that this ceremony becomes a gateway to the young person’s involvement in the life of the congregation in new ways.

This booklet is intended to help in the process of planning your family’s b'nei mitzvah celebration. It includes both communal expectations as well as suggestions for how to make the ceremony, and the process leading up to it, the most meaningful and joyful possible. Each family meets with Rabbi Toba and Rabbi Shahar approximately one year before the ceremony, to go over the entire process in detail. **In addition, family education sessions are required as part of the preparation process.**

The following sections include expectations and requirements for the b'nei mitzvah ceremony and the study leading up to it; opportunities to give tzedakah; a discussion of aspects of the ceremony itself; and logistical details and suggestions. **All requirements or expectations are in bold typeface.** There is also a checklist for your convenience at the end of the booklet. We ask that you read the *entire* booklet carefully, however. Any additional questions you have can be brought to Rabbi Toba.

Communal Expectations

Membership

The b'nei mitzvah ceremony takes place in the context of community. It is an acknowledgment of the young person taking their place as an adult in the broader Jewish community, and also within the Dorshei Tzedek community. **For this reason, families are expected to be members in good standing of Congregation Dorshei Tzedek for two full years prior to the b'nei mitzvah ceremony. "In good standing" includes all dues and fees payments being in order before the ceremony.** Exceptions to this rule must be discussed with the Executive Director, Melissa Colten. We are aware that this requirement might mean that a young person celebrates their b'nei mitzvah somewhat later than their 13th birthday.

The Service

B'nei mitzvah ceremonies take place during a regular Dorshei Tzedek Shabbat Shacharit (morning) service. While we want to make the service as inclusive and reflective of the family as possible, it is important to remember that this is also a service for the congregation, and will maintain the structure and feel of a regular Dorshei Tzedek service. As a community, we want to encourage members to attend one another's *simchas* (joyous occasions) just as we would support one another in times of sadness. All of the b'nei mitzvah ceremonies are announced in the congregational newsletter, and **you will be asked to submit a brief announcement that includes a bit of information about the b'nei mitzvah and their interests to the newsletter**, so that everyone can get to know a little bit about them before the event.

Celebrations following the service

While a party in the late afternoon/evening following the ceremony can be considered a private event, there is an expectation that all those present for the ceremony will be invited to the Kiddush following the service. At a minimum, we ask that the b'nei mitzvah family provide a light Kiddush lunch for everyone present. Current practice is that most families host a celebratory Kiddush lunch with the community and their guests, and do not have a private luncheon following the ceremony.

Some families also choose to have music at the Kiddush lunch. The guidelines for music at the lunch/afternoon event is as follows:

- Klezmer or other traditional Jewish music (e.g. Israeli dances) is fine during the lunch itself, we just request that it not be too loud, so people can enjoy some conversation.

If you would like to make the afternoon party the main party, it is fine to have rock/dance music at the end of the lunch, so that CDT members who prefer not to have that kind of Shabbat afternoon have time to eat and then depart. We ask that the dance music (apart from Jewish dance music, which is fine earlier) not begin before 1:00pm.

Inviting the class

At the Dorshei Tzedek religious school, one of our goals is to foster a sense of Jewish community among our youth. This is an important community-wide value, as reflected in the first line of our congregational mission statement: "Dorshei Tzedek is a Reconstructionist congregation dedicated to creating a caring and inclusive community..." Please keep this value in mind as you plan your b'nei mitzvah celebration. **We strongly encourage students to attend the b'nei mitzvah services of their classmates, in order to support one another and to learn the Jewish value of celebrating together as a community.** In planning parties to which members of the religious school class are being invited, families should make every effort to be inclusive of all members of the class, in order that no child feel left out. **We ask specifically that if any children in the class are being invited, then all be invited.**

Preparation & Requirements: "On Three Things"

In the Mishnah, the earliest collection of rabbinic teachings, we find this saying: "***On three things the world stands: on Torah, on avodah (prayer), and on gemilut chasadim (deeds of lovingkindness)***" (Pirkei Avot 1:2). Our children's Jewish education is based upon this three-fold formula, and the b'nei mitzvah process reflects it as well.

