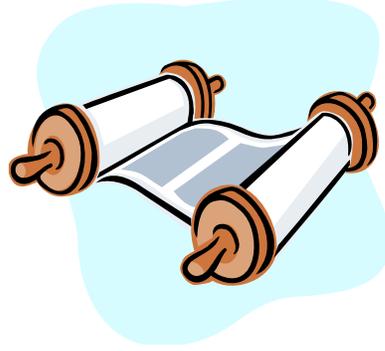


A GUIDE TO BECOMING A BAR OR BAT MITZVAH AT BETH HAVERIM SHIR SHALOM

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INTRODUCTION



Mazel Tov!

Soon your child will become a bar or bat mitzvah. This is a wonderful time for your entire family! At this moment, as the event becomes a reality, you may be feeling the beginnings of excitement and confusion. In this booklet, you will find everything you wanted to know – and some things you never thought of asking – about the philosophy, requirements and procedures of the entire process. We hope to make this journey a smooth and meaningful one that you will remember all your lives.

The Bar /Bat Mitzvah Ceremony in a Ritual and Educational Perspective

Jewish life includes a pattern of ritual ceremonies, each one marking a significant time in a person's life. With each event, every Jew relates in a more mature manner with our heritage and Jewish community. At birth, with the *brit milah* or naming ceremony, your child was welcomed into the covenant of the Jewish people. At an early age, your child was consecrated into Jewish learning in the religious school.

Now, at 13, your child will be called to the Torah as a bar or bat mitzvah, indicating a change in their religious status. “*Bar*” literally means “son” and “*Bat*” literally means “daughter.” A “*mitzvah*” is a commandment. To become a bar or bat mitzvah is to become a son or daughter of the commandment. With this privilege comes the obligation to learn about and observe Jewish commandments and practices applicable as a modern Reform adult. The bar and bat mitzvah ceremony is a rite of sacred passage and not the culmination of a religious and education process. It is expected that your child's Jewish studies will continue beyond the bar and bat mitzvah into the confirmation experience. When your child receives their bar or bat mitzvah certificate, they affirm their lifelong commitment to active participation in Jewish life through study, celebration and good deeds.

Confirmation

We fully expect that all young people who become bar /bat mitzvah at Beth Haverim Shir Shalom will continue on to confirmation.

Once you and your child have experienced the beautiful ceremony of bar /bat mitzvah, your connection to Judaism is not over. From the beginning of your child's Jewish life, you made a commitment to share all of its aspects within the Jewish community. The next step from a statement of mature interaction with Judaism during the bar /bat mitzvah, is an affirmation of that interaction through the process of Confirmation.

The first confirmation ceremony took place in Berlin, Germany in 1817. It was there, at the birthplace of Reform Judaism, that a group of 16- and 17- year -olds appeared before their congregation to affirm their Judaism. Originally, Confirmation was a substitute for bar mitzvah, since it was thought that a child's Jewish education should not end at the age of 13.

Today, throughout the United States and many other countries, students who continue their Jewish education after bar /bat mitzvah celebrate their confirmation in the tenth grade on *Shavuot*, the Festival of the Giving of the Torah.

The *Kadimah* program at Beth Haverim Shir Shalom aims at developing a more mature understanding of Judaism in order for each child to take a firm stance in the confirmation of their faith in God and their Jewish identity. Beginning in the 7th grade (which is a required year of attendance) and continuing through the 12th grade, this program emphasizes a wide variety of topics of interest to your child. Including various holiday celebrations, trips, guest speakers and discussions, this curriculum is geared toward helping bridge the gap in Jewish education between bar /bat mitzvah and adulthood.

