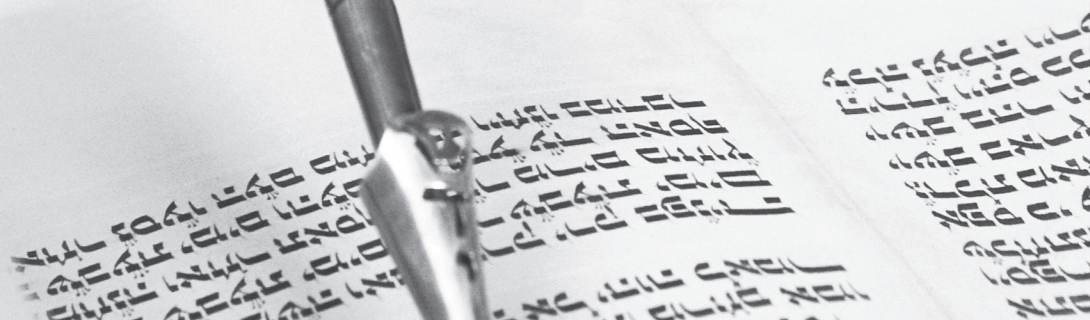




# B'nei Mitzvah Program

*"At twelve/thirteen one accepts  
responsibility for doing mitzvot"*

-Pirkei Avot 5:23





Dear Bar/Bat Mitzvah Parents,

As your family embarks on this most significant and exciting journey we wish to be among the very first to wish you congratulations, *Mazal Tov!*

Our entire Congregation Beth El family joins us in looking forward to your family's celebration. Your child is entering a time of wonderful change. Their relationships, responsibilities, and thoughts will develop. Though change can be unsettling, with the support of your synagogue community, you and we will celebrate these changes and opportunities for growth *b'simhah*, in joy!

As we join with you in preparing your children to grow into being responsible Jews, we are delighted by the privilege to create with you this personal and memorable religious moment.

Our children become Bar and Bat Mitzvah at a formative time in their lives. As they become Jewish teenagers, this ceremony marks a transition for them from the learning and joys of their childhoods to the moral consciousness, religious privileges, and the imperative of their responsibilities as maturing Jews.

As their parents and teachers, we hold out great hopes and dreams for their coming years of discovery. In pride and with purpose, we seek to guide our *B'nei Mitzvah* students toward the development of an ethical awareness in their daily behaviors.

We wish you wonder, fulfillment, and happiness as you journey with your child into the meanings of Jewish identity and acquisition of the synagogue skills and religious concepts we hold dear as Jews.

We hope the information in this booklet helps you to plan for and anticipate your upcoming *simhah*. Please call on us for any support we can provide at this special time.

*Mazal Tov!*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Shulman".

Rabbi Ron Shulman

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Avi Libman".

Rabbi Avi Libman



## INTRODUCTION

### Background

The title of "Bar Mitzvah" – Son of the Commandments or "Bat Mitzvah" – Daughter of the Commandments are Aramaic and Hebrew terms derived from the Talmud as a description of every Jew over the age of thirteen. As Jews, we are each endowed with the responsibility to perform *mitzvot* (commandments and the opportunity to guide our lives according to the values and ethics of Judaism. This status of Jewish maturity begins on the occasion of a child's 13th birthday, whether or not they mark this event with a ritual celebration or synagogue service.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah are not verbs. Our children, and each of us, become Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Bar or Bat Mitzvah is not a party and not a ceremony at the synagogue. Being a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a lasting condition of a Jew's life. Just as each child is in the process of attaining physical maturity at 12 and 13 years of age, so too does Judaism choose to mark every boy's and girl's moral, emotional and spiritual development through this sacred rite at this transitional time in their lives.

### Context

Bar and Bat Mitzvah take place within the three Jewish contexts of every child's life. At Congregation Beth El we prepare and celebrate, with each Bar or Bat Mitzvah student, in the context of his or her family with consideration of each family's unique feelings and experiences. We also work with every student and their parents in the context of our synagogue and local Jewish community. This means that Bar and Bat Mitzvah observances take place in the presence of our larger community in addition to each student's family and invited friends. This synagogue service also has a context, whereby we celebrate our children's becoming B'nei Mitzvah primarily on Shabbat. This day represents the values and ethics of Judaism and is celebrated as *mitzvot* through ritual, prayer and Torah study.

