

Dear Beit Mitzvah Families-

I look forward to forging the deep connection with teens and families that I feel when I work with Beit Mitzvah. We are here to support you and shower you with love. Please read everything in this packet carefully and refer to it often. Parents can help by being positive and supportive. As we work together to foster growth, we should expect the work to be a challenging, fun, wonderful, experience. If this is not the case, please tell me immediately and we will confer on a change of course. This process is designed to teach many important life lessons, including what you can accomplish when you tackle a large task by working on it steadily. As we work together, I hope that every step of the way will feel affirming and meaningful, culminating in what we hope will be one of the most meaningful days of your lives.

Blessings,

Rabbi Shifra

[swp@tbeaptos.org](mailto:swp@tbeaptos.org)

(831)479-3444 ext 208

Dear Beit Mitzvah Families-

I feel so blessed to be part of the process of preparing our students to become Beit Mitzvah. Some of you I have been blessed to know for many years, and others I am very excited about getting to know. This has been such an unusual time, and I have great respect for your commitment to be engaged in this process. We know that the Jewish people have learned about resiliency, and we are modeling this strength in pursuing this important rite of passage. I have so much gratitude to all of you for joining together in this journey and I want to be purposeful in thanking those of you who did not grow up as part of a Jewish community. I assure you that we are here to answer questions and encourage your curiosity. Temple Beth El is a big tent, you are welcome here.

Rabbi Paula

[pmarcus@tbeaptos.org](mailto:pmarcus@tbeaptos.org)

(831)479-3444 ext 207

Dear Beit Mitzvah Families,

My name is Roxy Tracy, and I am the Congregational Learning Coordinator at TBE. My family and I have been members of TBE for the past 34 years, and I became a Bat Mitzvah here in 2000. I have twelve years of teaching experience, and I feel lucky that I now get to combine my passion for education and Judaism in my work. If you ever have questions for me, or just want to say hi, please email me any time. I am thrilled to begin this journey with you!

Roxy Tracy

[rtracy@tbeaptos.org](mailto:rtracy@tbeaptos.org)

(831)201-4747

Who do I contact for...

- Logistics- Melissa Sunberg [msunberg@tbeaptos.org](mailto:msunberg@tbeaptos.org)
- Content of the service and questions related to Jewish practices- Clergy
- Date changes- Roxy
- Extra tutoring/learning issues- Rabbi Shifra or Roxy

## I. It's Not Just About One Day

By the age of 13, all Jews are “children of the commandments”, meaning that they have become responsible Jews, obligated by Jewish law to follow the commandments and take their turn serving in the role of leader in their Jewish community. In preparation for this life-cycle celebration, students are supported in the development of leadership skills and intellectual achievement. This is a time of dramatic growth and development, a rite of passage. We celebrate the transition from childhood to adulthood.

## II. What's It Mean?

**Bar** is the Aramaic form of the Hebrew word *ben* meaning “son.” **Bat** is both Hebrew and Aramaic for “daughter.” The plural is *b’nai*. That is why when we talk about twins or the class as a whole, we call the occasion **b’nai mitzvah**. More recently, *B’nai Mitzvah* is sometimes used as a singular gender non-specific form, like “they,” and sometimes people say *B’mitzvah* or *Beit Mitzvah* as a gender non-specific form.

The word **mitzvah** means commandment, good deed, or responsibility. The plural of mitzvah is **mitzvot**. When a child becomes an adult, they are required by Jewish Law to fulfill the mitzvot. Leading the congregation in the blessing over the Torah is the specific *mitzvah*, which when fulfilled, marks the moment of leadership when teens become **b’nai mitzvah**.

*Bar mitzvah*, *bat mitzvah* *b’nai mitzvah*, and *beit mitzvah* all refer to people who are becoming responsible for performing mitzvot.

