

Message from the Congregation

When one of our students becomes a bar or bat mitzvah, it is an important event, not only for the student, but for their family and for our entire congregation. The student has dedicated many years to study and preparation to take their place as a participant in the Jewish life of the community.

Beit Haverim takes great pride in the young men and women who become b'nai mitzvah and who are able to lead our worship service, read or chant Torah and Haftarah, deliver a d'var Torah, and complete a mitzvah project. The skills our students develop allow them to participate actively in synagogue life in high school, college and beyond. We hope that the students and their families will find the experience enriching and meaningful so that they will develop a lifelong commitment to Judaism, and a confident Jewish faith.

As you and your family prepare for your bar or bat mitzvah, it is particularly important to attend Shabbat worship services on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings. As a family, you will become familiar with the prayers and traditions of the congregation. As well, you will become more fully a member of the community. Please remember, it is especially meaningful to attend the b'nai mitzvah ceremonies of your classmates.

Our community grows as we support each other in this important rite of passage.

Congratulations from Beit Haverim!

A History of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Ceremonies

All societies recognize a moment in life that separates childhood from adulthood—the age when an individual assumes his or her religious and communal responsibilities to the society in which he or she lives. Like other such traditions, the ceremonies connected with becoming a bar/bat mitzvah at the age of thirteen evolved over time. It has always been viewed as one moment in the process of spiritual growth and commitment to the Jewish people.

In the Talmudic period, boys came “of age” at thirteen plus one day and girls at twelve years plus one day. The Talmud records that during the time of the Second Temple (520 B.C.E. – 70 C.E.), it was traditional for Sages to bless a child who has completed his first fast day at the age of twelve or thirteen. In Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers, second century C.E.) it is written, “At thirteen one is ready to do mitzvot”. By the time the Talmud was completed in the sixth century C.E., boys of thirteen years plus one day had assumed full responsibility for performing the mitzvot, hence the term bar mitzvah, “son of the commandment.” This also has legal ramifications: these boys were now counted in a minyan and could act as legal witnesses. There was no formal ceremony, only a public blessing by the father who stated that he was no longer responsible for the sins of the son.

The early bar mitzvah ceremony consisted of blessing and reading the last section of the weekly portion of the Torah, the maftir, meaning the extra reading, since the boy was not a bar mitzvah until after the service and reading the Haftarah portion. The most important part of the rite was a d'rasha or d'var Torah, a sermonette on the Torah or Haftarah portion. Since the bar mitzvah was assuming adult responsibilities, he was expected to show his understanding of these responsibilities to his family, and, more importantly, to the community. It wasn't until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that we find records of a bar mitzvah being invited to lead part of the worship service.

A public ceremony in celebration of a girl becoming a bat mitzvah, “daughter of the commandment” did not come into being in North America until 1922. Dr. Judith Kaplan-Eisenstein, the daughter of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, blessed and read the Torah portion from a book “at a respectable distance” from the Torah scroll. The regular celebration of girls becoming b'not mitzvah, came into prominence in Reform congregations particularly in the second half of the 20th century and is identical to the ceremony for a bar mitzvah.

The rite of confirmation originated in the Reform movement in Germany in 1810 and included girls in 1817. Since it was felt that a thirteen year old was too young to understand the precepts of Judaism, the celebration of a boy becoming a bar mitzvah was dropped in favor of confirmation, which was held at the age of sixteen or seventeen because that was deemed a more mature age to assume

the responsibilities of Judaism. Today, most congregations hold both ceremonies.

People love to celebrate joyous occasions, and becoming a bar/bat mitzvah is certainly no exception. However, unlike weddings at which we are commanded to rejoice with bride and groom, the bar/bat mitzvah has no such mandate. In early years, the celebrations varied from a simple Kiddush of wine, brandy and cake following the service to more elaborate meals for family and friends. The Rabbis urged families not to have elaborate celebrations and always to fulfill the mitzvah of providing for the poor. The d'rashah was delivered by the bar/bat mitzvah some time during the celebration in order to emphasize its religious aspects. Gifts were generally limited to books, or religious items, or "sermon gifts" which were small amounts of money given as thanks for the sermonette. Among Moroccan Jews, this money was given to the boy's teacher.

