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Dear b'nai mitzvah Families,

Mazal Tov!

If you are reading this b'nai mitzvah Handbook, then you are preparing for a wonderful moment of transition in the life of your family. Becoming a b'nai mitzvah is a special experience, not only for you, but for all of us here at Congregation B'nai Yisrael who are privileged to share a rite of passage in the life of your family. The b'nai mitzvah experience celebrates the end of childhood and the hope and promise for the future. As a b'nai mitzvah, your child is being recognized as an adult within our kehilah kedosha - sacred community. Your child has been a student for many years and their b'nai mitzvah is an opportunity for them to be a teacher and share with the community all they have learned and to share about their unique Jewish journey so far. Additionally, becoming a b'nai mitzvah is an opportunity for your child to develop their own unique connection to Judaism and their emerging identity as a young adult in the Jewish community.

In this handbook you will find a comprehensive guide through the b'nai mitzvah process. Throughout this journey, different members of our team will reach out to you to ensure that you are on schedule.

As you read the pages that follow, know that we feel particularly privileged to share a moment of blessing in the life of your family, and look forward to celebrating with you. We know that not all of your questions will be answered by the handbook. All of us here at Congregation B'nai Yisrael are here to guide you along this sacred journey. Please, be in touch with us any time for support.

Thank you for including us in this profound moment in your family's lives. We are deeply honored.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Joshua Strom       Cantor Lilah Sugarman
Timeline of Engagement

3rd Grade
- **Enroll and attend JID** - Tuesdays 3:30 - 5:30pm

4th Grade
- **Attend JID** - Thursdays 3:30 - 5:30pm
- **March**
  - Receive and fill out form for date selection
- **May**
  - Receive B/M Date
  - Attend 6 Friday Night Shabbat Services

5th Grade
- **Attend JID** - Thursdays 3:30 - 5:30pm
  - Attend 6 Friday Night Shabbat Services

6th Grade
- **Attend JID** - Wednesdays 3:00 - 5:30pm
  - Get Torah Portion booklets
  - Attend 6 Friday Night Shabbat Services
  - Participate in Family B’nai Mitzvah programs

7th Grade
- **Attend JID** - Wednesdays 3:00 - 5:30pm
  - Participate in weekly programs
  - Attend 6 Friday Night Shabbat Services
  - Participate in Family B’nai Mitzvah programs
Receive Coaching Schedule and Service Participation Forms

Begin tutoring and turn in Family Participation Forms
The first meeting at least one parent is expected to attend.

Family/ D’var Torah Meeting with Rabbi Strom

First Rehearsal with Rabbi Strom

Second Rehearsal with Cantor Lilah

B/M student and Family to participate in Friday Night Service. 1st Friday of the month is at 8pm and the rest are at 7pm.
Saturday Morning Services are at 10:15am and Havdalah Service at 5pm

**Done by birth year; this may not be the exact grade your child is in.
Planning and Preparation for Your Child's B'nai Mitzvah at Congregation B'nai Yisrael

**Family Attendance at Shabbat Services**

*4th/5th/6th Grade students are expected to attend 6 services each year for a total of 18 services over 3 years.*

As part of our Jewish Identity Program (JID) at Congregation B'nai Yisrael, every family with a child in 4th, 5th, and 6th grade is expected to attend and sit together at a minimum of six Shabbat services during each year.

When you go to a service there will be a ticket at the welcome table. Bring this ticket filled out to Rabbi Strom or Cantor Lilah at the end of the service and your services will be tracked.

*The first 5 students to complete their service requirement will get to go to Sugar Hi with the clergy.*

Your family's participation allows you to become familiar and comfortable with the worship service, practice the prayers and be a part of our greater CBY community.

**B'nai Mitzvah Hebrew Coaching**

*Approximately 23 weeks* (not including summer months or school vacation weeks) prior to your child’s b’nai mitzvah date they will begin weekly meetings These weekly coaching sessions will be a half hour long.

