



## *B'nei Mitzvah Handbook 5778*

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## A Time for Community and Family Celebration

Many parents describe the experience of seeing their child standing on the *bimah* as a bar or bat mitzvah as one of life's most moving events. It is a moment in which parents rejoice in seeing their child make an important statement about his or her attachment to Judaism. Families remember past generations and feel connected to them. The entire Jewish community takes pride in having given a child a basic foundation for living a Jewish life.

Yet, we also recognize that a child is neither at the beginning nor at the end of anything when he or she becomes a bar or bat mitzvah. At thirteen years old, our young people are very much in the middle of the journey from childhood to adulthood. Becoming a bar or bat mitzvah is a milestone along that journey that can help set a child's values and priorities for a lifetime of Jewish learning. It is not, however, the journey's destination.

This booklet is meant to help guide your family through the bar/bat mitzvah process. It attempts to answer questions about our community's policies and expectations. It is designed to provide you with some tools to help your family make the most of the experience. It also is meant to help parents think about the spiritual meaning of a celebrated lifecycle event.

### What are “*B’nei Mitzvah*”?

*Bar mitzvah* is not a verb. A person isn't “*bar mitzvahed*.” *Bar mitzvah* is also not the name of a religious service or of a social event. Rather, **a bar or bat mitzvah is a person** – a Jew who has come of age and entered a special relationship with the Jewish community and with God.

A “*mitzvah*” is a commandment. More than “good deeds,” the *mitzvot* (plural of *mitzvah*) are things we do because doing them draws us closer to God. Doing *mitzvot* is central to the Jewish concept of living a meaningful life. A *mitzvah* can be fulfilling an ethical obligation, like helping the poor. A *mitzvah* can be performing a ritual, like lighting Shabbat candles. Doing a *mitzvah* is something that we do to give our lives meaning and to fulfill our spiritual needs.

*Bar mitzvah* literally means, “son of commandment,” and can be understood to mean, “a man who is a part of the community of people who are bound by *mitzvot*.” *Bat Mitzvah* is the same in female form. In Hebrew, the plural of *bar mitzvah* and *bat mitzvah* is “*b’nei mitzvah*.” (“*B’not mitzvah*” is the plural for just women.) We talk about *b’nei mitzvah* when we talk about our children who are becoming members of the sacred community of people who respond to God with sacred action.

Traditionally, children become *b’nei mitzvah* when they turn thirteen (or, in some communities, twelve for girls). We celebrate the young person's coming of age by inviting him or her to read from the Torah with the accompanying blessings. Even without the ceremony, though, every Jewish child becomes a *bar* or *bat mitzvah* with the coming of age.

## Celebrating Our Values

Becoming a *bar* or *bat mitzvah* is much more than an excuse for a party or for showing off Hebrew reading skills. It is an expression of our values as Jews and as a Jewish community.

**Becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Means Accepting Responsibility.** Jewish children who celebrate becoming *b'nei mitzvah* are making a choice to identify with the Jewish people. They announce their decision to accept responsibility for living a life of meaning with ethical and spiritual purpose.

**The Torah Is the Center of Judaism.** Everything we do as Jews, everything we believe, everything we value revolves around the Torah. The Torah is the testimony of our people's encounter with God. In whatever way we understand Torah – whether as a divine revelation, a human text about striving for God, or a combination of the two – it is a text that has been embraced with the highest sanctity by the Jewish people. This is why the first *mitzvah* we expect our children to fulfill as *b'nei mitzvah* is to read publicly from the Torah.

***B'nei Mitzvah* Celebrations are Communal.** It is no coincidence that we hold this ceremony in public. To be a Jew means to live in covenant – not only with God but with other Jews, too. Becoming a *bar/bat mitzvah* marks the beginning of a child's entry into the community as a full-fledged member. The awarding of an *aliyah* (the honor of making the blessings before and after the Torah reading), is a gift of the Jewish people. For this reason, we celebrate a child's coming of age in the home of the Jewish community during our regular time of communal worship.

**It's Not a Performance – It's a Celebration.** The Temple is not a theater and the congregation is not an audience. The celebration of a child becoming a *bar/bat mitzvah* takes lots of hard preparation, but it is not a performance. This also means that the only "mistake" a *bar* or *bat mitzvah* can make at the celebration is to lose sight of this truth.

**The Reception is a Continuation of the Celebration.** Judaism has a formal name for the meal after the service in which a *bar/bat mitzvah* reads from Torah. It is a *se'udat mitzvah*, a meal to celebrate a *mitzvah*. It, too, is a sacred, joyful gathering. By reciting appropriate blessings at the *se'udat mitzvah* and by setting aside a portion of the plenty for the poor, we demonstrate that the words of Torah spoken at the synagogue were not just an isolated or empty gesture, but a sincere declaration of our intentions in all that we do.

**Becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Is Not the End of Jewish Learning.** Being a *bat* or *bar mitzvah* is not the "experience of a lifetime" – rather, it is the beginning of a lifetime of adult Jewish experiences. A *bar/bat mitzvah* is not measured by what he or she does on the *bimah*, but in the days and years that follow the ritual. Becoming a *bar/bat mitzvah* should begin a lifetime of adult Jewish growth and learning. We strongly urge all of our students to continue their Jewish learning beyond *bar* and *bat mitzvah* in our Pre-Confirmation class for eighth and ninth graders and in our Confirmation class for tenth graders. We urge our students to get involved in CRAFTY Jr. and CRAFTY Sr., our youth groups for middle school and high school students.

