



Congregation
B'nai Shalom
בני שלום

Becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah at Congregation B'nai Shalom

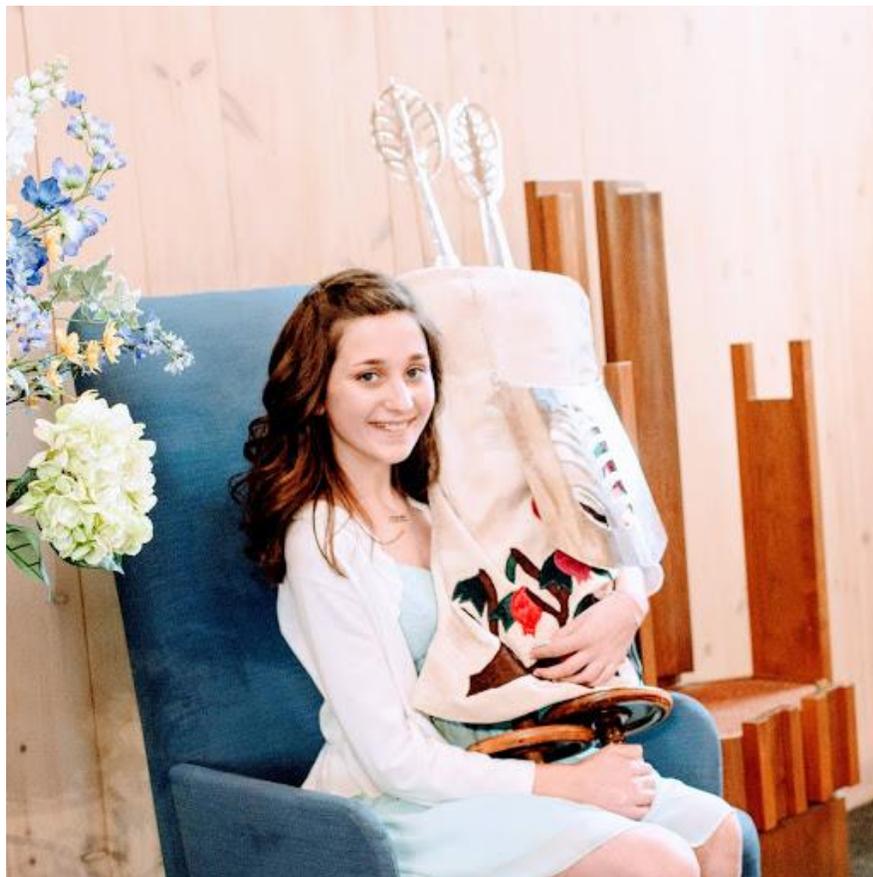


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FORWARD

We are delighted to be accompanying your family on your journey as you prepare for a Bar or Bat Mitzvah! There is a lot to think about and plan as you arrange for your child’s ceremony and celebration. This booklet is designed to help answer many of the questions parents and students may have about how Congregation B’nai Shalom, in partnership with your family, can create a meaningful and joyous service. Within these pages you will find everything you’ve ever wondered about *B’nai Mitzvah*, but were afraid to ask: From the history and background of the *B’nai Mitzvah* celebration, to the guidelines, procedures and customs unique to our congregation.



If, after reviewing this booklet, you still have questions, contact us at the Temple; we will do everything we can to make sure you, your family and your proud Bar/Bat Mitzvah child have an experience that, as a family, you will always cherish.

With early wishes of Mazel Tov,

Rachel Gurevitz
Rabbi

Joe Eiduson
Rabbi-Educator

Staff Contact Information

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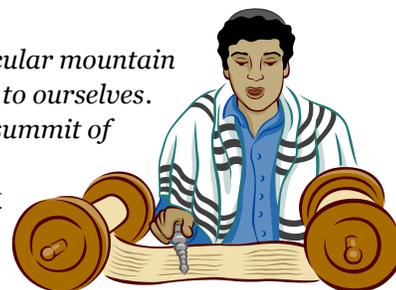
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B'nai Mitzvah: What It Means

Bar (for a boy), **Bat** (for a girl), **B'nai** (plural for boys) or **B'not** (plural for girls) **Mitzvah** means “one obligated by the commandments.” *Mitzvot* are all of the positive and negative 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 *mitzvah* as something that helps us feel more connected – to God and to each other. When a child becomes *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* it means that the obligation to learn and choose how to practice Judaism and live in accordance with Jewish values is now in their hands. *Bar 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.” In the end, it means a commitment to continue to learn, grow and to try new experiences.