REQUIREMENTS LEADING TO THE BAR /BAT MITZVAH CEREMONY

1. The child must be at least age 13.
2. Beginning with the fourth grade year, there is a requirement of a minimum of four consecutive years of formal religious education in the Beth Haverim Shir Shalom program before there can be a Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony as a part of our Saturday morning worship. New students to our school may fulfill this obligation with formal training at a previous religious institution. **We strongly recommend** that a student who will turn 10 years old during his/her 3rd grade year, start religious school in 3rd grade as opposed to 4th. This will enable the fulfillment of the four year requirement. Otherwise, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date assignment will be delayed at least six months.
3. Each student and his or her family are required to attend a minimum of 10 Shabbat services at Beth Haverim Shir Shalom. At least 4 of the 10 services must be on Shabbat morning. Other Shabbat mornings, as well as evenings, may be included in the remaining 6 services. *Service attendance cards, which can be found outside the temple office, must be handed to Rabbi Mosbacher or Cantor Perper at the end of the services your family attends.* To help maintain decorum, and to familiarize the family with the customs of Beth Haverim Shir Shalom, *the parents are expected to attend all 10 services with the bar /bat mitzvah candidate.* The interest of the parent, with the child, in the worship experience greatly enhances the entire bar /bat mitzvah experience. **We strongly suggest this requirement be completed one year prior to your bar/bat mitzvah celebration.**
4. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate must perform 18 hours of community service based on an issue that they care about that they would like to affect change on in the world.
5. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate will prepare a *d'var Torah* (speech) explaining the Torah portion and the lessons it should teach us, why becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is important to them, what they are looking forward to learning Jewishly after their celebration, and highlighting the community service they have performed. There will be monthly meetings with the rabbi beginning approximately seven months in advance to plan this presentation.
6. The family must be up-to-date with all financial commitments to the temple, including dues, school, bar /bat mitzvah fees, and building fund.

PREPARATION OF THE STUDENT

1. Approximately one year in advance, your child will attend a special class with the cantor or other tutor, which meets for several weeks. At this group class, your child will review the prayers of the service.
2. Beginning approximately seven months in advance, Rabbi Mosbacher begins to meet with b'nai mitzvah families to get to know them, as well as to work with students on their *dvar Torah*. At least one parent is required to attend each of these meetings. It's a great opportunity for families who are doubled with another family to get acquainted as well. The rabbi will meet with you approximately seven times in advance of the celebration according to a schedule that you should have received. Each meeting will last approximately 30 minutes. If you are sharing the date with another family, these meetings will be with the two families together.
3. Six to nine months in advance, your child will also attend regular tutoring sessions conducted by the cantor or a synagogue tutor. There he or she will learn his or her Torah and Haftarah portions. Lessons are weekly and last approximately 15 minutes. In consideration of the cantor/tutor's and other students' time, promptness is crucial. Students who arrive late may miss all or part of their lesson. If the rabbi or cantor deems it necessary, extra meetings may be needed to fulfill the requirements. If progress is still slow, the rabbi or cantor may recommend outside tutoring at your own expense. If you are aware of any special difficulties or learning needs your child may be having, please share them with the rabbi, cantor or educator as early as possible. (Please note: If you have special scheduling needs, you must let the temple secretary, the cantor or the tutor know before lessons are scheduled to begin.)
4. Your child must study every day for 15-20 minutes. Practicing once per week for the cantor simply will not suffice for a student to learn everything they need to know. For the best results, he/she should practice reading out loud and use both the prayer book and the CD. Parents should monitor their child's progress by listening to their practice sessions at home and through regular communication with the cantor or tutor. Even if you do not know how to read Hebrew, it is important to listen to your child for clarity, fluency and confidence.
5. Your child should always review what he or she already knows as well as working on newly assigned work. The weekly tutoring alone is insufficient practice.

PREPARATION FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY

1. Invitations and Announcements

Invitations should invite your guests to the ceremony in the temple. In wording the invitation, it is correct to use phrases like: X will be called to the Torah as a bar /bat mitzvah, Y will become a bar /bat mitzvah. This is a complete Shabbat morning service that begins promptly at 10:00 a.m.

2. *Kippot* (Yarmulkes), *Tallit*

The temple provides *kippot* and *tallitot* automatically for all services. If you wish to provide inscribed *kippot* and/or have a specific color, they must be ordered privately.

3. Live Streaming, Video and Still Photography

In order to maintain the sacred nature of the service, no photographs may be taken during the service. It is recommended that photography sessions be arranged for a weekday during the week(s) preceding the ceremony. If it is done on Saturday morning, all photographs must be taken before 9:15 am. An appointment must be made with the administrator in advance. Rabbi Mosbacher and Cantor Perper would be honored to be part of your family pictures, if you choose, but you must make that appointment with them directly. For more information on videotaping, and live streaming options, please refer to the **Hosting** section of this handbook.

