

# *Becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah At Temple Beth Avodah*



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## **FOREWORD**

Becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a major event for a Jewish child and his or her entire family. Months of intensive preparation and years of study lead to this very exciting day and we want you to be there fully, in every way, confident climbers up this sacred mountain.

The process of planning such an important family event is complex and very intense. This booklet is to help answer all the questions you may have about how Temple Beth Avodah creates a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. It contains everything you've ever wondered about a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, but were afraid to ask: From the history and background of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration, to Temple Beth Avodah's guidelines, procedures, and customs unique to our congregation. If, after reviewing this booklet, you still have questions, contact us at the Temple; we will do everything we can to make sure you, your family, and your proud Bar/Bat Mitzvah child have an experience you will always cherish.

Kol Tuv,

Rabbi Keith Stern

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## **HISTORY AND ORIGIN OF BAR/BAT MITZVAH**

To begin with, the term Bar Mitzvah is not a verb. It is incorrect to say, “My child was Bar Mitzvahed last year.” Bar Mitzvah is a noun, a term signifying a boy who has turned thirteen and is obligated to obey all of the mitzvot (the commandments), as read in the Bible and the Talmud and as interpreted by the Rabbis. This is still true for the Orthodox Jewish community today. A Bar Mitzvah is included in a minyan, a prayer quorum of 10 men. This is undoubtedly the origin of the classical line spoken by countless Bar Mitzvahs: “Today I am a man.” It’s short for the truer phrase, “Today I am counted among the men. I am responsible for my deeds and actions in a new way. My obligations to myself, to my family and to God change. How I behave in the world takes on a new meaning from this point on.”

Rabbi Leo Trepp teaches in The Book of Jewish Observance, “According to historians, the Bar Mitzvah celebration, as we know it, originated in the Middle Ages as an event of minor importance. The boy would be called to the Torah on a day following his thirteenth birthday. This could be a Monday or a Thursday. A small repast might follow; the youngster received the good wishes of the assembled congregation.” A little schnapps and angel food cake was offered and that was it. Then, back to the yeshiva to study or back to work.

The first ceremony of Bat Mitzvah was not celebrated until 1922. Judith Kaplan, the daughter of Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan, founder of the Reconstructionist movement, was called to the bimah on a Friday night. She read the Torah blessings and a selection from the Bible in Hebrew and English, although not from the Torah itself.

So what changed? Why is this formerly insignificant ritual – just an aliyah to the Torah on a weekday – now a rite of passage, a significant event in American Jewish family life? There is no simple answer. Perhaps as American Jews have easily assimilated into secular life there is a perceived need to find a uniquely Jewish expression for a transition that affects the entire family. And, maybe it’s something deeper in the souls of American Jews, something about pride and Torah and the chain of tradition.

*“Bar and Bat Mitzvah is a sacred mountain in Jewish time. We climb this particular mountain because it brings us closer to God, closer to Judaism, closer to our people, closer to ourselves. And what modern Jews need, more than ever, is a way to really be there at the summit of this holy mountain,”*

Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin, from Putting God on the Guest List

As you attend Shabbat morning services at other congregations, you will observe that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child’s participation in the service varies greatly. At most congregations the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child reads or chants at least one section of Torah, has an aliyah, chants the Haftarah and gives a D’var Torah. At Temple Beth Avodah your child will be encouraged to do all of the above. In addition, they will have the opportunity to chant as much Torah as they are capable and lead much of the service. The extent of the child’s participation will be determined in conjunction with the rabbis as well as the Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring coordinator.

## **THE TEMPLE BETH AVODAH FORMAL HEBREW PROGRAM: THE PATH TO BAR/BAT MITZVAH AND BEYOND**

Becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Temple Beth Avodah is one of the milestones of a multi-year education program. The Temple views the program as beginning in kindergarten and continuing through 12th grade. For those who wish to become Bar/Bat Mitzvah, five years of Hebrew studies, as well as Sunday Religious School enrollment and attendance are required. The Tuesday Hebrew studies program includes classes for Grade 3 Matchilim, Grade 4 Alef, Grade 5 Bet and Grade 6 Gimmel. Students are introduced to the language, its alphabet, basic grammar, prayers and blessings and are taught to read and write. Once a week, classes will join together for Beyt Keneset, a service that familiarizes students with the manner in which we pray at Temple Beth Avodah. Our Grade 7 program will take place on Monday evenings and on selected Sundays. It will also include special trips intended for both learning and community-building that will be required of all Grade 7 students. Students must complete the entire curriculum, regardless of when the Bar/Bat Mitzvah takes place during the year.