1) Torah/Learning

"Torah" refers to the first five books of the Bible, but also to Jewish learning in the broadest sense. The b'nei mitzvah ceremony represents the culmination of the first stage of a young person's Jewish study. For Reconstructionist Judaism, "Torah" encompasses all the richness of Jewish culture - including Hebrew language, Bible and other sacred texts, music and literature, and Jewish history. **For our educational expectations and requirements leading up to b'nei mitzvah, please see the Appendix at the back of this booklet.**

We recognize that different children have different strengths and capabilities, and we want to make sure that preparing for the b'nei mitzvah ceremony does not become a stressful burden. ***With the caveat that children's special needs and abilities will always be taken into account,*** these are the specific components of b'nei mitzvah preparation:

- **Competence in Hebrew reading.** B'nei mitzvah are expected to be able to read portions of the Shabbat liturgy as well as selections from the Torah and haftarah (prophetic reading).
- **Ability to *leyn* (chant) from the Torah scroll, and the haftarah.** Each student will work with a private tutor to learn the *trope*, the traditional modes of chanting Torah and haftarah. It is recommended to begin this preparation 8-10 months before the ceremony, depending on the student's facility with Hebrew and singing. Please contact Rabbi Toba or Rabbi Shahar for a list of possible tutors.

- **Preparation and delivery of a *d'var Torah*, “Torah talk.”** Over the course of the year preceding the ceremony, Rabbi Toba or Rabbi Shahar will meet with each student to discuss the Torah portion and help them prepare their *d'var Torah*.
- **In addition, the upcoming b'nei mitzvah class and their parents are expected to attend the family education sessions held in the 6th & 7th grade years.**

2) *Avodah/Worship*

Communal prayer is a central component of Dorshei Tzedek's life as a community, and so we expect our b'nei mitzvah to have familiarity with our Shabbat morning service. In addition, knowledge of the service is an important connection to Jewish communities around the world.

Part of becoming a Jewish adult is figuring out what role prayer and Jewish spirituality will play in one's life. As a community however, we affirm the value of each Jew being able to participate in religious services, being able to make a decision about the role of prayer in their own life from a place of knowledge and experience.

To that end, b'nei mitzvah learn to chant segments of the Shabbat morning service, as well as the blessings before and after the reading of the Torah and haftarah. There are minimum requirements for service-leading, but each b'nei mitzvah is encouraged to lead as much as they are able and interested. B'nei mitzvah learn portions of the service as part of the religious school curriculum, and will also be trained by their tutor.

In order to gain familiarity with the Shabbat morning service in general, and with our Reconstructionist service in particular, each student (along with a parent) is required to attend Shabbat morning services twice a month in the year leading up to the b'nei mitzvah. If you are busy attending b'nei mitzvah services at other synagogues, then one service at another synagogue can count towards the monthly requirement, and the other at Dorshei Tzedek.

3) *Gemilut Chasadim/Acts of Lovingkindness*

Caring for others, by giving of one's time and material possessions, is a fundamental Jewish value. As part of their preparation for becoming full members of the Jewish community, **b'nei mitzvah are required to become involved in some sort of social action (“*tikkun olam*”) project in the year leading up to their ceremony.** This can include volunteering at a soup kitchen, tutoring someone in need, working with an environmental organization, or any other project that involves giving of one's time and energy and care for those who are in need. This can also be a family project. These projects will be discussed at one of the Family Education programs, and the rabbis will discuss specific *tikkun olam* opportunities with you at the family meeting one year before your ceremony.

A Note on Special Needs

It is important to reiterate that every Jew becomes b'nei mitzvah when they turn 13, regardless of what ceremony they may or may not have. Congregation Dorshei Tzedek is committed to making this important life cycle celebration accessible and meaningful to all

of its members, including those young people who have disabilities that make it difficult or impossible to participate in all of the ways outlined above. In such cases, a special program of preparation will be worked out in consultation with the rabbis and the Inclusion Coordinator.

Opportunities for Tzedakah

At a time when most kids are eagerly looking forward to what they'll be receiving when they become b'nei mitzvah, this is a wonderful opportunity to teach about the obligation to give part of what is ours to others, especially at a time of joy!

