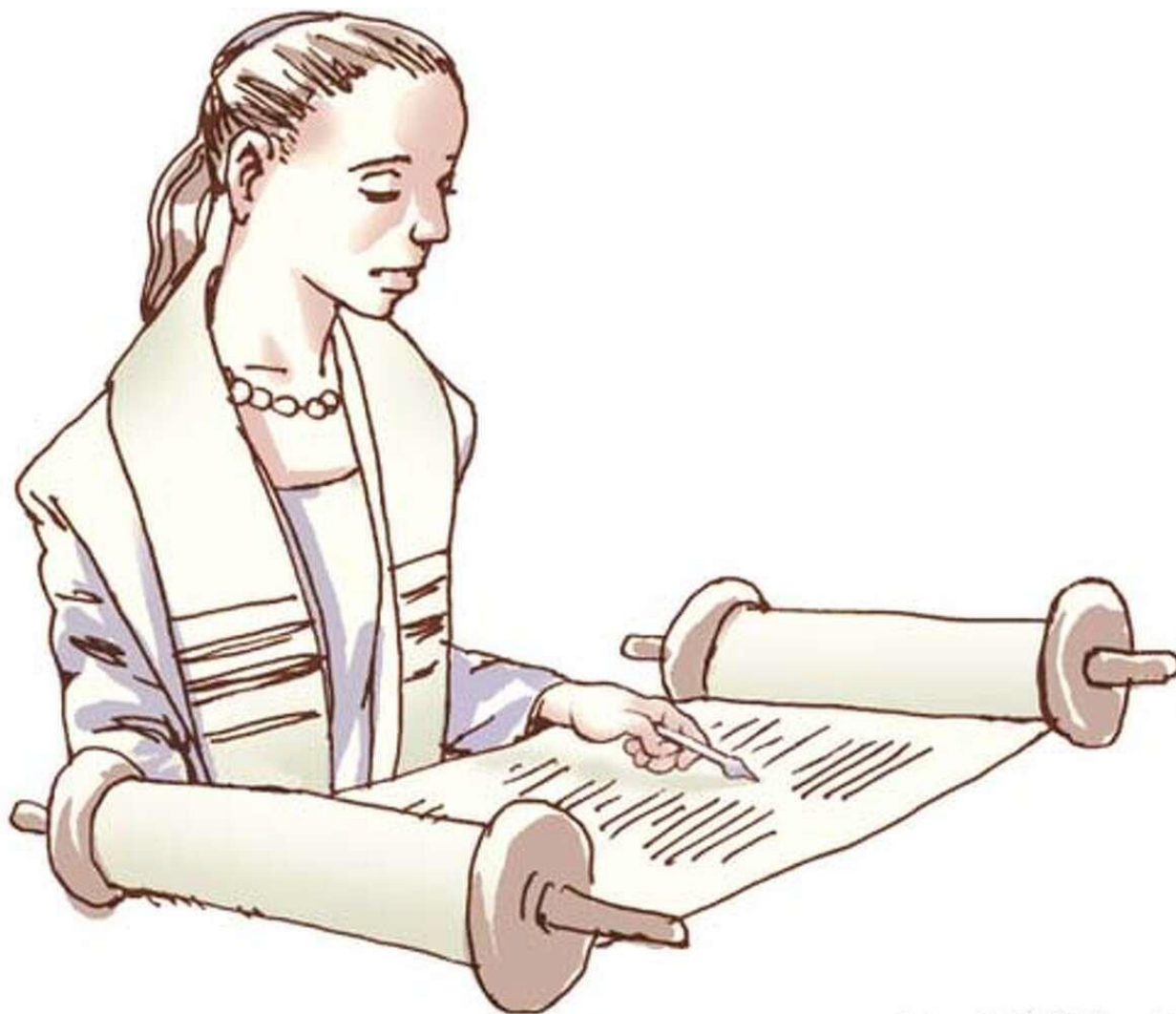




Congregation
B'nai Shalom
בני שלום

Bet Mitzvah

Congregation B'nai Shalom



Chronicle / Bill Russell

Forward

We are delighted to accompany your family on the journey as you prepare for *Bet Mitzvah*! In recent years, existing terms for the Jewish coming-of-age ceremony—commonly referred to as a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* in singular, *B'nei* or *B'not Mitzvah* in plural— seem inadequate due to their gendered nature. *Bet Mitzvah* is a term inclusive of all gender identities and gender expressions. It honors Hebrew and is understandable, useable, and easy to remember. Individual students still choose to become *Bar*, *Bat*, or *Bet Mitzvah*. This handbook will use '*Bet Mitzvah*' as the Hebrew inclusive term for all these choices.