### Grade 3 Matchilim

Matchilim means beginners. It is the first year of formal Hebrew education and begins in Grade 3. Matchilim is a year of exposure to the Hebrew language, alphabet recognition and reading development. Students are introduced to and gradually develop a familiarity with the language. The emphasis of the class is the development of fluent Hebrew reading skills. Towards the end of their Hebrew studies, students and parents will participate in the Grade 3 Matchilim Siyum Ha-Sefer ceremony at which students will receive their own inscribed prayerbook from their parents.

### Grade 4 Alef

The Alef class is a year of Hebrew language development. Students are introduced to and gradually develop a familiarity with the language. The emphasis of the class is learning to read and comprehend. Students will study the alphabet, prayers, learn their meaning and study some basic Hebrew grammar.

### Grade 5 Bet

The Bet class is the third year of the Hebrew program. The emphasis on Hebrew reading proficiency continues. Studies are centered around specific prayers of the Shabbat evening and morning services. The students will develop a prayer vocabulary. In addition, Grade 5 students will be a part of our new "Mitzvah Heroes" curriculum in preparation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

### Grade 6 Gimmel

Gimmel level students continue an in-depth study of the Shabbat liturgy. Focusing on the prayers of the Amidah, the Torah service and the concluding prayers, these students prepare themselves to be able to read and lead the entire Shabbat evening or morning service. Students and parents will together select and begin to work on the "Bar/Bat Mitzvah Family Mitzvah Project."

### Grade 7

Students in Grade 7 will be meeting on Monday evenings from 6:30 pm-8:45 pm at the same time as Midrasha (High School program for students in grades 8-12). It is expected that by the beginning of Grade 7, the student will be able to read and lead the entire Shabbat evening or morning service. The Grade 7 program will be primarily taught and facilitated by Rabbis Stern and Eiduson. Students will join Midrasha faculty members and students in grades 8-12 for dinner from 6:30-7:00 pm and will then have classes designed solely for Grade 7 students from 7:00 – 8:45 pm. The Monday evening coursework will include a variety of topics including: prayer, Torah study, current events, Israel, American Judaism and women in Judaism. In addition,

students will also study the significance of mitzvot in their lives and will participate with their families in a family mitzvah project decided on by the class. In addition to Monday evening classes, students in Grade 7 are strongly encouraged to attend Shabbat services – particularly services during which students are becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah, and will be involved in a number of informal educational experiences as well including class trips and selected youth programs during the year. This year's Grade 7 Outward Bound day-long program will take place on a Sunday in the Fall. This program is required of all Grade 7 students...please mark your calendars now!

#### Midrasha, Grades 8-12

In addition to our Monday evening dinners, core classes and selected electives, our newly revised Midrasha program for students in Grades 8-12 will include an opportunity for students to make individual decisions about their own paths of Jewish learning. Graduation from Temple Beth Avodah in Grade 12 will now come about as a combination between core curricular components and flexible elective program options that are no longer limited to traditional in-class participation on Monday evenings. This means that our post-B'nai Mitzvah students will still be able to come together once a week on Monday evenings for dinner and classes, but that “credits” toward “Graduation” may be gathered via other modes as well, such as: participation in informal youth programs, assistant teaching, communal service endeavors, independent study projects. Our Youth Educator, Becky Oliver, will help our students in Grades 8-12 customize individual learning plans that fit the needs and diverse interests of all students. It is our hope that through this flexible and individualized planning, we will capture the interests of an increased number of students in Grades 8-12 and will encourage students to begin to take more direct responsibility for their own Jewish journeys.

To inquire, to explore, to draw out, to interpret --- this is the meaning of the Hebrew root *D'rash*. Midrasha offers youth the opportunity to investigate the depth and beauty of Judaism, while it balances the need for post Bar/Bat Mitzvah education with an awareness of the numerous activities and responsibilities of today's teens.

## **BECOMING A BAR/BAT MITZVAH AT TEMPLE BETH AVODAH**

### Setting the Date

You will receive a form approximately 2 – 2½ years prior to the calendar year of your child's 13<sup>th</sup> birthday. The information on this form will be used to help set the date of your event. The basic principle that governs date assignments is chronological order.