There are a few ways to make *tzedakah* an integral aspect of the b'nei mitzvah process and the celebration itself. One is, as a family, to commit to giving a small percentage of what is being spent on the celebration to *tzedakah*. Dorshei Tzedek is a partner congregation with the non-profit organization MAZON: The Jewish Response to Hunger. As such, we have pledged to contribute 3% of the cost of any synagogue-sponsored celebrations to MAZON, which funds organizations and campaigns fighting hunger and poverty in the U.S. and abroad. **We encourage Dorshei Tzedek members to contribute 3% of the cost of the celebratory meal or party that you are planning for the b'nei mitzvah to MAZON.** Brochures are available on the sanctuary information table.

B'nei mitzvah students often contribute some portion of their b'nei present money to particular causes. Some include in the b'nei mitzvah invitation a request that people make a donation to charity in lieu of a gift. Others dedicate a percentage of the total present money received and donate that to charity.

Additional Giving

Some families decide to incorporate *tikkun olam* into the b'nei mitzvah party. Instead of traditional table decorations (flowers or balloons) one can use baskets of items to be donated after the event. It is also traditional in many synagogues for a child's close and/or extended family to make donations to the congregation or religious school in honor of the b'nei mitzvah. Dorshei Tzedek welcomes and appreciates all such contributions!

In lieu of each b'nei mitzvah student in the class giving a gift to every other child, a tradition has developed of all the families contributing to the "b'nei mitzvah fund." Each family donates an amount to a class tzedakah fund, and then the students in the class, with guidance from the Kitah Zayin teacher, decide how to allocate the money at the end of the 7th grade school year.

Some b'nei mitzvah cohorts have also decided to give a gift to the congregation - these have ranged from prayer books and chumashim to flowers for the bimah and other needed items.

Logistics

Choosing a date

To balance the needs of our b'nei mitzvah families with other needs of the congregation, we strive to carefully schedule our b'nei mitzvah celebrations. While it is traditional to hold the b'nei mitzvah ceremony on a Shabbat closely following the young person's 13th birthday, any time after that birthday is appropriate. Traditionally girls become adults at the age of 12, not 13, and so there is some flexibility in scheduling a bat mitzvah before a girl's 13th birthday.

Rabbi Toba contacts families two years before their child turns 13 to schedule their b'nei mitzvah date. This happens approximately every August/September (for fall/early winter dates) and January (for late winter/spring dates). B'nei mitzvah are not scheduled for the month of July. CDT policy is that there can be no more than two b'nei mitzvah ceremonies in a row, and only 3 out of every 5 Shabbatot. We do our best to make sure everyone gets one of their top two or three choices of dates.

The Site

All Dorshei Tzedek services are held at our prayer space at 60 Highland Street, West Newton, MA 02465. Our sanctuary has 120 permanent chairs, and an additional 70 folding chairs. If you are expecting more than 190 guests, we are able to squeeze in a few more seats on the side.

Fellowship Hall (the large room on the first floor) is reserved for your Kiddush lunch when you confirm your b'nei mitzvah date. Unless we have discussed other arrangements with you, the kitchen **MUST** be cleaned and completely vacated no later than 3:00pm. **If you wish to use the space beyond 3:00pm, you must speak with our Executive Director, Melissa Colten (execdirector@dorsheitzedek.org; 617-965-0330 x 3), to find out if it is available, and to reserve it if it is.** The prayer space belongs to Dorshei Tzedek exclusively. You and your guests may stay there as long as you like.

The Second Church is handicapped accessible, from the Chestnut Street parking-lot side. **Please let us know in advance if you will need to use this door**, so that a staff member can show you how to access it. There is an elevator up to the prayer space on the far side of Fellowship Hall. We also have a portable ramp which can be used in our sanctuary, to give access to the bimah. Please let us know in advance (by the Wednesday before your simcha) if you or one of your guests will need to use this.

There are parking lots and building entrances on both sides of the church - on Highland Street and also on Chestnut Street, and an additional entrance on the Mass Pike side of the building. The entrance to our prayer space is on Highland Street.