Within these pages, you will find everything you've ever wondered about *Bet Mitzvah* but were afraid to ask: From the history and background of the celebration to the guidelines, procedures, and customs unique to our Congregation. If you still have questions after reviewing this booklet, contact us at the Temple; we will do everything we can to make sure you, your family, and your proud *Bet Mitzvah* have an experience that, as a family, you will always cherish.

With Wishes of Mazel Tov,

Rabbi Rachel Gurevitz

Rabbi Joe Eiduson

Table of Contents

Forward 2

Staff Contact Information 3

Bet Mitzvah: What It Means..... 3

Educational Requirements 4

Tutoring Process..... 4

Fees and Billing 4

Kibud Av Va'Em: What Parents Can Do 5

Final Appointments with Rabbi and Soloist..... 6

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION..... 7

Behavior of Young People..... 7

Bimah Flowers 7

Building Use Policy 7

Dress..... 7

Food and Drink Policy..... 8

Kashrut Policy 8

Kippot and Tallitot..... 9

Oneg Shabbat and *Kiddush* 9

Photography..... 9

Recommended Courtesies..... 9

Room Set Up..... 9

Service Program 9

Tzedakah 10

Ushers..... 10

Video..... 10

A Final Note 10

BIBLIOGRAPHY 11

GLOSSARY 11

Staff Contact Information

508-366-7191

Rabbi Gurevitz	Ext. 201	rabbi@cbnaishalom.org
Rabbi Eiduson	Ext. 204	educator@cbnaishalom.org
Steve Winer	Ext. 202	executivedirector@cbnaishalom.org

Tutors

Lauren Epstein	240-372-2918	epsteinfamily@comcast.net
Sharon Goldstein	Ext. 203	sbgoldstein@cbnaishalom.org
Debbi Morin	Ext. 209	dmorin@cbnaishalom.org

Temple Secretaries	Ext. 205/200
--------------------	--------------

Bet Mitzvah: What It Means

Bat, Bar, or Bet Mitzvah means "one obligated by the *Mitzvot*." *Mitzvot* are the commandments found in the *Torah* - not only rituals and festivals, but also how we relate to others, our business dealings, our families, and how we care for the vulnerable in society. The Hebrew root of the word *Mitzvah* also conveys the meaning of 'connection.' So, we can think of a *Mitzvah* as something that helps us feel more connected – to God and each other. When a child becomes *Bet Mitzvah*, the obligation to learn and choose how to practice Judaism and live by Jewish values is now in their hands. *Bet Mitzvah* is not a verb; therefore, it is incorrect to say, "My child was *Bar Mitzvahed* last year" or "My daughter made her *Bat Mitzvah* last year." Ultimately, it means a commitment to continue learning, growing, and trying new experiences.

"Bet Mitzvah is a sacred mountain in Jewish time. We climb this particular mountain because it brings us closer to God, closer to Judaism, closer to our people, closer to ourselves. And what modern Jews need, more than ever, is a way to be there at the summit of this holy mountain."

Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin, from Putting God on the Guest List

Becoming Bet Mitzvah

THE PATH TO BET MITZVAH AND BEYOND



Becoming *Bet Mitzvah* at Congregation *B'nai Shalom* is just one of the many milestones of a multi-year education program continuing through 12th grade. *Bet Mitzvah* follows a period of extensive study of Jewish rituals, ethics, history, *Torah*, prayer, and Hebrew. As such, we expect students to demonstrate certain skills when they lead a service as *Bet Mitzvah* and have the basic knowledge to live a full and meaningful Jewish life. Each child will be prepared according to their ability. *Bet Mitzvah* is not a "cookie cutter" experience at Congregation *B'nai Shalom*, nor a competition to see which child can do the most. Every *Bet Mitzvah* student is unique and cherished. We believe that the training for the service should be a joyous experience and meet the learners' individual needs. The content of the service will be varied to meet the strengths of each individual.