## Requirements and Expectations

Temple Sinai sets meaningful requirements for students to fulfil before they can celebrate their acceptance of Torah as a *bar/bat mitzvah*:

- Students who are candidates for *bar/bat mitzvah* celebrations are expected to begin their Jewish education by the third grade. From that time through the year in which they become *b'nei mitzvah*, they should be enrolled in both Hebrew and Religious Schools. They should maintain an excellent attendance record for both. If a student misses an excessive number of classes, the family will be asked to meet with the Rabbi and the Director of Education to determine the necessary steps to maintain his or her *bar/bat mitzvah* service date.
- The Rabbi will meet with *b'nei mitzvah* families about one year before the service to discuss the family's hopes and expectations and to begin a conversation about the Torah portion that will be read at the service. The Rabbi will ask members of the family to review and sign a "B'nei Mitzvah Covenant" (see page 12) that specifies their commitment to meet all requirements and expectations.
- During the year before the *bar/bat mitzvah* service, students are required to spend a significant amount of time studying. For most students, we recommend one half-hour, three times a week. Parents should be directly involved in insuring that students keep up with lessons in preparation for the service. Families should take advantage of the prayer recordings and other materials on the "B'nei Mitzvah" page of the Temple's website. If students fall behind in their preparations, the education staff may recommend that the family engage a private tutor to assist with preparations. Recommendations for private tutors are available from the Rabbi, the Director of Education, and the teaching staff.
- It is the responsibility of the Rabbi and the teaching staff to inform parents of their children's progress in learning the *bar/bat mitzvah* materials. During the year before the service, the Rabbi will meet with students every four to six weeks and report to the parents on any problems or concerns. It is the responsibility of parents to raise any of their concerns about their children's preparation with the Rabbi and the teaching staff so that issues can be addressed and resolved quickly.
- All students are required to complete the seventh grade of Religious School with good attendance, regardless of when they celebrate becoming a *bar* or *bat mitzvah*.
- Starting in the third grade, students are required to attend Shabbat services at Temple Sinai. The purpose of this requirement is to help students become familiar with the service and to instill a love of Jewish prayer. It is our hope that the experience will encourage students to make regular synagogue participation a lasting part of their lives. Third grade students are required to attend three services. Fourth grade students are required to attend four services. Fifth grade students are required to attend five services. Sixth grade students are required to attend six services. Seventh grade students are required to attend seven services. Students may attend either Friday evening or Saturday morning services, except that sixth graders must include at least one service with a *bar* or *bat mitzvah* among the services they attend; seventh graders must include at least two services with a *bar* or *bat mitzvah* among the services they attend.

- Families are strongly encouraged to attend synagogue services beyond the required number, especially those at which the child's classmates become b'nei mitzvah. Attending these services supports classmates and the entire community.
- Each grade leads a Shabbat service as part of their Religious School year. All students are required to participate each year.
- Families also are strongly encouraged to observe Shabbat and other Jewish holidays in their home on a regular basis. The Rabbi is available to offer help and guidance for family home observance.
- Each student must complete a meaningful Tzedakah Project, selected and developed in conjunction with the Rabbi, before celebrating becoming a *bar/bat mitzvah*. (Specific suggestions for Tzedakah Projects begin on page 13).
- Each student must prepare a *d'var Torah* – a short teaching based on his or her Torah reading – that he or she will deliver at the service celebrating his or her becoming a *bar/bat mitzvah*. Parents play an important role in helping their child identify meaningful themes in the text that apply to the student's life and experience. The Rabbi also will work with students in developing and writing the *d'var Torah*. It is not a “thank you” speech, but it may include brief expressions of appreciation to parents and teachers. (Some helpful points on writing a *d'var Torah* begin on page 15).
- The family of each student in our Religious School must be a member of Temple Sinai. Exceptions may be made for Jewish students who do not have a Jewish custodial parent.
- Students in the Temple's Religious School must not simultaneously be enrolled in the religious education program of any non-Jewish faith. Please speak to the Rabbi if you have any questions about this important policy.
- It is customary for the family of the *bar/bat mitzvah* to host the Oneg on the Friday night preceeding the service at which he or she is called to the bimah. The Oneg does not need to be elaborate. The *bar/bat mitzvah's* family should provide refreshments similar to what is offered following a typical Shabbat service – cheese and crackers, vegetables and dip, for example – in quantities suitable for members of the congregation and invited guests. Most families do this by making a contribution to Sisterhood, which provides the Oneg at most of our services. (Families for whom this would be a financial burden can seek assistance from the Rabbi). See page 25 for our congregation's policies on food served in the synagogue. There is a form for requesting Sisterhood to provide the Oneg on page 34.
- Because Jewish learning does not end when a child becomes a *bar* or *bat mitzvah*, it is expected that all *b'nei mitzvah* students will continue through Confirmation. Students in the 8th and 9th grades meet on Sundays twice a month in a pre-Confirmation class. Confirmation is in 10th grade, with students meeting on a varying schedule with the Rabbi. The Confirmation curriculum emphasizes meaningful discussions about contemporary issues and trips.

- After becoming a *bar* or *bat mitzvah*, students are invited to serve as tutors and classroom aides (*madrachim* or *madrichot*) in the Religious and Hebrew Schools. This is a wonderful way to immediately apply the lessons and values learned through preparation for *bar/bat mitzvah*!

## Special Needs Students

Our congregation takes great pride in making every *bar/bat mitzvah* celebration special. There are occasions when this requires that we acknowledge the special needs of some students. We will do everything possible to work with students who are differently abled to maximize their sense of accomplishment and pride in Jewish identity. Please feel free to discuss your child's special needs and any concerns you might have with the Rabbi.

## Study Materials

Textbooks and other materials used in the Religious School are provided. The cost is included in the enrollment fee. Recordings of all the prayers that students are required to learn are on the Temple's website. Each student will be provided with a copy of his or her Torah portion months in advance of becoming a *bar/bat mitzvah*. The Rabbi, Cantor or other tutor will make an audio recording (tape, CD or MP3) of the Torah portion, read or chanted. The actual verses to be chanted will be chosen by the student and his or her parents with the advice of the Rabbi.

# The Nuts and Bolts of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Preparation

## Setting Dates

B'nei Mitzvah dates are assigned for a Shabbat morning on or near the child's thirteenth birthday. Dates are generally given as part of the fourth grade service. It is possible for families to request a date, but all dates must be approved by the Rabbi. All services at which a *bar* or *bat mitzvah* is celebrated are on a Shabbat morning and are conducted in the Temple's sanctuary. With exceptions for extraordinary circumstances, the Rabbi will not consider requests for services in an alternate location or on a day or time when the congregation does not usually conduct worship services with a Torah service.

## Tutoring

Twelve months before the date of the service, the Rabbi will meet with each *bar/bat mitzvah* family to discuss the process of study and tutoring. At that meeting, the Rabbi will help the student identify the verses of Torah that he or she will read at the service.