Fees

Each b'nei mitzvah family will be charged \$450 to cover the rental cost for the Kiddush space and the set-up and clean-up for the service. In order to avoid problems of non-payment, Dorshei Tzedek will bill you for this **well in advance of your event and**

payment is due 3 months before your scheduled date. If payment is not made in a timely manner (or some other arrangement made), we will not be able to hold your b'nei mitzvah celebration on the scheduled date. If the rental fee is prohibitive, please be in touch as soon as possible with the treasurer or with Rabbi Toba, in order to make another arrangement.

Kiddush

Everyone at the Shabbat morning service is invited to Kiddush after the service, and it is the custom for the b'nei mitzvah family to provide the Kiddush meal. While this does not need to be elaborate or fancy, we do ask that you remember that our Shabbat service is a community celebration as well as a family celebration.

The Kiddush lunch can be organized in a variety of ways. Some families hire a caterer to prepare the food and do the set-up/serving/clean-up; some families purchase or make the food, while other CDT members are assigned to help with the set-up and clean-up; and in some 7th grade classes, families have gotten together to create a “Kiddush co-op” and provide food for one another’s celebrations. If cost is an issue, please consult with Rabbi Toba or Executive Director Melissa Colten for ways in which the community can support you in providing Kiddush.

At the Second Church, **wine may only be served in our prayer space**, not in Fellowship Hall. If you are using a caterer, please let them know this.

Our kashrut policy is that our shared Kiddush meals are dairy (that is, vegetarian or fish). We ask that the challahs that you purchase for the motzi blessing have a *hechsher* (kosher certification). The congregation will provide wine/grape juice for the Kiddush blessing right after the ceremony; **if you would like to provide grape juice for your guests in the Fellowship Hall, please purchase a bottle or two and make arrangements to have it available downstairs with the meal.**

Please be aware that you must provide your own paper goods and cutlery for the Kiddush. The congregation has special white tablecloths available (for both the round and rectangular tables) for use especially by b'nei mitzvah families.

Set-Up and Clean-Up

Set-up for Services

Families can anticipate that approximately 25-30 CDT members will attend on the day of a b'nei mitzvah celebration, in ADDITION to members of the child’s class and members that you invite that aren’t Shabbat service “regulars.” **If you are expecting more than 100 people (including your guests and Dorshei Tzedek members), please contact Melissa Colten by Wednesday of the week of your service**, so that she can notify the custodial staff to set up the proper number of folding chairs.

Please bring a challah for the *motzi* blessing in the sanctuary (the ushers will take care of bringing it out at the right time).

Set-up for Kiddush

You will be contacted between 6 months to a year before your ceremony about whether or not you will need CDT members assigned to help with set-up and clean-up of the Kiddush, so that we can make assignments in a timely way. Please make your plans accordingly - and let us know if you are using a caterer who will handle set-up and clean-up.

The custodial staff will set up tables and chairs for your Kiddush lunch unless you tell us otherwise. Melissa has many floor plan templates from which you can choose - please connect with her for a document of layout choices, and let her know which one you'd like by the Wednesday before your event. It is also possible to set tables and chairs up yourself on Friday afternoon if the space is not being used that evening; please contact Melissa (execdirector@dorsheitzedek.org; 617-965-0330 x 3) to make arrangements.

Ritual items

Dorshei Tzedek has *kippot* (yarmulkes) and *tallitot* (prayer shawls) available, although some families choose to have special *kippot* made for the occasion (you can call the Israel Book Shop or Kolbo in Brookline for this).

Greening Your B'nei Mitzvah Celebration

Options for greening your b'nei mitzvah celebration are many. One way to minimize waste at the Kiddush and other parties is to contract with Bootstrap Composting (<http://bootstrapcompost.com>) or another composting company. If you or your caterer purchase biodegradable plates, cups and cutlery (one source: BMS Paper in Jamaica Plain), the process is simple. Whether you hire composting staff or not, it is recommended to save a parking spot for the composters near the Chestnut Street entrance to the church, so the staff can easily carry the cans of scraps out to their vehicle. And don't forget to align your caterer or volunteers with the composting plan!