“Bar and Bat 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 really be there at the summit of this holy mountain,”

Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin, from [Putting God on the Guest List](#)



Becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah

THE PATH TO B'NAI MITZVAH AND BEYOND

Becoming *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* at Congregation B'nai Shalom is just one of the many milestones of a multi-year education program. The congregation's leadership and membership views Jewish Education as beginning in Preschool and continuing through 12th grade. *B'nai Mitzvah* follows a period of extensive study of Jewish rituals, ethics, history, *Torah*, prayer and Hebrew. As such, we expect students not only to demonstrate certain skills when they lead a service as *B'nai Mitzvah*, but also to have the basic knowledge to live a full and meaningful Jewish life. Each child will be prepared according to his or her individual ability. This is not a “cookie cutter” experience, nor is it a competition to see which child can do the most. Every *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* student is unique and cherished. We believe that the training for the service should be a positive and joyous experience and should meet the individual needs of the learners. The content of the service will be varied to meet the strengths of each individual.

Educational Requirements

Bar/Bat Mitzvah eligibility at Congregation B'nai Shalom requires satisfactory completion of Religious School classes beginning in the third grade including four (4) full years of "Religious School" prior to the date of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. "Satisfactory completion" includes being present for 80% of class hours annually and achieving minimum competency per grade. Students are also expected to continue to attend and to complete grade seven even if the service date falls before the end of that school year. Students who celebrate Bar/Bat Mitzvah during their eighth-grade year must be attending and actively participating in the eighth grade 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 encouraged to continue at least through Confirmation in grade ten and High School graduation.

For Bar/Bat 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 prior to the Bat/Bar Mitzvah. To familiarize Bat/Bat Mitzvah students with our Shabbat Service, we require students to attend at least ten Shabbat Services during the year preceding their Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.

All families (parents with the child who will be celebrating their bar or bat mitzvah) will be scheduled and are expected to assist as extra ushers at a Bar/Bat Mitzvah service prior to their own child's service. This mitzvah enables other families to enjoy the morning of their celebration while their guests are warmly greeted and provided with prayer books. The assisting family will also set up the challah and juice, and any other baked goods provided by the congregation. The assisting family will also clean up afterwards and will assist the main Board usher as needed.

Tutoring Process

The Rabbi-Educator will arrange for tutoring. Approximately 10 – 12 months prior to the service, the Rabbi-Educator will assign a tutor who will teach the student how to chant verses of Torah and Haftarah. Most students will also review with their tutor the basic Hebrew prayers of the service learned in religious school. The Rabbi-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 his/her 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 *B'nai Mitzvah* will be done with Rabbi Gurevitz and Sharon Brown Goldstein. 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 will be held on the Wednesday prior to 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

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee includes: intake interview(s), rehearsals, tutoring and materials. The fee will be billed to each family during the fiscal year prior to the year in which the Bar/Bat Mitzvah occurs. Arrangements for payment must be made with the Executive Director. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee must be paid in full prior to the start of tutoring. Any additional tutoring expenses must be paid in full at least 1 month prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.

Specific costs and services will be updated on an annual basis. If additional tutoring is required, parent(s) will be notified and billed.



Kibud Av Va'Em

What Parents (& Others) Can Do

On Friday evening, the *Shabbat* candles will be lit by the *Bar* and or *Bat Mitzvah*, with help from parents. *Bar* and/or *Bat 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 *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*, signifying the transmission of Jewish identity through the generations of family.

B'nai Mitzvah students reciting at least 12 verses of Torah will have a total of four *Aliyot* (Torah blessings). The first **three** *Aliyot* may be recited by Jews over the age of 13, designated by the family. The blessing recited for an *Aliyah* affirms the reader's personal connection to the Jewish covenant. Please consider this in your choice of appropriate people for these roles. Parents often recite an *Aliyah* but are not required to do so. The *Bar* or *Bat 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, which may be given to anyone, including younger children. An adult Jew may also be invited to lift the open Torah to show the congregation the reading. This ritual, called *Hagbahah*, requires some strength and a good back. Parents are also invited to give their child a blessing on the *Bimah*. This is an opportunity to reflect on the core values and attributes that you see in your child and the Jewish life and principles that you hope will continue to guide their way. These blessings should not be longer than about two minutes.

