

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Manual
A Personal How-To Guide

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Beth Sholom Temple
Fredericksburg, VA



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Mazal Tov!

You and your family are about mark the start of your first phase of being a Jewish adult.

This manual provides the requirements and customary practices at Beth Sholom Temple for our Bat and Bar Mitzvah students and families

While a Jew becomes a Jewish adult and the daughter/son of the commandment (the literal translation of “Bat/Bar Mitzvah”) when they reach the proper age, we typically hold a service to recognize this life cycle milestone for several reasons.

1. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah is publicly acknowledging their acceptance of these responsibilities, in effect publicly declaring they are Jewish
2. The Bat/Bar Mitzvah demonstrates the ability to act as a Jewish adult by showing fluency with our liturgy and an understanding of our core teachings
3. Family and friends can recognize and celebrate this milestone
4. The BST community can acknowledge and celebrate this event

These requirements and practices have been developed with the approval of the Chairs of the Ritual Committee and Education Committee and approved by the Vice President for Religious Life and Education

NOTES ON USAGE:

Beth Sholom Temple welcomes people of all gender identities and gender expressions. Hebrew is a gender specific language and so for convenience this manual will use the traditional term “**Bar Mitzvah**” from here on to make reading easier. This manual also uses the neutral pronoun “they” and its derivatives, a practice becoming more common in secular mass media. Our view of male, female, and non-binary students is equal.

Requirements & Other Items

1. **Worship Service:** The Bar Mitzvah will lead the congregation in a Shabbat morning service to include:

- Read from Torah (at least 3 aliyot, each typically at least 3-4 verses) and recite the blessings before and after reading from Torah and offer a teaching on the week's Torah "Parsha" (portion) called a "D'Var Torah" (literally "Word of Torah").
 - Note: The Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) publishes a booklet for each Torah portion, which includes Hebrew and English translations of both Torah and Haftarah portions for each designated Parsha. Once you know which Parsha is aligned with the date of your Bar Mitzvah, you should ask the Office Manager to order it for you. The booklet also includes some interpretive background for each Parsha which will help with preparing the D'Var Torah.
- Lead the congregation in Hebrew prayer during the Shabbat prayer service (as detailed later in this manual)
- Name Statement (explained later in this manual)
- Friday night (optional): Many Bar Mitzvah families choose to host the Friday night service Oneg. Service starts promptly at 7:30 PM.

2. **Pre-ceremony**

The student must have been enrolled and participated in Jewish religious education.

The student must have participated in Hebrew School beginning in the third grade and achieved proficiency in reading and understanding Hebrew prayers and blessings, as evaluated by the Rabbi or Hebrew schoolteachers.

The student must have successfully completed all Religious and Hebrew School studies and requirements and should have an attendance record of 75 percent or better in both Religious and Hebrew School studies. Attendance at 6 Friday & 9 Saturday Services (from 6th through 7th grade)

The Mitzvah Project (explained in more detail later in this manual) is normally completed prior to the ceremony, but it may still be a work in progress.

The family and /or the students must be members in good standing of Beth Sholom Temple and be current on all dues, fees, and assessments. Any final/ outstanding obligations should be paid no later than three months prior to the date of the ceremony. (NOTE: No one will ever be excluded due to financial status. Please contact the Temple Treasurer if there are special circumstances that need to be considered)

Shabbat Service Invitations: The Shabbat service is, of course, open to all but it is customary to send invitations to those you would like to have share this life-cycle event. It is customary to

send an invitation to each member of the Hebrew Hay class. Please be aware that not all students in Hebrew Hay class are the same ones in the religious studies class. It is also customary to extend invitations to the Board of Directors.

Social Event Invitations: If there is a luncheon in the Social Hall immediately following the service and Kiddush, it is courteous and customary to invite all service attendees. Invitations to any evening social activity are purely at the discretion of the family, but please reflect our values and be inclusive to all classmates.

3. The B'nai Mitzvah Project

**“One should use one’s face, hands and feet to honor one’s Creator” –
Tosefta Brachot 4:1**

Each student is required to complete a Mitzvah Project. Before starting, the student must get approval from the Rabbi and the Vice-president for Religious Life and Education.

Begin with having the Bar Mitzvah student ask themselves a few questions that will help focus the student on creating a Mitzvah Project that will be personally meaningful to the student and will have a positive impact on the community.