Historically, bar/bat mitzvah has been viewed as the formal acknowledgment of a young person by acceptance of the obligations to family and community as a responsible Jew. It was and should continue to be the beginning of a lifetime of study, prayer, and a commitment to share the obligations and destiny of the Jewish people.

Keeping the Bar and Bat Mitzvah in Perspective

- **Bar/Bat Mitzvah is about the acceptance of responsibility.** It is more than a personal passage into adulthood. It is about taking your place as a member of the Jewish community.
- **The Torah is the center of Judaism.** Torah is at the center of our lives as Jews. The Torah is the testimony of our people's encounter with God. And however you interpret those events in the wilderness of Sinai some three millennia ago, what cannot be dismissed is that our ancestors have embraced this sacred legacy. This is why the first mitzvah we expect our children to fulfill is to stand at the Torah.
- **Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a community observance.** It is not by coincidence that we choose to hold this initial ceremony in public. To be a Jew is to live within a covenantal relationship – not only with God but with other Jews as well. Bar/bat mitzvah marks the entry of the child as a full-fledged member of the community. The awarding of an *aliyah*, “being called to the Torah”, is a gift from the Jewish people. For this reason, the marking of the child's coming of age takes place in the synagogue—the communal home.
- **Try to think of the reception that follows not as a separate event but as a continuation of the celebration.** In fact, Judaism has a formal name for the meal after the bar/bat mitzvah: it is a *s'udat mitzvah*. The meal is in honor of the performance of a mitzvah. It, too, is a sacred gathering. This is not to say that it must be solemn; it is to say, however, that the spirit of the morning's celebration should be perpetuated through the performance of mitzvot. The recitation of the blessings and the setting aside of a portion of one's bounty for the poor demonstrate that the morning's celebration was not an isolated event but is rather connected to all that follows.
- **The meaning of becoming a bar/bat mitzvah is enduring only if it takes place within a context of continued Jewish growth.** Being a bar/bat mitzvah is not the experience of a lifetime. It is lifetime experience – a state of being that remains with us throughout our lives. Indeed, the true measure of *performance* comes not on the day one becomes a bar/bat mitzvah but in the days that follow. Becoming a bar/bat mitzvah should be thought of as a Jewish “commencement,” marking not an end point but a beginning – a beginning of a lifetime of doing mitzvot, a beginning of a lifetime of learning. As such, it is our firm belief that the bar/bat mitzvah celebration is validated and enhanced by a commitment to continue religious education and participation.

Requirements, Expectations, Process

- **Membership:** In order for a child to become a bar/bat mitzvah at Beit Haverim, you and your family must be members of our congregation.
- **Fee:** The cost of the bar/bat mitzvah is \$510. This fee covers costs associated with the bar/bat mitzvah day, as well as bi-weekly meetings with the Rabbi beginning about six months prior to the ceremony. Religious School tuition, Hebrew classes and tutoring are not included in the fee. Please see our school registration form for these costs.
- **Religious Education:** The program begins with attendance in our Religious School for a minimum of three years as well as three years in our Hebrew program.
- **Services:** Students in our Religious School should attend services at least once a month during the year prior to a bar/bat mitzvah. In addition, we encourage you to attend the b'nai mitzvah services of other members in our congregation as well as High Holy Day and other festival services.
- **Mitzvah Project:** Each student is required to engage in *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, by developing and implementing a hands-on mitzvah project. Students are free to choose their project with the guidance of their family. Mitzvah projects should start six to twelve months prior to the bar/bat mitzvah.
- **Tutoring:** Six months to one year prior to the scheduled date of the celebration, depending on the needs of the student, the student will start tutoring. Please contact the office for names of tutors.
- **A Mentor for You:** To help guide you through the ins and outs of preparing for the bar/bat mitzvah, Beit Haverim has identified several "mentors." These members of the congregation have gone through this process themselves and will answer any questions you have such as, "how do I lock up the church when we're done?", "Where do I put the mitzvah project notice," etc. There are a lot of details that these mentors can help you through. Our mentors include: Dena Gutterman and Alan Cohen. Feel free to contact them any time with questions.

What Does a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Do?