Children gain the fundamental tools they need to prepare for becoming a b’nai mitzvah in JID – developing a Jewish identity, learning Hebrew, and learning many of the prayers. Once in coaching, students review prayers they already know, learn additional prayers, and learn to chant, connect with, and understand their Torah and Haftarah portions.

*You will receive a letter from the office about three months* before your child is to begin coaching with your day and time of coaching. An additional reminder will be sent a month before your child’s coaching start date. If your child has special learning needs, please be in touch directly with Cantor Lilah.

**B’nai Mitzvah Goals**

- Learn to Chant and lead Chatzi Kaddish, Bar’chu, Shema, V’ahavta, Avot v’ Imahot, G’vurot, Friday Night Kiddush, Torah and Haftarah blessings.
- Chant Torah from the Torah scroll
- Chant Haftarah
- Write and deliver a D’var Torah
- Participate in a Mitzvah Project
- Connect more deeply with what Judaism means to you.

**How to Reach These Goals**

- Ask questions
- Practice at home. Students must practice at least 5 days a week for at least 15 minutes a day.
- Use the recordings you receive from Cantor Lilah
- How to use recordings:

  Listen to the recording, sing with the recording a few times, and then once you have it down try singing it without the recording.
D'var Torah

B’nai mitzvah students at CBY prepare a d’var Torah to share with the congregation, a short speech demonstrating an understanding of the student’s portion, as well as their personal connection to the lesson or value the text highlights for them. In addition to working with Rabbi Strom to prepare their d’var Torah in the months leading up to the service, students are also encouraged to study their portions with their family and see how the text connects to their lives.

Mitzvah Project

We expect b’nai mitzvah students to participate in a b’nai mitzvah project that comprises at least 5 hours of participation. In addition to raising money for an organization, we want the students to participate with hands-on experiences. It is important that we both give and do.

Sanctuary Practice Sessions

In the two weeks before your child’s b’nai mitzvah, two sanctuary practice sessions will be held.

The goals of the rehearsals are to:

- Familiarize the soon-to-be b’nai mitzvah with the experience of working in a large room
- Practice using the microphone and projecting their voice
- Review how to concentrate in front of a congregation
- Go over the English readings they will lead
- Go over when and where to walk
The Shabbat of Your Child’s B’nai Mitzvah

Friday Night Before Your Child’s B’nai Mitzvah

On the Friday night before your child’s b’nai mitzvah, your child will accompany Rabbi Strom and Cantor Lilah onto the bimah to lead some of the prayers of the services including the V’ahavta and the Kiddush. The family will be invited up to light the Shabbat candles at the beginning of the service. We ask that your family arrive to temple and check in with the rabbi or cantor no later than 6:45pm for a 7:00pm service, and no later than 7:45pm for an 8:00pm service. We cannot hold the Friday night service for later arrivals.

B’nai Mitzvah Services

Our Saturday Shabbat services begin at 10:15am or 5:00pm. Your family, and those participating in the service, should be in their seats by the time services begin.

It is important that those assigned Torah blessings (aliyot) know the procedures and the Hebrew blessings involved when they are called to the Torah. Please ensure that all family members participating in the service are fully prepared and have practiced their parts. Rabbi Strom or Cantor Lilah will be happy to go over all details in advance. For those receiving Torah blessing aliya, we can provide copies of the blessings in Hebrew, English, transliteration, and a recording of the musical chant of the blessings. We also include the blessings in this handbook. If you have assigned friends or family these honors, we encourage you to provide them with copies of these in advance.

In response to congregants' requests for alternative b’nai mitzvah services, we offer a 10:00am Thursday service. These services are geared toward families who will have a limited number of guests and can demonstrate a specific need for this option. There will be an additional fee for this service. Interested families must make their request to the clergy and Religious Practices Committee for approval.

