



# B'nai Mitzvah at Congregation B'nai Shalom

## A Guide to Frequently Asked Questions

January 2020



Congratulations as you approach your child’s Bar or Bat Mitzvah. This guide is to provide you with information about the activities you will need to calendar, the decisions you will need to make, and services that Congregation B’nai Shalom will make available to you to support both the spiritual simcha and the celebration of the day.

This guide was written to provide answers to some of the questions we typically receive from B’nai Mitzvah families and via our CBS B’nai Mitzvah Parents Facebook Page.

It is a supplement to the [B’nai Mitzvah Handbook](#) which you received from the Rabbi-Educator.

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## 1. Please provide a summary of the Planning and Logistics Schedule

The office staff will reach out to you in the timeframe noted below to schedule the following.

Before B'nai Mitzvah Date	Event
18-24 months	Select the venue for a celebration. If you would like to use the Temple facilities, begin discussion with the Executive Director. Details on options are included in this document.
13 months	Schedule one year out appointments with the Rabbi-Educator to discuss the overall B'nai Mitzvah preparation and responsibilities and with Sharon Brown Goldstein to receive your Torah portion.
~10 – 12 months	The Rabbi-Educator will assign a tutor. You will set a schedule with your assigned tutor, who will work with your child on the Torah portion, the Haftarah portion and then service readiness as you get closer to the B'nai Mitzvah date.
4 months	<p>As you get closer to your date, you and your child will meet with Rabbi Gurevitz and Sharon Brown Goldstein to discuss your child's B'nai Mitzvah learnings and to begin preparing for the day. Please see the <a href="#">B'nai Mitzvah Handbook</a> section on Final Appointments for details.</p> <p>You will get an email to schedule the 7 appointments that are spread over the two months leading up to the B'nai Mitzvah.</p> <p>The FINAL rehearsal is always the 3 – 5 p.m. the Wednesday before the B'nai Mitzvah and includes parents. Please block your calendars now.</p> <p>You will also get an email to schedule your role as an assistant family (see explanation on pg. 5). We try to schedule this for the Shabbat in the weeks before your child's service.</p>
3 months	You will receive a form asking to confirm details for your child's service. Among these questions will be how many people you anticipate for the Friday night Oneg, as well as other potential options and enhancements. These are described in the next section.
2.5 months	You'll get an email asking for photo for the lobby screens and for a short article / bio about your child. A template is provided. With your permission, your child's picture will be included on the lobby electronic display board announcing their upcoming B'nai Mitzvah. The article will be included in the Temple bulletin for the month of the event.
2 months	If you have indicated you are having a Kiddush at the Temple following the service, you will receive a form asking for details
1-2 months	Meet with Rabbi Gurevitz and Sharon Brown Goldstein. The Rabbi will give you the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Participation List at your first meeting. Begin collecting your thoughts for the blessing you will offer your child during the B'nai Mitzvah. The Rabbi will discuss this with you at one of the last pre-B'nai Mitzvah meetings.
The week before	You'll get an email confirming all of the various details and letting you know the name of the usher (board member) and the assistant family.
Week of	<p>Wednesday, 3-5pm – final rehearsal.</p> <p>If you're having a Kiddush in the social hall, the Executive Director will work with you to confirm the room setups.</p> <p>Bring in your kippot and programs (if you're not using ours)</p>

## **2. Can you recommend a vendor for Photography, DJ, Venue, etc.?**

The Executive Director keeps a list of vendors recommended by congregants. The *CBS B'nai Mitzvah Parents* Facebook page is often used to obtain more information from folks who are planning or have planned a celebration. You can join the CBS B'nai Mitzvah Parents Facebook group by going to the page and asking to join.