The Ceremony

Planning the Service

About 6-8 weeks preceding the ceremony, Rabbi Toba meets with each family to go over the service, discussing both the b'nei mitzvah's participation and opportunities for involvement for other family members and friends. This is also a time when the family can make any special requests (like a favorite tune!).

Honors & Family Participation

There are a number of ways to involve family members and friends in the ceremony. In addition to the b'nei mitzvah themselves, it is customary to honor parents, grandparents, and close friends and/or family with *aliyot* - the honor of being called up to the Torah. There are seven *aliyot* total. Of those seven, two are reserved for members of the congregation. Other honors include chanting a portion of Torah, opening and closing the ark, lifting and

wrapping the Torah after the reading, and doing readings in English during the service. If a younger sibling (or siblings) would like to be involved, please let Rabbi Toba know.

Our policy is to reserve the role of service leader for Rabbi Toba and/or members of Dorshei Tzedek, in addition to the b'nei mitzvah. If you have a family member who would like to lead a prayer or a small section of the service, please consult with Rabbi Toba.

Please see the sheet entitled “Torah Honors and Blessings” below - this is intended for you to send to your guests who will be having the honor of an *aliyah* to the Torah.

Torah Chanting

The b'nei mitzvah ceremony is an opportunity for family members (especially parents, if they'd like!) and close friends to share the honor of chanting from the Torah along with the b'nei mitzvah student. Our primary concern is both “quality control” and not to put undue pressure or possible embarrassment on the guest who is leyning (chanting Torah). While we are able to work fairly closely with a parent who decides to leyn (and if you are able to read Hebrew and would like to chant a section, please ask your child's tutor to work with you), we are relying on you to make wise choices in terms of inviting others to leyn. **In general, a b'nei mitzvah ceremony is NOT a good time for a guest to chant Torah for the first time; it is a fairly high-pressure situation.** It would be better if you would only ask those people whom you know have experience leyning. **We also ask that anyone who is leyning do so from the Torah, not from the chumash (the book form of the Torah), and that they actually chant (and not just read) the portion.** If you feel that you have a potentially awkward situation in regard to this with a family member, please be in touch with Rabbi Toba.

Again, we do not want to discourage you from participating in this way - it's a wonderful thing for a parent to do! If there is a family member (or members) who do have some experience but need a refresher, your tutor should be able to make a recording for them, and may also be able to go over it with them by phone.

Any Torah readings that you do not give to family and friends can be easily assigned to congregants. **Three to four months before the ceremony, please ask your tutor to contact the Ritual Committee chair and let them know how many readings need to be assigned to the general congregation.**

The Role of Non-Jewish Family Members in the Ceremony

Dorshei Tzedek is a welcoming and inclusive community, and we cherish the participation and support of our non-Jewish members. We especially appreciate the commitment of non-Jewish parents who are raising their children as Jews. We also want to make sure that all non-Jewish family members and friends who attend the ceremony feel welcome and included. There are some traditional ritual boundaries that we observe at Dorshei Tzedek. Most relevant to the b'nei mitzvah service, **we reserve all honors relating to the Torah - including being called up for an *aliyah*, opening and closing the ark, and lifting and wrapping the Torah - for Jews.** The only exception to this rule is that non-Jewish spouses/partners are welcome to accompany their Jewish partner to the bimah, but we ask that only the Jewish person recite the Hebrew blessing. **There is an English blessing for a**

non-Jewish parent to recite if they so wish, affirming their own connection to Torah and the Jewish people.

Non-Jewish family members or friends can be invited to do English readings, and a non-Jewish parent is invited to give their child a blessing along with the Jewish parent.

Childcare

Childcare will be available during the service.

Photography & Writing on Shabbat

It is our policy that **no photos or videos can be taken during Dorshei Tzedek Shabbat services**. We consider this an intrusion on the sanctity of the religious service and a violation of the spirit of Shabbat. Please communicate this to your guests. If you would like a “photo op” of your child reading from the Torah, this can be done in the week prior to the ceremony, when the b'nei mitzvah will have the opportunity to read their portion from the Torah scroll. **Photography is allowed during the Kiddush**; we only ask that you respect the sensibilities of members who may prefer not to be photographed on Shabbat.

