*Vehayey Brachah*:

And you shall be a blessing…



Temple Beth El

Bat/Bar Mitzvah Handbook & Community Guidelines

5780/ 2019 - 2020

Updated – August 2020

Shalom B’nai Mitzvah families:

This letter is an introduction of the Bar and Bat Mitzvah process. Hopefully, this letter will further your understanding, ease some of your concerns, and help you to understand this important life cycle event here at Temple Beth El. Indeed, it will be a special moment for your young adult and the whole family, so we begin by wishing **Mazel Tov** to you on this upcoming joyous moment!

Traditionally the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is translated as “becoming” a woman or a man in Jewish life, however, as this custom has evolved, it is not merely so simple. This rite of passage is only one part of a process of becoming an adult, and specifically a Jewish adult. Truly it is the beginning. It is a rite of passage that conveys to the community and family that the individual is now a full member of the Jewish community with its responsibilities and freedoms.

There are 2 notifications to B’nai Mitzvah families. The first occurs with a letter to our parents late in the Gimmel year. At this time, parents should expect to receive the assigned date of their child’s Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Early in the Hai year we will have another meeting, where Rabbi and the Education Director will lead a conversation with the B’nai Mitzvah parents about the training process, requirements, procedure and structure of the tutoring sessions and synagogue guidelines. A representative of the ritual committee will also be present to answer questions. Since the congregation asks that each child invite all of the B’nai Mitzvah class (Kitah Hai) to their Shabbat service, it is also an opportunity for the families to meet one another. An address and phone list of Kitah Hai will be provided at that meeting. Approximately 6-8 months before your bar/bat Mitzvah date your family (parents & bar/bat Mitzvah candidate) will meet with Rabbi and Adina Mattes to discuss your child’s training and mitzvah project and answer any questions you may have.

Each family is asked to invite the entire class, Rabbi and family to your B’nai Mitzvah events. We ask that you and your child attend the other B’nai Mitzvah services. It is also our hope that families can help one another with arranging these events. Please feel free to contact our B’nai Mitzvah Coordinator or call to schedule an appointment with Rabbi to ask any questions. Good luck and Mazel Tov!!

B’Shalom,

Adina Mattes

Education Director

**BAR and BAT MITZVAH OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS**

B’nai Mitzvah date- the ritual committee with the approval of the board of directors uses the following guidelines for setting up a Bar/Bat Mitzvah dates:

Dates may be assigned any time after the child’s 13th birthday and will be based upon the secular birth date with highest priority given to the oldest child. Traditionally the Bar Mitzvah cycle runs March through June and begins again in August – November.

In the event of a requested date change, the committee will consider the following criteria:

* Avoiding Jewish holidays, synagogue summer schedule and close proximity to the High Holy Days.
* Striving for two Bar/Bat Mitzvah services per month. (When this cannot be avoided, we will try to have at least 2 weekends between the next Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
* Consideration of the congregation’s overall schedule.

**Educational Requirements to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah**

1. A familiarity with Jewish history, customs, holidays and ethics.

2. The ability to read fluently and understand the meaning of major Hebrew prayers of the Sabbath services through classroom instruction and participation in weekly services. Regular attendance at both Shabbat evening and morning services is expected during the period of preparation. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend with their children.

3. The ability to chant portions of Torah and Haftarah based on trope instruction during Hebrew class.

4. The preparation of a D'var Torah (the speech - a commentary on his/her Torah or Haftarah portion) to be presented during the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. Work on the D’var is started in the Jewish Life portion of Hay class where they will learn about giving a d’var and discuss their Torah portion. Students will work on their speech with Rabbi. Completion of the D’var is the responsibility of the student with their family. (See template in back of this packet)

**From the Congregation’s by-laws and Standards:**

Bar/Bat Mitzvah - Membership is required for a minimum of four (4) years prior to becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, unless the candidate and family is transferring from another synagogue where the family was a member in good standing. Additionally, a minimum of two (2) years of Jewish education, or its equivalent, is required for any candidate prior to becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Any final decision regarding the adequacy of a candidate’s religious and educational preparation to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah shall be made at the Rabbi’s discretion, with the concurrence of the Ritual Committee.

**Obligations of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Family:**

* Members must be current in their payment of all dues and fees at the time Bar/Bat Mitzvah training begins and at the time the ceremony occurs.
* It is a custom at our synagogue for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah parents or family to sponsor the Oneg Shabbat on Friday and Kiddush on Saturday morning on the Shabbat of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. The Kashrut policy does not allow any home-baked goods to be brought into the synagogue. Please contact the TBE office for further clarification.
* Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate parents are required to volunteer time to prepare for and work at Onegs and Kiddushes during the Dalet and Hai school years. This is to ensure that we have enough workers to cover all ceremonies.
* In case of financial need, the above obligations may be reviewed and discussed with the TBE treasurer.

