



Bar / Bat Mitzvah Handbook

**BETH JACOB**  
**CONGREGATION OF IRVINE**

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## From the Rabbi

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Welcome and Mazel Tov! We are very excited and gratified that you have chosen to share this momentous family occasion with our Beth Jacob Family. Becoming a B'nai Mitzvah is a true milestone as a child begins their adult life. As is usually the case, the amount that is gained is directly proportional to the effort and preparation that is first expended. We look forward to getting to know your child and to the study sessions. Our hope and prayer is that they will enjoy this process, will find it meaningful and relevant, and that they will choose to be involved with the Synagogue as they continue through their adult life.

I wish you much hatzlacha / success in this most important endeavor and feel privileged to play a role in it. I look forward to personally meeting with you.

Warmest Regards,

**Yisroel Ciner**

Rabbi Yisroel Ciner



## Introduction

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Mazal Tov on the forthcoming Bar / Bat Mitzvah in your family. Because this is such a special time, we would like to assist you in making your Simcha both spiritually memorable and enjoyable so that it will have a lasting impact on your son or daughter.

Beth Jacob of Irvine has created this guide to address challenges and questions that you may encounter as you plan your Simcha. At the end of the guide you will find some useful forms to get you started and to ease the planning process. Please return these forms to the Shul office when indicated on the timeline and allow enough time for careful review by office staff so changes can be made if needed.

We are here to assist you in creating a Simcha that you will remember for a lifetime. Please feel free to ask any questions and we will try to address all questions and concerns in the most efficient way possible.

Warmest Regards,

**Michelle Onufer**

Beth Jacob Office Manager



## Prerequisites

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### Ancestral

Students must be Jewish. A Jew is someone born of a Jewish mother or converted to Judaism in accordance with Torah law. The Rabbi is the final arbiter on all questions pertaining to the validity of any conversion to Judaism.

### Academic

Each Candidate must enter the year before Bar/Bat Mitzvah with at least **three prior years** of Jewish education. A fourth year of education must be attained during the final year leading to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Jewish education may be obtained at any Jewish Day School, at the Beth Jacob Congregation, with a tutor, or through another avenue of the Rabbi's approval. In addition, each Bar/Bat Mitzvah Candidate must meet the formal standards set forth below. Although the minimum standard will suffice, we encourage capable students and motivated parents to aim for one of the higher levels. These standards are:

- a. Basic *Chumash* Knowledge
- b. Basic Knowledge of Shabbat Traditions
- c. Basic Knowledge of *Kashrut* Traditions
- d. Basic Knowledge of Jewish Prayer Book/ *Siddur*
- e. Basic Knowledge of *Brachot*
- f. Basic Knowledge of Jewish Ethical Values

“Basic Knowledge” is a subjective term that connotes Biblical information such as the basic Creation story, Noah and the Flood, the Tower of Babel, names and deeds of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, the Exodus from Egypt, the stories of Joshua, the major Judges, Kings Saul, David, and Solomon, etc. “Basic Knowledge” of Judaic traditions (e.g., Shabbat, *Kashrut*, *Siddur*, *Brachot*) connotes such ideas as recognizing and learning the Friday night melodies *Shalom Aleichem* and “Kiddush,” as well as some *Zemirot*, the traditions surrounding the Friday Night Shabbat table, basic traditions of Shabbat, such basic *Kashrut* rules as knowing some animals that are permitted, some that are forbidden, knowing about meat and milk separation, recognizing *Kashrut* certification symbols on food labels, knowing core prayers like the Morning Blessings, *Sh'ma* and the *Amidah*, knowing the most common *brachot* recited over common foods, etc. The Rabbi will establish the curriculum.



## What it means to become B'nai Mitzvah

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A boy becomes a Bar Mitzvah on his thirteenth birthday and a girl becomes a Bat Mitzvah on her twelfth. Until this point, all the child's moral, ethical and religious behavior were the responsibility of the parents. From B'nai Mitzvah forward that responsibility rests solely with the child.

In essence, every Jew is a B'nai Mitzvah from the moment they become of age. Therefore, Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a state of being in which we are obligated to fulfill G-d's commandments.

A child must learn what is required of them so they can accept the responsibility before becoming B'nai Mitzvah. The key factor to being a successful Jew can be summed up in one word – responsibility. The true meaning of responsibility is freely accepting and fulfilling a commitment. Therefore prior to becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, a Jewish child should follow a program that cultivates moral, ethical and religious responsibility. Beth Jacob of Irvine offers a tailored program that culminates with a ceremony through which the entire congregation recognizes that your child has proven him/herself capable of being a responsible Jew.