## **3. Can I use the social hall for all or part of the celebration?**

Hosting an event at Congregation B'nai Shalom? You have the option to host a Friday night dinner for your family, a Kiddush luncheon after the Saturday service, or a Saturday night party at the temple. More information is listed below, but you should confirm your space planning needs as early as possible to ensure availability. There are also some ways you can enhance the weekend, and the office will be in touch about three months prior to confirm a lot of these details. But here are some things to begin considering:

## **4. How can family and friends be included? What about family members who are not Jewish?**

At your first meeting with Rabbi Gurevitz, she will give you the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Participation List and discuss the various roles members of your family can fill during the service.

## **5. Can I make changes to the Service Pamphlet / Program?**

Congregation B'nai Shalom will print programs for your B'nai Mitzvah and most families choose this option. You can opt to provide your own program, but please note that any custom program will need to be approved by Sharon Brown Goldstein.

## **6. How will the sanctuary be decorated for the service?**

Many B'nai Mitzvah families choose to decorate the bimah the day of the event. You may bring in live flowers for the bimah, or, as many of our families do, take advantage of the temple's silk flower arrangements. Many of our families find this to be a less expensive option and your donation for use of the flowers goes to the Temple's Landscape Fund to help us beautify our grounds. Bimah decorations other than flowers are permitted only with permission from the Rabbi. Please contact the Executive Director for further information.

## **7. Can I photograph or Video the Service?**

Photographers and videographers are not permitted during the service itself. However, the temple does have a video service available. Many B'nai Mitzvah families would like to have a video of their child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah. If this is something you would like, you can arrange with the Temple office to have the service recorded and live-streamed. This video includes a direct audio feed from our sound system, and our videographer will be able to zoom in and focus on the B'nai Mitzvah students as they read from the prayer book and Torah, and other key sections of the service. There is a fee for this optional service.

## **8. How do I add my family to the Tree of Life?**

Some B'nai Mitzvah families choose to commemorate the special day in their family's lifecycle by purchasing a leaf for the "Tree of Life". The purchase of a leaf helps Congregation B'nai Shalom fulfill its mission and provides a permanent touchstone to mark this event. Details are available on the Temple website under the 'Donate' tab at the top of the home page, or from the Temple Office.

## **9. Do I need to provide kippot?**

You may order kippot to be used for your child's B'nai Mitzvah. Bring them to the Temple Office during the week of the service. If you do not choose to do so, the ushers will put out the synagogue's collection for use by your attendees.

## **10. Does my child wear a Tallit to lead the service and do we need to purchase one?**

Kippot and Tallitot in keeping with the spirit of Reform Judaism, the wearing of a Kippah (a.k.a. Yarmulke, head covering) or Tallit (prayer shawl) is an individual option. The material wrapped around us creates a feeling of

God's presence close to us as we prepare to do something holy. The Tzitzit are reminders of our connection to God through acts of Mitzvot. It is important for parents to discuss the meaning and option of Tallit-wearing with their child so that they can participate in making this choice. For those who choose to wear a tallit, some families buy a tallit for their child, some use an inherited tallit, and some use a tallit from the basket that is available for congregants at the temple.

### **11. Do I need to provide Challah for the service?**

You don't need to worry about the challah, unless you have a family member or friend baking a special challah for the bimah (and if so, please tell us). The forms you complete with an estimated headcount ensure that we will buy the right amount of challah for the lobby.

### **12. Is the Friday night service part of the B'nai Mitzvah?**

The B'nai Mitzvah weekend begins Friday night at the Erev Shabbat service when your family will light the candles and your child chants Kiddush. Most services begin promptly at 7:30 pm; however, the first Friday of the month is our Shabbat Rishon Family Service which begins at 6:45 pm. Be sure to check the temple calendar, as there are other special services, including most during the summer, that begin at 6:45 or 7:00 pm. Please arrive 15 minutes before the start of the service. If you are hosting a family dinner, please plan accordingly.

### **13. Could we host a family dinner in the social hall on Friday night service prior to the service?**

If the hall is available, yes of course. More details are included below.