**THE SHABBAT OF THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH CEREMONY**

The Synagogue is a special place; it represents Jewish tradition and responsibility. Behavior and dress at Temple Beth El should reflect our respect for Jewish tradition and the building. With that in mind, we ask that kippot be worn in the sanctuary, and non-revealing dresses and tops should be worn. When on the bimah all tops should cover the shoulders. Skirts should be at least knee-length on the bimah.Women are encouraged to also wear head coverings and tallit. Please inform all of your family that will be involved with the Torah service of the appropriate dress code for the bimah.

What happens on Friday night?

* Immediate family will arrive at 7:00pm and meet in the Rabbi’s office at 7:15pm. Shabbat Services begin at 7:30pm.
* During Friday evening services we honor the Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate by calling upon him/her to chant the Kiddush.
* Candidates are encouraged to lead many of the Friday evening prayers.

What happens on Saturday morning?

* Immediate family will arrive at 9:00am and meet in the Rabbi’s office at 9:15am. Shabbat Services begin at 9:30am.

Alternative Bar Mitzvah Services

* In some cases, Rabbi will suggest that an afternoon or Havdallah service will best suit the needs of a child. This can occur when the Rabbi and the Director of Education feel that the child simply cannot perform all of the requirements set forth to fulfill the obligations of a traditional Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

**What happens at the Bar/Bat Mitzvah services?**

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate:

* Chants the Maftir from the Torah and, if prepared he/she may also chant other Aliyot from the Torah.
* Chants the Haftarah blessings and portion.
* Prepares D’var for Saturday Shabbat service.
* Is encouraged to lead other prayers from the service.

**Non-Torah Honors**

* Appointment of an usher - at least 1 adult- to request that kippot be worn in the sanctuary, to aid in orderly seating, to hand out books /pamphlets and to control use of cell phones during our Shabbat service.
* English Readings will be chosen from **the *Kol Haneshamah* prayer book** (provided by the TBE office.) You will have the option of choosing a reading on **Peace for Friday night** and a reading on **Social Action** for the **Saturday morning** service. All reading selections and written materials for the service must be finalized and approved by Rabbi 14 days prior to the B’nai Mitzvah. Additional English readings will be presented to the families close to your event date.
* Possible Presentations/Talks (each kept under 4 minutes)

-Presentation of one tallit at the start of the Saturday Shabbat service.

- Prayer or talk to Bar/Bat Mitzvah, generally by parent. (Options - The Parent Blessing on p. 688 in *Kol Haneshamah* or p. 862 in *Siddur Haddash*)

- TBE Board Member Presentation of the gifts from the TBE Board, Sisterhood & Men’s Club. (Under 3 min.)

**Torah Honors**

* Torah service honors are restricted to people who are Jewish, in following TBE policy of non-Jewish participation in Jewish life. Details of the roles non-Jewish people can play in the service can be discussed directly with the Rabbi. The form at the back of this booklet should be completed and given to the Rabbi at least two weeks prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. **For all participants, provide the English name**. For those who **recite blessings**, provide the **Hebrew name of the person and his/her father and mother.**
* At TBE there is the option of having a total of 4 aliyot or 8 aliyot (the B’nai Mitzvah always reads the 4th or 8th reading) There are seven Aliyot to the Torah (besides the Maftir for which the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is called). Five Aliyot are given to family members or to close friends. Couples may be called up together for an Aliya. *One or two Aliyot are reserved for members of TBE*. In cases where there are not enough family members to participate, the family can request to have three Aliyot instead. **Torah readers may be asked to demonstrate their fluency during the week prior to the B’nai Mitzvah date. All Torah readers are strongly encouraged to read directly from the Torah scroll.**
* A **Hagbah** (Torah lifter) and **Gelilah** (Torah dresser) will also be needed for the Torah service along with 4 sets of **ark openers**. *The Hagbah individual should have prior experience or be available to practice on Friday after services.* We can assist you with filling this honor.
* TBE Ritual Committee will supply **Gabai** for your Torah service.
* **Healing Prayer** (mi sheberah) sung Saturday morning. Traditionally the Hay class has done this together.

Accessibility:

* We do our best to be a handicap accessible synagogue. Most of our facility is however our bima is not. There are railings on the right and left side of the bima for those who cannot negotiate stairs. Please contact the synagogue office if you are in need of any special arrangements.