Also, at that time, students will begin working with Rabbi Sol Goodman preparing the service prayers, blessings and their Torah and Haftarah portions. Students are expected to spend a significant amount of time preparing for these tutoring lessons at home. We recommend that parents engage in their children's learning and make sure that students spend at least a half-hour studying at least three days a week. The "B'nei Mitzvah" page of the Temple's website has recordings and resources to help students and parents learn the material for the service.

Starting at about three months before the service, students will begin to meet also with Rabbi Goldwasser to write their *d'var Torah* and to practice reading their prayers, Torah and haftarah readings, and *d'var Torah* from the bimah so that the child feels comfortable and confident. The Rabbi and Cantor also will lead the student in a rehearsal of the service with the family in the week or two before the service. The Rabbi and Cantor are available for tutoring during the summer months.

Starting about four weeks before the service, students switch from working with Rabbi Goodman to working with Cantor Deborah Johnson to make final preparations for the service.

## Invitations

Like all Temple Sinai services, the service at which a *bar/bat mitzvah* is celebrated is open to all and will be included in the congregation's announcements. In addition, you may wish to send personal invitations to your invited guests, near and far.

Families are strongly encouraged to invite all of the children in their child's Religious School class. The Director of Education will provide families with a class list.

Here is one suggestion for the wording of the invitation: "We invite you to join us at Shabbat services at Temple Sinai in Cranston, Rhode Island, on the morning of [date] at which our son/daughter, [name], will be called to the Torah as a *bar/bat mitzvah*. A reception will follow the service at ..."

Of course, you may ask the Rabbi if you have any questions about invitations for your family's celebration.

## Decorations

Due to the traditional, modest beauty of our Sanctuary, we permit only a limited display of artificial flowers on the bimah or baskets to display food and supplies to be donated to a charitable cause. Please be aware that, due to concerns about allergies, fresh flowers are not permitted on the Bima.

## Board Member Presentation

It is a tradition at Temple Sinai that a member of the Temple's Board of Trustees presents gifts from the congregation to the *bar/bat mitzvah* at the service. Board members generally volunteer for this duty, but the family has the option to request a particular Board member if they wish.

## Programs

Some families choose to create a service program for congregants and guests at the service. Programs can include a message from the family of the *bar/bat mitzvah*, information about the Tzedakah Project, and the names of the people accepting honors at the service. If you wish, consult with the Rabbi about the service program. There are suggestions for the service program on page 27.

## Article in *The Scroll*

Every child with a bar or bat mitzvah celebration at Temple Sinai has a brief article about them in the issue of *The Scroll*, the congregation's newsletter, that precedes the celebration. Dottie Swajian, our Temple Administrator, will provide you with a form to provide your child's activities, interests and other recognitions. Please return the form (on page 33), along with a photograph of your child, to Dottie by the 12th of the month preceding the service.



# What Happens at the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Celebration?

## What Do the Parents Do?

Besides *kvelling* (“taking beaming delight”), the parent or parents’ ritual involvement on the day of the *bar/bat mitzvah* celebration likely includes an *aliyah* (the honor of reciting the Torah blessings) and offering a brief blessing for the *bar/bat mitzvah*. Parents may sit on the bimah during the entire service if they wish.

## Honors for Other Participants in the Service

The *bar/bat mitzvah* celebration has opportunities to honor family members who have been important in the life of the *bar/bat mitzvah*. Below is a basic guide to these honors. These honors are all optional; there is no need for every celebration to include every honor. There is an honors worksheet on page 22 to help you and the Rabbi plan the service. If you have any questions, please speak to the Rabbi.

### *Aliyah*

*Aliyah* means “going up” and refers to the person or people who recite the blessings before and after the Torah reading. We usually have three to seven *aliyot* (plural of *aliyah*) during the Torah service. The honor of reciting the blessings for each *aliyah* can be given to an individual or to a group of people. The last *aliyah* usually is given to the *bar/bat mitzvah*. Other *aliyot* may be assigned to adult Jewish friends and family, and to older siblings.

*An Important Note:* The celebration of the *bar/bat mitzvah* is part of the congregation’s worship service. It is not a private ceremony. Under some circumstances, an *aliyah* will be given to a member of the congregation for a special occasion. For example, an *aliyah* is traditionally offered to a couple on the Shabbat before their wedding or following the birth of a child.

### *Turgeman*

The *turgeman* is the person who translates the Torah reading into the vernacular (English). This may be assigned as an additional honor to an adult Jew or it may be done by the person called for the *aliyah*.

### *Petichah*

The *aron kodesh* (holy ark) is opened at the beginning of the Torah service, at the end of the Torah service, and at the Aleinu prayer. The honor of opening and closing the ark is called *petichah*. Each ark opening may be assigned to up to four people (including a child or children).

### *Hagbahah and Gelilah*

After the Torah is read, the Torah is raised and shown to the congregation in the honor called *hagbahah*. This honor should be given to an adult who is able to lift our Torah scrolls comfortably and confidently. The honor of rolling, tying and dressing the scroll is called *gelilah*. There should be only one person designated for each of these honors. The Rabbi recommends a brief lesson before the service if the people given these honors are not familiar with the ritual.

## The Participation of Non-Jewish Family Members and Friends

We welcome the participation of non-Jewish family members and friends in our service. We want all of your guests to feel welcome. The Rabbi makes a special point to explain the elements of the service to help everyone feel at home in the Temple.

Some of the honors during the Torah service may be given only to Jews. There are honors that *are* appropriate for non-Jews. We at Temple Sinai believe that this is an important way to include important friends and family members who might otherwise feel excluded. English readings before the *Barchu*, near the beginning of the service, are an example. Such readings must be approved by the Rabbi and may include a prayer for peace, a psalm or a meaningful modern poem. In the instance of a *bar/bat mitzvah* with married, interfaith parents or grandparents, both members of the couple typically come up for an *aliyah*, but only the Jewish parent or grandparent recites the blessings because these blessings are a central statement of Jewish identity. By custom, our congregation allows non-Jews to accompany Jews for the honor of opening the ark.