### Requirements

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah student must have completed the requirements of the 4<sup>th</sup> year of our Hebrew School as well as all of the Grade 7 requirements – formal and informal opportunities – detailed on page 4 of this Handbook. There will be a 75% attendance requirement for students in Grade 6 (Tuesday/Sunday classes) and Grade 7 (Monday evening classes). Students who are present less than 75% of the time will receive individualized make-up work at the discretion of the Education Director. We do expect that attendance at all classes, the Outward Bound Trip, and informal programs be complied to by our Grade 7 students and their families so that we can continue to provide the best Jewish educational and social experience possible.

All financial obligations to Temple Beth Avodah must be current or an acceptable arrangement must be made with either the President or the Treasurer of the Temple. Payments must be current at least 30 days prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. All forms must be filled out and submitted to the Temple office on time. For further details, see the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Timeline and the sample forms enclosed.

Parents and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student are expected to participate in Bar/Bat Mitzvah programs offered through the Education Department.

Participation in regular Shabbat worship services enables our students to develop an understanding of the service and a comfort level with the flow of the service. Therefore, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student is strongly encouraged to attend as many Friday night services as possible and at least three Saturday morning Shabbat services at Temple Beth Avodah during the year prior to the child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. It is our hope that parents attend the services with their children to familiarize themselves with the service and share thoughts and comments on the service. It is also nice to pray together. Bar/Bat Mitzvah students and their parents agree that attending services is the most helpful and concrete way to become familiar with the traditions at Temple Beth Avodah and to de-mystify the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process for the entire family.

## Bar/Bat Mitzvah Preparation

Our students at Temple Beth Avodah are well prepared to begin their individualized Bar/Bat Mitzvah training. Our Hebrew program has taught them all the skills they need to lead a Shabbat service.

Approximately eight months prior to your child's date, you and your child will be invited to attend a Friday Shabbat Service at which time your child will receive his/her Torah portion and a special personalized Bar/Bat Mitzvah packet. (If you are unable to attend the specific Friday Shabbat Service, you may elect to receive the packet on another Shabbat, or directly from Rabbi Stern or Rabbi Eiduson.) Soon thereafter, you will be contacted to schedule weekly tutoring sessions with our Temple Beth Avodah Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring coordinator, Shukie Sapir. Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring is one ½ hour session per week. Every effort will be made to accommodate your child's schedule. The primary responsibility for scheduling and attendance at these weekly tutoring sessions rests with the student and his/her family.

During the months of preparation we expect that you schedule a regular daily practice time for your child. Repetition and constant reinforcement of the material is crucial to his/her success.

Most students can master Bar/Bat Mitzvah assignments without difficulty. A sufficient number of tutorial sessions will be scheduled to assure adequate preparation.

We rely on parents to tell us at the beginning of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation process about any special learning needs your child may have. This will help us create a realistic and positive set of expectations for your son/daughter.

When, in the judgement of the Rabbis or the Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring coordinator, a student repeatedly comes to a tutorial session inadequately prepared, or is in need of special additional assistance, supplementary private tutorial assistance, at the family's expense, will be required.

Your child will be prepared according to his/her individual ability. This is not a "cookie cutter" experience, nor is it a competition to see which child can do the most. Every Bar/Bat Mitzvah student is unique and cherished. Your son/daughter will help lead the service, chant the Torah, and chant his/her Haftarah. He or she will also present a D'var Torah, a personal interpretation of their Torah portion.



## **MAKING YOUR CHILD'S BAR/BAT MITZVAH A MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE**

As the Bar or Bat Mitzvah of a child approaches, many parents become concerned about how to keep this important milestone in proper perspective and how to make sure that it has the appropriate Jewish focus. Some suggestions are discussed below:

### **Use the time before your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah to grow and learn.**

In many families, the upcoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah of a child leads to a renewed sense of "Jewish energy" and an increased interest in Jewish learning for parents. As you hear your child practicing Haftarah blessings, or as you help him or her prepare a D'Var Torah, you may get in touch with your own questions and your own gaps in Jewish knowledge.

### **Take advantage of this high energy time and invest in your own learning.**

This is a time not only to learn content (introductory Hebrew, prayers and prayer book, basic "Jewish literacy" vocabulary), but also to revisit those questions and uncertainties that you had as a young person (and perhaps still have!). When parents engage in Jewish study, the impact of the child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah extends far beyond the actual ceremony in the Temple.

### **Study and explore with your child.**

Talk to the Rabbi together. Don't avoid the subject of God. You don't need to be able to answer every question your child asks; you just need to model that you take the process of Jewish questioning seriously. As you become comfortable sharing your own areas of uncertainty with your child, your relationship will deepen and mature. Your child will learn that effort, and some uncertainty, characterize both adult Jewish learning and a mature relationship with God.