Because of the traditional prohibition of writing on Shabbat, it is also Dorshei Tzedek policy that members and guests not be invited to write. **This precludes guest books or other types of activities where writing is involved.**

Torah Honors & Blessings

Aliyah (literally “going up”) refers to the honor of being called up to the *bimah* (the raised platform at the front of the sanctuary) to chant blessings before and after a section of Torah is read.

Who gets called up for an aliyah?

At Dorshei Tzedek, any Jewish adult (aged 13 years or older) can be called up for an *aliyah*. In addition, non-Jewish spouses/partners are welcome to accompany their partner up to the *bimah*, with the Jewish partner reciting the Hebrew blessing.

What do I do if I have an aliyah?

When it is your turn to be called up, Rabbi Toba will call out your name in both English and Hebrew. **We request that those called up wear a tallit (prayer shawl)** - at the very minimum, one person in a group *aliyah* must wear a *tallit*. At the Torah reading table, the reader will point out to you the first word of the reading in the Torah scroll. Touch one corner of your *tallit* to the first word and then kiss the corner of the *tallit*. Then chant the beginning of the blessing. The blessing translates as:

*Bless Adonai, the blessed One; Blessed is Adonai, forever and ever
Blessed are You Adonai, Source of Life, who has brought us close to Your service
and given us Your Torah. Blessed is Adonai, Giver of Torah.*

After chanting a few verses, the reader will show you the last word chanted, and again you will touch that word with the corner of your *tallit* and kiss the *tallit*. Then recite the closing blessing, which translates as:

Blessed are You Adonai, Source of Life, who has given us a Torah of truth, and has planted eternal life within us. Blessed is Adonai, Giver of Torah.

The one change in the Reconstructionist version of these blessings is in the third line, where we substitute “who has brought us close to Your service” for the traditional “who has chosen us from all the nations,” consistent with our rejection of the idea of the Jews as the “chosen” people. You can see and hear the Hebrew Torah blessing at www.dorsheitzedek.org/torah-blessings.

Notes for visitors

For those of you visiting Dorshei Tzedek, welcome! We are pleased to have you join us for our Shabbat morning services, and want to let you know about a few of our practices. First, we like everyone to join in - so please do! All of the songs and prayers that are communally sung are transliterated in English. In order to honor Shabbat and the needs of our community members, we ask that you remember to **turn off your cell phone, refrain from taking any pictures, and please do not wear any strong fragrances**, including perfume, cologne, and strongly scented hair products. These cause some of us serious illness. Thank you for your understanding!

Conclusion

Preparing for the b'nei mitzvah ceremony is both an exciting and a potentially stressful time in a family's life. **Please know that the staff and membership of Dorshei Tzedek want to do everything possible to make this experience as meaningful and smooth as possible for you.** Please contact Rabbi Toba or Rabbi Shahar with any questions you might have. We will be in touch with you to set up an initial meeting.

The following selection from the Talmud is included in the Reconstructionist prayer book as a blessing for b'nei mitzvah. May this *kavannah*, this intention, guide us as we prepare our children to become caring, committed Jewish adults:

May you live to see your world fulfilled, may you be our link to future worlds, and may your hope encompass all the generations yet to be. May your heart conceive with understanding, and may your mouth speak wisdom, and your tongue be stirred with sounds of joy. May your gaze be straight and sure, and your eyes be lit with Torah's lamp, and your face aglow with heaven's radiance, your lips expressing words of knowledge, and your inner self alive with righteousness. And may you always rush in eagerness to hear the words of One more ancient than all time.