## Blessing for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's Family

The coming of age of a child is a rite of passage for the whole family, not just for the *bar/bat mitzvah*. The Rabbi usually will offer members of the *bar/bat mitzvah's* family an opportunity during the service to receive a blessing (including non-Jewish family members). This is also an appropriate way to include and recognize younger siblings in the celebration.

## Tallit

Jewish men and women are encouraged to wear a *tallit* (*tallis*, or prayer shawl) during morning services, but it is not required. As the *tallit* represents the acceptance of the mitzvot, it is not appropriate for non-Jews or children under the age of *bar/bat mitzvah* to wear one. *Tallitot* (plural of *tallit*) are available at the sanctuary door for members and guests.

Many families give the *bar/bat mitzvah* a *tallit* to wear at the service. The *tallitot* that children receive at their *bar/bat mitzvah* celebrations often become cherished possessions.

## Kippot (Yarmulkes)

Traditionally, all Jewish men and boys wear a *kippah* (*yarmulke*). The wearing of a *kippah*, however, is not mandated by Jewish law and it is not limited to men. There are no restrictions on wearing a *kippah* for people who are not Jewish. *Kippot* (plural of *kippah*) are available for members and guests.

Many families provide *kippot* with the name of the *bar/bat mitzvah* printed or embroidered into them. This *kippah* becomes an appropriate keepsake of the occasion. If you order *kippot* for the occasion, make sure that you allow several weeks for printing and shipping.

## What to Wear

We respectfully request that clothing be appropriately modest. Inform your family and guests that they should dress for a religious service. Please inform your guests that formal evening wear, low neck lines, tee-shirts and bare shoulders are not appropriate for our Shabbat

services. You can direct your guests to check the Temple's website for information on appropriate attire for worship services.

## Photography/Videography

The Temple sanctuary is a sacred space and our services take place in sacred time. It is the congregation's policy to restrict the use of photography or videography during any part of the service, including the Torah reading. The use of still cameras is confined to the area immediately outside the main doors of the sanctuary, which remain open throughout the service. No flash photography is permitted. Additionally, one video camera, set on a tripod, may be placed in one rear corner of the sanctuary in a manner that does not block the walking area. We prefer that tripods remain a few feet in the "hallway" behind the seam in the carpet. The Rabbi will make an announcement at the beginning of the service asking everyone to turn off and not use cameras and other electronic devices during the service. It is helpful to put a notice in the service program, stating, "Please do not take photographs or videos during the service."

You can arrange for photos of the bar/bat mitzvah, the family, the Cantor and the Rabbi before the service. Such arrangements must be made ahead of time and photography must be concluded at least one half hour before the beginning of the service.

## Tossing Candy

We discourage families from the practice of tossing candy at the bar/bat mitzvah. While we wish to have joyful celebrations at our services, we have found that throwing candy creates a free-for-all atmosphere. There are, of course, stories of people being injured by projectile candy. Also, the noise of crinkling candy wrappers can be distracting during the service. Nonetheless, if this is an important tradition for your family, you may choose to provide a limited number (one per person, please) of small candies to give to members of the congregation.

## Additional Resources:

### B'nei Mitzvah Covenant

על שלשה דברים...

*Al sh'losha d'varim...*

The world is sustained by three things:  
Torah, worship, and acts of lovingkindness

This covenant documents our commitment to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah program at Temple Sinai. We understand that becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a significant Jewish milestone, marking the transition from childhood to adulthood. We agree to do our best to complete the following expectations:

#### **Torah**

We will participate fully in the B'nei Mitzvah program, which requires diligent study and preparation from students and engaged participation from parents. We will encourage \_\_\_\_\_ (Bar/Bat Mitzvah) to continue his/her lifelong Jewish education.

#### **Avodah**

Worship

We will attend services regularly during the months preceding the Bar or Bat Mitzvah service. (Six are required in sixth grade, seven in seventh). We will strive to make Jewish holidays, observance and celebration a part of our lives.

#### **G'milut Chasadim**

Acts of Lovingkindness

We will work together to complete a meaningful Tzedakah Project that benefits the community and furthers the pursuit of justice and caring. Recognizing the value in teaching our child that he/she is a part of a community and that empathy for others is an important trait, we will endeavor to make acts of tzedakah and lovingkindness a part of our lives.

Signature of Bar/Bat Mitzvah: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents/guardians' signatures: \_\_\_\_\_

Clergy Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

“You are not required to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.”  
Rabbi Tarfon, Pirkei Avot

## Tzedakah Projects Ideas

*Tzedakah* is an obligation in Judaism: It involves giving our time, giving money, or raising money to further the cause of justice in the world. Here is a list of ideas and resources that your family might consider for a Tzedakah Project. If you don't know about these organizations, check them out. It's good to learn about the ways in which people are doing *tikkun olam*, "repairing the world," in our community.

This is not a complete list. You are encouraged to find your own way to fulfill the obligation of *tzedakah*. The most important thing is not how much you give, but that you make a genuine commitment to help in a way that is meaningful to you. This is one of the ways in which a *bar/bat mitzvah* can show his or her desire to take on adult Jewish responsibilities.

### 1. Give of Your Time:

- a. Visit the elderly – family members, a neighbor, or a nursing home. There are a number of nursing homes in our area that are always looking for volunteers.
- b. Work on a project to help the environment.
- c. Work at a meals program, such as the Temple's "Sandwiches at Sinai" program to prepare meals for Harrington Hall homeless shelter in Cranston.
- d. Collect old but usable clothes, toys, videos, books, etc., and give them to the needy and the homeless through a poverty relief organization.
- e. Participate in a walk-a-thon for a cause you care about.
- f. Work on a project for Habitat for Humanity.