Educational Requirements

Bet Mitzvah eligibility at Congregation B'nai Shalom requires satisfactory completion of Religious School classes beginning in the fourth grade, including four (4) full years of "Religious School" through the completion of 7th grade. "Satisfactory completion" includes being present for 80% of class hours annually and achieving minimum competency per grade. Students must continue to attend and complete grade seven even if the service date falls before the end of that school year. Students who celebrate *Bet Mitzvah* during their eighth, ninth, tenth, or post-confirmation year must enroll, attend and actively participate in our *Chai* School program at the time of the service. In keeping with our emphasis on lifelong learning, our religious school continues through the high school years, and all students are expected and encouraged to continue through Confirmation in grade ten and High School graduation.

For *Bet Mitzvah* students to experience the real meaning of becoming a Jewish adult, all students are required to complete the **"Shaarei Kehilah- Gates of Community" program**. Information regarding the program will be distributed approximately one year before the *Bet Mitzvah*. To familiarize *Bet Mitzvah* students with our *Shabbat* Service format, we require students to attend at least ten *Shabbat* Services the year preceding their *Bet Mitzvah* service.

All families (**parents with the child** celebrating their *Bet Mitzvah*) will be scheduled and expected to assist as extra ushers at a *Bet Mitzvah* service before their child's *Bet Mitzvah* Service. This *Mitzvah* enables other families to enjoy the morning of their celebration while their guests are warmly greeted and provided with prayer books. They will attend the service to greet latecomers and collect the prayerbooks at the end of the service.

Tutoring Process

The Temple Educator will arrange for tutoring. Approximately 10 – 12 months before the service, the Temple Educator will assign a tutor to teach the student how to chant verses of *Torah* and *Haftarah*. Students will also review the basic Hebrew prayers of the service learned in religious school with their tutor. The Temple Educator will also give the student a three-ring binder containing that week's *parashah* in Hebrew and English, commentary that explains the portion, and the *Haftarah* reading, study resources, and materials to help the child lead the service. After receiving their book, the student and family will read the entire *Torah* portion in English and select verses that the student will learn for the ceremony. The final preparations for *Bet Mitzvah* continue with Rabbi Gurevitz and our Cantorial Soloists. Rabbi Gurevitz will work with the student on their *D'var Torah*, literally, a "word of *Torah*." It is a mini-sermon, which the student will write after studying the *Torah* portion with their parents and Rabbi Gurevitz. A final rehearsal with one of our Cantorial Soloists will be held the Wednesday before the ceremony from 3 pm to 5 pm. *Parents* may need to give notice at work to ensure they are available for this rehearsal.

Fees and Billing

As *Bet Mitzvah* is an integral part of our religious education program, tuition for fourth through sixth-grade students includes *Bet Mitzvah* preparation (intake interview(s), tutoring, rehearsals, and materials). Families of students who begin their religious education at Congregation B'nai Shalom after fourth grade will be assessed additional tuition to accommodate the *Bet Mitzvah* education. Parent (s) will be notified and billed if extra tutoring is required.



Kibud Av Va'Em: What Parents Can Do

On Friday evening, the *Bet Mitzvah* will light the *Shabbat candles* with help from parents. *Bet Mitzvah* students will then lead the Congregation in the Friday evening *Kiddush*.

On *Shabbat* morning, during the *Torah* service, family members or family friends may participate in certain honors, which include *Aliyot* (*Torah* blessings), *Hagbahah* (lifting the *Torah*), *Gelilah* (dressing the *Torah*), and closing the Ark. At shared services, the honors are divided between the two families. Parents and Jewish grandparents may pass the *Torah* to the *Bet Mitzvah*, signifying the transmission of Jewish identity through the generations of the family.