Modifications are made to what an individual child will read and lead in accordance with 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 B'nai Mitzvah Schedule

The service begins at 10:15 a.m. and ends between 12:00-12:15 p.m. for a "single" service, and 12:15-12:30 p.m. for a shared service.

8:00 a.m.	Building open for photographer to set up
8:30	Photographs in the sanctuary
9:00	Board Member arrives to assist with the <i>Torah</i>
9:45	End of family photographs - <i>Torah</i> must be dressed Rabbi comes in from <i>Torah</i> study. Time for one photo with each student Students' materials are set out and prepared.
9:45	All service participants (<i>Aliyot</i> and <i>Torah</i> honors) meet with rabbi in the sanctuary for final instructions and the signing of <i>B'nai Mitzvah</i> certificates.
10:00	Parents place a <i>tallit</i> on student's shoulders Congregants begin to enter the sanctuary Final bathroom run for <i>B'nai Mitzvah</i> students and siblings.
10:15	Service begins.

Final Appointments with Rabbi and Soloist

- 7 weeks** **Rabbi Gurevitz**
Student and parents will meet with Rabbi Gurevitz for two one-hour meetings. If this will be a paired service with another student, both families will be present. 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*. If this will be a paired service with another student, both families will be present. At the third appointment, student and rabbi (Parents do not attend) will make final corrections to the *D'var Torah* and practice in the sanctuary.
- 6 weeks** **Sharon Goldstein**
Mrs. Goldstein will introduce the student to reading from the *Torah* scroll itself, assign English prayers and work in the sanctuary on conducting the service. The student will meet with the soloist for three (3) one-hour appointments: Torah choreography; chant from the *Torah*; *Haftarah*; *Kiddush*. Parents do not attend these meetings.
- 5 weeks** **Sharon Goldstein**
Assignment of English & Hebrew service readings; review prayers and readings
Chant from the *Torah*; *Haftarah*; *Kiddush*
Practice prayers on *bimah*
- 4 weeks** **Meet with Rabbi Gurevitz**
Turn in and review Shaarei Kehilah Booklet
Family Study Session
- 3 weeks** **Sharon Goldstein**
Torah service, Hebrew prayers, English prayers in the sanctuary
- 2 weeks** **Rabbi Gurevitz (student only)**
Read over final draft of *D'var Torah* & practice service in the sanctuary
- 1 week** **Rabbi Gurevitz**
A final rehearsal will be held the week of the *B'nai Mitzvah*, with *Bat* or *Bar 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 afternoon, from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Behavior of Young People

It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that young people behave appropriately and maintain proper respect for Temple property and proper decorum during the service. It is also the parents' responsibility to ensure that young people are not served wine or other alcoholic beverages. If you are inviting many young people, we urge you to discuss security arrangements with our **Executive Director**.

For all luncheon and evening parties, a building monitor will be arranged to manage building issues, to assist vendors and to lock up the building after the party is over.

Bimah Flowers

Families are welcome to sponsor or co-sponsor fresh *bimah* flowers or silk *bimah* flowers. For a single service, the family is responsible for flowers. For a shared service, both families will be asked to coordinate and then split the costs. 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 contact the **Executive Director** for further information.

Building Use Policy

When you completed your Bar/Bat Mitzvah Information Form requesting the date for your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah, you indicated whether or not you were interested in renting the social hall. If you indicated that you were interested, the date will be saved for you until such time as some other person or 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 room. The B'nai Mitzvah family may rent the Social Hall for an afternoon and/or evening reception of 2-4 hours. Our Building Use Policy requires a deposit to hold the room. **Please speak with the Executive Director as early as possible to avoid any 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 there is no evening social hall use 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 beginning to serve them.

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

The Building Use Policy presently requires two deposits: Function Reservation Deposit is due upon signing of agreement. The Function deposit is to reserve the date of the event. This deposit is non-refundable.

A Damage Deposit that is fully refundable if the room(s) is in proper order after the function is complete based on an inspection by the Executive Director.