A bar/bat mitzvah participates in the Shabbat morning service in three ways: being a *sh'liach tzibur*, “leader of worship,” reciting from the Torah and the Haftarah, and by offering a “*d’var Torah*” or teaching on the week’s Torah portion.

Sh’liach Tzibur

One of the oldest and most prestigious roles in the synagogue is to be the *sh’liach tzibur*. Literally, the “representative of the community,” the *sh’liach tzibur* leads the congregation in prayer. The student will join with the Rabbi in this sacred role.

Most of the Hebrew prayers have been learned in Hebrew class. The basic Hebrew prayers expected of a bar/bat mitzvah are:

- * *Candle Blessings*
- * *Kiddush*
- * *HaMotzi*
- * *Bar’Chu*
- * *Yotzer*
- * *Sh’ma/Va’ahavta/L’ma-an Tizk’ru*
- * *Mi’chamocho*
- * *Avot-imahot*
- * *G’vurot*
- * *K’dusha*
- * *Chatzi Kaddish*
- * *Kaddish Ya’tom*
- * *Aleynu*
- * *Tallit Blessing*
- * *She’hechiyanu*
- * *Torah Blessings*
- * *Haftarah Blessings*

K’riat Hatorah & Haftarah

The student will assume the role of the *baal(at) k’riah*, “Torah reader,” for the day. This entails reading from the week’s Torah portion.

The Torah is unvocalized, which means it is written without vowels or accents. The ability to read this unvocalized text is taught in the private tutoring sessions.

Following the reading of the Torah, the student will read the Haftarah or secondary biblical reading.

Friday Night

At Beit Haverim it is customary for the bar/bat mitzvah to lead the congregation in the Kiddush, HaMotzi and, along with their parents, the blessing of the Shabbat candles at Friday night service preceding the bar/bat mitzvah service. It is our custom that the other bar/bat mitzvah parents will supply cookies and cakes for the Oneg following the Friday night service.

Materials

As soon as you have chosen a date with Rabbi, please notify the office (office@beithav.org) so we can verify availability with LOUCC and order the study books. You will be provided with a copy of your Torah and Haftarah portions 6 months before your bar/bat mitzvah. This will contain the Hebrew text and English translations as well as helpful commentary.

Programs

Programs for the Saturday service are optional. If you wish to make programs, copies of other programs from the past are included in this packet. It is your responsibility to create, print, and copy them.

What Does a Parent Do?

Besides *kvelling*, overflowing with pride, your involvement as the parents include:

- Lighting and blessing Shabbat Candles on Friday night
- Offering words of blessing to your bar/bat mitzvah at the Saturday morning service
- Presenting your bar/bat mitzvah with a tallit, “prayer shawl”
- Passing the Torah

In addition, it is customary for the families of the classmates of the bar/bat mitzvah to provide the oneg at the Friday night service.

Who Else Can Participate in the Service?

Honors are an important part of the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony. Family and friends who are given honors cease to be observers and become active participants. A variety of opportunities for family and friends exist within the Friday night and Shabbat morning worship service.

These include but are not limited to:

Speaking Parts:

- Leading prayers in English or in Hebrew
- Reading or chanting an Aliya (prayer before and after a Torah portion)
- Presenting the tallit to the bar/bat mitzvah (this honor is not limited to the parents)

Non-speaking Parts:

- The passing of the Torah. When the ark is opened, the Torah is passed down from generation to generation into the arms of the bar/bat mitzvah.
- Hagba'a, lifting the Torah, and g'lilah, dressing the Torah
- Opening and closing of the ark. This honor is a wonderful way to include young children in the ceremony.

Use of the Building/Space

Special Equipment/Decorations

Depending upon your plans, you may need to have tables, linens, flowers, or other items delivered in anticipation of the Saturday event. Please make arrangements to get into the building on Friday afternoon.

Check with the LOUCC office (503-635-4348) to arrange to be let in. If no LOUCC personnel will be present at the time you need to set up, please let the Beit Haverim office know so arrangements can be made.

Sanctuary Usage

The sanctuary is not air conditioned, so if you have your bar/bat mitzvah services in hot weather, be aware that it may be warm, although morning services are typically mild.

Feel free to place floral arrangements on the bima, but not on the lectern as they will interfere with the Torah.

