



Ner Tamid Synagogue

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Handbook

To Be Distributed With:

- ✓ **Financial Obligations & Food Policies Handout**
- ✓ **Timeline**

Timeline

For clarity, see color coded timeline of events

Child Entering 6th Grade

- ✓ Schedule a date with the office and the rabbi for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. (Bring three potential dates to the rabbi for help choosing.)
- ✓ Sign off on Financial Obligations.

10-12 Months Before the Date

- ✓ Schedule a meeting between the child and the tutor. The child begins tutoring.
- ✓ Discuss any luncheon or party plans with office staff.
- ✓ Attend Shabbat services twice a month in preparation for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

2-4 Months Before the Date

- Finalize and notify the Ner Tamid Office of your plans for any Oneg, Kiddush or party.
- Schedule appointments with the child and the rabbi to prepare the D'var Torah.
- Parents acquire the *tallit*.
- Parents assign Honors and give the list to the rabbi.
- Parents prepare and print a Program (if desired).
- Parents decide if they wish to provide an enhanced Friday *Oneg* and/or Saturday *Kiddush* (see office).
- Parents contact the Photographer and office to schedule the Photography/Rehearsal for an afternoon prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Shabbat.
- Send anyone with an *aliyah* honor a copy of the Torah Blessings (appended to this Handbook) and ensure they are prepared to recite them.
- Send out invitations to your guests. ***It is required that you invite all students in the child's Ner Tamid class (both grades if applicable) and their families to the service, and all the children to a party.***

Standards and Requirements for Bar and Bat Mitzvah

- The Bar or Bat Mitzvah student must be Jewish according to the laws of Conservative Judaism. Please inform the rabbi if the child is adopted or if the birth mother isn't Jewish.
- The student must have completed the Ner Tamid Religious School or attended a Jewish Day School for at least two years. If this prerequisite has not been met, parents must meet with the religious school principal to work out alternative arrangements to bring the student up to the required standard.
- By booking a date through the office, the parents agree to the structure, style, and form of Ner Tamid's religious services, and its facility/party guidelines.
- Parents must meet all financial obligations, including required prepayments.

Choosing a Date

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony is an *affirmation* of the child's adult participation and responsibilities in the eyes of the community. It does not need to occur near the birthday. Choose a date that best allows your child to be properly prepared for, and shine in, their adult debut. Any time during the 13th year is fine, with the exclusion of July, August and major holidays, both secular and Jewish.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Preparation & Tutoring

The religious school teaches only selected prayers: leading the service requires additional tutoring and self-study. The child is encouraged to lead the entire service if they are able. Attending Saturday morning services *is* crucial reinforcement for learning to lead the service, if the student actively follows along, sings, and practices at home. Just being in the building does not lead to familiarity with the service. Attendance in Shabbat services also enhances the feeling of connection with the community, which strengthens the meaning of the ceremony and ensures that the Bat/Bat Mitzvah is not a “guest” to the community at his/her own ceremony.

Tutoring sessions are scheduled each week for 20-30 minutes either in person or virtually. Students should practice between sessions for 20 – 40 minutes, 4-5 times per week. Tutor and student are expected to be considerate of each other’s time, including being on time, being prepared, and teaching/learning respectfully. Cancellations/rescheduling should be arranged 48 hours in advance when possible. Bnei Mitzvah fees include up to 20 hours of tutoring. Extra hours can be added at the expense of the family. Bnei Mitzvah fees must be paid in order to begin tutoring.

Fiscal Responsibilities and Food Policies

Please read and sign the “Financial Obligations” contract.