4. *Bima* Baskets or Flowers

The family must provide *bima* baskets or flowers for the *bima*. The temple will create baskets to be distributed to the Center for Food Action in Mahwah, Ramapo Bergen Animal Rescue in Oakland, or Jewish Family Services of Rockland. Or as an alternative, flowers, ordered privately, not through the temple, should be delivered on Friday before 1 p.m. and will be left for the congregation to enjoy throughout the next week. For more information on *Bima* Baskets, please refer to the **Hosting** section of this handbook.

5. Temple Topics Submission

Each B'nai Mitzvah student has the opportunity to submit a "biography" that will be published in the Temple Topics newsletter corresponding with the month of their celebration. This form is available on line under the B'nai Mitzvah information on the temple website or from the synagogue office.

6. *Oneg Shabbat*

Each bar/bat mitzvah family hosts the *Oneg Shabbat* Friday night before their celebration. For more information on the *Oneg Shabbat*, please refer to the **Hosting** section of this handbook.

7. Use of Temple Building

Please refer to the **Hosting** section of this handbook for more information on the use of temple facilities.

8. *Tzedakah*

It is considered one of the highest *mitzvot* to give *tzedakah* as a way of honoring all of life's special occasions. By giving *tzedakah*, we thank God for the many blessings in our lives. For suggestions of charities to which you can give *tzedakah*, please speak to the rabbi. If you would like to honor the rabbi, cantor or educator, it would be appropriate to make a donation to one of the Beth Haverim Shir Shalom funds or the rabbi's, cantor's, or educator's discretionary fund. Please contact the temple office for information.

9. Suggested Reading

There are many great ways for your family to make the whole bnei mitzvah experience even more meaningful; there are some terrific books available with creative ideas for you to explore, and we'd like to recommend some of our favorites:

On the Doorposts of Your House: Prayers and Ceremonies for the Jewish Home
Central Conference of American Rabbis

Gates of Mitzvah: A Guide to the Jewish Life Cycle
Central Conference of American Rabbis

Putting God on the Guest List: How to Reclaim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Child's Bar or Bat mitzvah
Jewish Lights Publishing

Raising Your Child to be a Mensch
Neil Kurshan

Teaching Your Child About God
David Wolpe

The Mitzvah Project Book: Making Mitzvah Part of Your Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Your Life
Skylights Path Publishing

LEADING UP TO YOUR BAR /BAT MITZVAH CEREMONY

1. Your child will continue his or her learning sessions throughout the year (approximately) before the bar /bat mitzvah ceremony.
2. You will be assigned three rehearsals, to be led by the educator, cantor, and rabbi. They will occur during the three weeks immediately preceding the ceremony and will each last approximately 1 hour. Both the child and at least one parent must attend these rehearsals. A run-through of the service will occur then. The student should bring their *d'var Torah*, prayer book and all materials they have been studying from to the rehearsals. Completed *Aliyah* (honors) sheets and a draft of your parent blessing are due at the first rehearsal. For more information on *Aliyah* sheets and parent blessings, please refer to the **Honor Sheets** section and the **Prayers/Blessings** section of this handbook.
3. **Ushering is a requirement for the family.** You will generally be assigned to usher at the bar /bat mitzvah service immediately preceding your own. (This may or may not be the Saturday morning directly before your child's service. Please call the temple office to verify your ushering date.) This will enable you to have a fresh and complete understanding of the entire service. If you are unable to usher on the day of your assignment, it is your responsibility to arrange a switch with another family.

Please arrive to usher **no later than 9:30 a.m. for a 10:00 a.m. service.** Your job as ushers is very important in helping to maintain the decorum needed for a spiritual experience during the service, and a family will return the favor the day of your child's celebration.

SERVICE PROCEDURES

The sacred form of Shabbat services, including readings, music and other ritual matters, is determined by the rabbi and the cantor to enhance the beauty of every Shabbat for the congregation. There are ample opportunities at each service for family and friends to participate by aliyot and under certain circumstances, to chant Torah.

Erev Shabbat/Friday Night

1. The family must attend the Friday evening *Shabbat* services immediately preceding the bar /bat mitzvah ceremony. The first Friday evening *Shabbat* service of the month begins at 6:00 p.m.. All other Friday night *Shabbat* services will begin at 7:30 p.m.. Your family must arrive no later than 5:45 p.m. for a 6:00 p.m. services, or no later than 7:15 p.m. for a 7:30 p.m. service.

Please call the synagogue office to be assured of the *Shabbat* service time.