If your family is considering having a b’nai mitzvah family celebration in Israel, Rabbi Strom and Cantor Lilah can help find a rabbi or cantor in Israel to make your b’nai mitzvah a meaningful experience.

What’s Next? Post-B’nai Mitzvah Engagement

The future beyond this milestone at CBY holds many opportunities to engage in our community. Becoming b’nai mitzvah is not a culminating event in the lives of our children or in the development of their identities. At Congregation B’nai Yisrael, opportunities for teens continue through the High School years with post-JID monthly classes (Rosh Chodesh for girls and Shevet Achim for boys) as well as other post-b’nai mitzvah engagement offerings in our future. These years are the most important as our children begin to wrestle with what is most fundamental in their identity and value system and their experience takes on a higher level of meaning. Our Jewish Identity Development programs for 8th, 9th and 10th graders are in many ways the richest, and we look forward to continuing to learn with your child they develop a positive and healthy Jewish identity.
Questions and Answers about B’nai Mitzvah

Q. Is there a Shabbat “Etiquette” we should know about?
A. We refrain from taking pictures during the service. Cell phones must be turned off prior to entering our sanctuary. We hope that talking will be kept to a minimum.

Q. Do We Order Kippot (yarmulkes)?
A. It is not necessary for you to order monogrammed kippot. Kippot will be provided by the temple and available when entering the sanctuary. It is every individual’s decision to wear one or to refrain.

Q. How can we arrange for photography at the temple? Can we take pictures in the sanctuary prior to the service?
A. Yes, pictures may be taken before a service, but must be completed one-half hour prior to the start of the service time. All photographers must be scheduled through the Temple Office. The taking of still pictures is not permitted during the b’nai mitzvah service. Included in this Handbook is a copy of our “Guidelines for Photographers”.

Q. Can we videotape the service?
A. No, we do not allow private videographers. A link to connect to the Livestream will be sent to you before the services to share with family and friends who are unable to attend the services, and we will share a link after that you can then download the video to watch at any time.

Q. What does the b’nai mitzvah fee pay for?
A. The b’nai mitzvah fee covers the following expenses:

- Coaching
- Friday night Shabbat oneg (reception)*
- Our musical accompanist
- Security and Maintenance for the b’nai mitzvah service
- Flowers

*The Friday night reception typically includes coffee and dessert. If you would like to enhance the reception, please contact Ava Saperstein, our Executive Director.

Q. Are we expected to give something to the rabbi and cantor or the temple?
A. Being a member of Congregation B’nai Yisrael provides each family access to our rabbi and cantor for life cycle events. If a family wishes, a voluntary donation may be made to Rabbi Strom’s Discretionary Fund, Cantor Sugarman’s Discretionary Fund, and the General Fund.

Q. What opportunities are available for family participation in the b’nai mitzvah service?
A. Here is a list of available choices at Congregation B’nai Yisrael:

- One aliyah for the b’nai mitzvah is required and up to six additional aliyot for family members

  *Note: In the case of twins, two aliyot for the b’nai mitzvah are required, and up to five additional aliyot will remain for family members.

- English translation of the Torah (may be divided between up to three people total of one to three readers)
- Parent speeches
- One adult Temple Member, congregational representative to give congregational gift. (Torah with Modern Commentary)
- One child, enrolled in our program, to give the class gift (kiddush cup)
- Grandparents’ participation in transmission of Torah

  * One adult or child to dress the Torah
Q. What preparation is necessary for an Aliyah?

A. It is important that people reading the Torah blessings are comfortable with the Hebrew blessings, and with the procedures involved in being called to the Torah. We ask participants to spend a few minutes reviewing the blessings in advance so they can be chanted or recited with ease. For reference, a large card with the blessings is located to the right of the Torah. The blessings are chanted in Hebrew.

You will be asked in advance to give the clergy your Hebrew name, and the Hebrew names of anyone else who has an aliyah.