### **14. Who provides the Oneg Shabbat after the Friday Shabbat Service?**

Many families opt to honor their child by sponsoring the Friday Evening Oneg, or providing additional goodies for the congregations and those joining our community as part of their special weekend, by enhancing what the Temple Sisterhood provides at the Oneg Shabbat. Our Sisterhood does a wonderful job of setting up the Oneg Shabbat. They'll be in touch with you about details, many of which are on the form you'll receive about 3 months prior to the event.

### **15. What time should we arrive on Saturday Morning?**

Photography is not permitted during any worship service at Congregation B'nai Shalom. Families may take photos before the service up until 9:45 a.m. If you are taking family photos, you may arrive any time after 8 a.m.

Photos or not, all service participants must arrive in the sanctuary by 9:45 when the sanctuary doors close and the Rabbi meets ONLY with service participants.

### **16. When can we take photos?**

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 is a precaution that benefits families and photographers from the responsibility of potential damage to our valuable Torah scrolls.

Your family is able to take family photographs at any time after 8 a.m., when the building opens for Torah Study in the library. However, you are ONLY able to take photographs with the Torah with the assistance of the Board Usher, who is scheduled to arrive at 8:45. If you are scheduled for a shared B'nai Mitzvah, you and your partner family should coordinate so that one group takes bimah and Torah photos from 8:45-9:15 and the other family takes bimah and Torah photos from 9:15-9:45. While one family is in the sanctuary, the other family can take pictures in the lobby, in front of the building, or in the courtyard, weather permitting. No photography is permitted during the service itself.

All photography must be completed at 9:45 when the Rabbi begins the meeting with the families.

## 17. What is the best way to direct people to the reception after the service?

At the end of the service, the Rabbi will make “announcements”. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah Participation List* includes space for you to provide the information. Some families opt to rent a school bus to transport young guests, while others choose to arrange car pools.

## 18. What time does the service end?

The service begins promptly at 10:15am. A single B’nai Mitzvah generally ends between 12:00 and 12:15, while a shared B’nai Mitzvah generally ends between 12:15 and 12:30. You can use these general times to inform caterers, reception halls, buses, parents for pickups, etc.

## 19. Can your recap the time line please?

8:00	Building open for photographer to set up
8:45	Usher arrives. Family Photography with Torah.
9:00	The Assistant Family(s) arrive to set up Challah and Juice in the lobby, greet guests, hand out prayer books, kippot and programs, etc. The office staff will have everything ready.
9:45	Sanctuary doors close; Rabbi meets ONLY with service participants in the sanctuary. End of family photographs - Torah must be dressed.  Students' materials are set out and prepared.  All service participants (Aliyot and Torah honors) meet with Rabbi in the sanctuary for final instructions and the signing of B'nai Mitzvah certificates.
10:00	Parents place a tallit on student's shoulders if one is being worn. Congregants begin to enter the sanctuary
10:15	Service begins
12:15-12:25	Service ends - Kiddush challah and juice served in lobby for all congregants

## 20. If I am having a luncheon following the service, do we need to do a Kiddush at the Temple?

The Temple provides challah and juice in the lobby and that will be open to the entire congregation.

## 21. What is the dress code for the B’nai Mitzvah?

Please see [B’nai Mitzvah Handbook](#) for details. In short, dress should be respectful for a religious service.

Appropriate dress is a trouser or skirt suit, a jacket and tie, or a modest dress. Please note that if a dress does not have sleeves that cover the shoulders, a jacket or cardigan must be worn over the dress.

If your child isn’t going to feel right in a suit or comfortable in a dress, please reach out to Rabbi Gurevitz to discuss what will be best for your B’nai Mitzvah so that they can feel themselves and be comfortable and confident on the bimah.

Members of the family who will be participating on the bimah should also ensure that they have appropriate dress as noted above.

## 22. What is the role of the Assistant Family?

During a service prior to your child’s B’nai Mitzvah (typically in the weeks leading up to it), **both your child and you** will be asked to serve as an Assistant Family. This involves arriving at the temple at 9 a.m. to help set up the Kiddush, to welcome guests, to hand out prayer books prior to the service and then to receive them at the end of the service.