Bet Mitzvah students reciting at least 12 *Torah* verses will have four *Aliyot* (*Torah* blessings). Jewish individuals over the age of 13 may recite the first three *Aliyot* as designated by the family. The prayer recited for an *Aliyah* affirms the reader's connection to the Jewish covenant. Please consider this in your choice of appropriate people for these roles. Parents often recite *Aliyah* blessings but are not required to do so. The *Bet Mitzvah* recites the final *Aliyah*.

One or two guests or family members may be designated to assist in uncovering and covering the *Torah*. These are non-reading parts that may be given to anyone, including younger children. An adult Jew may also lift the open *Torah* to show the Congregation the reading. This ritual, called *Hagbahah*, requires some strength and a good back. Parents also give the *Bet Mitzvah* a blessing on the *Bimah*. This is an opportunity to reflect on the core values and attributes you see in your child and the Jewish life and principles you hope will continue to guide their way. These blessings should not be longer than about two minutes.

Modifications to what an individual child will read and lead with regard to any special learning needs. No child is ever denied a ceremony due to learning needs. We will work with families and children to individualize these ceremonies when needed.

Saturday Morning *Bet Mitzvah* Schedule

The *Bet Mitzvah* Service begins at 10:15 am and ends between 12:00–12:15 pm for a "single" service, and 12:15–12:30 pm for a shared service.

- 9:00 The building opens for interior photography. A Board member will be available to take out the *Torah* scroll for photographs. (In case of a *Bet Mitzvah* service shared between families, an alternate schedule will be provided to allow each family time for *Torah* photographs)
- 9:40 Rabbi arrives following *Torah* study. Time for one photo with the *Bet Mitzvah*. *Students' materials are set out and prepared.* All service participants (*Aliyot* and *Torah* honors) meet with the Rabbi in the Sanctuary for final instructions and to sign *B'nai Mitzvah* certificates.
- 9:45
- 10:00 Congregants begin to enter the Sanctuary. Final bathroom run for *Bet Mitzvah* and siblings.
- 10:15 Service Begins

Final Appointments with Rabbi and Soloist

Seven weeks **Rabbi Gurevitz**

Students and parents will meet with Rabbi Gurevitz for two one-hour meetings. Both families will be present if this is a paired service with another student. At the first appointment, the parents and the student will study the *Torah* portion together in English. At the second appointment, parents, student, and Rabbi study the *Torah* portion, and the student will begin to outline a *D'var Torah*. Both families will be present if this is a paired service with another student. At the third appointment, the student and Rabbi (Parents do not attend) will make final corrections to the *D'var Torah* and practice in the Sanctuary.

Six weeks **Sharon Goldstein**

Mrs. Goldstein will introduce the student to reading from the *Torah* scroll, assign English prayers and work in the Sanctuary on conducting the service. The student will meet Mrs. Goldstein for three (3) one-hour appointments: *Torah* choreography; chant from the *Torah*; *Haftarah*; *Kiddush*. Parents do not attend these meetings.

Five weeks **Sharon Goldstein**

Assignment of English & Hebrew service readings; review prayers and readings
Chant from the *Torah*; *Haftarah*; *Kiddush*
Practice prayers on *Bimah*

Four weeks **Meet with Rabbi Gurevitz.**

Turn in and review Shaarei Kehilah Booklet
Family Study Session

Three weeks **Sharon Goldstein**

Torah service, Hebrew prayers, and English prayers in the Sanctuary

Two weeks **Rabbi Gurevitz (student only)**

Read over the final draft of *D'var Torah* & practice service in the Sanctuary.

One week **Final Rehearsal with Cantorial Soloist**

A final rehearsal will be held the week of the *Bet Mitzvah*, with the *Bet Mitzvah* and parents. If this will be a paired service with another student, both families will be present for the final rehearsal. These rehearsals are held on Wednesday afternoons from 3:00 – 5:00 pm.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Behavior of Young People

The parents are responsible for ensuring that young people behave appropriately, respect Temple property and have adequate decorum during the service. Parents are responsible for ensuring that young people are not served wine or other alcoholic beverages. If you invite a lot of young people, we urge you to discuss security arrangements with our **Executive Director**.