## III. The 6 Expected Accomplishments

Each student is expected to:

- • Lead basic Shabbat **prayers and blessings** (checklist, text and audio are on our website [www.tbeaptos.org](http://www.tbeaptos.org) go to the “Learn” scroll bar at the top of our website)
- Chant *Aliyot* from the **Torah** Scroll.
- Chant part or all of the **Haftarah** portion from the prophets.
- Perform **13 hours of community service** in a *Mitzvah* project. This can be described as a short-term volunteer commitment to any social service, such as cooking for the Mazon Project. Any project that enhances the lives of others or protects or preserves the environment is appropriate. In general, giving of one’s self in community service is preferred. However, some students have chosen to fulfill their *mitzvah* project by raising *tzedakah* funds. For instance, one student painted greeting cards and sold them, donating the proceeds to wildlife preservation. If you’re looking for a project, Rabbi Shifra is in touch with elderly people who would like visitors.
- Deliver a **speech** interpreting the Torah portion from their personal point of view (known in Hebrew as a *D’var Torah*) that they will create with Rabbi Shifra’s help. You can get started in advance by reading a translation or summary of your Torah portion and writing a paragraph about what it is about.
- Participate in at least **13 Shabbat services**. You will receive a list of all the dates for the *beit mitzvah* class at the retreat. Please note those dates on your calendar so that you will be able to watch classmate’s celebrations. You should also attend some Friday night services or services at other congregations. In addition to watching, you are expected to sing along and are encouraged to find opportunities to practice leading. Please plan to lead the Friday Evening Kiddush at the service the evening before your *beit mitzvah*. If that doesn’t work for you, please arrange with the rabbis to do it the week before.

## **Timeline**

- ☐ By the spring of 5<sup>th</sup> grade, you will receive communication about choosing a date.
- ☐ Begin learning Prayers and Blessings and reviewing Hebrew Reading. Every student needs to know all of the Prayers and Blessings 6 months prior to their Beit Mitzvah date. A Prayers and Blessings checklist and texts and recordings of these Prayers and Blessings are located on [tbeaptos.org](http://tbeaptos.org) under LEARN. In addition, every student attends the Summer Prayers and Blessings class on Wednesday evenings from 7 to 8:00PM during the summer between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade, unless they choose to become exempt by testing out of the class. Parents may be asked to hire an additional tutor for students who are unable to read Hebrew or do not know their prayers and blessings.

- ☐ Attend at least 3 *Shabbat* Services and arrange to lead a prayer or blessing for at least one of them.
- ☐ Create a guest list. You are required to invite all of your Beit Mitzvah classmates.
- ☐ Book hotel rooms if you will be having out-of-town guests (summer dates may fill up early).

### **6 Months Prior to Your *Beit Mitzvah*:**

- ☐ Schedule weekly tutoring with clergy and begin practicing every day. Start the *Mitzvah* Project.
- ☐ Please remember that all fees must be paid in full 90 days prior to your event.

### 10 weeks Prior to Your *Beit Mitzvah*:

- ☐ Schedule Parents' and student's meeting with Rabbi Shifra to begin writing the *D'var Torah* (which means *Torah* teaching or speech.)
  
- ☐ Meet with the Rabbi who is leading your service to review/customize the service. (See "*Customizing the Service*") (If you have a preference of which Rabbi you would like to lead your service, please let us know and we will try to accommodate you.) [Here](#), and on the Beit Mitzvah section of the TBE website there is an explanation of Beit Mitzvah which you can email to your guests. Feel free to modify it as you see fit. In the interest of reducing waste, we discourage creating paper programs to hand out at services.
  
- ☐ **Call Melissa Sunberg at TBE to review plans (479-3444).** Submit photo and short statement of student's interests for publication in the *Shofar* to Melissa Sunberg

Starting about one year before their *Beit Mitzvah*, students should practice every day for 10 minutes. From 6 months prior, students should practice at least 20 minutes per day. For maximum benefit, students should study twice daily. If the study goals become a struggle, please talk to Rabbi Shifra, who has lots of ideas and experience and will help you.

## THE SHOFAR: Bio Blurb

The Temple community looks forward to reading about your family's *simcha* (celebration) in *The Shofar*. Please send Melissa Sunberg a few lines about your child that will appear in the newsletter. We are now publishing the Shofar 4 times a year, at the end of the summer, late fall, late winter/early spring and late spring/early summer. We will include the information about your child in the next Shofar that comes out after we receive it. It may be after the event.

The blurb can include parents' or siblings' names, school and grade, interests, hobbies or their *Mitzvah* Project.