Parties and Kiddush

Please speak with the office about *Kiddush* and parties. No inappropriate Shabbat activities may take place before Shabbat ends (approximately 45 minutes after sundown) on Saturday night on the grounds of Ner Tamid. ***It is required that you invite all students in the child's Ner Tamid class (both grades) and their families to the service, and all the children to a party if you have one.***

A spiritual note: the way you plan the celebratory events around the Bar/Bat Mitzvah should reflect the values of your family. What does your child *really* want? Is there a special hobby or interest of theirs that might become a theme for a simple celebration? If they do not have a large circle of friends, an expensive dance party may turn out to be an unpleasant memory. It is an important growing experience to discuss openly with the child that a middle ground between desires and financial reality is where we must live, and how we publicly present ourselves should reflect our spiritual values. The following are options that can be successful:

- ◆ Simple dessert snacks on Friday night, with a catered dairy lunch at the synagogue after services, with toasts by family and friends for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, with no party at all later on.
- ◆ Just the simple dessert snacks for Friday night *and* Saturday afternoon, and rent an inexpensive venue for a party on Saturday night. The party could start at 7:30 or 8:00 with just cake and dancing, and no catered dinner.
- ◆ Do not have any party or catered meals – or have a simple bagel and cake spread for Shabbat lunch-- and the child might instead receive a special gift, normally financially out-of-range

such as March of the Living or another teen trip to Israel over the summer!

- ◆ One might also choose to make invitations on one's own computer using special cardstock.

Pictures and Videotaping

Photographs cannot be taken on Shabbat. Typically, all Bar/Bat Mitzvah photos are taken on an afternoon prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah weekend at a “dress rehearsal.” Please arrange the exact time with the rabbi and your photographer, and ensure that any relatives whom you'd like to be in the photos arrive in time for the rehearsal. Book two hours for this photo session.

Videotaping is not permitted on Shabbat. Like photography, videotaping is an act of creation.

However, our security cameras record the event, and the office staff can pull a keepsake recording for the family.

Tallit

The ceremony of becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah marks the first official occasion in which a boy or girl wears a *tallit* during prayer as a symbol of their entrance into adulthood within the Jewish community. Customarily, parents present the *tallit* to their child on the *bimah* during the Shabbat morning service. Parents should purchase, or pass on, a *tallit* as part of preparations. *Tallitot* come in different sizes: keep in mind that your child is still growing, and so it's better to purchase one that they can grow into.

Program

Many families choose to hand out a program on the Saturday morning of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. A program can explain to guests what to expect in the service, what decorum is appropriate (*kippot* for all men, *tallitot* for adult Jewish men and [optional for] women, no cell phones, etc.), and to whom the Honors are assigned. Our website has a sample program in electronic form.

Honors for Non-Jews

Non-Jews may offer English readings. Ask the rabbi for options. Also acceptable are The Prayers for our Country and for Peace and English readings of your choosing from outside the siddur. In certain circumstances, non-Jews may have other honors, like opening the ark. The rabbi will discuss with you.

Candy

Some families choose to have candy thrown onto the *bimah* to begin adulthood with a taste of sweetness. If so, the family is expected to purchase and distribute the candy, which must have a *hekhsher* and should be soft. It would be tossed following the haftarah.

Service Length

Many parents are anxious to please their guests by figuring out ways to shorten the service. This is an unnecessary anxiety because best efforts will save only ten minutes. The choreography of relatives and friends being honored publicly, along with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's and parent(s)' presentations, simply take time, and shortening them by a minute here and there will not make a difference to guests. There is no reason for a parent not to speak simply to save minutes. The prayers for Israel and for Our Country are optional, and four or five minutes might be shaved off if these prayers are eliminated at the parent(s)' discretion. Simply put, the service will begin at 9:30 and will end between Noon and 12:30.

The Service

Ner Tamid uses the prayer book *Siddur Lev Shalem*, presented to the student in religious school.

Friday night services last one hour. Participation by the family centers on a festive *Kiddush*.

The Saturday morning service begins at 9:30 a.m. Immediate family must arrive early (by 9:15 a.m.) and are advised to be seated in the first row of the sanctuary with other relatives seated behind them. The Tallit Presentation typically begins before 10am and the Torah Service typically begins *between* 10:00 and 10:30. **Everyone on the bimah should be wearing a head covering.**