### Personal & Family Meaning

Congregation Beth El's goal is to help every family celebrating a Bar or Bat Mitzvah to find meaning and enjoyment in this special milestone. The Rabbis and staff strive to individualize each student's training and each family's preparations. It is our hope that every Bar or Bat Mitzvah synagogue celebration also reflects personal connection and participation. In order to achieve this goal, we ask for assistance from our B'nei Mitzvah parents. To that end, we encourage you to attend Shabbat Services as often as possible with your son or daughter in order to become familiar with the ritual and style of our synagogue's worship.

### Objectives of the B'nei Mitzvah Program

- To develop a **positive connection** to Judaism, the Jewish people, the Jewish community and the Congregation.
- To **study** prayer and the rites, rituals, and individual skills related to the Shabbat service and reading of the Torah.
- To provide opportunities for a **family experience** through sharing social, tikkun, hesed, ritual and learning opportunities.
- To **create community** among the children and parents as they celebrate this milestone together.

### Formal Classes

Our rabbis look forward to joining with you and your child at these family programs to enhance your preparation for, and celebration of, this wonderful milestone.

Spring of 5th Grade – It's A Date! Preparation Program  
Winter of 6th Grade – It's a Simha! Orientation Program  
Spring of 6th Grade – It's a Mitzvah! Ritual Objects Program  
Fall of 7th Grade – It's a Community! Personal Connections & Tzedakah Program  
Winter of 7th Grade – B'nei Mitzvah Launch & Shabbat Program

### Tutoring

Each of our students prepares for their Bar or Bat Mitzvah under the guidance of our Congregation Beth El clergy and educators. Specific preparation of the texts they will recite on the Shabbat of their celebration is done with a Congregation Beth El approved tutor. Our clergy and educators guide each family in selecting an appropriate tutor for their child. Individual tutoring begins 8 to 10 months prior to each child's celebration date. This varies based on seasons of the year and student individual needs. Individual tutor rates range from \$40 to \$60 per lesson. At this time, financial arrangements are made directly with the chosen tutor. At this time, financial arrangements are made directly with the chosen tutor. See **page 8** for an approved tutor list.

### Bar and Bat Mitzvah Costs

A \$613.00 Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee is billed to your synagogue account. Half of this fee, \$300, is due to confirm your child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah date on our synagogue calendar. The \$313.00 balance will be due during the year of your family's simha. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee helps to defray the costs of our B'nei Mitzvah program and includes a modest contribution to the Friday evening Oneg Shabbat and Saturday morning Kiddush, which in part, will be sponsored in your name on your special Shabbat.

### Parent's Prayer

You will have the opportunity during the service to bless your child. See **page 11** for the B'nei Mitzvah Guidelines. If you have any questions regarding the parents' speech, please contact the Rabbis.

## **Meeting with the Rabbis**

Prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, *Michele Alexandria, our Rabbinic Office and Life Cycle Event Coordinator*, will contact you to set up three meetings with a Rabbi. The first meeting is for the parents and Bar/Bat Mitzvah student to review the plans for the upcoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Additional meetings for the student will help him or her to write their speech. Plan an hour for the first meeting and 1/2 hour for each subsequent meeting.

Each Bar/Bat Mitzvah will write and deliver a D'var Torah (speech, where they become teachers of Torah for the entire congregation. It is the time students will explain what their Haftarah portion is about and what they have learned from it. They will make meaningful connections to their own lives and to the world today.

## **Rehearsal**

A dress rehearsal, covering all aspects of the family's participation with the Rabbi, will be scheduled during the week preceding the date of your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. The rehearsal time is for the immediate family; others honorees do not need to attend. At this rehearsal, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah goes through the service, rehearsing their parts so that there will be no surprises during the ceremony itself. Not only is this time used to ensure that the service will run smoothly, but we also want to make sure that everyone in the family feels comfortable with the service and their role in it.

If you'd like to photograph this event, the rehearsal is your opportunity. Still photography is prohibited on Shabbat. Please arrange for your photographer to join you before or after the rehearsal.

## Timeline- For the Week of

### ***Rehearsal... (The Rabbinic Assistant will assist in setting up a date and time)***

- Student and family attend a walk through of the service
- Photos can be taken at this time

### ***Friday Evening***

- Family arrives 15 minutes prior to the beginning of services, which start at 6:15 p.m.
- Mother or female family member reads English prayer before the candle lighting

### ***Saturday Morning***

- Family arrives 15 minutes prior to the beginning of services, which start at 9:30 a.m.
- Parents bless their children and B'nei Mitzvah candidate responds

## Honors

You are invited to choose those members of your family and friends whom you wish to honor with an Aliyot to the Torah or other service involvements. The list of Honors and Torah Blessings can be found in the Appendix section, **page 9-10**. You may also find additional resources online at <http://www.cbe.org/bar/bat-mitzvah.html>.