Beit Mitzvah Text Examples:

**KYRA KATE PHELAN**, daughter of Shana and Peter Phelan, will be called to the Torah on November 4th. Kyra is an eighth grader at New Brighton Middle School. She enjoys racing sailboats, softball, running, skiing, swimming, traveling and reading. For her mitzvah project, she hopes to educate people on the effects of using plastics and how it ends up in our oceans. She is working with Sailors for the Sea and Save our Shores. (74 words)

**GABRIEL ORANGE** will become a Bar Mitzvah on December 16. Bright, cheerful and engaging, Gabriel loves fishing, rock climbing, outdoor adventures, is an accomplished trumpeter, is learning the ukulele and is a member of the Junior Rock Shabbat Band. He loves role-playing games, board games, brain puzzles, and is the founder of his school's D&D Club. He loves computer programming, disassembling and rebuilding. Gabriel has a passion for learning and enjoys sharing his knowledge with others, especially science. (78 words)

**ARYEH KOONTZ** is a seventh-grade honor roll student at New Brighton Middle School. He enjoys video games, biking, wrestling for the school team, and reading about history and politics. Aryeh will become a Bar Mitzvah on January 20th. His mitzvah project has been cooking and delivering Sunday meals to the Homeless Shelter downtown.

- ☐ Begin thinking about Jewish family members and friends who would like to say an *Aliyah*. Collect their Hebrew names including their parents' Hebrew names (Aryeh ben Moshe v'Sarah). If they don't have Hebrew names, please include their first name and their parents' first names. Non-Jewish family members may come up for an *Aliyah* with other Jewish family members, or they may be given other honors. The Beit Mitzvah will recite the Torah Blessings for their last Aliyah. It is our usual custom that parents recite the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last blessing. For each aliyah except the last two, you will choose individuals and friends to receive this honor. If, for example your child is reciting five aliyot, then you will choose three individuals or groups to come up for aliyot.
- ☐ Select a Hebrew or *Yiddish* name if the student or family member does not already have one.
- ☐ Order *tallit and kippah* for the student (from gift shop).
- ☐ Send invitations. Don't forget to invite the Beit Mitzvah class.
- ☐ **Confirm time of Friday night service. Parents practice the candle lighting blessing and student practices the Kiddush.**
- ☐ Schedule Student to lead one or two prayers at a *Shabbat* Service.

#### **4 Weeks Prior to Your *Beit Mitzvah*:**

- ☐ Make arrangements with a rabbi for a final rehearsal, usually the Thursday before the big day. Parents and anyone involved in the service should be present. We suggest that the rehearsal be in the morning, rather than after school, when students are often tired.

#### **2 Weeks Prior to Your *Beit Mitzvah*:**

- ☐ Submit or email to your assigned Rabbi a typed list of Hebrew names of those doing *Aliyot* (**Please do not turn in late!**)
- ☐ Call Melissa Sunberg to finalize set-up. Confirm number of attendants and zoom/live streaming link with Melissa.
- ☐ Send link to everyone invited to watch. You may invite them to Friday night as well.

## Rehearsal, Friday night, and Day of Your *Beit Mitzvah*:

### To Bring to the Rehearsal:

The student's copy of their Prayer Book

The student's *D'var Torah* speech printed in large font with page numbers on each page

*Haftarah*

The student's *tallit* and *kippah*

If you haven't already provided the rabbi with a list of the properly spelled *Aliyot* blessers (include pronunciation if difficult) along with the Hebrew names of those who have Hebrew names, be sure to bring this to the rehearsal and e-mail a copy to the rabbi.

Meet briefly with Melissa Sunberg to discuss last-minute questions or changes. Confirm the time of the Friday night service and make sure you have the zoom link for Friday night.

### To Bring to the Beit Mitzvah

The student's copy of their Prayer Book

Water bottle

The student's *D'var Torah* speech

The student's *Haftarah*

Tallit and kippah

### To Bring Home after the Service

The gifts from Brotherhood and Women of Beth El

Your Tallit

Your envelopes and gifts that have been collected in the 3 tiered gift box

## **Covid Guidelines**

TBE will strictly follow all guidelines outlined by the state of California. You have a choice to have your service inside our beautiful sanctuary, or outside in our lovely flexible worship space.



