

Vehayey Brachah:
And you shall be a blessing...



TEMPLE BETH EL

**BAT/BAR MITZVAH HANDBOOK &
COMMUNITY GUIDELINES**

5772/ 2011-2012

Shalom B'nai Mitzvah families:

This letter is an introduction of the Bar and Bat Mitzvah process. Hopefully, this letter will further your understanding, ease some of your concerns, and help you to understand the way Temple Beth El understands this important life cycle event. Indeed, it will be a special moment for your young adult and the whole family, so we begin by wishing Mazel Tov to you on this upcoming joyous moment!

Traditionally the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is translated as “becoming” a woman or a man in Jewish life, however, as this custom has evolved, it is not merely so simple. This rite of passage is only one part of a process of becoming an adult, and specifically a Jewish adult. Truly it is the beginning. It is a rite of passage that conveys to the community and family that the individual is now a full member of the Jewish community with its responsibilities and freedoms.

There are 2 notifications to B'nai Mitzvah families. The first occurs at a parent meeting in the Gimmel year, typically in January. At this time, parents should expect to receive the assigned date of their child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah. During this meeting, the Rabbi will lead a conversation with the B'nai Mitzvah candidates and parents about the training process, requirements, and synagogue guidelines. The B'nai Mitzvah coordinator will also be in attendance to explain the procedure and structure of the tutoring sessions. A representative of the ritual committee will also be present to answer questions. Since the congregation asks that each child invite all of the B'nai Mitzvah class (Kitah Hai) to their Shabbat service, it is also an opportunity for the families to meet one another. An address and phone list of Kitah Hai will be provided at that meeting. The second will be via a scheduled private meeting with each B'nai Mitzvah family and will occur in the late fall of the Dalet year

Each family will have the opportunity to speak with the Rabbi individually to plan the specifics. It is our hope that each family will invite Rabbi Micah & family and the entire class to the individual B'nai Mitzvah events, and that each student will attend the other B'nai Mitzvot. It is also our hope that families can help one another with arranging these events. Please feel free to contact the Rabbi or to arrange an appointment with any questions or comments.

Good luck and Mazel Tov!!

B'shalom,

Rabbi Micah Becker-Klein,
Andrea Finestrauss, Principal

BAR and BAT MITZVAH OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS

B'nai Mitzvah date- the ritual committee with the approval of the board of directors uses the following guidelines for setting up a Bar/Bat Mitzvah dates:

-Dates may be assigned any time after the child's 13th birthday and will be based upon the secular birthdate with highest priority given to the oldest child.

In the event of a requested change of date, the committee will consider the following criteria:

- Avoiding Jewish holidays and close proximity to the High Holy Days.
- Striving for two Bar/Bat Mitzvah services per month. When this cannot be avoided, we will try to have at least three weekends between the next Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- Consideration of the congregation's overall schedule.

Educational Requirements to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah

1. A familiarity with Jewish history, customs, holidays and ethics.
2. The ability to read fluently and understand the meaning of major Hebrew prayers of the Sabbath services through classroom instruction and participation in weekly services. Regular attendance at both Shabbat evening and morning services is expected during the period of preparation. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend with their children.
3. The ability to chant portions of Torah and Haftarah based on trope instruction during Hebrew class.
4. The preparation of a D'var Torah (a commentary on his/her Torah or Haftarah portion) of his/her choosing after working with the Rabbi, to be presented during the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.

From the Congregation's by-laws and Standards:

Bar/Bat Mitzvah - Membership is required for a minimum of four (4) years prior to becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, unless the candidate and family is transferring from another synagogue where the family was a member in good standing. Additionally, a minimum of two (2) years of Jewish education, or its equivalent, is required for any candidate prior to becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Any final decision regarding the adequacy of a candidate's religious and educational preparation to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah shall be made at the Rabbi's discretion, with the concurrence of the Ritual Committee.