### 2. Raise Money for a good cause

- a. Help the hungry, the poor, and the homeless by helping to raise money for organizations like these:
  - \* Mazon: Jewish Response to Hunger. Donate 3% of the cost of your celebration or a part of your *bar/bat mitzvah* gifts. [www.mazon.org](http://www.mazon.org)
  - \* Habitat for Humanity, [www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org)
- b. Help support medical research and medical support groups
  - \* Local hospitals or nationally recognized specialty hospitals
  - \* Specific disease groups: Cancer Care, The Kidney Foundation, AIDS, MS, Heart Association, etc.
  - \* Hadassah, [www.hadassah.org](http://www.hadassah.org)
- c. Help other support groups
  - \* P-FLAG: Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)
  - \* JACS, AA, and other organizations dealing with substance abuse
  - \* The Jewish Guild for the Blind. [www.jgb.org](http://www.jgb.org)
- d. Help Jewish Causes
  - \* Union for Reform Judaism Annual Campaign, [www.urj.org/give](http://www.urj.org/give)
  - \* ARZA/WORLD UNION, North America. [www.rj.org/arzawuna/](http://www.rj.org/arzawuna/)
  - \* WUPJ: World Union for Progressive Judaism. [www.wupj.org](http://www.wupj.org)

- \* WRJ: Women of Reform Judaism. [www.rj.org/wrj](http://www.rj.org/wrj)
- \* NFTB: North American Federation of Temple Brotherhoods. [www.nftb.org](http://www.nftb.org)
- \* HUC-JIR: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.  
[www.huc.edu](http://www.huc.edu)
- \* Leo Baeck School in Haifa, Israel
- \* Rabbis for Human Rights (Israel)

Find more ideas on the website [www.serverhodeisland.org](http://www.serverhodeisland.org).

Students should prepare a brief talk about their tzedakah projects to be presented to the Religious School during Kehilah.

## Writing the *D'var Torah*

“*D'var Torah*” literally means, “a word of Torah.” It is a brief talk about a weekly Torah portion. It sometimes examines the Torah portion as a whole, or it can look at a smaller section of the portion. Sometimes, a *d'var Torah* will focus just on a single verse, or even on a single word. Rather than a full-fledged sermon, the *d'var Torah* is a simple explanation of the Torah portion, the identification of an issue or problem within it, a personal reflection on the meaning of that issue, and a proposed interpretation. Usually, a *d'var Torah* is no more than a few minutes long when read aloud.

The Rabbi works closely with each student to help him or her develop the *d'var Torah*. The process proceeds in several steps.

- I. **Choose the section of the weekly Torah portion to read or chant.** The Rabbi gives each student a packet of materials about the Torah portion for the week of the service. The packet includes a synopsis of the Torah portion and a review of how the portion has been interpreted in Jewish tradition. The first step for the *bar mitzvah* student is to read through the packet with his or her family and to discuss the material. From that discussion, the student will select a section of the Torah portion that interests him or her. The verses that the student will learn to read or chant in Hebrew will reflect this selection.
- II. **Describe the Torah portion.** The first section of the the *d'var Torah* describes the important features of the Torah portion or of the smaller section on which the *d'var Torah* focusses. This is generally no more than a brief paragraph of four or five sentences.
- III. **Raise a question or focus on a problem.** The next section of the *d'var Torah* states some problem or question in the text. It could be a word or phrase that is difficult to understand. It could be a seeming inconsistency. It could be something that contains multiple meanings. It could be something that seems to go against common sense or contemporary assumptions. It could be something with which the speaker simply disagrees. The speaker must explain the problem clearly.
- IV. **Offer an explanation, interpretation or resolution to the problem.** The speaker needs to offer a new perspective on the problem that shows insight or innovation in approaching it. This could take the form of listing a number of possibilities. It could be a thought that comes from a personal experience. It could be a new reading of the text that gives it new meaning. There are no right and wrong answers here; your interpretation is the one that is true for you.
- V. **Apply the text to a real-life situation.** Give examples of how the teaching learned from this piece of Torah applies to your life, to your family, community, nation, or to the world. Be as specific as possible in showing what the Torah might tell us about addressing problems in the real world.
- VI. **Thank the people who have helped you learn this Torah.** Don't forget your parents. They are your first and best teachers.

Here's an example of how a *d'var Torah* might take shape. It is based on a passage from a Torah portion in Deuteronomy called *Nitzavim*.

**Describe the Torah portion:**

This week's Torah portion is *Nitzavim*. In it, Moses gives a speech to the Israelites while they are on the east bank of the Jordan River, about to enter into the land of Israel for the first time after forty years of wandering in the desert. Moses tells them, "You stand here this day, all of you, before Adonai your God...to enter into the covenant of Adonai your God." Moses goes on to say that the covenant is not just with the people who are there, but also with "those who are not here."

**Raise a question or focus on a problem:**

The first time I read that, it seemed strange to me. Who is Moses talking about when he says that the covenant is with people who are not there? Why does he have to say that? I also wonder, if Moses is including me in the people who are not there.

**Offer an explanation, interpretation or resolution to the problem:**

When I studied this section of the Torah with the Rabbi, I learned that one traditional explanation of Moses' statement is that he is addressing himself to all the future generations of the Jewish people. I like that because it means that the covenant, the relationship between God and the Jewish people, is just as true for people today as it was when Moses lived. The Israelites who came out of slavery in Egypt must have felt that God was very close to them because they heard God speak the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, but Moses says that the covenant is as much for us as it was for them. We were standing there, too, even if no one could see us, when the ancient Israelites entered into the covenant.

I think there is also another way of understanding this section, though. Moses could also be talking about the people who aren't there because they died during the forty years of traveling through the wilderness. He could be talking about the past as well as about the future. I like this interpretation, too, because Judaism is always emphasizing the importance of remembering people who have died. We end every service by reciting the Mourner's Kaddish to remember them. Maybe Moses wants to make sure that everyone knows that the covenant includes the people we remember. Death does not mean that a person no longer exists. It just means that you don't see them with your eyes, but you can still be in a relationship with them, a covenant, in your heart.

**Apply the text to a real-life situation:**

When my grandfather died I was so sad. It was the first time in my life that someone I knew personally had died. I felt like a piece of me had been taken away and I could never get it back. I would never get to see him or talk with him again.

It took me a while to realize that I was wrong. Even though my grandfather has died, I still feel that he is part of me. I think of him when my family tells stories about him, especially his ridiculous jokes. I sometimes even think of him when I hear a piece of music that I know he liked. He has not really gone away. I am still in a relationship with him. It's just that I can no longer see him, literally.



The teaching in this week's Torah portion could be that we always have to remember "those who are not here." These are people who we love who are not physically present. However, when we think of them, we find that they are part of our lives and part of the covenant, too.

