

*Temple Beth Avodah*



*www.bethavodah.org  
Newton Centre, MA*

*“Is this the little girl I carried?*

*Is this the little boy at play?”*

Sorry... I can't help getting sentimental whenever I'm asked to share my thoughts on B'nai Mitzvah. What an extraordinary rite of passage! To see our children who will, let's face it, always be our babies, dressed beautifully, standing proudly at the podium. To hear these children lead a Shabbat service, chant from the Torah and from their Haftarah, and then compose and read an interpretation of the Torah portion of the week – what an unmitigated blessing for them and for all of us.

A Bar/Bat Mitzvah reminds us of the miracle of life and family. It draws our attention to how quickly time passes and how precious every day can be. While it's true that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student is doing the heavy lifting of practice and study, everyone in the family is involved in the act of transition from child to adult.

The more that you can be tuned into your child's progress from week to week, the more often you can have a conversation with your child about their Torah portion and why this is meaningful to your family, the more fulfilling it will be: for you and for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah student.

I would strongly urge you to attend B'nai Mitzvah ceremonies at our temple. No one needs an invitation to enter the sanctuary – it's open to everyone. Get a sense of the rhythm of the service as well as the logistics. It will help you feel comfortable with this remarkable event.

We, the temple staff, are devoted to making sure that you and yours have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah that celebrates love and dedication and commitment to a joyous Jewish life.

**Rabbi Keith Stern**

# IMPORTANT STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Please be in touch with the TBA staff with any questions or concerns you may have regarding the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process.

*45 Puddingstone Lane, Newton, MA 02459  
617-527-0045*

For Information about...	Contact...	Email
General Questions about process, tutoring, and programs	Lori Rosen, Education Program Manager	lrosen@bethavodah.org
Spiritual and religious aspects of process	Rabbi Keith Stern	kstern@bethavodah.org
Personalizing the service, service logistics, and music	Susan Glickman, Cantorial Soloist	sglickman@bethavodah.org
Tutoring, cancelling and rescheduling appointments	Shukie Sapir or Iris Sonnenschein, Bar/Bat Mitzvah Tutors	ssapir@bethavodah.org isonnenschein@bethavodah.org
Dues, tuition, fees, and payments	Marie Calder, Business Manager	mcalders@bethavodah.org
Facilities planning and vendors	Doug Ball, Facilities Manager	dball@bethavodah.org
Rental Contracts, meetings with Rabbi Stern or Susan Glickman	Claudia Folkman, Executive Assistant	cfolkman@bethavodah.org
Mitzvah Projects & Youth Programs	Francie Weinberg, Youth Educator	fweinberg@bethavodah.org
Religious School and Midrasha	Becky Oliver, Director of Education	boliver@bethavodah.org

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# THE ELEMENTS OF BAR/BAT MITZVAH

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As your child begins their transition from childhood to adulthood, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience provides them with an opportunity to be challenged to develop new skills, explore different aspects of their Jewish identity, and connect with the greater Jewish experience. Though each child's experience is unique, the elements of every Bar/Bat Mitzvah help students grow in new ways in a supportive environment.

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## SPIRITUALLY CHALLENGING

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**LEADING THE PRAYER SERVICE.** The learning that takes place in religious school in the classroom and the sanctuary, as well as their attendance at Shabbat services and B'nai Mitzvah empowers our students to feel confident in leading a prayer service.

**CONVERSATIONS WITH RABBI STERN.** Through the meetings with Rabbi Stern and classroom learning, students are challenged to question and form their own personal beliefs about Judaism.

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## INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGING

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**CHANTING TORAH AND HAFTARAH.** Your child will be assigned a Torah and Haftarah portion according to the date of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Rabbi Stern, along with their individual Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutor will determine which sections of the portion he/she will be reading. This act connects them to generations of Jews who have read Torah.