A building monitor will be arranged for all luncheon and evening parties to manage building issues, assist vendors, and lock up the building after the party.

Bimah Flowers

Families are welcome to sponsor or co-sponsor fresh or silk *bimah* flowers. Opting for the silk *bimah* flowers creates a donation to the Landscape Fund that helps beautify the Temple grounds and courtyard. For a single service, the family is responsible for flowers. Both families will be asked to coordinate and then split the costs for a shared service. If only one family wishes to sponsor the flowers, that family may arrange the flowers on their own. *Bimah* decorations other than flowers are only permitted with permission from the Rabbi. Please get in touch with the Executive Director for further information.

Building Use Policy

When you completed your *Bet Mitzvah* Information Form requesting the date for your child's *Bet Mitzvah*, you indicated whether or not you were interested in renting the social hall. If you said you were interested, the date will be saved until someone or a group inquires about renting or using the room. At that time, you will be called to see whether you are still interested in renting the space. The *Bet Mitzvah* family may rent the Social Hall for an afternoon and/or evening reception of 2-4 hours. **Please speak with the Executive Director as early as possible to avoid disappointment.**

The following is the usual schedule for receptions held in the social hall:

Afternoon Reception: Two or Four Hours. A later end time may be available if no evening social hall is used that day. If there is an evening event that same day, afternoon families must vacate the hall by 5:00 pm to allow enough time for the changeover. When it is a shared service, if the afternoon reception family wishes to use the main lobby for hors d'oeuvres, they must wait until the other family has left before serving them.

Evening Reception: 7:30 pm – 11:30 pm - An earlier start time may be available if there is no afternoon reception that day.

A downpayment is required to hold the room reservation. Information is on the rental form.


Dress

While Congregation *B'nai Shalom* is often informal in clothing, anyone on the *Bimah* must dress appropriately to lead a prayer service. *Bet Mitzvah* students may not wear a tuxedo. Prom dresses (floor length) are not permitted. *Bet Mitzvah* students may not wear strapless or sleeveless dresses unless covered by a jacket or sweater. Using a Tallit as a shoulder covering is not permitted because a Tallit is a ritual prayer garment and is an addition, not a substitute, for appropriate dress to lead others in prayer.

Food and Drink Policy

In general, no food or drink except bottled water is allowed in the Sanctuary for the following reasons:

- ✓ Our Sanctuary is a sacred place
- ✓ We do not want to damage the space
- ✓ We want to keep trash (wrappers, bottles, and so on) to a minimum.



PLEASE NOTE

***Please do not chew gum in the Sanctuary.
It is inappropriate to chew gum and pray.***

Throwing candy is not permitted during the service.

Kashrut Policy

The Congregation does not maintain a *kosher* kitchen. Meat does not have to be *kosher*, and other ingredients do not have to be *kosher*. However, food should be served "***Kosher style***." The following is Congregation B'nai Shalom's definition of "*Kosher style*":

- 1) No pork or shellfish products [example: ham, shrimp, lobster, lard, pork, pork hot dogs, pork meatballs (or beef/pork combination)] are allowed.
- 2) Meat and dairy products may NOT be served during the same course.
- 3) Vegetables, eggs, and fruit are Pareve (neutral) and may be served at any meal.

Hors D'oeuvres and Appetizers - If served before a meal, these will be considered a part of the meal and will follow the guidelines for meals above.

Dessert - A dairy dessert may follow a meat meal, and milk or cream may be served with coffee after the meat dishes are cleared.

Application of Policy

This policy applies to food prepared at home, in the synagogue's kitchen, purchased and brought in, and prepared or brought in by caterers. Our kitchen is **not** *kosher*. If you wish to have a kosher meal, contact your *kosher* caterer regarding having the kitchen *Kashered* before your event. Permission to *Kasher* the kitchen must be granted by one of our rabbis.

Regarding events where outside caterers are brought in, you must obtain certificates of insurance that include workers' compensation and general liability, including products/completed operations. Most importantly, if liquor is served, this coverage must include liquor liability coverage. These certificates should be requested for each event, and the event dates should be shown on the certificate of insurance. In most cases, this should not burden quality caterers as they are asked for these as a standard part of their business.