## Other Celebrations

With such a large and vibrant community, there is always a possibility of other celebrations taking place on the same Shabbat as your son/daughter's Bar or Bat Mitzvah. An Auf Ruf, baby-naming, or another celebratory event/speaker may be scheduled. While we will do our best to notify you in advance, there is always the possibility of a last minute simcha. If this is the case, we will work with both families to help coordinate co-sponsorship for that Shabbat kiddish.

## Seating

In the Sanctuary, the first two rows to the left of the *shulchan* are reserved for the immediate family of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah (this will be reviewed during the rehearsal). The guests of the family are invited to sit with the rest of the congregation on a first come first served basis. Please be aware and respect that Shabbat regulars who attend our service each week have seats in the sanctuary to which they are accustomed.

## Proper Dress for Your Guests

Beth El means “House of God” and should be treated accordingly. Therefore, we expect that your guests will be dressed appropriately and modestly. We ask that you inform your family and guests, especially those who are given honors and are coming to the bimah, of the expected proper attire. For those receiving any honors, please note **our dress code**:

**Men: No jeans; jacket, and tie preferred.** No tennis or running type shoes. Kippah for all men, and Tallit for all Jewish men.

**Women: Modest dress.** No mini skirts, jeans, spaghetti straps or other clothing allowing the woman to have bare shoulders.

**Boys: No jeans; jacket, and tie preferred.**- No t-shirts, No shorts, No tennis or running type shoes

**Girls: Modest dress;** No jeans, No mini skirts, No t-shirts, No shorts, No tennis or running type shoes- girls shoulders must be covered.

### Please advise your guests ahead of time about proper attire.

Please accept these guidelines in a positive spirit for they are designed to enhance the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. Attention should not be drawn away from your child to people who are wearing clothing designed to attract attention or that demonstrate a casual attitude towards the worship service.

### Inviting Classmates, Teachers, and Others...

*When preparing your guest list, it is our policy that all students in your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah class are invited to the ceremony and party.* These are students with whom your child has been studying with for at least a year, if not longer. They are the children your child will continue to see in Synagogue and USY programs. We will provide a class list upon request. Being left out at this age can be a trying and hurtful experience. By inviting the entire class, you are demonstrating the value of Jewish community.

Your child's teachers have been an important part of his/her development. We encourage you to invite those individuals who have worked with your child, over the years, including both Jewish and secular teachers as well as tutors, counselors, school administrators, and other special people in your child's life.

*Rabbi Elazar ben Shamu'a taught:  
The reverence for your teacher should be  
as great as your reverence for God.*

— Pirkei Avot 4:15

## APPENDIX

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### Important Contact Information

Congregation Beth El  
858.452.1734

For all communications, please contact the Rabbinic Office. Hours are  
Mon-Thurs 9:00 am - 5:00 pm and Friday 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Rabbi Ron Shulman.....	858.452.1734 x227	rshulman@cbe.org
Rabbi Avi Libman.....	858.452.1734 x228	rabbiavi@cbe.org
Rabbinic Office and Life Cycle Event Coordinator-Michele Alexandria.....	858.452.1734 x225	michele@cbe.org
Director of Administration-Jason Lobenstein.....	858.452.1734 x229	jason@cbe.org

### *B'nei Mitzvah Tutors*

Hannah Anbar	hganbar@hotmail.com	858-247-5147
Jessie Birnbaum	jessie.birnbaum18@gmail.com	619-405-9740
Sharone Yedid	mommysharone@yahoo.com	858-231-6886
David Lipsitz	david@cbe.org	858-952-4132

\* B'nei Mitzvah tutors are not employees of Congregation Beth El. Private arrangements must be made with the tutors. Congregation Beth El is not responsible for enforcing or mediating any arrangements with a private tutor



## Congregation Beth El Shabbat Service Honors

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Bar/t Mitzvah Date \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation Beth El is happy for you to celebrate your simḥa at our Shabbat services by offering you the privilege of choosing family members or close friends who will be honored during the reading of the Torah. For Aliyot to the Torah, a Hebrew name should be given in this form: *Moshe (first name) ben (son of) Avraham (father's Hebrew name) v' Sarah (mother's Hebrew name) or Miriam (first name) bat (daughter of) Avraham v' Sarah (father's and mother's Hebrew name)*. Our rabbis can help you identify these names. Please be sure that all of your honorees can read the Hebrew blessings fluently. We can provide the Hebrew with English transliteration to aid in preparation.