Obligations of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Family:

1. Members must be current in their payment of all dues and fees at the time Bar/Bat Mitzvah training begins and at the time the ceremony occurs.
2. Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidates and their parents are expected to participate in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah workshop.
3. It is a custom at our synagogue for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah parents to sponsor the Oneg Shabbat on Friday and Kiddush on Saturday morning on the Shabbat of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. The Kashrut policy does not allow any home-baked goods to be brought into the synagogue. Please contact the TBE office for further clarification.
4. Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate parents may be required to volunteer time to prepare for and work at Onegs and Kiddushes during the Dalet and Hai school. This is to insure that we have enough workers to cover all ceremonies.
5. In case of financial need the above obligations may be reviewed and discussed with the TBE treasurer.

THE SHABBAT OF THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH CEREMONY

The Synagogue is a special place; it represents Jewish tradition and responsibility. Behavior and dress at Temple Beth El should reflect our respect for the building and for Jewish tradition. With that in mind, kippot for males must be worn in the sanctuary, non-revealing tops covering the shoulders must be worn when on the bimah, and skirts should be at least knee-length on the bimah. Women are encouraged to also wear head coverings and tallit.

What happens on Friday night?

- Immediate family will meet in the Rabbi's office at 7:10 p.m. Shabbat Services begin at 7:30.
- During Friday evening services we honor the Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate by calling upon him/her to chant the Kiddush.
- Candidates are encouraged to lead many of the Friday evening prayers.

What happens on Saturday morning?

- Immediate family will meet in the Rabbi's office at 9:10am. Shabbat Services begin at 9:30am.

Alternative Bar Mitzvah Services

- In some cases, the Rabbi will suggest that an afternoon or Havdallah service will best suit the needs of a child. This can occur when the Rabbi and the Principal feel that the child simply cannot perform all of the requirements set forth to fulfill the obligations of a traditional Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

What happens at the Bar/Bat Mitzvah services?

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate:

- Chants the Haftarah blessings and portion.
- Chants the Maftir from the Torah and, if prepared, may also chant other Aliyot from the Torah.
- Is encouraged to lead other prayers from the service.

Non-Torah Honors

- Appointment of an usher to request that men wear kippot, to aid in orderly seating and to hand out books and pamphlets, if necessary.
- Selected English readings may be read by b'nai mitzvah candidate or assigned to family or friends. See form at back of booklet. All reading selections, speech, poems/readings, honors, and other written materials for the services must be finalized and approved by the Rabbi 14 days prior to the B'nai Mitzvah date (i.e. the Thursday, two weeks before).

Possible Presentations/Talks (each kept under 4 minutes)

- Presentation of the tallit.
- Prayer or talk to Bar/Bat Mitzvah, generally by parent.
- These talks are under 4 minutes.
- You may ask a fellow TBE congregant to give a short (under 3 min) speech and present the gifts from the TBE Board, Sisterhood & Men's Club. Or the TBE board member on the Bima can do this honor.

Torah Honors

- Torah service honors are restricted to people who are Jewish, in following TBE policy of non-Jewish participation in Jewish life. Details of the roles non-Jewish people can play in the service can be discussed directly with the Rabbi. The form at the back of this booklet should be completed and given to the Rabbi at least two weeks prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. For all participants, provide the English name. For those who recite blessings, please also provide the Hebrew name of the person and his/her father and mother.
- There are seven Aliyot to the Torah (besides the Maftir for which the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is called). Five Aliyot are given to family members or to close friends. Couples may be called up together for an Aliya. One or two Aliyot are reserved for members of TBE. In cases where there are not enough family members to participate, the family can request to have three Aliyot instead. Torah readers may be asked to demonstrate their fluency during the week prior to the b'nai mitzvah date. All Torah readers are strongly encouraged to read directly from the Torah scroll.

Accessibility:

- Temple Beth El tries to be handicapped accessible. The bima is not. There are railings on the right and left side of the bima for those who can negotiate stairs. Please contact the synagogue office if you would like to arrange to have the service on the floor level.

PREPARATION

Required Reading

Each student and family are encouraged read certain books which will be discussed and used in meetings and workshops.

-For Parents: *Putting God on the Guest List* by Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin, Jewish Lights Press.

-For students: read and complete the worksheets in the companion volume, *For Children: Putting God on the Guest List*. This book will make up part of our Hai class curriculum. The books are pre-ordered for you.

If there is enough interest with the families involved, the synagogue could institute a discussion/support group based on issues raised in this text. We encourage you to contact one another and to create support networks as each family moves through the process.