Specifics on our building and dietary policies [can be found at this link](#).

Kippot and Tallitot

In keeping with the spirit of Reform Judaism, wearing a *Kippah* (a.k.a. *Yarmulke*, head covering) or *Tallit* (prayer shawl) is an individual option. A *Tallit* may be worn by anyone, during the day, during prayer. The *Tzitzit* are reminders of our connection to God through acts of *Mitzvot*. The material wrapped around us creates a feeling of God's presence as we prepare to do something holy. In Reform Judaism, whether to wear a *Tallit* or a *Kippah* to pray is an individual choice. Parents need to discuss the meaning and option of *Tallit*-wearing with their *Bet Mitzvah* so that they can participate in making this choice.

The Temple provides *Kippot* for all services. Families may also order any personalized *Kippot* style for all attendees. Enough *Kippot* must be purchased for all guests. In the case of pairing, the families should provide two baskets, one for each *Bet Mitzvah*. *Kippot* may not be displayed in such a way, nor should they be handed to people as they enter, leading to the impression that it is necessary to wear one to enter the Sanctuary.

Oneg Shabbat and Kiddush

Oneg Shabbat and *Kiddush Bet Mitzvah* families are expected to help provide food for the Friday night *Oneg Shabbat*. The Temple office will provide specifics regarding the *Oneg Shabbat* about six weeks before the *Bet Mitzvah*. The CBS Sisterhood has many options for participation and takes care of set up and clean up.

Photography

Photography is not permitted during any worship service at Congregation *B'nai Shalom*. Families may take photos from 9:00 am, when the Temple opens, until 9:45 am. This timing may be adapted for shared *Bet Mitzvah* to allow both families time for pictures with the *Torah*. Pictures posed with the *Torah* can only take place on Saturday morning when a Board member is present to ensure the safe handling of the *Torah*. This precaution benefits families and photographers from the responsibility of potential damage to our valuable *Torah* scrolls.

Recommended Courtesies

To reflect the joy of the occasion and express a sense of gratitude, Jewish tradition encourages the family to contribute to the Temple in honor of the *Bet Mitzvah*. Social etiquette is a part of adult life. As our young people reach adulthood, we must model this proper behavior. If your guest list includes most of the students in your child's religious school class, it is appropriate to invite all the students in the class so that no one feels left out.

Room Set Up

Our Executive Director will be happy to accommodate any seating arrangements you require within the capacity of our space. Please make an appointment at least six weeks before your celebration to discuss these details. Our Executive Director can also supply information on the number and sizes of tables available.

Service Program

The Temple office will print programs for your *Bet Mitzvah*; many families choose this option. We can also provide you with a template if you wish to adapt it. If you decide to print your programs, you must have the wording approved by Sharon Goldstein, Cantorial Soloist, before printing.

Tzedakah

Congregation B'nai Shalom is a Synagogue Member of a Jewish hunger organization, MAZON, "Sustenance," which feeds the hungry through its support of soup kitchens and food pantries. We encourage families to assess themselves with 3% of the cost of their celebration as a donation to MAZON. More info can be found at www.mazon.org.

As a donation to the Temple, many families inscribe their children's names on a leaf on the Tree of Life in the lobby in honor of the *Bet Mitzvah*. These should be ordered one month in advance to ensure they arrive on time. Contact our Executive Director for more information.

Ushers

As a benefit of being a part of a Synagogue community, we have many ways that we provide for the needs of each other at important ritual moments; at worship, at *shiva* (mourning prayers), taking our turn to provide beautiful dessert *Oneg Shabbat* spreads for each other and more. All *Bet Mitzvah* families are assigned as "assistant ushers" for a *Shabbat* morning service before their own child's service. This manageable *Mitzvah* is expected of the student, along with family members. The "assistant family" will be part of the Congregation during the service once it begins and will collect prayerbooks following the service. You will receive your assignment from the Temple office.