- What are my interests?
- What do I like to do?
- How can I take what I am interested in and do something that will make the world a better place for others?
- What bothers me?
- What makes me so upset I wish there was something I could do to change it?

4. Day Of Service

Dress Standards: Based on Jewish views of respect for the sanctity of the service, a Bar Mitzvah should wear a dress shirt and tie. Jacket is optional. A Bat Mitzvah should wear “business attire” including dresses or skirts. Prom-type dresses and “spaghetti strap” clothing are not appropriate in a worship service.

Kippot: Often the Bar Mitzvah family will provide Kippot for the congregants and guests of the ceremony. These, as well as other items that the family may wish to purchase, can be ordered through the BST Gift Shop.

Tallit: During the Ceremony, parents or another special person typically present the Bar Mitzvah with a Tallit to wear during the ceremony and to use during worship services as a Jewish adult.

Programs: The family can provide a program available to guests of the ceremony. Sample programs are available. The pamphlet can have introductory information describing the ceremony and the various ritual items of the Sanctuary. The rest of the booklet may contain the order of the Morning Service along with the people who are participating in the service.

Kiddush: The family's responsibilities also include providing for and setting up a Kiddush for the congregation following the service. At a minimum, the Kiddush will include wine, juice, and challah.

The service starts promptly at **10:00am**.

Here are some other things to think about...not in lieu of a Mitzvah Project!!!

- For a luncheon or dinner, have centerpieces that can be donated.
- Have guests bring items to donate to a cause. For example, on invitations ask that guests bring canned items or gently used items to donate to either homeless shelters (e.g., blankets or jackets) or head start schools (e.g., used children's books).
- Purchase a Leaf for the Tree of Life in the Lobby of Beth Sholom Temple in honor of your child.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Covenant & Process

1. Covenant

Date: _____

“I agree to follow the process and guidelines of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah program. My family and the BST community will teach, model, and guide for me the process of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah as I commit to learning and fulfilling my obligations to my community.”

Bar/Bat Mitzvah: _____

“I/We agree to follow the process and guidelines of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah program. I/We will teach, model, and guide for my/our child the process of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah and fulfill my/our obligations to my/our child and my/our community.”

Parent(s): _____

“We agree to follow the process and guidelines of this Bar/Bat Mitzvah manual. We agree to teach, model, and guide for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah the process of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah and fulfill our obligations to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and their family.”

Rabbi/Teacher: _____

2. 1+ Year Before Service

Receive Bar Mitzvah date and portion

*Date: _____

*Torah Portion: _____

Prayer Goals:

* Hebrew Aleph

* Hebrew Bet

* Hebrew Gimmel

Received Torah/Haftarah booklet

Set date for first family meeting with Rabbi or Lay Leader

* Date and time of first family meeting:

* _____

Service Honor form given to family

3. 9 Months Before Service

Schedule lessons with Torah tutor

*Lessons Begin: _____

*Instructor: _____

Mitzvah Project Scheduled with stakeholders (e.g., Religious School Principal) for school activity

*Project: _____

Scheduled D'var Torah and Service Prep Sessions with Rabbi or Lay Leader

4. 3 Months Before Service

Check-Up Meeting with Rabbi/Service Leader, Hebrew Hey Teacher, and Torah Tutor

*Date and Time: _____

Schedule Service Rehearsal

*Date and Time: _____

5. 2 Months Before Service

Submit pictures and short bio for blog and Shabbat Brochure to Hebrew Hay teacher

6. 1 Month Before Service

- Service Honor form returned to Service Leader
- Complete D'var Torah
- Completion of Mitzvah Project or review of progress

7. Post-service

As Jewish adults, B'Nai Mitzvot will be asked to read their Torah Parsha each year in the cycle of the annual readings of Torah (providing that it is not the same Parsha as a current Bar Mitzvah) and will have opportunities to participate in future prayer services and honors on the Bimah (e.g., High Holy Days, Shabbat, etc.)

D'var Torah Guide For Students

1. Introduction

In this paragraph you introduce us to your Torah portion and/or Haftarah portion

Example: "Shabbat Shalom. My Torah portion is Parashat Bereshit and I read from the Book of Genesis, Chapter 1, verses 1 – 12 which can be found in the red Torah books in front of you on pages x - z."

2. Summary

In this paragraph, which is usually 5 – 7 sentences long, you summarize your Torah and/or Haftarah portion. You do not need to be too specific: general details are perfectly fine.