## Overview of the B'nai Mitzvah Experience

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### **Meeting with the Rabbi**

When you begin planning for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah please contact the Shul to arrange a meeting with the Rabbi. The Rabbi will meet with the parents together with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and will help you determine the appropriate date for your Simcha and will discuss tailoring the preparation process to your child's needs.

### **Bat Mitzvah Preparation**

A Bat Mitzvah should learn more than just material for her D'var Torah. This is a wonderful opportunity for a girl to learn the unique role of a Jewish woman and the halakhic responsibilities assumed when she becomes Bat Mitzvah.

There is no one right way to celebrate a Bat Mitzvah. Some girls deliver a D'var Torah in Shul on Shabbat morning while others only speak at the celebration. Both are wonderful venues for a young girl to celebrate this important moment in her life.

On the Hebrew calendar date that your daughter reaches her twelfth birthday we recommend that you celebrate her Bat Mitzvah by arranging a festive family meal marking her transformation into a Bat Mitzvah.

### **Bar Mitzvah Preparation**

When meeting with the Rabbi, you will decide together on choosing a Bar Mitzvah teacher and a course of study for your son.

When planning your son's Bar mitzvah please remember that each child is unique, possessing special talents. Some children have musical talents and wonderful memory skills while others do not. Some children have wonderful stage presence while others do not. Do not force a child to do that which he simply can't achieve just because you think "everyone" is doing it.

Today there is no one expectation for a Bar Mitzvah. Some boys will read the entire Torah portion while others only a few Aliyot. Some boys will only read their Haftorah while others don't read the Haftorah at all. Some boys will lead Musaf while others will not. Some will speak in Shul while others will not. Remember – there is no ONE right way for your son to celebrate his Bar Mitzvah. Most important – it should be spiritually rewarding and educationally memorable experience. The Rabbi is available to assist you in tailoring your son's participation based upon his talents and preferences.



First Aliyah: Your son should receive an Aliyah on the date that corresponds to his 13<sup>th</sup> birthday on the Hebrew calendar, or the closest date thereafter when the Torah is read. If you wish the Rabbi can help you arrange for that Aliyah to take place at one of the Shul's weekday morning Minyanim. After the Bar Mitzvah boy's Aliyah the father says the special blessing of Baruch Sheptarani recited when a son reaches Bar Mitzvah age. If the Bar Mitzvah boy wishes to read the Torah at the Minyan please inform the Rabbi in advance. It is traditional to offer some refreshments after the Minyan in honor of this occasion.

If your son is technically Bar Mitzvah prior to the Shabbat celebration, we encourage you to arrange that your son read the Torah in Shul at Mincha on Shabbat afternoon the week before the Bar Mitzvah as well as Monday and/or Thursday morning prior to the Bar Mitzvah. This offers your son a wonderful experience reading publicly before the Simcha itself. Please discuss these possibilities with the Rabbi.

There are a number of Halakhot, Jewish laws, pertaining to reading the Torah that are important to know. The following are some of the essential laws:

- Each word must be read from the Torah scroll and not from memory.
- One must be careful not to skip the last word or two at the end of a column, but should carefully read each word before starting the next column in the Torah.
- The Baal Kriah, the one reading the Torah, should hold the left Torah handle while reading the Torah and the Oleh; the one honored with the Aliyah should hold the right handle.
- From the conclusion of the Shacharit until Kiddush is recited, one may not eat or drink anything. No water bottle should therefore be brought onto the Bima.
- While reciting the Brakhot for the Aliyah, the Oleh should hold both Torah handles.

### **Dvar Torah**

A Bar and Bat Mitzvah are wonderful occasions for parents to learn with their son or daughter sources that can then be used in writing the speech. Some parents prepare the Dvar Torah for their children while others ask for professional help either from the Bar or Bat Mitzvah teacher, the Rabbi or other educators. If you should need assistance, do not hesitate to ask.

### **Conflicts and Additional Simchot**



The Shul policy permits one Bar or Bat Mitzvah on a Shabbat, so that each child will have their own Simcha. We strongly encourage you to reserve the date as early as possible. This way you will have a greater chance to have the date you wish. Please note that we do permit an Aufrof or naming of a baby on the same Shabbat that we celebrate a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. In such cases, however, you are considered the primary Simcha and we will work together with you and the other Baal Simcha to arrange a wonderful Shabbat for both families.