### **Learn about the values that underlie Jewish adulthood. Incorporate these values into your celebration, and into your family life.**

Jewish tradition is built on a solid foundation of values, which impact all aspects of daily life. Your child needs to know what these values are and how to live them, if he or she is to understand the real meaning of being a Jewish adult. You may feel like you too would like more information on Jewish values. A good book to read together on the subject is [It's a Mitzvah](#) by Rabbi Bradley Artson (1995, Behrman House).

As you gain new knowledge, discuss with your child how to live what you've learned. It is traditional, for example, for Jews celebrating a simcha to address the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. The B'nei Mitzvah year is an ideal time to participate as a family in projects that help others.

Focusing on values and linking values to Jewish adulthood keeps a Bar or Bat Mitzvah "on track." Further, this focus makes Jewish living tangible and accessible for your child.

### **Make sure your Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration *looks* Jewish.**

In planning your party, focus on a celebration of your child's uniqueness, his or her Jewish accomplishments, your family and community. If you're comfortable with it, you may want to include a tzedakah component. Your celebration can be joyful without being ostentatious. Lavish themes, which have no Jewish or "ethical" component, detract from the Jewish nature of this important milestone.

## **TIMELINE**

### **Two years prior to your child turning 13**

#### **November**

You will receive a questionnaire concerning your child becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. This should be completed and returned to the Temple office before the end of the year.

#### **February/March**

You will receive your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.

### **One year prior to the calendar year of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah date**

The entire Bar/Bat Mitzvah class will be required to attend preparation programs with the Rabbis, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Tutoring Coordinator, as well as other Education Department personnel. You will be notified by mail of dates and times of this program and information will also be available on the Temple's website.

- If you haven't already done so, contact the Executive Director to reserve the Temple facilities.

School requirements for Bar/Bat Mitzvah:

- Parents and Bar/Bat Mitzvah students attend Education programs.
- Your child regularly attends classes in the Religious School program. 75% attendance rate is required in Grades 6 (Tuesday/Sunday classes) and Grades 7 (Monday evening classes and ALL trips and informal youth opportunities) or student will be assigned individualized make-up work to complete and return to the Education Director.

### **Approximately 8 months prior to your Date**

- Your child is invited to a Friday night Shabbat service to receive his or her Torah portion and additional information.
- A letter will be sent to your family with a comprehensive Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation schedule including: tutoring with Shukie Sapir, rehearsal time with our Cantorial Soloist, and three mandatory meetings with Rabbi Stern that must occur prior to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah. At the first meeting Rabbi meets with the parents and the student; at the second, Rabbi meets with the student alone; and at the third Rabbi oversees your final rehearsal. The week prior to the second meeting with the Rabbi, the student should email Rabbi Stern a copy of the draft of his/her D'Var Torah for his review and suggestions at the meeting.

All meeting times with the Rabbi, the Cantorial Soloist as well as tutoring times with Shukie Sapir are planned with the schedules of working parents in mind, and as a result, we have made every effort to schedule the meetings as close to the end of the workday as possible; please plan on attending at the scheduled times. If any or all of the times are impossible, we will attempt to schedule a time more accommodating for all parties. Please note, when rescheduling missed tutoring appointments or meetings with Rabbi Stern, students cannot be taken out of Hebrew School.

- Tutoring begins.

### **Two months prior to your Date**

- Submit to the Temple office a photograph and short paragraph written by your child. This will be printed in the Kadima, our monthly bulletin. You will receive a reminder form via U.S. mail or email.
- Meet with Rabbi Stern about student D'var Torah and "Thank you speech" typically prepared by each student in the weeks prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

### **One month prior to your Date**

- Student and at least one parent meet with Temple Beth Avodah's Cantorial Soloist. The Honors form will be reviewed with the parent at this time, so that it can be finalized with Rabbi Stern at the final rehearsal.
- All fees must be paid and membership dues must be current.
- The Sisterhood representative will order the flowers for the bimah. See the Bimah Flowers Section on page 10.
- Submit forms to the Temple office for the photographer, caterer, florist, musician and/or DJ and videographer. You will receive these forms with your Facility Reservation Contract.

### **The week before your Date**

- Your child will have a rehearsal on the bima with Bar/Bat Mitzvah Tutoring Coordinator, Shukie Sapir. Parents are not required to attend.
- Submit to the Building Manager:
  - Caterer's name
  - Social Hall set up
  - Number of guests attending and number of guests who are children.
  - Requested arrival time of caterer, photographer, musicians, etc.
- On the Friday of the week prior to your date, your child will lead the *motzi* at the conclusion of the service. On this evening, the parents are asked to serve at the Oneg Shabbat.