Each of the students will have their own copy of the prayer books that we use in the synagogue. The prayer book is an invaluable tool for this occasion, the rest of the children's lives, and a great way to begin a foundation for a Jewish library.

Required Service Attendance

As you may already know, it is required that each Bar or Bat Mitzvah **attend*** fifteen (15) Friday evening services and at least fifteen (15) regular Saturday morning services in the months directly prior to their B'nai Mitzvah date. This includes the Friday evening and Saturday morning services on the 2 Friday nights and Saturday mornings prior to their date.

***attend** means to be IN the sanctuary.

Required Mitzvah Activities

The B'nai Mitzvah candidates are required to engage in social action/community service (*tikkun olam*) programs in the broader community during their Dalet & Hai years **prior** to the B'nai Mitzvah date. Suggested activities include: tutoring another child in Hebrew or Jewish studies, visiting a hospital, nursing or rehabilitation center, raising funds for the people in need, homeless work, visiting the home-bound Jewish elderly, and working in animal shelters. It is often called "the Mitzvah project." A journal of volunteer work is required. Each student should consult with the Rabbi regarding this volunteer work.

In addition, each child is expected to find, contact, and research one Jewish tzedakah organization. This will help educate and create an awareness of the group to all of the guests and members of the congregation during the services. A sample list of organizations is included in this packet).

Training/Tutoring

The Rabbi will provide recordings of the Torah reading and *Haftarah* reading. Our goal is to encourage each child to read as much of the Torah as possible, chant the *Haftarah* selection, and lead prayers of the Shabbat morning service within their ability. This is not a contest to see who can “read the most.” Each child has a unique blessing to offer and it is that blessing that should be highlighted.

Regular attendance at school on Sundays and on Tuesdays, in conjunction with regular attendance at Shabbat evening and morning services will help your children be prepared for their B’nai Mitzvah and is essential to a positive B’nai Mitzvah process. The Rabbi and congregation will try to help those families who cannot meet those requirements through e-mail and computer-aided programs. However, this is a less than ideal situation.

The tutoring process will begin approximately 6 months prior to the Bar/ Bat Mitzvah date. Please allow time for extended sessions during the two weeks preceding the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date for the family to concentrate on the upcoming event

Tutoring Schedule:

The B’nai Mitzvah tutoring coordinator, Andrea Finestrauss, will schedule such sessions using the following guidelines:

6 months prior:

- Initial meeting with Rabbi, family and student to review expectations
- Student receives the following:
 1. Hebrew Maftir (Torah portion) with vowels and without vowels (as it appears in the Torah)
 - 2, English copy of Torah portion,
 3. Hebrew and English copy of Haftarah portion
 4. CD recording of Torah portion and Haftarah portion.

After your family meeting with the Rabbi, the student begins to work with the TBE tutors on the prayer checklist and Torah portion(s). These sessions will be 15 minutes weekly.

It is the responsibility of the student to progress with the study of Torah readings and Haftarah readings. If a student requires additional help to achieve the necessary learning, the B’nai Mitzvah coordinator will help arrange for a private tutor. The family is responsible for payment for these sessions.

2 months prior:

- Meet with Rabbi Micah to review students outline (for speech).
- Additional Aliyot recordings can be requested if needed.
- Order kipot, napkins, Tallit, etc. – call our Judaic Shop!

-Choose English readings from the Kol Haneshamah prayer book according to the following guidelines:

Fri. Eve: select 1 reading for each topic: prayer, Shabbat, nature or love, redemption or peace.

Sat: select 1 reading each for love and redemption, or peace.

4 weeks prior:

- Student meets with Rabbi to review Torah readings and Haftarah.
- Email first draft of speech to Rabbi for editing.

3 weeks prior :

- Email Rabbi edited speech and completed honors form (attached)
- Meet with Rabbi.

2 weeks prior:

- Email final draft speech to Rabbi.
- Family should attend Friday and Saturday services
- Meet with Rabbi, practice carrying Torah.
- Mitzvah project due

Week of:

- Tuesday afternoon meeting with Rabbi (35-45 minutes) to practice
- Thursday dress rehearsal 4-6pm. We encourage all immediate family members to participate. Your photographer is also welcome at this time. Pictures are not allowed in the sanctuary during Shabbat.