### **Candy:**

Candy is customarily thrown during the Bar Mitzvah after the Bar Mitzvah receives his Aliyah. To avoid any accidents with candy hitting someone in a dangerous fashion we request that you follow these rules:

- Only soft candies should be thrown
- All candies must be marked kosher and be approved by the Rabbi.
- If you wish to store the candy in Shul, please bring it to the Shul office on Friday morning before your Simcha

### **Gift Presentation**

The Shul is pleased to present each Bar and Bat Mitzvah a gift of an inscribed siddure, a teen relevant book on Judaism, and a personalized silver Kiddish Cup indicating the name of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah and the date and Parasha of the Simcha. It is our hope that this gift will be used in the years ahead and will remind the Bar or Bat Mitzvah of their special relationship with our Shul.

### **Photography**

If you would like to have pictures/video taken in Shul before or after the Bar/Bat Mitzvah please call the Shul office and arrange a time to have the sanctuary available for your use. If you would like to have the photographer take pictures/video of your son reading the Torah on a Monday or Thursday morning, please speak to the Rabbi in advance of the date for guidance and instructions.

### **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Party**

If you are planning a party to celebrate your Simcha it is important to keep in mind that a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a special time to mark your child's spiritual and religious maturation. Make sure that Diveri Torah are incorporated into the celebration and use your creativity to teach your child how special this moment is in his or her religious development. This is a wonderful time for parents to address their children, expressing their dreams and aspirations for their future. Use themes for the party that stress the unique moment and make it a memorable event that will guide your child into adulthood.



**Kiddush**

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah family traditionally hosts a Kiddush in honor of the Simcha. The type of hosted Kiddush is left to your discretion. Please call the Shul office for a description of the different options and for a list of approved kosher caterers.

If there will be an Aufruf or baby naming on the Shabbat of your Simcha, we encourage you to co-sponsor the Kiddush with the other family. In such a situation you will be the one who chooses the type of Kiddush being served.



## 12 Month Bar / Bat Mitzvah Timeline

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Please plan ahead for the following key times:

### 12 Months Prior to Event

- ❑ Arrange a meeting with the Rabbi for the family to discuss the year-long training process and address any questions or concerns regarding all aspects of the Bar/Bat mitzvah. This is an opportunity for each family to get to know the Rabbi, talk about your child's *Parasha*, discuss a mitzvah project, and begin outlining a family vision for your *simcha*.
- ❑ Contact Office Administrator to reserve facilities, confirm payment of membership, enroll in the Bar / Bat Mitzvah Program. *All Class fee payments will be arranged at this time.*
- ❑ Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate should begin meeting weekly with their Bar/Bat Mitzvah Instructor to prepare for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- ❑ Each Candidate joins Junior NCSY and begins participating in its activities.
- ❑ Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planning Form – Part 2 (Family details) and Section 1 of Part 1 (Bar/Bat Mitzvah Preparation) due to Shul office

### 6 Months Prior to Event

- ❑ Each Candidate should attend Beth Jacob Minyan on Shabbat morning for at least the six-month period prior to the Bar/ Bat Mitzvah Day from approximately 9:45 to noon
- ❑ At least one parent from the family should attend Shabbat morning services consistently in order to gain greater familiarity with the service, demonstrate solidarity with your child, and model the importance of regular Shabbat attendance.
- ❑ Parent and child should attend our bi-monthly Sunday morning parent / child T'filah. This requirement for Bar mitzvah preparation enables the student to have the opportunity to participate in a weekday service and, for boys, to learn the ritual of putting on tefillin.

### 4 Months Prior to Event

- ❑ Arrange a meeting with the Rabbi to listen and review the students' davening and chanting progress. The rabbi will recommend areas in which additional tutoring can maximize the students proficiency in one or more areas.

### 3 Months Prior:

- ❑ Complete remaining sections of Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planning form (Facility Options, Kiddush Options and Shabbat Honors) and submit to Shul office



- Confirm Facility Rental, Catering, Kippot, and Floral Arrangements.

### **2 Months Prior:**

- Meet with the Rabbi
  - Discuss issues and concepts dealt within the Torah and Haftarah portions to begin D'var Torah preparation
  - Review guidelines and standards for alyot and other honors.
  - Schedule a final rehearsal date\*

*\*Many families choose to use rehearsal as a time for formal photos and videotaping.*

### **3 Weeks Prior:**

- Complete Aliyot and Honors form and submit to Shul office
- Submit completed D'var Torah to the Rabbi for approval.
- Complete Mitzvah Projects and submit form.