Dress

While Congregation B'nai Shalom is often an informal setting in terms of clothing, it is expected that anyone who will be on the *Bimah* will dress appropriately to lead a prayer service. *B'nai Mitzvah* students may not wear a tuxedo. Prom dresses (floor length) are not permitted. *Bat Mitzvah* girls may not wear strapless or sleeveless dresses unless covered by a jacket or sweater. The use of a Tallit as a shoulder covering instead of a jacket 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.

 <p style="text-align: center;">PLEASE NOTE</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Please do not chew gum in the Sanctuary. It is inappropriate to chew gum and pray.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Throwing candy is not permitted during the service.</i></p>
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Kashrut Policy

The Congregation does not maintain a *kosher* kitchen. Meat does not have to be *kashered* 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 at the same meal.
- 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, food prepared in the synagogue’s kitchen, food purchased and brought in and food 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* prior to your event. Permission to *kasher* the kitchen must be granted by one of our rabbis.

In terms of events where outside caterers are brought in, it is imperative that you obtain certificates of insurance that include workers compensation and general liability including products/completed operations. Most importantly, if liquor is being 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 be a burden to quality caterers as they are asked for these as a standard part of their business.

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. A Tallit may be worn by men and women, 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 close to us as we prepare to do something holy. In Reform Judaism, it is a choice as to whether to wear a *Tallit* or a *Kippah* to pray. 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.

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

Oneg Shabbat and Kiddush

Oneg Shabbat and Kiddush B'nai Mitzvah families are expected to assist by providing some of the food for the Friday night Oneg Shabbat, but are not required to do set-up or clean up. There will be a congregational Kiddush each Shabbat morning in the main lobby, lasting at least fifteen minutes and extending if people wish to gather. The congregation will provide juice and challah, and the family may provide additional food. This is always set out in the lobby, even when a family is continuing with a luncheon in the social hall, as the service is a congregational service that is open to all, as is the Kiddush.

Photography

Photography is not permitted during any worship service at Congregation B'nai Shalom. Families may take photos beginning at 8:00 a.m. when the temple opens, and up until 9:45 a.m. 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.

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 *B'nai Mitzvah*. Social etiquette is a part of adult life. As our young people reach adulthood, it is up to us as adults to model for them this proper behavior. If your guest list includes most of the students in your child's religious school class, it is proper to invite all of 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 6 weeks prior to your celebration to discuss these details. He can also supply information on the number and size of tables available.

Service Program

The temple office will print programs for your B'nai Mitzvah, and 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 own programs, you will need to have the wording approved by Sharon Goldstein prior to 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 3% of the cost of their celebration as a donation to MAZON. More info can be found at www.mazon.org and a brochure is available from the Temple office.

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 *B'nai Mitzvah*. These should be ordered one month in advance to be sure that they arrive on time. Contact Executive Director for more information.

Ushers

As part of a larger 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 *Oney Shabbat* spreads for each other and more. All B'nai Mitzvah families are assigned as "assistant ushers" for a *Shabbat* morning service prior to their own child's service. This manageable Mitzvah is expected of the student, along with family members. It is also expected that the "assistant family" will be part of the congregation during the service once their ushering duties are completed. You will receive your assignment from the Temple office.

Video

The Temple can, upon request, and with at least four weeks prior notice, create a video recording of your child's ceremony. Please check with the Executive Director for details. Professional video recording of *B'nai Mitzvah* is also permitted with the following conditions: Recording cameras may only be set up against the rear wall of the sanctuary. They must be turned on prior to the service, and must remain unattended and stationary throughout the service. Replacement of a recording medium, e.g. DVD, is permitted.

A Final Note...

"Why does the *B'nai Mitzvah* experience continue to exercise such influence on us today? In a time where faith is questioned on every side, there is 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 out 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 *B'nai Mitzvah* provides challenges and opportunities for creating meaning in our lives.

"*B'nai 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, so it prepares 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 so much for you and yours to have an exceptional *B'nai Mitzvah* experience here at Congregation B'nai Shalom. We create the possibility for a service that is inclusive, thoughtful, spiritually alive, and Hamish (filled with warmth and joy). *B'nai 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.



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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 Moskovitz

The Haftarah Commentary URJ Press

GLOSSARY

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

Bar Mitzvah: "son of the commandments". **Bat Mitzvah**: "daughter of the commandments".

Bimah: the raised platform in the synagogue.

D'var Torah: The speech given by the B'nai 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 it is read.

Kiddush: The blessing over the wine. 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 - generally means righteousness or the doing of good deeds.