## 1. Dates

If you do not have a date or wish to change your date, Roxy will work with you to accommodate your change of date.

## 2. Aliyot

When a Beit Mitzvah chants sections of Torah, they will say the blessing before and after the last section and normally the parents chant the same blessings before and after the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last section. You will honor a few guests and family members by inviting them to say the blessings before and after the other sections. We will need their Hebrew names in advance, including their parents' Hebrew names. I strongly recommend that anyone coming up for an Aliyah **PRACTICE!** Here are the links for prayer-e-oke.

Blessing before Torah Reading <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5MNWQX0ehY>

Blessings after Torah Reading <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHydzcEaj40>

I also like their other links, such as the blessings over the wine <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHydzcEaj40>

Please be sure to ask everyone who will be doing this to practice these blessings, and please remind them that the decorum of the Torah service is serious, so it would not be particularly appropriate to crack up if they make a mistake.

## 3. Parents' Blessing

Parents will be invited to bless their child after they complete reading from the *Torah* & *Haftarah* and giving their *D'var Torah*. This is an awesome moment, witnessed by your family & friends. It is a time to express prayers and wishes for them as they move into becoming a young adult in our community. We suggest the guideline of **about 3 minutes per parent**.

## 4. Wearing a Tallit

A Tallit is the fringed shawl that Jews wear during a Torah service. It is our tradition that at least one person for each *Aliyah* wear a *tallit*. There will be *tallitot* hanging on the rack near the entrance to the sanctuary. These are available to anyone who needs one. The Beit Mitzvah child is usually presented with a gift of their very own Tallit at the beginning of the service by a family member. Many people choose to purchase theirs at the Sisterhood Gift Shop, which carries a wide variety of Tallitot.

## 5. Customizing the Service

We are happy to help you customize your service. We know that you may have unique ways to make it a meaningful and personal experience. To this end, there will be a special meeting with one of our Rabbis to customize the service and choose prayers and songs to be included in the ceremony. Both you and your student need to attend this important meeting.

Some of our members choose to hold their *Beit Mitzvah* at their homes. The Temple will provide the Torah and prayerbooks, and clergy will attend. Should you choose this option, you are responsible for any zoom technology.

## 5. CHAPERONES

We have found that having chaperones helps each family to have a joyful party, unmarred by inappropriate behavior. It is the chaperones' responsibility to be the eyes and ears of the community so that we can have continuity as we educate kids about what it means to be a good guest. Chaperones need to know where the kids are and what they are doing during the service, lunch, and party. No one is allowed on the Simcha playground or to wander around the building or grounds unsupervised. Students should not climb trees or pick plants. A general rule of thumb is to only use things for the purpose for which they were put there. Please gently remind kids of what is expected of them and what is appropriate in this social setting. Chaperones should exercise their authority in a kind but clear way. Please report all incidents large or small to Rabbi Shifra so that she can become aware of and address any ongoing issues. You may also call their parent/parents and ask them to pick up their student and take them home from the party if you feel that they are having a negative impact on the celebration. We also ask our parents not to drink alcohol at the parties for which they are chaperones.

### AT THE SERVICE AND LUNCH

Chaperones should sit with or behind the 7<sup>th</sup> graders at the service and remind them of appropriate behavior when necessary. Chaperones should intervene if groups of kids attempt to leave together during the service. Although it is fine for a kid to use the bathroom, that should not be a group activity. Chaperones, please ask any of the parents from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade class who are there if they would help place the books on the carts. For the duration of the lunch it is important that chaperones know where the kids are and what they are doing. Please eat lunch but please remember that you have to keep your eyes on the kids the whole time. Kids should not be climbing the fence to get into the playground or wandering the halls, entering classrooms or the Litvak wing, running through the waterfall area, or going upstairs. Please stay until the last kid has gone home.

**Please include feeding your chaperones in your meal planning.**

**Please contact your Chaperone Coordinator(s) at least one month in advance to coordinate people, location, dates and times. Remember to call the chaperones a couple days in advance to confirm their attendance.**

**A minimum of two Chaperones is necessary.**