**Thank the people who have helped you learn this Torah:**

Preparing for this day has been a wonderful, but challenging, experience. I could not have done everything that I needed to do for becoming a bar mitzvah if it were not for the help of many people. I want to thank the Rabbi and Cantor for all the time they spent working with me. Thank you, Cantor, for always making me feel good about the progress I made, even when I didn't feel like it was enough.

Thank you, also, to all of my teachers over the years in Religious School. I would not know an aleph from a bet without you.

I also want to thank my little sister, Lauren, who now knows my Torah portion almost as well as I do. She had to listen to me read it so many times. Thank you for your patience, Lauren.

Thank you, Mom and Dad. You have done so much for me that I can't even say how grateful I am. You drove me all over the place for my lessons and you helped me learn the prayers and my Torah portion. I know that you have put a lot of your time and energy into preparing for today. I know that you did this because of all the things you want for me. I am so happy to be your son.

I also want to thank all the other members of my family who are here today, including my grandfather, who was the inspiration for my d'var Torah. Even though I don't see you anymore, Papa, I still know that you are there. Thank you.

Shabbat shalom.

## Ideas for the Parents' Blessing

*Rabbi Eliezer ben Rabbi Shimon said: A man is responsible for his son until the age of thirteen; thereafter he must say, "Blessed is the One who has freed me from the responsibility of this boy!"*

– Midrash Genesis Rabbah 63:10

The tradition of parents offering a blessing at a child's coming of age ceremony is ancient. The above quotation shows that it was performed thousands of years ago on the occasion of a child's first *aliyah*. Although it might seem inappropriate to recite a prayer freeing yourself from responsibility for your thirteen-year-old child, the underlying principle is instructive in thinking about what you might say to your son or daughter on the day he or she celebrates becoming a *bar/bat mitzvah*.

The intent of the parent's blessing during our service is to give the mother and/or father the opportunity to publicly acknowledge – in a sacred setting – the joy they feel at that moment. What is even more important, they also can share their hopes and dreams for their child. In other words, it is an opportunity to put the meaning of that special moment into words.

Therefore, ***every word of the blessing should be addressed to your child, not to the congregation***. Speak in the second person. For example, do not tell the congregation, "We hope that Richard will continue to be a caring person." Instead, say to your child, "Richard, we hope you will continue to be a caring person." It makes a huge difference in keeping the focus on your child, which is where it belongs on this occasion.

Please also remember that this talk is not an appropriate time to review all of your child's accomplishments. A talk that sounds like a nomination speech for a Nobel Prize may seem out of place for a thirteen-year-old!

You may wish to use one of the blessings below, or to write something of your own. In any event, it's best to prepare your remarks in advance. Also, shorter is better. Each parent's remarks should be no more than two minutes. (Again, this is your child's moment, not yours). When you are done, please feel free to hug your child. Crying is permitted.

Below are some examples of blessings that parents can offer on this occasion:

Praised is God who has granted new responsibilities to \_\_\_\_\_ and to us. As you begin to enjoy your new status among the Jewish people, a status that redefines your role in life, may God grant us the wisdom to continue as guides and parents, allowing you to live in accordance with the teachings of our Torah as a responsible Jewish adult.

For a male:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁפָּטַרְנִי מֵעֲנֹשׁוֹ שְׁלִיזָה.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, shep'tarani mei-onsho shelazeh.*

For a female:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁפָּטַרְנִי מֵעֲנֹשָׁה שְׁלֹזֶאֶת.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, shep'tarani mei-onshah shelazot.*

Praised are You, *Adonai* our God, Source of all being,  
who has freed us of some responsibilities and conferred new ones upon \_\_\_\_\_.

\* \* \* \* \*

Our hearts are one on this joyous day  
as you commit yourself to a life of Torah:  
a life, we pray, filled with  
wisdom, caring and righteous action.

We pray that you will grow each day  
in compassion for the needy,  
in concern for the stranger,  
in love for all people.

Made the one who blessed our ancestors,  
Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca,  
Jacob and Rachel and Leah,  
bless you on your becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

May you grow with strength and courage,  
with vision and sensitivity.  
And may you always be certain of our love.

Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

May you live to see your world fulfilled,  
may your destiny be for worlds still to come,  
and may you trust in generations past and yet to be.  
May your heart be filled with intuition  
and your words be rich in understanding.  
May songs of praise ever be upon your tongue,  
and your vision clarify a straight path before you.  
May your eyes shine the light of Torah  
and your face reflect the brightness of the heavens.  
May your lips ever speak wisdom  
and your fulfillment be in righteousness,  
even as you ever yearn to hear the words of  
the Ancient One of Holiness.

## Aliyah Primer

“*Aliyah*” Means “going up.” The word, as applied to the Torah honor, implies a spiritual ascent. An *aliyah* is one of the most sacred honors in Judaism. Consequently, you must be Jewish and “of age” (a *bar/bat mitzvah*) to qualify for an *aliyah*. The ceremony of *bar/bat mitzvah* is a celebration of a child’s first *aliyah*.

### Jewish Name

Proper form requires you to be called to the Torah by your Jewish name. This includes your given name and the name(s) of your father and/or mother. Here are examples:

For men	<i>Ya’akov ben Avraham v’Sarah</i>
For women	<i>Rachel bat Avraham v’Sarah</i>

Although Jewish names are often called “Hebrew names,” they may be Hebrew or Yiddish.

### Going Up

When your name is called, go up to the *bimah*, and stand next to the reader. She or he will point to the place in the *sefer Torah* (the Torah scroll) where she or he is reading. Touch that spot with the *tzitzit* (fringes) of your *tallit* (prayer shawl) or the *avnet* (Torah binding cloth, also called a “*wimpel*” or “*binder*”) and then kiss the *tzitzit* or *avnet*. Some people choose to grasp the two wooden posts of the scroll while reciting the *brachah* (the blessing).

### Blessing before the Torah Reading

Recite the first line, then wait for the congregation to respond with the second line. After the congregation’s response, repeat that second line and then read the rest of the first blessing.

You:

בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יְיָ הַמְּבָרֵךְ  
*Bar’chu et Adonai ham’vorach!*  
Bless Adonai, the blessed One!