Video

All *Bet Mitzvah* services will be live-streamed (unless the family requests otherwise). A download of the recording, as well as custom video production, is also available. Parents will receive all details and costs from the office about two months before the service.

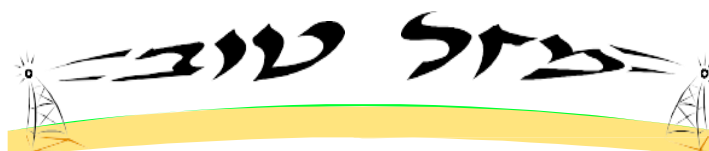
A Final Note

"Why does the *Bet Mitzvah* experience continue to exercise such influence on us today? In a time where faith is questioned on every side, there is an urgency to a Jew's affirming the covenant that binds the Jewish people to God and God to us. In a time when rites of passage may be disparaged as primitive, there is a yearning for the milestone event to separate the early years of childhood from the years of adolescence and adulthood. In a time when mobility has spread families across America...there is a need for a ceremony to bring families together with shared traditions. In a time when we seek the meaning of our Jewish identity, the *Bet Mitzvah* provides challenges and opportunities for creating meaning in our lives.

"*Bet Mitzvah* observance helps to ensure the continuation of Jewish learning. It marks the acquisition of Jewish skills. It is the moment when the Jewish community grows by one member...It trains children to achieve what is expected of adults, preparing them to be adults. It sets Jewish children on a lifelong path toward wisdom, faith, justice, and peace."

-from A Spiritual Journey: The Bar and Bat Mitzvah Handbook by Seymour Rossel

We want you and yours to have an exceptional *Bet Mitzvah* experience at Congregation *B'nai Shalom*. We create the possibility for an inclusive, thoughtful, spiritually alive, and *Hamish* (filled with warmth and joy) service. *Bet Mitzvah* is the chance to celebrate all the beauty, joy, and hope that is part of your Jewish family. The more you know and learn, the more *naches* --- joy you will share with all who attend.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

A Spiritual Journey: The Bar and Bat Mitzvah Handbook by Seymour Rossel

A Torah Commentary for our Times by Rabbi Harvey J. Fields

Bar Mitzvah: A Jewish Boy's Coming of Age by Eric Kimmel.

Bat Mitzvah: A Jewish Girl's Coming of Age by Barbara Diamond Goldin

For Kids – Putting God on the Guest List by Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin, Jewish Lights

The JGirl's Guide the Young Jewish Woman's Handbook for Coming of Age by Penina Adelman, Ali Feldman, and Shulamit Reinharz

The B'nai Mitzvah Memory Book: An Album for Treasuring the Spiritual Celebration, by Rabbi Jeffrey and Nina Salkin, Jewish Lights.

The Complete B'nai Mitzvah Book: Everything You Need to Plan a Meaningful Celebration by Patti Moskowitz

The Haftarah Commentary URJ Press

GLOSSARY

Aliyah (plural, **Aliyot**): Hebrew for 'going up.' Refers to the honor of chanting the blessings.

Bimah: the raised platform in the synagogue.

D'var Torah: The speech given by the *Bet Mitzvah* child commenting on their *Torah* portion.

Glilah: The honor of dressing the *Torah* after the *Torah* reading.

Haftarah: literally, "completion." The reading from the Prophets for a particular Shabbat.

Hagbahah: the honor of lifting the *Torah* after the reading.

Kiddush: The blessing over the wine. It also refers to refreshments offered after the service.

Kipah: Hebrew name for head covering.

Mazel Tov: Commonly meaning 'congratulations' or 'good luck.'

Mitzvah (plural, **Mitzvot**): an obligation of Jewish life

Motzi: The blessing over bread.

Oneg Shabbat: refers to the refreshments served after the Friday evening Shabbat service

Parashah: the *Torah* portion of the week.

Siddur: the prayer book.

Simcha (plural, S'**machot**): a joyous occasion.

Tallit: fringed prayer shawl

Torah: literally, "teaching." The Five Books of Moses

Trope: Musical notations for chanting *Torah* and *Haftarah*

Tzedakah: The *Mitzvah* of giving means righteousness or doing good deeds.