**Tallit Presentation:** Parent(s)

**Open and Close Ark before Torah Service:** Parent(s)

**Aliyot: Please select one or two individuals for each Aliyah who are above the age of 13.**

*(Often grandparents, aunts/uncles, older siblings, and other relatives or close friends)*

- A. English Name \_\_\_\_\_  
English Name \_\_\_\_\_  
**Hebrew Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Hebrew Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Relationship** \_\_\_\_\_
- B. English Name \_\_\_\_\_  
English Name \_\_\_\_\_  
**Hebrew Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Hebrew Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Relationship** \_\_\_\_\_
- C. English Name \_\_\_\_\_  
English Name \_\_\_\_\_  
**Hebrew Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Hebrew Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Relationship** \_\_\_\_\_

*(Usually the Parent's)*

D. English Name \_\_\_\_\_  
English Name \_\_\_\_\_  
**Hebrew Name** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Hebrew Name** \_\_\_\_\_

Bar/t Mitzvah's English Name \_\_\_\_\_  
**Hebrew Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Hagba'ah-** \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Adult who lifts the Torah)*

**Gelilah-** \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Person(s) who wrap the Torah)*

**Prayer for Country:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Please select someone to read this English Prayer)*

**Open and Close Ark after Torah Service:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Family and/or Friend)*

Please make us aware of special family considerations, or requests:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please see that all English Names are spelled correctly. Thank you.

**Please email this form - TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO YOUR CHILD'S BAR/BAT MITZVAH, to Michele Alexandria, the Rabbinic Office and Life Cycle Event Coordinator, at [michele@cbe.org](mailto:michele@cbe.org)**

## Guidelines for *B'nei Mitzvah* Parents' Prayer

Just before your son or daughter comes forward to the Torah for his or her Maftir Aliyah, we invite you to offer a brief and personal Parents' Prayer in their honor. This is a special and often emotional moment. Occasionally, parents choose not to speak, preferring a more private expression of their feelings. You may choose whether to offer a public or private prayer and we have included guidelines below.

Please note the following guidelines for your Parents' Prayer:

- a. The content of your prayer is an expression of gratitude. Please reflect on your child's character and special spirit rather than recount his or her many activities or accomplishments.
- b. Less is more! In sensitivity to the flow of our service and your child's comfort, **limit your total prayer to 200 words**, please!
- c. We rabbis hope you can appreciate our request to review your prayer prior to your family's celebration. In that way, you and we can know we achieved our goals for this experience. We're also happy to help you craft your prayer, if you would like assistance.

## **B'nei Mitzvah Checklist:**

*For scheduling and assistance with all of these listed below, please contact our Rabbinic Office and Life Cycle Event Coordinator: Michele Alexandria at: [michele@cbe.org](mailto:michele@cbe.org) or call 858-452-1734 ext. 225*

**Speech Meetings with the Rabbi:** (3-4 months before the B'nei Mitzvah )schedule your student's speech preparation meetings with the rabbi.

**B'mei Mitzvah Rehearsal:** the rehearsal is scheduled during the week prior to your child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The rehearsal will be scheduled when the speech meetings are scheduled.

### **Photography and Videography:**

Photography and Videography are not permitted in the sanctuary on Shabbat. Photos can be taken immediately after your Bar or Bat Mitzvah rehearsal in the Stone Family Sanctuary.

**Shabbat Honors:** (2 weeks before) please email Michele the completed B'nei Shabbat Honors Form including the Hebrew names and parent's Hebrew names for all of those who are receiving an Aliyah. See page 9/10.

### **Tree of Life Leaf:**

To commemorate your student's Bar or Bat Mitzvah you may purchase a Tree of Life Leaf. Please fill out the Tree of Life Leaf Order Form and submit to Michele.

### **Bar Mitzvah Weekend Celebration:**

The Beth El Campus is available to your family for a private Friday night Shabbat dinner, community Shabbat lunch, after services, and a private Saturday evening party. For more information, please refer to the B'nei Mitzvah Celebration Guide, and contact Michele.

We all look forward to assisting you during this special time.  
If you have questions, please contact:

Michele Alexandria  
Rabbinic Office and Life Cycle Event Coordinator  
Congregation Beth El  
858-452-1734  
[michele@cbe.org](mailto:michele@cbe.org)

*Mazal Tov*