3. The Key Part – What Interested You

In this paragraph, which might also be 5 – 7 sentences long, you explain what you found most interesting from your Torah portion.

Example: "This morning, I want to focus on Genesis, chapter one, verse 7. I found this verse to be challenging as it describes God creating the second day, but unlike the other days of creation, God does not say that 'it was good.' This made me think about what it means to say that something we create is 'good.' What was different about day two? According to our Rabbis..."

4. How the Teaching Applies To Your Life or to the Jewish Community

In this paragraph, again about 5 – 7 sentences long, you explain how these verses that you just discussed apply to your life.

Example: "In my life, I try to think about the things I create and what I do. Is everything always good? If not, how could I do something better, how can I work to make sure that most of what I do is good and helps the world. However, if it turns out that it wasn't good, does this mean that it is a complete loss? Can I learn from this mistake? Perhaps this is what God wanted us to learn by not calling everything 'good.'"

5. Conclusion

In this paragraph, again about 4 – 6 sentences long, you summarize what you have learned and just taught the Congregation and either a) offer a challenge/charge, b) pose a further question for listeners to think about, or c) offer a blessing to the congregation.

Name Statement

**“A person has three names:
one that he is called by his father and mother;
one that people know him by,
and one that he acquires for himself.”**

Midrash - Kohelet Rabba

Immediately prior to being formally called to the Torah for their first Aliyah, each Bar Mitzvah will be asked to talk for a minute or two to explain their name. They can choose to focus on their English name, their Hebrew name, their middle name or their surname.

The purpose of this exercise is to compel the Bar Mitzvah to examine their own history. This short statement can be approached several ways. Some questions that can be explored include:

- If named after a late relative, why did their parents choose that relative? What was that person's history, where did they come from?
- If a family name is used, where did your family come from? Why?
- What is the meaning of their name? Does that meaning provide inspiration? Perhaps it tells us something about the giver of the name or creates aspirations.
- Who in Jewish history shared this name? What were the qualities of that person?

Shabbat Morning Honors List

Basic Information:

Family Name: _____

Mitzvah Child's Hebrew Name: _____

Date of Service: _____

Service Honors: (Please include relationship to family for all honors)

Giving of Tallit:

Ark Opening for taking out the Torah (Optional):

Name: _____

Passing of the Torah (Dor l'dor – translation: Generation to Generation)—Optional):

Names of Grandparents, Parents, and others involved in passing the Torah:

Aliyot: a minimum of 3, but more are fine; the final Aliyah is reserved for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah

1st Aliyah

English Name(s): _____

*Hebrew Name(s): _____

2nd Aliyah

English Name(s): _____

Hebrew Name(s): _____

3rd Aliyah

English Name(s): _____

Hebrew Name(s): _____

4th Aliyah – Bar/Bat Mitzvah

English Name: _____

Hebrew Name: _____

English Translations

*Names/Aliyot: _____

Hagbah:

*Name: _____

Gelilah:

*Name(s): _____

Prayer for Our Country:

Name: _____

Prayer for Israel:

*Name: _____

Ark Opening for returning Torah to the Ark:

*Name(s): _____

3rd Ark Opening

*Name(s): _____

Additional Comments:

Bar Mitzvah Shabbat Morning Service Framework

This represents the notional service framework and is used to plan a study path in our current Shabbat Morning Prayer Book. Additional prayers in English are normally added. Students are encouraged to seek out additional readings (English or Hebrew) that they find meaningful. The Hebrew Hay teacher and service leader will help the student integrate these into the service.

<u>Prayer</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Leader</u>	<u>English or Hebrew</u>
Mah Tovu	74	Student or song leader*	Hebrew
Asher Yatzar	76 or 77	Student	English with chatimah
Elohai Nishamah	78 or 79	Student	English with chatimah
Morning Blessings	80	Student	Hebrew
Torah Study Blessing	86		Hebrew
Eilu D'varim	88	Student or song leader	English
Ashrei	97	Student	Hebrew
Psalm 150	100	Student or song leader	Hebrew
Chatzi Kaddish	106	Student	Hebrew
Bar'chu	108	Student or song leader	Hebrew
Yotzeir Or	110	Student	Hebrew
Shema and V'ahavta	114-116	Student	Hebrew
Mi Chamocha	122	Student or song leader	English
Intro to Amidah	124	Student	English & Hebrew
Avot v'imahot	126	Student	Hebrew
G'vurot	128	Student	Hebrew
Kiddushah	130	Student	Hebrew
Torah Blessings**	250	Student	Hebrew
Haftarah Blessings**	254	Student	Hebrew

*Please note – A song leader or the student can lead these songs and prayers. If you would like a song leader present, please speak with the Hebrew Hey teacher and Rabbi.