Sample for Bar/Bat Mitzvah Speeches:

**print in 16 pt font, double space and include page numbers (in no particular order):

1. Welcome (Shabbat shalom...)
2. Meaning of Bat/Bar Mitzvah, being Jewish (see Chapter 3-5 in *Putting God...*)
3. Importance of Mitzvah project, Jewish tzedakkah organization *
4. Torah Portion
5. Haftarah Connection
6. Thank You(s) (end with: Shabbat Shalom)

HONORS SHEET

Bar/Bat Mitzvah:

Torah portion:

Parents:

Haftarah portion:

Siblings:

Grandparents:

Aliyah/Blessings Hebrew Name(s) English Name(s) Torah Reader

First _____ ben/bat _____

_____ ben/bat _____

Second _____ ben/bat _____

_____ ben/bat _____

Third (saved for member(s) of congregation)

_____ ben/bat _____

_____ ben/bat _____

Fourth _____ ben/bat _____

_____ ben/bat _____

Fifth (saved for member(s) of congregation)

_____ ben/bat _____

_____ ben/bat _____

Sixth: _____ ben/bat _____

_____ ben/bat _____

Seventh _____ ben/bat _____

_____ ben/bat _____

MAFTIR _____ ben/bat _____

Hagbah (Lifting Torah)

Gelilah (Wrapping)

Name of person presenting gifts:

Ark Openings (happens four times—Barechu, before, after the Torah is read, and at Alenu)

(2 people)

Barechu— 1.

2.

Torah— 1.

2.

Torah (end) 1.

2.

Alenu 1.

2.

Additional Important Information

Synagogue (can hold up to 180 comfortably) or outside in a rented tent

All on site events are kosher and must follow TBE policy.

Donations— It is customary to make contributions to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund in honor of life-cycle events. TBE funds are tax-exempt. The administrator of the congregation can help make appropriate suggestions as to amounts and the purpose of the different funds available.

You may want to consider purchasing a leaf on our Tree of Life in the TBE lobby in honor of your child's B'Nai Mitzvot. Contact the TBE office for additional information.

Oneg—follows services Friday and Saturday.

Family hosts both during your Bar/Bat Mitzvah weekend.

Photography and Video

There is no still photography in the sanctuary from 30 minutes prior until one hour (60 minutes) after the service concludes. Photography is allowed at the dress rehearsal.

Bima Decorations

Many families have chosen to beautify the sanctuary with flowers or Mitzvah baskets on the bima and a centerpiece in the social hall. Please arrange delivery of all decorations or food with the TBE office. Flowers or baskets must be delivered before the office closes on Friday at 12pm.

Services offered through the Synagogue:

Sisterhood catering:

Prepare the Oneg Shabbat & Kiddush.

Cater your reception at the synagogue (or your home or other location?).

Judaica shop may provide:

Kippot, Tallit, gifts, napkins, etc.

(Please contact the synagogue office for details)

Tzedakkah/Mitzvah Organizations
Some Web Resources

A good list of organizations is in *Putting God on the Guest List*.

Informative websites include:

Tzedakah .org www.tzedakah.org

Just Tzedakah www.just-tzedakah.org

The Mitzvah Bowl is a good resource in the Philly area at www.themitzvahbowl.com

Animal Aid Organizations:

CHAI—concern for helping animals in Israel www.CHAi-online.com

-Humane Society for Israel

-search under bar and bat Mitzvah

Israel Guide Dogs for the Blind <http://israelguidedog.org/>

Pups for Peace <http://www.pupsforpeace.org/>

Mitzvah Dogs/ Canine Companions www.cci.org

Human related :

Dorot— (means “generations”) helping feed, create access to services primarily for the Jewish elderly

MAZON- Jewish organization to feed the hungry- <http://mazon.org/>

SPNI- Society for Protection of Nature in Israel- <http://aspni.org/>

JNF -Jewish National Fund - plants trees, etc in Israel www.jnf.org

The New Israel Fund www.nif.org

Hadassah www.hadassah.org

Jewish Federation of Delaware <http://www.shalomdelaware.org/>