### **Week of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah**

- Your child will have a rehearsal with Rabbi Stern in the sanctuary. Parents are required to attend. Siblings and grandparents may also attend.
- At this rehearsal, the "Honors Form" should be finalized and given to the Rabbi.
- The Friday evening before your date, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student will open the doors to the ark for the Aleinu.
- The family will sponsor the Friday evening Oneg Shabbat (the fee for this will be charged to you) on the Friday evening before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Food and beverages are supplied by the Temple.



## **OTHER INFORMATION**

### Time of Arrival

Our Shabbat morning service begins at 10:00 am and lasts approximately 2 hours. The Havdalah service starts at 6 pm and lasts approximately 1 3/4 hours.

### Bimah Flowers

Each family is billed for the flowers that adorn the bimah. The fee is added as a part of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah fees. The Temple Sisterhood will arrange for the purchase and delivery of the flowers. Since the quality of particular flowers is seasonal, it is Sisterhood's policy to request the best available flowers to adorn the bimah. Given that, if you still have a specific preference for the color scheme, you must contact the Sisterhood representative one month prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.

You may make your own arrangements for bimah flowers; however, you will still be required to pay the flower/oneg fee. These fees help the Temple cover the cost of supplying flowers for the bimah and providing a Shabbat oneg during weeks when there are no Bar/Bat Mitzvahs. There are specific guidelines if you choose to provide flowers for the bimah. Contact the Sisterhood representative for a list of these guidelines and to advise her of your desire to provide your own flowers.

### Photography

On most occasions, a photography session is permitted before the service begins starting at 9:00 am for a morning service and 5:00 pm for a Havdalah service. The photography session must be completed 20 minutes prior to the start of the service. The Rabbi is available to take out the Torah for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child to hold for photographs 15 minutes prior to the service. Photographs are not permitted during the service.

### Videotaping the Service

The Temple has a Videotape and/or DVD recording system which is installed into the back wall of the sanctuary. For a fee (see form included with manual), the service can be videotaped. If you hire your own videographer for the service, please be aware that they are ONLY permitted to set up a stationary camera at the rear of the sanctuary. Only available lighting may be used.

### Ushers

The Temple will provide two ushers at the service. If there are a large number of children at the service (more than 20), two ushers are not always sufficient. There have been services where friends of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child have been disruptive. We request that you designate a few adult guests to sit amongst the child guests to help monitor their behavior and act as ushers if necessary. You do not want a Bar/Bat Mitzvah service where the Rabbi has to interrupt the service to reprimand your guests.

## Parental Ushering Responsibilities

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah season prior to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah, each family will be assigned one Bar/Bat Mitzvah service at which they will serve as an usher. If your child's simcha falls between January and June, you will be required to usher at one service during the previous September – December. September – December Bar/Bat Mitzvah families will usher during the previous January – June time frame. These dates are approximate, depending on the size of the class. This is not optional.

## Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service Program (Optional)

Some families prepare a program to distribute to their guests. A typical program might include a personal welcome as well as some information about the ceremony of Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the Temple, the service and the Torah and Haftarah readings. Our Rabbi and Education Director are available to assist any family wishing to prepare such a program. They can also share some sample programs with you. Preparation and printing of programs are the responsibility of each family.

## Kippah and Tallit

Congregants are not required to wear a kippah (yarmulka). The Temple has kippot available for those who would like to cover their head. Some families choose to purchase kippot and have them imprinted with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child's name and date.

It is traditional to wear a Tallit (prayer shawl) at a service when the Torah is read. The Temple provides Tallitot for those who wish to wear them. Before the service it is our custom to don our Tallitot as a congregation and recite the blessing together.

## Aliyot and other Honors

When the Torah service begins, the Rabbi invites grandparents and great grand-parents up to the bimah along with parents and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's siblings who have already become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The Torah is removed from the Ark and passed down from generation to generation to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Non-Jewish spouses are strongly encouraged to participate in passing the Torah down from generation to generation.

Family members and friends of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah can be given an Aliyah, the honor of reciting the blessings over the Torah. You will be asked to complete a form listing the names of those participating in the service. A sample of this form is also provided in this handbook. The blessings may be chanted directly from the Hebrew or from the transliteration of the Hebrew. A copy of the Torah blessings is enclosed with your child's Torah portion as well as in this packet of materials. We strongly recommend that you send a copy of the Torah blessings to everyone who has an Aliyah. We suggest that those honored with an Aliyah practice the blessings a few times. Upon request we will send a cassette tape with the blessings.