**WRITING A D'VAR TORAH.** Students will write and deliver an interpretation of their Torah portion and its relevancy in their everyday life. Through Midrasha classes and meetings with Rabbi Stern, students will have the opportunity to study and interpret their portion to prepare them writing their D'var Torah. This can be a family process and an opportunity for parents and children to learn together and grapple with Torah and its modern day interpretations.

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## CREATIVELY CHALLENGING

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**CREATING A PERSONAL REFLECTION.** Susan Glickman will work with each family and student to incorporate a personal reflection into the service such as a creative reading or song.

**PARTICIPATING IN A MITZVAH PROJECT.** Each family is expected to complete a Mitzvah project through volunteering, fundraising, and/or raising awareness on an important cause that is meaningful to them. We are happy to provide support, guidance and suggestions to each family.

**DESIGNING A PERSONALIZED YAD.** During the grade 6 year, students create their own yad (Torah pointer) to use at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. These beautiful pieces of art are unique to each student and often include their Hebrew name.

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# REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

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In order to be adequately prepared and create a meaningful experience, all Bar/Bat Mitzvah students and families must complete basic requirements in participation in education programs, tutoring, meetings, and services.

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## EDUCATION PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

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It is expected that all TBA children are participating in a Jewish learning program to adequately prepare them with important skills, enhance your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience, and encourage participation in the Jewish community into adulthood.

Our religious school is designed to achieve these goals and help you and your child have a meaningful experience. B'nai Mitzvah participation requires:

- **Regular attendance at weekly Religious School.**
  - If the Director of Education determines that the student has too many absences, make up work or extra tutoring may be required, at the family's expense. Exceptions will be considered on an individual basis. Please see our Education handbook for more information about our Religious school.
  - Prior to the start of individual B'nai Mitzvah tutoring, students are expected to have a certain level of knowledge and skill that is taught in our religious school program. Students who begin attending religious school after grade 5 may be required to attend extra tutoring at the expense of the family at the discretion of the Rabbi and Director of Education.
  - In addition to regular attendance at school, students are expected to practice Hebrew reading at home throughout their experience in grades 3 and above.
- **Students who attend Jewish Day School** are not required to participate in TBA religious school, but are invited to participate in our supplemental programming. In addition, day school students are encouraged to attend Midrasha on Mondays beginning in grade 7 as the experience can enhance their day school learning and provide a connection to the TBA community.

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ALL TBA STUDENTS WHO HAVE BECOME BAR/BAT MITZVAH ARE EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN JEWISH LEARNING AND PROGRAMMING THROUGH GRADE 12.

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Our grade 8 students are expected to attend our Midrasha grades 8-12 program regardless of Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. The experience of Bar/Bat Mitzvah becomes significantly more meaningful if there are follow up experiences.

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## INDIVIDUAL BAR/BAT MITZVAH TUTORING

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Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring will consist of building on the knowledge learned in Religious School or Jewish Day School to lead Shabbat morning or Havdalah services, as well as preparing to chant a Torah and Haftarah portion. Tutoring sessions take place outside of Religious School.

- Students will be assigned a tutor approximately 9-12 months before their Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.
- Tutoring sessions take place weekly.
- Students will reinforce their knowledge of prayers learned during Religious School, as well as learn their Torah and Haftarah portions.
- Home practice is a key to success in learning the service for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. If a student is not practicing and extra tutoring sessions may be required at the family's expense.
- The tutor will meet regularly with Rabbi Stern to give him updates on the student's progress.
- Jewish day school students are highly encouraged to use TBA's tutors; however, if a student is using a tutor through their school they must communicate with the Rabbi regularly and provide status updates.

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## MEETINGS WITH CLERGY

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Throughout the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process, you and your child will meet with Rabbi Stern and Susan Glickman to prepare spiritually, emotionally, and educationally for the experience. These meetings are an essential part of the process and are required. Please see the timeline for a more detailed schedule of meetings.