Kitchen Usage

LOUCC is a "green" congregation. They do not use paper or disposable products. You will see that the kitchen is well equipped with plates and silverware, as well as serving pieces. It is a good idea to check the kitchen during Religious School hours to see just what is available. You are welcome to use anything in the kitchen, provided you wash and replace it at the end of the event. You may feel free to use paper tablecloths. If you absolutely must use disposable paper products or plastic cups, you will need to bring trash bags to dispose of them immediately following your celebration and take the trash bags away from the church when you leave. We pride ourselves on leaving the kitchen and social hall in pristine condition after each service. This is one reason that we are able to share space so harmoniously. Thus it will be necessary for you to have one or more persons in place to help you clean up after the service(s).

Social Hall Usage

If you choose to have anything beside a simple Oneg after the Saturday service, please notify the office on how many hours you plan to be there so that no other events will be scheduled during that time. The Beit Haverim office will send you a building use agreement, which is a contract between you and LOUCC (copy attached). The agreement will spell out any details that you need to attend to, including the price for the room, janitorial fees, etc.

The social hall has a capacity of 200 people set by the fire marshal. The capacity for people seated at tables is 80. If you have more than 80 guests who will be eating, you can rent café tables for people to stand around. The two classrooms adjacent to the social hall can be used for tables and guests as well.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Are there restrictions on the age of the people I ask to participate in the service?

A: Yes. No one under the age of 13 should recite an Aliyah.

Q: May more than one person come up and recite a blessing together?

A: Yes.

Q: Can blessings be said in English?

A: Yes

Q: Will the Hebrew transliteration or English translation of the blessings be available?

A: Yes, a copy is on the table at the Bimah.

Q: Are Tallit and/or kippot (yarmulkes) required?

A: Such traditional articles are optional. If you wish to supply kippot as mementos of your event, you are welcome to do so. Beit Haverim has plenty of our own, so it is not necessary.

Q: What time do services begin and how long to they last?

A: Saturday morning services begin at 10:00 a.m. and last about two hours.

Q: What are the responsibilities for the Oneg Shabbat on Friday night and Kiddush on Saturday morning during the Shabbat when the student will become a bar/bat mitzvah?

A: It has become customary for the families of classmates of the bar/bat mitzvah to provide refreshments following the Friday night service. Traditionally, the bar/bat mitzvah family provides a Kiddush luncheon on Saturday morning following the service. However, this is only a suggestion. Please see the final page for additional options and ideas.

Q: Will audio or videotape be allowed at the service?

A: Yes, but only from an unobtrusive fixed position. No camera adjustments are to be made during the service.

Q: Can photographs be taken during the service?

A: If you wish to have photos taken, please remember that no pictures may be taken during the services, either Friday evening or Saturday morning. If you wish to set up a video camera on a stand, it may record during services, as long as nobody is running the camera.

If you wish to have photos taken before the Saturday service, plan to have your photographer arrive by 8:30 a.m. to give you enough time. Please contact the Beit Haverim office to make arrangements to be let in at this time.

Q: What will the congregation do for the bar/bat mitzvah?

A: The congregation presents the bar/bat mitzvah a Kiddush cup as well as certifications/gift certificates to the Mittleman Jewish Community Center, Oregon Jewish Museum, etc.

Q: What are the congregation's customs for donations in honor of the bar or bat mitzvah?

A: Families are encouraged to donate up to 3% of what is spent on the "social" aspects of the bar/bat mitzvah to a local, communal charity that is engaged in the provision of food or shelter to the needy of the general community. This is only a suggestion.

Celebration Variations

It is most common to have a celebration of some kind at a catering hall or restaurant directly after the Oneg Shabbat. Other models to consider include:

- Using the social hall at our place of worship for a luncheon for guests
- Having a luncheon at home
- Providing a luncheon for guests immediately after services and then having a party for the children (or adults and children) later that evening or the next day
- Inviting everyone to a mystery location and then involving them in a mitzvah project
- Taking a family trip to Israel
- Taking a family trip to the town in Europe (or any place in the world) from which your ancestors came and explore your Jewish roots together, and...
- Any combination of the above

Resources:

Adapted from The B'nei Mitzvah handbook: A Web Resource for Congregational Use-URJ

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