It is customary that those honored with an Aliyah wear a tallit and kippah. A non-Jewish partner is invited to accompany his/her Jewish spouse to the Torah. However, we ask that the Jewish partner alone recite the Torah blessings.

The parents share the second to last Aliyah. The last Aliyah is given to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The maximum number of Aliyot is five during the Shabbat morning service and three during the Havdalah service. Several people may share one Aliyah.

Other honors available are opening the ark (before and after the Torah service), dressing the Torah, lifting the Torah and reading from the Torah. Non-Jewish family and friends may be given the honor of opening the ark.

### Parents' Blessing

During the service, parents sit on the Bimah with their child. Siblings sit in the congregation. There will be an opportunity for the parents to address their child in front of the congregation, following the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's recitation of the blessings after the Haftarah. Parents may choose to prepare one speech or each parent may address the child individually. We respectfully request that your words to your child be about why this Bar/Bat Mitzvah day is so beautiful and about how much you love and appreciate your child. It is not a time to tell the congregation about a report card or a touchdown. It is about a spiritual message at a spiritual moment.

### Gifts from the Congregation

Gifts (certificates, a kiddush cup and a Torah Commentary) are presented to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child either by a Temple Officer or by a congregant of your choosing. If a congregant is to present the gifts, be sure to make your request to him or her well in advance of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.

Your presenter will have the option of sitting on the bimah for the duration of the service, or he/she can be called up for the presentation. They should have a short (one or two minute) speech prepared, which should include the presentation of the gifts on behalf of the Sisterhood (Kiddush cup), Ritual Committee (Torah Commentary) and the congregation (Bar/Bat Mitzvah Certificate and certificate for discounted NFTY trip to Israel), and any personal sentiments he or she would like to express to your child.

### Conclusion of the Service

At the conclusion of the morning service, the entire extended family is invited to the bimah for the kiddush and motzi. Non-Jewish family members are, of course, included in this invitation. At the conclusion of the Havdallah service, the immediate family gathers for the closing ritual. You may invite others to share in this moving and beautiful ritual.



## **THE CELEBRATION**

### **USE OF OUR FACILITIES**

When the date of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah is set you will have the option to rent our facilities. If you choose to do so, the Temple will contact you by phone to discuss the specific details and the fees. This is usually done about a year before your date. You will then receive a contract including additional information about the building regulations and fees (see Sample Forms). A copy of the standard rental rates and other Bar/Bat Mitzvah fees is included in this manual. Families who would like to consider doing something different than the standard rental should speak directly to the Executive Director to discuss ideas and fees.

We encourage you to rent any or all of the Temple's facilities for your Simcha. We will make every effort to accommodate your needs. You may reserve either or both of the Social Halls and function rooms for the afternoon and/or the evening. Temple facilities are also available for rental on Sunday afternoons or evenings (particularly for Kid's Parties) or for Shabbat dinners on Friday nights before your Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

If both a Shabbat morning service and a Havdalah service are scheduled for the date to which your child has been assigned, you have been notified of the name of the other family assigned this date. In this case, the Temple's Social Hall is available to each family as follows:

1. If you have a morning service, you may have a Kiddush or a Luncheon in the Social Hall. For your information, the Temple's rental agreement states that a Kiddush must end by 2:30 PM and a Luncheon must end by 4:00 PM.
2. If you have a Havdalah service, you may use the Social Hall for the evening until midnight. It will be available to your caterer once the Hall has been cleaned and reset at the conclusion of the afternoon affair (usually around 5:00 p.m.).
3. We suggest that families scheduled for the same date discuss their intended uses of the Social Hall. If only one service is scheduled for the date to which you have been assigned, the Social Hall is available for your use during both the afternoon and the evening.
4. In the event that new families join the class, this could affect both the calendar and use of the Social Hall. We will make every effort to arrange equitable use of the Social Hall.

### **THE CATERER**

Both kosher and non-kosher caterers are allowed at the Temple. The kitchen can be kashered for use by a kosher caterer. However, no shellfish or pork products may be served. All caterers must follow the Temple guidelines provided in the function information packet you will receive with your rental contract.

### **ROOM SET UP**

Our Facilities Manager will be happy to accommodate any seating arrangements you require within the capacity of our space. Please make an appointment with him at least 2 weeks prior to your celebration to discuss these details. He can also supply information on the number and size of tables available (currently (15) 72" round tables seating 10-12, and (14) 60" round tables seating 8-10). We also have (8) 8' rectangular tables and (11) 6' rectangular tables.