Q. What time should we arrive at the temple?

A. All participants should arrive at the synagogue one-half hour prior to the start of the service. Photographers must be completely finished at that time. Service participants should be seated near the b’nai mitzvah family.

Q. Can we use the social hall following services?

A. The Social Hall is available for rental after both the 10:15am and the 5:00pm services. Please contact the Temple Office as soon as possible about availability, for a copy of the fee schedule, and with any questions regarding rental of the Social Hall.
Information for Ushers at B’nai Mitzvah

The b’nai mitzvah family arranges for ushers for the service, one usher for every ten friends of the b’nai mitzvah. Ushers are often adult friends from within the temple.

The primary job of the usher is to be a greeter. We hope that people attending our services will experience a warm welcome, just as we would greet invited guests into our homes.

We ask that the usher arrive at least twenty minutes before services. At that point, the greeter can station himself or herself by the front door and direct people should they need to use the telephone, find the coat room, or any of our other facilities.

The obligations of the usher are as follows:

1. The usher hands out the prayer books.
2. Ushers are responsible for requesting that loud or disruptive guests keep their voices down and ensuring that no young people are sitting in the balcony without their parents.
3. Please do not let more than two young people out of the sanctuary at any one time. (Groups of boys and girls have been disruptive in the men’s room and in the women’s room during previous services.)
4. If any young people prove uncooperative, one of the ushers must escort them to the office and call their parents in order to arrange for them to be picked up.

Guidelines for Photographers at CBY

We welcome those who wish to take photographs into our sanctuary. However, we want to avoid any memories of damage, so we ask you to observe our guidelines.

1. Photographers may set up their equipment and take pictures so long as they do not move any piece of sound equipment, furniture, or art in the building.
2. The rabbi or cantor will be happy to provide guidance and assistance during the pre-service photography session so that you and your family may take pictures with the Torah. A member of the clergy will be available during this time period. Please do not open the Ark or remove a Torah from the Ark without a member of the clergy present with you.
3. If you wish to take pictures with a photographer in our sanctuary during the regular times we have reserved, be sure the Temple Office has the photographer’s name and contact information.
4. We have reserved the sanctuary for family photography from 8:45-9:45am before a 10:15am service and from 3:30-4:30pm before a 5:00pm service. Picture-taking must be completed one half hour prior to the start of service time. By that time, the facility staff will instruct the photographer to remove all equipment from the building.
5. If you wish to arrange an alternate time during the week for photography, please be in touch with Lisa Block, Administrative Assistant, in the temple office.
Clergy and Staff
Contact Information

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Torah Blessings

Blessing Before Reading Torah

ברוך אתה בָּרוּךְ
Bar’chu et Adonai ham’vorach

(ה米粉ך על כל עולמך
(congregational response)
Bar’chu et Adonai ham'vorach

ברוך אתה בָּרוּךְ
Bar’chu et Adonai ham'vorach

ברוך אתה בָּרוּךְ
Bar’chu et Adonai ham'vorach

ברוך אתה בָּרוּךְ
Bar’chu et Adonai ham'vorach

ברוך אתה, אדונاي אローיננו, מלך העולם,
Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
asher bachar banu mikol ha’amim,
v’natan lanu et Torato.
Baruch atah, Adonai, notein hatorah.

Blessed Adonai who is blessed.
Blessed is Adonai who is blessed now and forever
Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who has chosen us from among the peoples, and given us the Torah.
Blessed are You, Adonai, who gives the Torah.
Blessing After Reading Torah

ברוך אתה עלי מלך העולם, הנד lettre cria בלולא.
אושר דברי תורה אתה,
והחיון עולםبعת חזנים.
ברוך אתה עלי הנברך.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech haolam
Asher natan lanu Torat emet
v’chayei olam nata b’tokeinu
Baruch atah, Adonai, notein haTorah.

Blessed Are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
Who has given us a Torah of truth, implanting within us eternal life.
Blessed are You, Adonai, who gives the Torah.