The congregation:

בָּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבָרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד  
*Baruch Adonai ham’vorach l’olam va-ed!*  
Blessed is Adonai, the blessed One forever and ever!

You:

בָּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבָרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד  
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ  
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה  
*Baruch Adonai ham’vorach l’olam va-ed!*  
*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam*  
*asher bachar banu mikol ha-amim v’natan lanu et Torato.*  
*Baruch Atah Adonai notein ha-Torah.*

Blessed is *Adonai*, the blessed One forever and ever!  
Blessed are You, *Adonai*, our God, Source of all being,  
who has chosen us from among the peoples and given us the Torah.  
Blessed are You, *Adonai*, who gives the Torah.

The congregation:

אָמֵן  
*Amein!*  
Amen!

### The Torah Reading

Following the conclusion of the first blessing, the reader will read the selection from the Torah. After completing the reading, the reader will indicate where the last word appears in the scroll. Again, touch that spot with the *tzitzit* of your *tallit* or the *avnet* and then kiss the *tzitzit* or *avnet*. The reader will close the scroll.

### Blessing after the Torah Reading

Following the Torah reading, the concluding *brachah* is recited. Again, the person offering the blessing may choose to grasp the posts of the Torah scroll while reciting the blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת  
וְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם נָטַע בְּתוֹכֵנוּ  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה  
*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam*  
*Asher natan lanu Torat emet*  
*V'chayei olam nata b'tocheinu.*  
*Baruch Atah Adonai notein haTorah.*

Blessed are You, *Adonai*, our God, Source of all being,  
who has given us the Torah of truth  
and implanted within us eternal life.  
Blessed are You, *Adonai*, who gives the Torah.

The congregation responds, "Amen."

### After the Concluding Blessing

The person honored with the *aliyah* is often asked to read the translation of the Torah reading. This honor may also be given to another individual. Following the concluding blessing and translation, move to the right side of the bimah. At the end of the following *aliyah*, you may return to your seat.

# Honors Work Sheet

Name of Bar/Bat Mitzvah: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Use this form to assign duties to the people you wish to honor at the service. These are the *possible* honors. **You do not need to assign them all.** It is possible to add additional honors if that is desirable. The Rabbi will help you to complete this sheet. *Please make sure that all of the people to whom you have assigned honors know what is expected of them.*

***P'tichah*** (Opening the ark) for Torah service – 1 to 4 people

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***Hakafah*** (Carrying the Torah in procession *before* the reading)

NOTE: The bar/bat mitzvah usually carries the Torah in the procession *after* the reading.

**Passing of the Torah** (Parents/Grandparents)

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***Aliyah*** (Torah blessings) – Each *aliyah* can be assigned to one person or a small group of people (often a married couple). The last *aliyah* is reserved for the bar/bat mitzvah. There are three to seven *aliyot*. (There is a minimum of three verses of Torah read for each *aliyah*.)

NOTE: Under some circumstances, an *aliyah* will be given to a member of the congregation for a special occasion. For example, an *aliyah* is traditionally offered to a couple on the Shabbat before their wedding or following the birth of a child. The Rabbi will inform you if there is a need to assign an *aliyah* for an occasion such as this.

English Names

Jewish Names\*

1.

2.

3.

English Names

Jewish Names\*

4.

5.

6.

7.

\* Jewish names are usually Hebrew or Yiddish. They include the name of the person's father or the names of the person's father and mother. Examples are: *Yonatan ben Shmuel v'Sara* (*Shmuel* and *Sara* are the Jewish names of the parents), *Rachel bat Moshe*, or *Oznat bat Avraham u'Ferl*. Ask the Rabbi if you have questions.

**Turgeman** (Translators) – *One person for each aliyah. (The translation may be read by the person receiving the aliyah).*

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**Hagbahah** (Lifting the Torah; one person only) \_\_\_\_\_

**G'lilah** (Dressing the Torah; one person only) \_\_\_\_\_

**P'tichah** (Opening the ark) for Returning the Torah to the ark – *1 to 4 people*

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**P'tichah** (Opening the ark) for Aleinu – *1 to 4 people*

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**Board Presentation.** The family may request a specific member of the Board to present gifts from the congregation.

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It is our custom to recite the names of deceased family members when we recite the Mourners Kaddish at the conclusion of the service. Please provide the names of family members whom you would like to be remembered for the Kaddish:

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## Kashrut at Temple Sinai

As you plan for the Kiddush on the Friday night before the *bar/bat mitzvah* celebration, and as you plan for the reception that follows the service on Saturday, please keep in mind the Temple's policies for food brought into and served in the Temple building. **Please share these policies with any caterer you may hire to prepare or serve food in the Temple.**

Temple Sinai has a "Kosher Style" policy. No pork product or shellfish are permitted to be served or eaten within the Temple building.

Meat and dairy should not be served at the same time (e.g., no cream cheese and roast beef served in the same course of the meal), but meat and dairy may be served at the same meal if they are on the table at different times. For example, after a meat entrée is cleared, a dairy dessert may be served.

During the seven days of Passover, only unleavened foods will be brought into or be served within the Temple.

Alcoholic beverages other than champagne, wine, or beer can be used or served in the Temple building only when specifically approved in writing by the Temple. Even then, they must be provided and served only by the host or by properly licensed vendors in compliance with local ordinances.

Here is a simplified guide to our policies:

### YES!

- Beef, lamb, poultry (no kosher certification required)
  - Cheeses, milk and other dairy products (no kosher certification required)
- These two categories cannot be served at the same time.*

- Whole fish
- Vegetables of all sorts (no kosher certification required)
- Candies, chocolates, sweets of all kinds (no kosher certification required)
- Breads, grains, beer, cakes, cookies, pastries (**except during Passover**)
- Caviar
- Wine (no kosher certificate required)

### NO.

- Pork
- Shellfish (shrimp, lobster, crab, snails, etc.)
- Leavened products (bread, grains, cakes, cookies, pastries, beer, most liquors, etc.) **during Passover.**

## Your *Se'udat Mitzvah*/Reception

The “Jewish part” of the *bar/bat mitzvah* experience does not end when the service is over. Choosing to focus on Jewish values during your later celebration will show that Jewish values continue to matter to you even when you're not in a synagogue. Remember, everything we do with our children teaches them something.