1. Introductory Blessings and Psalms: *Birkhot Ha-Shachar and Pesukei De-Zimra*.
2. *Shacharit*: The Bar/Bat Mitzvah child may lead all or portions of this part of the service, which includes Barechu, Shema, Amidah, Kedushah, and Kaddish.
3. *Tallit* Ceremony: The *tallit* is presented to the child on the *bimah*. Parents may say a few words before the child reads the blessing. The parents then return to their seats.
4. Torah Service: At the beginning of the Torah Service, those honored with opening the ark ascend the *bimah* and take their places, and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, parents, and grandparents line up to the right of the ark. The rabbi will take the Torah and pass it from the grandparents to parents to Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Parents may say a few words during this time. Either the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, or a parent, will carry the scroll as the Bar/Bat Mitzvah leads the Torah procession around the sanctuary.
5. *Aliyot*: Each *aliyah* is called to the Torah, individually, at the appropriate time. They recite the Torah blessings before and after each section is read. **Please provide a copy of the blessings in advance to each relative honored, and confirm they are prepared to publicly recite them.** The 7th *aliyah* is typically reserved for the parents at which time the parents may also say a few words. Two *aliyot* are reserved for members of the congregation who are observing *Yahrzeit* and are chosen by the rabbi.
6. Speeches by the president, parents, and the rabbi.
7. Maftir: This is the final *aliyah* and is reserved for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
8. *Hagbah* and *Gelilah*: The child waits on the *bimah* as the Torah is lifted and dressed.
9. *Haftarah*: The Bar/Bat Mitzvah chants their *haftarah* and its blessings.
10. Readings: Either outside readings or the Prayers for Country and Israel are recited by honorees.
11. *Dvar Torah*: The Bar/Bat Mitzvah reads their speech, slowly and loudly.
12. The *Musaf* Service.



Ner Tamid Bar/Bat Mitzvah Honors List

- ✓ Ner Tamid distributes two aliyot to those observing a yahrzeit, leaving you **four aliyot** to give in addition to the parents Aliyah (7th Aliyah) and the B'nei Mitzvah Aliyah (maftir Aliyah).
 - ✓ This honor can only be taken by Jews.
 - ✓ Have your honorees practice reciting the blessing. Recording and text available upon request.
 - ✓ If you or your honorees cannot determine Hebrew names, the rabbi can say “friends” or “family” in Hebrew.

Aliyah	ENGLISH NAME	HEBREW NAME (+ father and mother); indicate if a Kohein or Levi (they will know)	Relationship to the Bar/t Mitzvah
<i>Example</i>	<i>Steven and Anna Bernstein</i>	<i>Shmuel ben Avraham v'Rivka Channah bat David v'Sarah</i>	<i>Uncle Aunt</i>
#3			
#4:			
#5:			
#6:			
#7:	PARENT(S)		PARENT(S)
Maftir	BAR/T MITZVAH CHILD		BAR/T MITZVAH CHILD
ALTER-NATE			

“CHAIN OF RECEIVING THE TORAH” (page 168)

Family members handing down the Torah through the generations to the Bar/t Mitzvah.

Also specify one additional person to open the ark on the left side at this time.

E.g. “Grandmother Sarah to Grandfathers Joe & Bob to Linda to Mark to Joey with little sister Beth opening the ark on the left.”

Torah Lifter (*magbi'a/magbihah*) – a strong person, preferably experienced:

_____ (Names & relationship to Bar/t Mitzvah)

Torah Dresser (*golel/golelet*) – often related to the lifter. Puts on the Torah belt, cover, & adornments:

_____ (Name & relationship to Bar/t Mitzvah)

Additional English Readings: Non-Jews are welcome to readings and ark openings:

A Reading Suggested by the rabbi [Optional]:

_____ (Name[s] and relationship to Bar/t Mitzvah)

Prayer for Our Country or Alternative Prayer for Our Country [optional] (page 177):

_____ (Name and relationship to Bar/t Mitzvah)

Prayer for the State of Israel [optional], Hebrew or English (page 178):

_____ (Name and relationship to Bar/t Mitzvah)

Open/Close ark (page 184), 2 people or a family:

_____ (Names and relationship to Bar/t Mitzvah)

FRIDAY NIGHT HONORS:

Depending on the timing of sundown, who will be doing the candle lighting? Recommended options: 1) all women of all generations from the family, along with the child; 2) all grandparents and the child; 3) nuclear family.

Friday night is an appropriate time for grandparents to make their remarks. Who will be doing so?