**Students chant the Torah blessings and the selected Aliyot from the Torah Parsha. Students also chant the Haftarah blessings; the Haftarah reading itself may be chanted in Hebrew, read in Hebrew, or read in English.

Tutoring, Music and Service Leader

Tutors:

The tutoring process helps to ensure that the Bar Mitzvah is fully prepared for their day.

Torah Tutors: Reading and chanting from Sefer Torah requires special skills and practice not offered as part of our regular Hebrew curriculum. Bar Mitzvah families typically work with a Torah Tutor. Torah tutoring should begin 4-6 months prior to the ceremony. This will provide the Bar Mitzvah ample time to learn their Torah (and, if desired, their Haftarah as well). BST members who serve as Torah Tutors do so in their spare time. Their tutoring is outside the parameters of regular schooling. Most do not charge a fee for their efforts, but it is an accepted and expected practice that students and their families make a donation to BST or perhaps donate prayer books and/or chumashim to the Temple in lieu of a fee and in honor of their tutor. Families should simply ask their tutors if they prefer a fee for services or a donation in their honor. Most families have made a typical donation in honor of a tutor's service on the order of \$300. Families are encouraged to have this conversation directly with their child's tutor.

Some students require some extra teaching to complete the regular Hebrew curriculum as they approach their Bat/Bar Mitzvah ceremony. Families who wish to avail themselves of BST resources have several options including Hebrew teachers and older students. BST members who serve as Hebrew tutors do so in their spare time. Families should simply ask their tutors if they prefer a fee for services or a donation in their honor and any expected amounts should be clearly agreed at the start. A typical fee for Hebrew tutoring by an older student is \$10 per hour, but an experienced teacher may warrant a significantly higher fee.

The Hebrew Hay teacher can provide the names of potential Torah and Hebrew tutors.

Music:

Another joyful aspect of the Shabbat Morning Service is music. Bat/Bar Mitzvah families should attend other B'nai Mitzvah at BST to help decide the type of music desired.

Music can be provided by members of BST, family members or friends. Please contact them directly for more information. If you decide to hire a song leader, please have them contact the Rabbi or Service Leader so that they may coordinate in preparation of your Bat/Bar Mitzvah ceremony. All parties must work out in detail what music the song leader will provide and whether and how they will participate when the Bat/Bar Mitzvah leads the congregation.

Service Officiant:

The BST Rabbi will normally serve as the officiant at all Bar/Bat Mitzvah services. If the family wishes to have another officiant, such as an outside Rabbi or a qualified service leader, it must be approved by the BST Rabbi and the Board of Directors.

Helpful Tips & Frequently Asked Questions

Questions can be addressed to the Rabbi; the teacher of Hebrew Hay; or the Vice President for Religious Life and Education. Families of recent Bar/Bat Mitzvahs are also usually more than happy to talk about their experiences.

Q: How do we pick a date?

A: Working with the Rabbi teachers and the Vice President for Religious Life and Education, there are several considerations when selecting the date. Remember, the child will become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah when they come of age (13 for a boy; 12 for a girl). The service and celebration are the recognition of this milestone lifecycle event in a Jewish child's maturation to adulthood. Some things to consider:

- Birthday
- Torah portion
- Can't be on a major Jewish Holiday (e.g. Rosh Hashanah, Passover)
- Weather and other travel-related challenges for out-of-town guests
- Availability of synagogue and celebration venue

Q: What if my child can't master all that Hebrew?

A: Amazingly, they almost all do, even if they've struggled before this. If there are extenuating circumstances, a decision to proceed typically rests with the Rabbi. In the absence of a Rabbi, the Board of Directors will make the decision if the student does not meet the requirements detailed in this manual after discussion with Hebrew teachers and Torah tutors. Regular progress checks are important to make sure the student is on the right path. A service can be tailored to fit each student's abilities and circumstances.

Q: Can a service be postponed due to illness or family emergency?

A: Of course. With the exception of the Torah Parsha the student can easily handle a change. However, this will require assignment of a new Torah reading and a development of a new d'var Torah, so we should do our best to avoid last minute changes other than in truly severe circumstances.

Q: My spouse and half my family are not Jewish. Can they participate?