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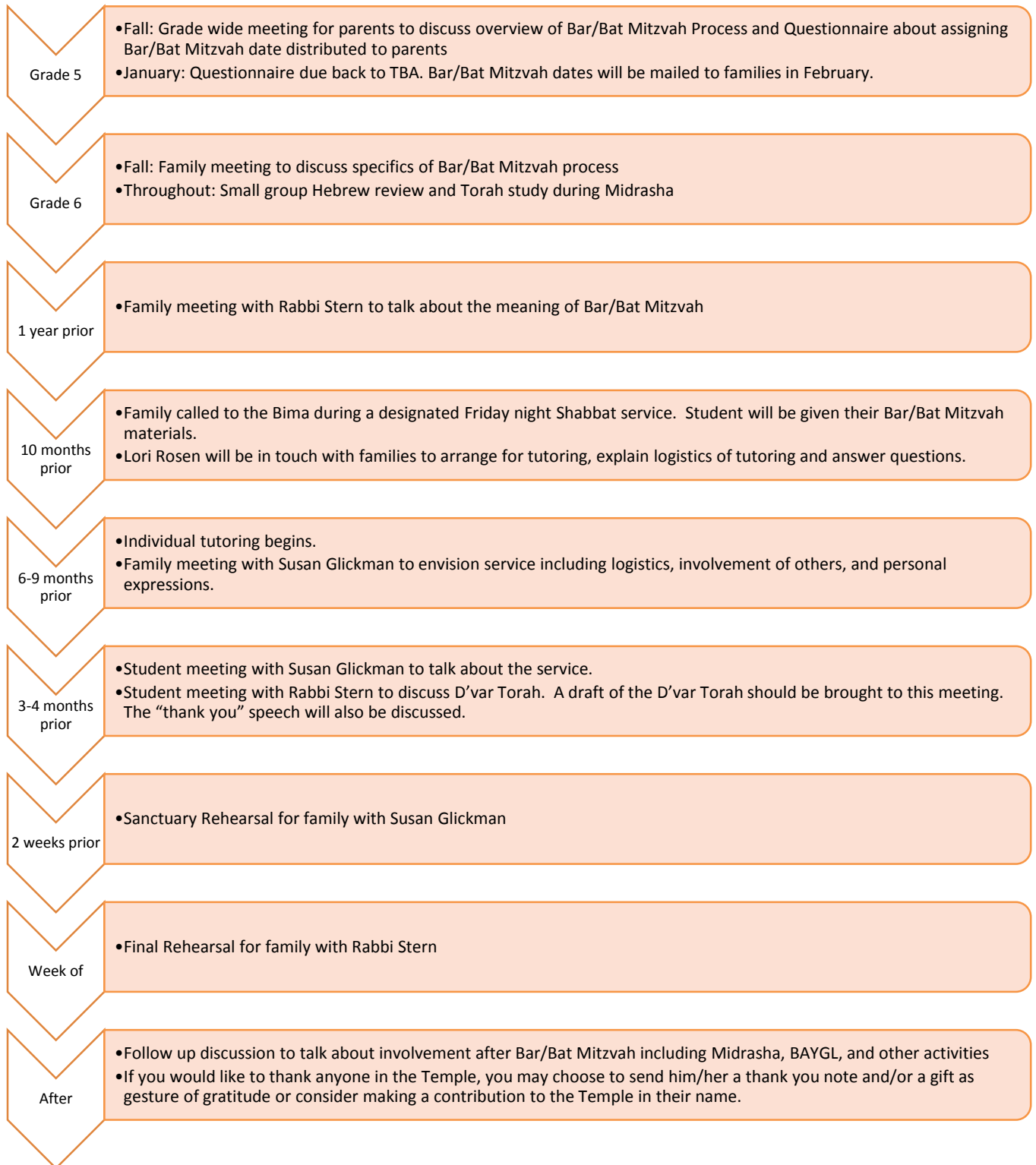
## SYNAGOGUE EXPERIENCE

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**Service Attendance Requirement:** Bar/Bat Mitzvah students and their families are asked to attend at least 3 Bar/Bat Mitzvah services in the year of their Bar Mitzvah. If a student is having a morning service, they should plan on attending 3 morning services at TBA. If a student is having a Havdalah service, they should plan on attending 3 Havdalah service. Service attendance allows students and families to be more prepared with knowledge of the service, prayerbook, and elements of B'nai Mitzvah. The student will feel more comfortable and at ease on the Bima and in front of the congregation.