### ***MUSIC AND DANCING***

The Temple allows live music and dancing following the Shabbat service. You might consider renting a platform for a stage for your band or performers if you so desire since only one of our social halls has a small stage.

### ***BEHAVIOR OF YOUNG PEOPLE***

It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that young people behave appropriately and maintain proper respect for Temple property. It is also your responsibility to ensure that young people are not served wine or other alcoholic beverages. If you are having a large number of young people at your reception/party, we urge you to discuss security arrangements with our Executive Director.

For all Luncheon and Evening parties, the temple Board has enacted a policy that requires the temple to hire a security guard from an approved firm. The cost for this added security is included in the rental fee paid to the temple.

### ***CONGREGATIONAL KIDDUSH***

Our congregation is invited and encouraged to attend all our services. One of the fees you will be assessed this year, covers the cost of a small kiddush for those members attending your service, but not invited to your social celebration. However, we encourage all families to extend an invitation to all who attend the service to participate in the Kiddush or cocktail hour that you host here at Temple Beth Avodah.

### ***TZEDAKAH***

Families are encouraged to make tzedakah an integral part of the celebration. Some of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah families have chosen to have centerpieces that can later be donated, including flowers, books, non-perishable food items, toys, etc.

It is customary to donate any left over food (to Bristol Soup Kitchen in Waltham) and/or a small percentage (3-5%) of the total cost for food at your event to Project Mazon – a world Jewish hunger relief agency. Both Project Mazon and Family Table (another Jewish hunger program) have special tzedakah programs for Simchat. Please speak to the Rabbi or the Education Director for suggestions. If you want to donate your leftover food, please notify the Facilities Manager or Executive Director.



## **RECOMMENDED COURTESIES**

- To reflect the joy of the occasion and express a sense of gratitude, Jewish tradition encourages the family to make a contribution to the Temple in honor of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- If you would like to thank anyone in the Temple for working especially hard on your behalf, you may choose to send him/her a thank-you note and/or a gift as a gesture of gratitude. You might also consider making a contribution to the Temple in their name.
- You are encouraged to invite any or all of your child's Hebrew School classmates, but please refrain from inviting all but a few of them. Your child's religious school class is his/her Temple community. A Jewish milestone should be celebrated with the members of one's community.
- You are requested to select additional ushers to assist the Temple's assigned ushers if there are more than 20 children attending the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

## **HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS**

- Don't forget to pick up your DVD from the custodian on duty if you purchased this service.
- When speaking to your child on the bima, please speak slowly and loudly. Also, refrain from putting your printed speech on the podium. This results in the child's attention being on the paper rather than you.
- It is a good idea to ask your child to make eye contact and maintain it with anyone who addresses him or her during the service.
- If you or members of your family are unaccustomed to making an Aliyah, please practice the blessings a few times before the service. The Rabbis will be happy to provide you with information regarding the specific Aliyah customs of our Temple. A transliteration in English is also included in your child's Torah Portion Packet and in this Bar/Bat Mitzvah Manual.
- Don't forget to take all your Bar/Bat Mitzvah material, your Bar/Bat Mitzvah certificate, your new kiddush cup and gifts after the conclusion of the service.

## **WHAT COMES AFTER THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH**

“Dropping out of Jewish education after Bar and Bat Mitzvah mocks all that bar and bat mitzvah stands for – Jewish learning and its power to shape and influence our lives.”

Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin

Jewish education continues on at Temple Beth Avodah after your child becomes a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a marker on the road to a solid Jewish education. A thirteen year old still has much to learn about Judaism and the Jewish people. Post Bar/Bat Mitzvah is when our children have the maturity and the opportunity to engage in meaningful Jewish dialogue about a variety of subjects. At Temple Beth Avodah we want to see all of our children reach Graduation at the end of 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

By permitting your child to stop Hebrew School the Monday after their Bar/Bat Mitzvah you are sending a powerful message about the importance of Judaism in their lives and that Bar/Bat Mitzvah was the sole purpose of their Jewish education. Now more than ever, the post Bar/Bat Mitzvah youth has the chance to truly engage in Jewish studies, backed by the strong foundation he/she received in the traditional religious school program. We expect that those who become Bar/Bat Mitzvah in 7<sup>th</sup> grade will complete the entire Grade 7 program year.

The Temple has designed a program for post Bar/Bat Mitzvah children beginning in 8<sup>th</sup> grade which meets on Monday evenings called Midrasha. This program engages our children in a variety of learning situations covering many different topics. A more complete description of Midrasha is found on page 4 of this handbook.