2. Each bar/bat mitzvah family hosts the *Oneg Shabbat* on the Friday night before their celebration. Please see the **Hosting** section of this handbook for more information.

Aliyot - Honors

1. The mother or other adult Jewish female in the family helps to lead the candle blessing at the beginning of the service.
2. There are other honors available for the family on Friday night, including reciting the Torah blessings, lifting and dressing the Torah, opening the ark for the Torah service, and opening the ark for the *Aleinu* section of the service. You may utilize as many of these honors as you wish.
3. The bar /bat mitzvah child will lead the congregation in the *Kiddush* at the end of services.

Please be sure to utilize the correct honors sheets depending on whether yours is a single or double celebration. Please note: families are given the same number of honors to distribute, whether it is a single or double celebration. If you are celebrating together with another family, please contact Cantor Perper to determine whether you are "Family # 1" or "Family # 2".

Shacharit L'Shabbat/Saturday Morning

Prior to the Service

1. The Shabbat morning service begins at 10 a.m. sharp. Your family must arrive no later than 9:15 a.m.
2. If you are bringing your own *kippot*, please do so no later than the Wednesday preceding your child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Otherwise, there are *kippot* and *tallitot* available for those worshippers who wish to use them.
3. If desired, a parking attendant or babysitter is the responsibility of the family. Arrangements must be made through the administrator.
4. Extended family and guests should be seated by 9:55 a.m. (at least five minutes before the start time.) Please: no visiting with guests after 9:55 a.m. so that we can begin services on time.
5. There are no reserved or assigned seats, although it is customary for the parents and immediate family to sit in the front rows of the sanctuary.
6. Unless otherwise noted, services begin promptly at 10 a.m. and end at approximately 11:45 am.

During the Bar /Bat Mitzvah Ceremony

1. **Torah Transmission:** Since a bar /bat mitzvah ceremony is the culmination of years of work by both the parents and the child, it is important to symbolically transmit the teachings of Torah from the parents to the child. This is done by a Torah transmission ceremony. After an introduction by the rabbi, the rabbi will pass the Torah from the parents to the child. After each parent embraces the Torah, the child will take the Torah from the rabbi and, followed by parents and sibling(s), will walk down the side aisle and up the middle for a *Hakafah*. Before the Torah is returned to the ark, the child and his/her parents and sibling(s) will walk down the side aisle again and up the middle for a second *Hakafah*.
2. After the child completes the *Haftarah* blessings, **parents are invited to offer a blessing in English**. Please refer to the **Prayers/Blessings** section of this handbook for information on choosing or writing your own blessing.
3. *Aliyot/Pulpit Honors*
There are several opportunities to honor your family and close friends during the Shabbat morning service. The forms listing the honors available can be found in the **Honor Sheets** section of this handbook. These forms must be completed and handed in at the first rehearsal. Please inform each participant of his or her honor well in advance to the service.

A. *Tallit* Presentation – **OPTIONAL**

It is the Bar and Bat Mitzvah student's personal choice as to whether he or she wears a *tallit* (prayer shawl) during the service. If your child IS planning to wear a *tallit*, then there are two options:

1. The *tallit* is "presented" to the child by a relative or family friend on the *bimah* as a part of the beginning of the service. This is a **NON-SPEAKING** part; the rabbi will help the child say the prayer for wearing a *tallit*, and he/she will put it on and continue with the service. If you are doing this, then you need to include the presenter's name in your honor sheets when you hand them in to the office.
2. The *tallit* is placed in the sanctuary before the service and when Cantor Perper escorts the Bar and/or Bat Mitzvah up onto the *bimah*, he will assist with the prayer and putting on the *tallit* before the service begins.

B. Opening and Closing the Ark Curtains

There are three times during the service when you can choose one or two people to open/close the Ark curtains. They are: at the beginning of the Torah service, at the end of the Torah service, and during the *Aleinu* section of the service. As this honor can be given to people of any faith or age, it is appropriate to involve non-Jewish family members, younger siblings and close friends at this time. On your honor sheets, list one or two people for each of these three times.