**PREPARATION**

# **Required Service Attendance**

As you may already know, it is required that each Bar or Bat Mitzvah attend **fifteen (15)** Friday evening services and at least **fifteen (15**) regular Saturday morning services in the months directly prior to their B’nai Mitzvah date. This includes the Friday evening and Saturday morning services on the 2 Friday nights and Saturday mornings prior to their date.

*Exceptions may be necessary when dates conflict with TBE holiday/vacation schedules.* It is recommended that parent(s) attend services with your child to ensure that you are comfortable with the Shabbat service order and know the prayers.

# **Required Mitzvah Activities**

The B’nai Mitzvah candidates are required to engage in **social action/community service** (***tikkun olam****)* programs in the broader community during their Dalet & Hay years **prior** to the B’nai Mitzvah date. Suggested activities include: tutoring another child in Hebrew or Jewish studies, visiting a hospital, nursing or rehabilitation center, raising funds for the people in need, homeless work, visiting the home-bound Jewish elderly, and working in animal shelters. It is often called **“the Mitzvah project.”** A journal of volunteer work is required. Each student should consult with the Rabbi regarding this volunteer work.

In addition, each child is expected to find, contact, and research one Jewish tzedakah organization. This organization will be the focus of a **poster** that your child will create and that will be on display in the lobby for their bat/bar mitzvah. This will help educate and create an awareness of the group to all of the guests and members of the congregation during the services. A sample list of organizations is included in this packet.

(**Poster** – Topic - Jewish organization. 20 x 30 poster/display (tri-fold) board. Poster should **include Hebrew** **words** and a pocket with donation information.)

**Training/ “Check-In”**

Rabbi will provide recordings of the *maftir* (Torah reading) and *Haftarah* reading after the student has mastered the Hebrew reading of each portion. Our goal is to encourage each child to read as much of the Torah as possible, chant the *Haftarah* selection, and lead prayers of the Shabbat morning service within their ability. This is not a contest to see who can “read the most.” Each child has a unique blessing to offer and it is that blessing that should be highlighted.

Regular attendance at school on Sundays and Tuesdays, in conjunction with regular attendance at Shabbat evening and morning services will help your children be prepared for their B’nai Mitzvah and is essential to a positive B’nai Mitzvah process. The Rabbi and congregation will try to help those families who cannot meet those requirements through e-mail and computer-aided programs. However, this is a less than ideal situation.

The “check-in” process will begin approximately **5/6 months** prior to the Bar/ Bat Mitzvah date after your Family meeting with Rabbi. The sessions will be **15 minutes** one time a week (when school is in session & scheduled summer weeks.) This “check-in” session is meant to be used as a review time and to ensure that your child is on task with his/her preparations. Please allow time for **extended sessions** during **the two weeks preceding the Bar/Bat Mitzvah** date for your family to concentrate on the upcoming event.

The B’nai Mitzvah coordinator will schedule sessions using the following guidelines:

Approximately 5/6 months prior to your Bat/Bar Mitzvah date:

**Family Meeting** - Review expectations for Bat/Bar Mitzvah with Rabbi, Parents & student. Student receives the following:

* Hebrew Maftir (Torah portion) with vowels and without vowels (as it appears in the Torah.)
* English copy of Torah portion (Maftir)
* Hebrew and English copy of Haftarah portion
* Synopsis & study guide of Torah portion.

Recording of Torah portion (maftir) and Haftarah portion will be electronically sent to you once the student has mastered the Hebrew reading of each portion.

After your family meeting with the Rabbi, the student will begin “check-in” sessions with TBE Check-in staff to confirm knowledge on the prayer checklist, Torah and Haftorah portion(s). These sessions will be weekly for 15 minutes. There are no sessions on weeks with holidays or when school is cancelled.

It is the responsibility of the student to progress with the study of Torah readings and Haftarah readings. If a student requires additional help to achieve the necessary learning, the B’nai Mitzvah coordinator will help arrange for a private tutor. The family is responsible for payment for these sessions.

**Time line**

2 months prior:

* + - Meet with Rabbi to review student’s speech outline.
    - Additional Aliyot recordings can be requested if needed.
    - Order kipot, napkins, Tallit, etc. – call our Judaic Shop!
* Selection of an English reading for Friday & Saturday Shabbat service. All readings should be chosen from the ***Kol Haneshamah*** prayer book. Provided by the TBE office.
  + - Begin preparation of Student’s prayer book.

5 - 4 weeks prior.