**Parental Ushering Responsibilities:** As members of the TBA community, each family is required to usher at one Bar/Bat Mitzvah service in the year prior to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. We want to ensure that you, as the B'nai Mitzvah family, as well as the congregation enjoy the spiritual experience and simcha. In striving to make that happen, it is your responsibility to usher in an effort to alleviate any disruptions to the service. Claudia Folkman will inform you of your assigned ushering day and time. This is not optional. If you are unable to usher at the service you are assigned, it is your responsibility to switch with another family and inform Claudia of when you will be ushering. Ushers ensure that the families can enjoy their experience fully without worrying about what is going on in the congregation.

# BAR/BAT MITZVAH TIMELINE



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# FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

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Outside of Temple dues and Religious School tuition, the following are the financial obligations associated with Bar/Bat Mitzvah. All financial obligations including membership dues, school tuition and Bar/Bat Mitzvah fees must be current 90 days before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, or an acceptable arrangement must be made with the Business Manager and Temple Executive Director.

- **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Fee: \$1,700.** This fee covers Bar/Bat Mitzvah materials and tutoring. The fee is split over two payments. This first payment of \$850 is due when the family returns the date request questionnaire in January of Grade 5. The second payment of \$850 is due at the beginning of Grade 6. Therefore, the fee will be paid in full as the student is entering their Bar/Bat Mitzvah year, easing financial responsibilities in the year of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Families may contact Marie Calder to arrange an alternate payment plan if needed.
- **Room rental and security fees:** Claudia Folkman will contact you approximately one year before your Bar/Bat Mitzvah regarding facility and rental fees. A 50% deposit and the security fee is due back to the Temple 2 months after you receive the contract. The balance will appear on your Temple invoice in the year of your function. If you are going to be using the Temple for your celebration, the fees to use the facilities are as follows:
  - Saturday morning Kiddush-\$1,000, ends at 2:30 p.m.
  - Saturday Luncheon-\$1,500, ends at 4:00 p.m.
  - Saturday evening party-\$1,700, ends at 12:00 midnight.
  - Friday night Shabbat dinner-\$150
  - If more than 50 children will be attending the service, there is a \$200 fee for extra security.
  - A \$250 security deposit is required for all functions at the Temple. This fee will be returned to you after your function and the Facilities Manager has inspected the building.

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# LOGISTICS AND PLANNING GUIDELINES

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## Service times

Shabbat Morning: 10:00am  
Havdallah: 6:00pm

We find it best on your invitation you mark the start time as 15 minutes before the actual time. Both services last approximately 2 hours.

## Bima Flowers

The Temple orders the Bima flowers. For more information about specific color requests or guidelines for ordering yourself, contact Facilities Manager Doug Ball one month prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.

## Photography

A photography session is permitted starting at 9:00 a.m. for a morning service and 5:00 p.m. for a Havdalah service. The photography session must be completed 20 minutes prior to the start of the service. Rabbi Stern will be available to take out the Torah and participate in photographs 15 minutes prior to the service. Photographs are not permitted during the service.

## Service Videography

Temple Beth Avodah live streams its services. Our streaming provider, StreamSpot, has additional event-based offerings that you can also enjoy and order. StreamSpot offers the opportunity to set up a professional remote camera operator who can drive the camera and monitor your Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.

Why should I order a professional remote camera operator?

- Constant broadcast monitoring to ensure a high quality broadcast and recording
- Get close shots of participants at your event
- Have a high quality keepsake
- Share your special event with those who cannot attend, due to illness, difficulty and distance

There is an additional fee of \$125 to have your service operated by a remote camera operator. Following the service, you will also have access to download the service and make copies on a DVD. Please contact Claudia in the Temple office at least two weeks in advance of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah if you would like to include a remote camera operator.