C. *Aliyot* to the Torah

One of the greatest honors for a child who is becoming a bar /bat mitzvah is to be called to the Torah for the first time. In addition, the father, mother and eight other family members or friends who are Jewish and over the age of 13 can be honored by reciting the Torah blessings. There are a total of 8 *aliyot* during the Torah reading section of the service, of which you are responsible for four: one for the child, one for (typically) his/her parents, and two others you may offer to friends and family. We are eager to help make this portion of the service run as smoothly as all the rest. If you or your family members need a recording of the blessings or other special assistance, please do not hesitate to ask. The Torah blessing can be found in the **Prayers/Blessings** section of this handbook.

D. *Hagbah*/Lifting the Torah and *G'lilah*/Dressing the Torah

After the Torah is chanted, the honor of lifting the Torah is given to a relative or friend. Since the Torah is lifted high and turned around so that the congregation can see the Torah, this honor should be given to someone strong enough to perform the *aliyah*. A second person then helps dress the Torah before it is returned to the ark. Both of these honors are given to a Jewish person who is over the age of 13.

E. *Kiddush*

There is a prayer before the *Kiddush* that can be given to anyone Jewish or non-Jewish, including a younger sibling, as another honor. Please see the **Prayers/Blessings** section of this handbook for a copy of this prayer.

F. Optional “In Remembrance” section

Our b’nai mitzvah families are permitted to include an “In Remembrance” to be published within the service guide. The “In Remembrance” form can be found in the **Honor Sheet** section of the handbook. For “In Remembrance” examples please refer to the **Prayers/Blessings** section of this handbook.

Please note: You may assign a family member and/or friend to more than one honor during the service, as long as he/she fits the requirements as explained at the bottom of page 2 in the Honor Sheets section of this handbook.

GLOSSARY

Aleinu – The prayer of adoration chanted and read towards the end of the service in front of the open ark.

Aliyah/Aliyot (plural) – The word literally means “going up” it is used to refer to the honor of reciting the blessings over the Torah. Often it is used any time one is called to go up to the *bima* for an honor.

Bar mitzvah – The word literally means “son of a commandment.” A boy, having reached puberty, is now traditionally considered responsible for carrying out the laws of Judaism. The word refers specifically to the child and not to the ritual ceremony of being called up to the Torah. B’nai mitzvah is the plural.

Bat mitzvah – The word literally means “daughter of a commandment.” A girl, having reached puberty, is now traditionally considered responsible for carrying out the laws of Judaism. The word refers specifically to the child and not to the ritual ceremony of being called up to the Torah. B’not mitzvah is the plural.

Bima – The pulpit in a sanctuary.

Haftarah – The word literally means “conclusion.” It refers to the reading from the Prophets. It is usually thematically connected to the Torah portion for a particular Shabbat. This reading is done not from a scroll, but from a book.

Hakafah – The procession which brings the Torah into the congregation.

Kiddush/Motzi – These are the blessings done at the end of the service over the wine and the bread.

Kippah (Yarmulke) – This is a skullcap worn according to custom by both men and women if they wish during prayer.

Mitzvah/Mitzvot (plural) – This word literally means “commandment” but has also come to be understood as “good deed” since all that God commands is for the good of the people. For Reform Jews, it denotes desirable acts, both ritual and ethical, which define us as Jews.

Oneg Shabbat – This phrase literally means, “delight of the Sabbath.” It refers to the time after the Friday evening service during which there is socializing, eating and drinking to celebrate Shabbat.

Parashah – This term refers to the section of the Torah read on any particular Shabbat.

Siddur – This term refers to the Jewish prayer book.

Tallit/Tallitot (plural) – This is the prayer shawl traditionally worn during morning services, or anytime Torah is read. It is based on the commandment to wear fringes. According to the Talmud, a Jewish law book, both males and females may wear it once they reach the age of bar /bat mitzvah.

Torah – The handwritten parchment scroll kept in the ark and containing the Five Books of Moses.

Tzedakah – This term literally means “righteousness” or “act of justice” and is used to refer to the duty of the Jew to assist others through charity or volunteer work.

PEOPLE TO CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

Rabbi Joel Mosbacher – rabbimosbacher@yahoo.com

Cantor David Perper – cantorperper@earthlink.net

Educator – Rebecca McVeigh – schoolatbethhav@optonline.net

Education Chair – Lauren Einhorn – laureneinhorn16@gmail.com

Ritual Chair - Stacey Coyne – staceycoy@aol.com

Community Service - Bobby Mass - bobby@comfortconcepts.com
Whitney Speer – whitneyspeer@msn.com

Oneg Shabbat Information – Temple Office (201) 512-1983