### **Prior to Shabbat**

- Soft kosher candy should be brought to synagogue prior to onset of Shabbat.
- Kippot should be brought to synagogue prior to onset of Shabbat.
- All floral arrangements should be brought to synagogue prior to onset of Shabbat.
- Any other deliveries and decorations should be brought to synagogue prior to onset of Shabbat.



## Outline Of The Main Shabbat Morning Service

Total running time: 3 hours, 9:00am - 12:00 pm

Our services are always followed by a Kiddush/luncheon for the Congregation

### **PART 1 - P'sukei d'Zimra (Psalms of Praise) [approx. 9:00-9:30am]**

We begin every morning service by reciting a series of blessings thanking G-d for the gifts of life. The subsequent Psalms of Praise thereafter are woven together with verses of Scripture. Together, these prayers serve as a warm-up that prepares our imagination and soul for a more intimate encounter with G-d, as we approach the *Sh'ma* and the *Amidah*.

### **PART 2 – Shacharit [approx. 9:30-10:00am]**

*Shacharit* is the main body of daily morning Jewish prayer. The Shacharit liturgy recited on Shabbat is akin to but much fuller than that which is recited the other six mornings of the week. The outline is as follows:

1. We begin where we concluded *P'sukei d'Zimra*, with more words of praise.
2. We are called to prayer as a group with '*Barchu*'.
3. We recite the prayers and two blessings that precede the recitation of the *Sh'ma*.
4. We recite the prayers and blessing that follow the *Sh'ma* and guide us into the *Amidah*.
5. We recited the entire *Amidah* silently on our own.
6. The *Shaliach Tzibur* repeats the *Amidah* aloud.

### **PART 3 - The Torah Service [approx. 10:00am]**

The heart of Shabbat morning is centered around the Torah service. The service proceeds as follows:



1. We take the Torah from the ark.
2. We escort the Torah around the sanctuary.
3. We read the *Weekly Torah Portion*, which we divide into seven parts, called *Aliyot*.
4. We read the *Maftir* as the final *Aliyah*.
5. We raise the Torah aloft for all to see and to proclaim that Moshe placed this teaching before all of Israel by the Word of G-d and by the hand of Moshe.
6. We recite the *Haftarah* - a designated passage from the prophetic literature that parallels the major theme of the Weekly Torah Portion.
7. The Torah is escorted around the sanctuary, to be returned to the Ark.
8. We replace the Torah in the Ark while singing praise to G-d.
9. The Rabbi delivers a sermon, generally related to themes read in the Weekly Torah Portion.

#### **PART 4 - Musaf (Additional Service)**

On a regular weekday morning, we recite *birchot hashachar*, *P'sukei d'Zimra*, *Shacharit* and -- on Mondays and Thursdays -- we also read a brief passage from the Torah. Thus, the Musaf Service is added only on Shabbat and special Biblical holy days. It expresses our reverence for G-d and our hope for the ingathering of our People and the restoration of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple, the Beit HaMikdash.

#### **PART 5 – Bnai Mitzvah's Speech and Service Conclusion**

*B'nai Mitzvah* gives their speech and concludes Musaf with a gift presentation by the Synagogue.

#### **PART 6 – Kiddush**

At the conclusion of the Shabbat Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service, we prepare for our *Seudat Mitzvah* - the celebratory luncheon in honor of the Bar/Bat mitzvah - by reciting *Kiddush*, then ritually washing our hands, and reciting the blessing over two loaves of *challah*.



## **Shabbat Observance in an Orthodox Synagogue**

Beth Jacob Congregation of Irvine abides by the Torah's standards of Shabbat conduct. Throughout the entire 25 hours of Shabbat -- from 18 minutes prior to sundown on Friday until three stars can be seen on at nightfall on Saturday. As such, all bar / Bat mitzvah families and their guests should be aware of the following:

- The presence of any electronic equipment such as cell phones, pagers, cameras or electronic music is prohibited within the sanctuary, the synagogue building, or on the public grounds throughout Shabbat.
- In kind, no food may be brought into or taken out of the synagogue during the entire Sabbath. If you would like to collect the leftovers from your sponsored Friday night dinner or Saturday luncheon, you may pick them up after Shabbat ends.

***Your thoughtful consideration of these practices will enhance your own Shabbat experience and that of your fellow congregants. Thank you!***