A: Definitely yes. We've had many non-Jewish parents, family, and friends participate. While some roles are reserved for those of Jewish faith, there are many opportunities to honor those who have supported the student on this journey.

Appendix: Social Event Resources and Venue Information

Beth Sholom Temple does not endorse any of the following businesses. These businesses and/or websites have been listed because members found them useful in the past. ***We strongly recommend that you speak with Temple members who have used these listings for their candid remarks.***

Invitations:

- Order custom printing or “borrow” an idea and make them yourself. Allow extra time for the printing of invitations. Send invitations out 6 weeks before event. For those with out-of-town guests, a “Save the Date” message or card may be helpful.
- Lydia’s (540) 373-7023 417 William Street Fredericksburg, Virginia
- Shelley Impressions (540) 310-0766
- Hallmark Stores or stationary stores
- <http://barmitzvah.invitations4less.com/>
- www.evite.com – Electronic and PAPER Invitations available

Kippot:

- Beth Sholom Temple Gift Shop
- www.kippah.com This website allows you to design your own Kippot. They also have tallit and benchers (prayer books for after meal blessings). 888-547-7247 888-kippahs
- Yofah Religious Articles 718-436-2669

Tallit:

- The Beth Sholom Temple Gift Shop
- Woven Gems – BST Member Diane Kowalski can create a personal Silk Prayer Shawl (540) 273-0914
- Elite Tallit www.elitetallit.com (678) 677-2556
- www.judaism.com
- www.alljudaica.com
- www.kippah.com

Reception Sites:

- Beth Sholom Temple Social Hall (PLEASE CONTACT TEMPLE OFFICE FOR CURRENT RENTAL FORM AND AGREEMENT DETAILS)
- Fredericksburg Expo Center
- Riverside Theater
- Various Local Hotels: Holiday Inn, Hilton Garden Inn, Marriott & Wingate Inn, Hospitality House

- Local Restaurants
- The Inn at the Olde Silk Mill 1707 Princess Anne Street 540-371-5666
- Belmont - Gari Melcher's Estate
- Function Room: Castiglia's Party Space (911 Charles St.)

Caterers (Not all offer kosher menus):

- Avalon Caterers (offers kosher and non-kosher catering) (202) 337-2000
- Caroline Street Caterers (540) 654-9180
- BST Member, Jim Swanson NOTE: Jim does not charge for his services, only for the cost of food & drink. However, it is customary to make a donation to BST in honor of Jim's generosity of spirit and time. A customary and accepted donation is on the order of \$200, although this varies depending on the level of preparation and number of guests.
- Aladdin Mediterranean Catering
- Georgetown Caterers
- www.aviglatt.com
- R & R Caterers (703) 451-2798
- Platters, cakes and pastries are also available from:

BJ's, Wegman's, Costco, Shopper's Food Warehouse & Wal-Mart

Decorations:

- BST Member, Stacy Moore of Moore Sweets and Balloons (540) 361-4422
- Oriental Trading Company www.orientaltrading.com
- Memorable Moments www.mmphotodjsax.com

Entertainment:

- Mix Masters DJ www.mixmastersdjs.com (540) 786-6655
- About Faces Entertainment (face painting, caricature artists, clowns, jugglers, etc.) 410-740-5417

Photography & Videography: Please note that NO flash photography is allowed during the service

- Kyle and Silvana Olson 703-347-4475
- BST Member, Karen Pearlman (540) 373-9699
- Memorable Moments www.mmphotodjsax.com
- Shutterbooth (photo booth) (804) 614-7220

Flowers: Several local florists can provide flowers for the Bimah and for centerpieces.

- Carolyn Helfrich (540) 371-5461
- Merryman's Florist, (540) 371-4567
- Achara Florist and Fine Gifts, (540) 720-0748

House Rules For Rental of Facilities (PLEASE CONTACT TEMPLE OFFICE FOR CURRENT RENTAL FORM AND AGREEMENT DETAILS)

Entertainment, in addition to music, should be appropriate for the Sabbath and the occasion. Any doubts as to propriety can be resolved with the Vice President for Religious Life and Education. It is the responsibility of the Bar Mitzvah family to communicate the proper standards of decorum to their guests.

The only equipment included for use with rental of the facilities are the Temple's tables and chairs. Equipment in excess of that maintained by the Temple must be supplied by the applicant at their own expense. Dishes and linens are available, on a rental basis, from an approved vendor.