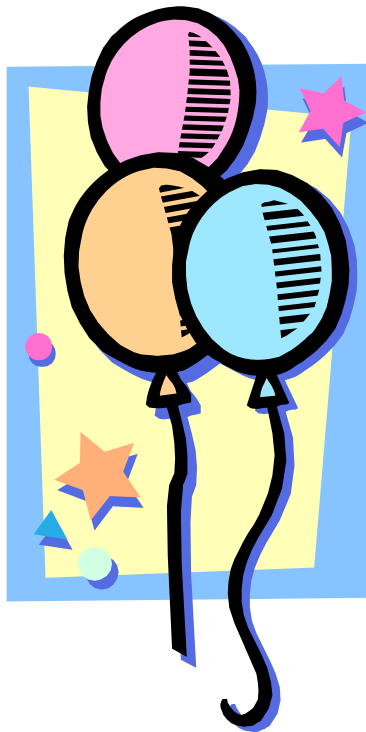
## **A FINAL NOTE**

“Why do the Bar/Bat Mitzvah continue to exercise such influence on us today?...In a time where faith is questioned on every side, there is urgency to a Jew’s affirming the covenant that binds the Jewish people to God and God to us. In a time when rites of passage may be disparaged as primitive, there is a yearning for the milestone event to separate the early years of childhood from the years of adolescence and adulthood. In a time when mobility has spread families out across America...there is a need for a ceremony to bring families together with shared traditions. In a time when we seek the meaning of our Jewish identity, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah provide challenges and opportunities for creating meaning in our lives.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah observance helps to ensure the continuation of Jewish learning. It marks the acquisition of Jewish skills. It is the moment when the Jewish community grows by one member...It trains children to achieve what is expected of adults, so it prepares them to be adults. It sets Jewish children on a lifelong path toward wisdom, faith, justice and peace.”

-from [A Spiritual Journey: The Bar and Bat Mitzvah Handbook](#) by Seymour Rossel

We want so much for you and yours to have an exceptional Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience here at Temple Beth Avodah. We create the possibility for a service that is inclusive, thoughtful, spiritually alive, and haimish. A Bar/Bat Mitzvah is the chance to celebrate all the beauty, struggle, and hope that is part of your Jewish family. The more you know and learn before the big Shabbat day, the more naches --- joy, you will share with all who attend.



## **GLOSSARY**

**Aliyah** (plural, **aliyot**): Hebrew for ‘going up’. Refers to the honor of chanting the blessings over the Torah scroll.

**Bar Mitzvah**: literally, “son of the commandments”.

**Bat Mitzvah**: literally, “daughter of the commandments”.

**Bimah**: the raised platform in the synagogue

**D’var Torah**: The speech given by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child commenting on their Torah portion.

**Gabbai**: Man or woman who calls up honorees to recite the blessing during the Torah reading.

**Glilah**: The honor of dressing the Torah after the Torah reading.

**Haftarah**: literally, “completion”. The reading of the section from the Book of Prophets for a particular Shabbat.

**Hagbah**: the honor of lifting the Torah after it is read.

**Havdalah**: literally, “separation, distinction”. The ceremony that ends Shabbat on Saturday evening.

**Kiddush**: The blessing of the Sabbath and/or festival wine. Also refers to refreshments offered to the congregation after the service.

**Kippah**: Hebrew name for head covering worn traditionally by men. Also commonly known by the Yiddish word yarmulke.

**Mazel Tov**: Commonly meaning ‘congratulations’.

**Mitzvah** (plural, **mitzvot**): an obligation of Jewish life

**Motzi**: The blessing over bread.

**Oneg**: refers to the refreshments served after the Friday evening Shabbat service

**Parasha**: the Torah portion of the week.

**Siddur**: the prayer book.

**Simcha** (plural, **simchot**): a joyous occasion.

**Tallit**: fringed prayer shawl

**Torah**: literally, “teaching”. The Five Books of Moses, the first part of the Hebrew Bible that is read from the scroll.

**Trope:** Musical notations for chanting Torah and Haftarah

**Tzedakah:** The mitzvah of giving, generally means righteousness or the doing of good deeds.

***INCLUDED AS EXHIBITS OR SAMPLES***

Sample Tutoring Schedule

Blessings Before and After Torah

Honors Form

Biographical Information for the Kadima

Rental and Fee information

Sample Rental Contract

Directions to Temple Beth Avodah

Form to Request Recording of the Service