B'nei Mitzvah Planning Checklist

<i>When</i>	<i>What</i>
12 months	<input type="checkbox"/> Meet with Rabbi Toba & Rabbi Shahar
11 months	<input type="checkbox"/> Schedule initial meeting with tutor
6-10 months	<input type="checkbox"/> Begin tikkun olam project
6-10 months	<input type="checkbox"/> CDT will bill you \$450 for rental, set-up and clean-up of Second Church. <i>These fees must be paid 3 months prior to your event, or space cannot be held for you.</i>
6-10 months	<input type="checkbox"/> Notify Melissa Colten, CDT's Executive Director (617-965-0330, x3), if you are using a caterer or not (see B'nei Mitzvah Logistics Packet for more info on this).
4-5 months	<input type="checkbox"/> If desired, identify friends and family to chant Torah. Tell tutor and b'nei mitzvah coordinator if doing so.
3-4 months	<input type="checkbox"/> Order invitations
2-3 months	<input type="checkbox"/> Send invitations and order food for kiddush
2 months	<input type="checkbox"/> Write b'nei mitzvah announcement for the newsletter. <i>This must be submitted by the 10th day of the month which precedes your event.</i>
	Discuss with Melissa:
3 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Usage of special b'nei mitzvah tablecloths 2. Gaining building access on the Friday before your simcha - to drop off paper products/supplies or to do your own Fellowship Hall set-up
1 week	<input type="checkbox"/> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Your final guest count, so we know how many additional chairs to set up for the service 2. Whether to leave the back entrance (near kitchen) open for handicapped access. (This will not otherwise be open) 3. Your Fellowship Hall floor plan (Marla has many from which to choose) 4. Any other logistical issues of concern

APPENDIX:

Educational Requirements for becoming B'nei Mitzvah at Congregation Dorshei Tzedek

It is our goal that any young person who has a b'nei mitzvah ceremony at Dorshei Tzedek has received a Reconstructionist Jewish education, has developed the skills needed to participate in Jewish life, and has established a connection to the Dorshei Tzedek community. To meet these goals, it is our expectation that the young person will have been continuously enrolled¹ in the Dorshei Tzedek religious school beginning no later than 3rd grade, and will also participate in community activities (see “Community Involvement” below).

Exceptions to the norm of attendance at the CDT religious school may include:

a) Day School students: Attendance at a Jewish day school will fulfill the educational expectation.

b) Other Supplementary Schools: If a young person has attended a supplementary school other than Dorshei Tzedek, beginning no later than third grade and at a minimum of 4 hours of study per week, the young person must attend Dorshei Tzedek religious school for at least two years prior to the b'nei mitzvah.

c) Other Prior Education: If a young person has (i) not received a prior Jewish education; or (ii) attended another school for less than 4 hours/week; or (iii) began later than third grade, an educational equivalency plan (see below) to bridge any educational gaps must be agreed to by the student and their parent(s) and implemented, and the young person must attend the Dorshei Tzedek religious school for at least two years prior to the b'nei mitzvah.

d) Special Needs: If a young person has special education needs that cannot be met in our religious school, the educational expectations can be fulfilled through attendance at Gateways or other comparable programs. In these situations, parents should consult with Rabbi Shahar prior to enrolling their child to ensure that the program meets our expectations.

e) Other Circumstances: For any other circumstance not covered by these guidelines, please schedule an appointment with Rabbi Shahar to discuss educational expectations as soon as possible.

Please be aware that meeting these educational expectations might mean holding a b'nei mitzvah ceremony at some point beyond the young person's 13th birthday.

¹ A student will be considered continuously enrolled if they have taken a leave of absence for medical or other reasons as approved by Rabbi Shahar and has completed the requirements of their educational equivalency plan.

Equivalency Plans

For a student who has no prior Jewish education when enrolling in the Dorshei Tzedek religious school or whose prior education does not meet our educational expectations (see Section (c) above), or who takes a leave of absence as outlined above, an educational equivalency plan will be developed by the Director of Congregational Learning in consultation with the parent(s). Such a plan may include tutoring, attendance at Camp JRF, or other activities that will assist the student in reaching the educational goals described above.

Community Involvement

Students who are enrolled in programs other than Dorshei Tzedek religious school should also:

- Meet the Shabbat service attendance requirement applicable to their grade (see Parents' Handbook for more info)
- Participate in Community Learning Days and family education programs for their grade
- Attend erev Shabbat Dinners for their grade
- Participate in informal education programs for their grade

(all to the extent feasible if special needs are a consideration)