* + - Student meets with Rabbi to review Torah readings and Haftarah.
    - Email draft of speech to Rabbi for editing.
    - Deliver poster to B’nai Mitzvah Coordinator
    - Check in with B’nai Mitzvah Coordinator to finalize all plans.

3 weeks prior:

* + - Email **final draft of speech** & **completed honors form** to Rabbi & Adina Mattes
    - Mitzvah project due
    - Honor Sheet due

2 weeks prior:

* + - **Family should attend Friday and Saturday services.** *Exceptions may be necessary when dates conflict with TBE holiday/vacation schedules.*
    - Meet with Rabbi, practice carrying Torah

Weekend prior:

* **Family should attend Friday and Saturday services** *Exceptions may be necessary when dates conflict with TBE holiday/vacation schedules.*

Week of:

* + - **Tuesday afternoon meeting with Rabbi** to practice.
    - **Thursday** **dress rehearsal 4-5:30pm**. We encourage all immediate family members to participate. Your photographer is also welcome at this time. Pictures are not allowed in the sanctuary during Shabbat.

**Additional Important Information**

**Sanctuary can hold 180 persons comfortably. Additional seating is available if needed.**

**All on site events must be kosher and follow TBE policies.**

**End of School Lunch Sponsor-** The tradition at TBE has been that the Hay class families sponsor the end of the year luncheon for the entire school on the last day. This can be as simple or as elaborate as the class would like.

**Donations—** It is customary to make contributions to the Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund in honor of life-cycle events. TBE funds are tax-exempt. The administrator of the congregation can help make appropriate suggestions as to amounts and the purpose of the different funds available.

You may want to consider purchasing a leaf on our Tree of Life in the TBE lobby in honor of your child’s bar/bat mitzvah. Contact the TBE office for additional information.

**Oneg**—following services Friday and Saturday. **Family hosts both onegs during your Bar/Bat Mitzvah weekend.** TBE Sisterhood will contact you to assist you with the planning of your oneg/kiddush.

**Photography and Video**

There is no still photography or video recording in the sanctuary from 30 minutes prior until one hour (60 minutes) after the service concludes. Photography is allowed at the dress rehearsal. **Please check with the TBE office if you are interested in web streaming your family Bar/Bat Mitzvah.**

**Bima Decorations**

Many families have chosen to beautify the sanctuary with flowers or Mitzvah baskets on the bima and a centerpiece in the social hall. Please arrange delivery of all decorations or food with the TBE office. **All deliveries** should occur **before the office closes on Friday at 12pm.**

**Services offered through the Synagogue:**

**Sisterhood catering**:

Prepare the Oneg Shabbat & Kiddush.

Cater your reception at the synagogue (or your home or other location?).

**Judaica shop** may provide: Kippot, Tallit, gifts, napkins, etc. (Please contact the synagogue office for details)

**Sample for Bar/Bat Mitzvah Speech**

Print in 16 pt font, double space & include page numbers.

Speech should be approximately 900 – 1200 words.

* + Welcome (Shabbat shalom…)
  + Meaning of Bat/Bar Mitzvah, being Jewish (see Chapter 3-5 in *Putting God…*)
  + Importance of Mitzvah project, Jewish tzedakah organization \*
  + Torah Portion
  + Haftarah Connection
  + Thank You(s) to your Hai class, Religious School teachers, Tutors, Rabbi, Siblings, Parents and Grandparents.
  + Finish with Shabbat Shalom.

We have 3 sample speeches available for you to review.

**Tzedakkah/Mitzvah Organizations**

**Some Web Resources**

Informative websites include:

Tzedakah www.tzedakah.org

Just Tzedakah www.just-tzedakah.org

The Mitzvah Bowl is a good resource in the Philly area at www.themitzvahbowl.com

**Animal Aid Organizations:**

CHAI—concern for helping animals in Israel www.CHAI-online.com

-Humane Society for Israel

-search under bar and bat Mitzvah

Israel Guide Dogs for the Blind http://israelguidedog.org/

Pups for Peace http://www.pupsforpeace.org/

Mitzvah Dogs/ Canine Companions www.cci.org

**Human related:**

Dorot— (means “generations”) helping feed, create access to services primarily for the Jewish elderly

MAZON- Jewish organization to feed the hungry- http://mazon.org/

SPNI- Society for Protection of Nature in Israel- http://aspni.org/

JNF -Jewish National Fund - plants trees, etc in Israel [www.jnf.org](about:blank)

The New Israel Fund www.nif.org

Hadassah [www.hadassah.org](about:blank)

Jewish Federation of Delaware [http://www.shalomdelaware.org/](about:blank)