## Ushers for the day of your service

If there are a large number of children at the service, the two parent ushers provided by the Temple may not be sufficient to ensure the children are not disruptive. We request that you designate a few adult guests to sit among the child guests to help monitor their behavior and act as ushers if necessary.



## Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program/Pamphlet (Optional)

Some families prepare a program to distribute to their guests. This pamphlet may include a personal welcome as well as information about the ceremony of Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

## 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.

The Temple provides tallitot (prayer shawls) 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.

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## INVOLVING OTHERS IN YOUR CELEBRATION

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### Religious School Classmates

You are encouraged to invite any or all of your child's Religious School classmates, but please refrain from inviting all but a few of them. Your child's Religious School class is their Temple community. A Jewish milestone should be celebrated with the members of one's community.

### Aliyot and other Honors

You will be asked to fill out an honors sheet and return it to Claudia Folkman in the Temple office approximately one month before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. A sample sheet is included at the back of this handbook.

- **Passing the Torah from generation to generation:** At the beginning of the service, the Rabbi will invite parents, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's older siblings, grandparents and great-grandparents to come up to the bima. 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 this ritual.
- **Aliyah:** Family members and friends can be given an Aliyah, the honor of reciting the blessings over the Torah. The blessings written in Hebrew and transliteration will be on the bima during the service. We strongly recommend that those who have an aliyah practice before the day of the service. A copy of the Torah blessings is enclosed with our child's Torah portion. A recording of the blessings can be found on the Temple Beth Avodah website at [www.bethavodah.org](http://www.bethavodah.org) in the Sanctuary music section.
  - A morning service contains 5 aliyot; a Havdalah service contains 3 aliyot.
  - The parents of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah share the second to last aliyah. The last Aliyah is given to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
  - A non-Jewish partner is invited to accompany his/her Jewish spouse to the Torah. However, we ask that the Jewish partner alone recites the blessings.
- **Other honors:** opening the ark before and after the Torah service, dressing the Torah, lifting the Torah and reading from the Torah. Non-Jewish or Jewish family and friends may be given the honor of opening and closing the ark.

## Parents' Blessings

There will be an opportunity for parents to address their child at the end of the service. The words to your child should be about why this day is special and beautiful, and why you love and appreciate your child. This is not the time to tell the congregation about your child's latest report card or accomplishment in sports. We recommend that this blessing/address be about 5 minutes in duration.

## Conclusion of the Service

At the conclusion of the service, the Rabbi will invite your entire extended family up to the bima for Kiddush and motzi in the morning and Havdalah in the evening. You may invite others to share in this moving and beautiful ritual.

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## GUIDELINES FOR USING TEMPLE BETH AVODAH FACILITIES

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The facilities at TBA are available to use for your celebration in the afternoon and the evening. Temple facilities are also available for rental on Sunday afternoons or evenings or for Shabbat dinners on the Friday night before your Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

- If you have a morning service, you may have a Kiddush or a luncheon in the Social Hall. A kiddush must end by 2:30 and a luncheon must end by 4:00.
- 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.

## Supervision of Youth

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. For all luncheon and evening parties, the Temple Board has enacted a policy that requires the Temple to hire a security guard. This cost is included in the facility rental fee. There will be a fee of \$200 for an extra security guard if more than 50 children will be attending the celebration.

## The Caterer

Both kosher and non-kosher caterers are permitted at the Temple. The kitchen can be koshered for use by your caterer. **No pork or shellfish 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

Please make an appointment with Doug Ball, our Facilities Manager, at least 2 weeks prior to your celebration to discuss seating arrangements and general set up of the room.

## Music and Dancing

The Temple allows live music and dancing following the Shabbat service.

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## LOOKING AHEAD...

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This is an exciting time for your family! We are happy to be part of the journey and are here to help you every step of the way. Please do not hesitate to contact any of the TBA staff with any questions that you may have.