You will receive detailed instructions – and the Board member usher will be there to help guide you. In performing this manageable Mitzvah, you help us welcome the family and friends of another B’nai Mitzvah student. If you know that your child has extracurricular activities in the weeks prior to their B’nai Mitzvah, please call the temple office early and arrange for an appropriate Assistant Family date. The B’nai Mitzvah student must plan to be available during the entire morning through the end of the Kiddush at ~12:30.

### 23. Having a reception at CBS – the details

There are a few different types of receptions that can be held in the social hall. Basically, these are:

- Friday Evening Family Dinner
- Saturday Extended Kiddush (~2 hours)
- Saturday Luncheon Reception (~4 hours)
- Saturday Evening Reception

For all, the Temple’s dietary policy must be followed. Congregation B’nai Shalom is “Kosher Style”. Please see the [B’nai Mitzvah Handbook](#) for details. Additional details around use of the social hall can be found in our [Building Use Policy](#) on the website.

#### Friday Evening Family Dinner

Families sometimes host dinners in the social hall before the Friday evening service. These run the gamut from self-catered buffets, to bringing in platters, or hot entrees, to fully-catered dinners. Generally, they start around 90 minutes to two hours or so before the service begins, and all must be cleared 30 minutes prior to the start of the service so our Oneg can be set up.

If you are interested in hosting a Friday night dinner, please confirm social hall availability with the Executive Director, Steve Winer.

Congregational dinners, programs and events have priority for use of the social hall on Friday evenings. Extended families *may* be able to join a congregational dinner that is already on the calendar, subject to space. Please coordinate with the Executive Director on counts and payments.

If we have a planned congregational dinner, we are not able to host a separate Friday night dinner for your family.

#### Saturday Extended Kiddush

Typically, these are “Lox and Bagels” and the fixings...although some families have gone more elaborate – and generally served buffet-style. They start at the end of the service, and last anywhere from 1-2 hours.

#### Saturday Luncheon or Evening Reception

These generally include a DJ or band, more formal meal service, occasionally a ‘cocktail hour’, and are generally about 4 hours in length.

#### General Information

- Room setup is handled by our custodians. A few days before the event, work with the Executive Director and he will come up with a diagram for you. Samples are available.
- Setup – The tables will be set up after the Oneg Friday night. You or your caterer can come in any time after the Temple opens at 8am.
- Storage – You can leave things in the pantry behind the kitchen during the week prior to the event. Just let the office know that you’re coming and what you’ll be storing. Limited refrigerator room is also available
- Tables, Chairs and other supplies.
  - We have eleven - 5’x6’ oval tables (seat up to 10),
  - We have three – 5’ round tables (seat up to 8)

- We have twelve – 96”x30” rectangular tables (seats up to 10)
- We have four – 72”x30” rectangular tables (seats up to 8)
- The oval and round tables take round tablecloths 82” up to 96” (depending on how much you want to hang down), and the 8’ tables generally get 10’ long by 4-5’ wide tablecloths.
- There are also a variety of vases available for centerpieces.
- Caterer setup / deliveries – For Friday night dinners, the office is generally staffed until about 4pm, but we can make arrangements for you to have a key card to let the caterer in. On Saturday, we have a staff monitor here at 8:00 am, and the monitor will watch out for the caterer or other vendors, let them in and show them where to set up.
- What you **can’t** do. Helium balloons are not allowed because of our ceiling fans. Candles on the tables are not allowed, but you can use candles as part of a ‘candle-lighting ceremony’. We also don’t allow chocolate fountains, because all that chocolate is really hard to get out of the carpeting. For more information, please see our [Building Use Policy](#) on the website.

Remember – the Temple staff is here to help you make sure that this is the wonderful memorable day you want it to be. We are here for you. Any questions, you can email Steve Winer at [executivedirector@cnaishalom.org](mailto:executivedirector@cnaishalom.org), the Office Staff at [officestaff@cnaishalom.org](mailto:officestaff@cnaishalom.org), or call us at 508-366-7191.