Decide as a family what you are celebrating and what this moment means in your life. This decision will help guide you through the rest of the planning stages. You may find the text *Putting God on the Guest List* by Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin (Jewish Lights Publishing) to be quite helpful.

### Consider Jewish Values in Your Decision Making

- \* *G'milut Chasadim* – Acts of Loving Kindness
- \* *Tzedakah* – Righteousness/Justice/Sacred Giving
- \* *Talmud Torah* – Study of the Torah
- \* *Hiddur P'nei Zakein* – Honoring the Elderly
- \* *Zicharon* – Memory
- \* *Shabbat* – Honoring Shabbat
- \* *Tzar Ba'alei Chayim* – Non-Cruelty to Animals
- \* *Tikkun Hanefesh* – Repairing the Self
- \* *Tikkun Olam* – Repairing the World

### Some Tzedakah Suggestions:

- \* Donate 3% of the total cost of the food you serve to Mazon, an organization that helps feed hungry people nationwide. If you contact them ahead of time, they will send you cards to put on your tables, indicating that you have made a contribution.
- \* Give donations that can make a difference in the lives of others, not party favors that will cost you the same amount and end up in the trash. Give each guest a certificate indicating that a *tzedakah* contribution has been made in their honor to an organization you support.
- \* Check to see if the leftover food can be donated to a soup kitchen or pantry. If you are somewhat insistent, many restaurants and caterers will help with this.

### Keep it Jewish

Begin the meal with *Kiddush* and *Motzi* and end it with singing *Birkat HaMazon*, the blessing after meals. Consider ending the celebration with *Havdalah* if the party will end late Saturday afternoon. Begin with *Havdalah* before a Saturday evening event.

Everything you do to make your *bar/bat mitzvah* celebration personal, filled with your values, and meaningful will enhance the experience. Have your celebration reflect who you are and what you believe as an individual and as a family. Make Jewish choices, and don't be afraid to be different. It's worth it! The memories of how you worked together and your incredibly meaningful celebration will last a lifetime. Put God on the guest list for your *bar/bat mitzvah*.

## Service Program Suggestions

*Families sometimes prepare a program for the bar/bat mitzvah service in booklet form as a guide to help people understand the service and also as a keepsake of the occasion. Here are some materials you may wish to include in your program.*

**Cover:** The cover might include the secular and Hebrew name of your child, the date of the celebration in both the secular and Hebrew calendars, and the name of the congregation. Some families like to include a photograph of the bar/bat mitzvah on the cover or other artwork.

**Welcome from the Family.** Many families like to include words of welcome in the form of a letter from the parents of the bar/bat mitzvah. Here is a sample of something you might write:

*We welcome you to this Shabbat service to celebrate with us as [name] becomes a [Bar/Bat] Mitzvah. It gives us great joy to share this milestone with our family and friends who have come from near and far.*

*Today, [name] will be called for the first time to read from the Torah (the "Five Books of Moses"). In doing so, [s/he] will celebrate becoming a [Bar/Bat] Mitzvah, literally translated as "[son/daughter] of commandment." Being a [Bar/Bat] Mitzvah means that [name] is now considered a full member of the community of people who are responsible for living according to the commandments of the Torah. [Name] also will give a d'var Torah, a teaching about this week's Torah portion that reflects on [his/her] own life experience.*

*We are delighted that you are joining us on this happy occasion.*

*L'Shalom,  
[Name of parents]*

**Explanation of Synagogue Traditions.** The program often will include explanations of traditional Jewish worship practices. This is particularly helpful for non-Jewish friends and relatives who may be in a synagogue for the first time on the day of the celebration. The explanations will make them feel more comfortable and address the anxieties they might have about doing something "wrong." Here is a sample of what you might include:

*This morning we celebrate Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath. Reading from the Torah is part of the regular service on Shabbat morning. The honor of an aliyah, reciting the blessings before and after reading from the Torah, is often given to people on special occasions. This morning, aliyot (plural of aliyah) will be given to people who are special in [name's] life. [Name] will have the final aliyah.*

*Here are some terms you may hear during the service:*

Siddur. *The Jewish prayerbook. Our siddur contains traditional prayers, modern translations, and transliterations to aid people unfamiliar with Hebrew. Because Hebrew is read from right to left the prayer book opens in the direction opposite books in English.*

Kippah (Yarmulke). *In Jewish tradition, men and boys cover their heads with a kippah (called a yarmulke in Yiddish) as a sign of piety and humility before God. In our congregation, a kippah is optional for everyone – men and women, Jews and non-Jews.*

Tallit (Tallis). *The fringed prayer shawl is worn by Jews who have reached the age of Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Today, [name] is wearing a tallit for the first time. It is not appropriate for non-Jews to wear a tallit.*

Torah Scroll. *The Torah scroll is the holiest object in Jewish tradition. Before and after reading from the Torah, the scroll will be carried through the congregation. Many will touch the scroll with a siddur or with the corner of their tallit and bring it to their lips to symbolize the sweetness of the Torah's teachings.*

"Yashar Ko'ach!" *You may hear people during the service say, "Yashar ko'ach" ("May you go from strength to strength") as a way of expressing congratulations for a job well done. It is not appropriate to clap in applause in the synagogue. The traditional response to "Yashar koach" is "Baruch t'hiyeh" ("May you be blessed").*

**Torah and Haftarah Readings.** Please give the name of the weekly Torah portion and the page numbers in the Tanakh where the Torah and Haftarah readings can be found. If you would like to include the Hebrew and English translation of the Torah and/or Haftarah readings in the program, the rabbi would be happy to provide them for you.

**List of Honors.** The program can be a good place to acknowledge the people who will be receiving honors at the service. You can give a simple list of the people who will be opening the ark, reciting the blessings for the aliyot, and lifting and dressing the Torah scroll. You can also identify people who will have special honors at the reception, such as the person making the *motzi* and *kiddush* blessings.

**Reminders.** The program is also a good place to remind congregants some points of synagogue etiquette. It is very helpful to the service leaders to have simple statements in the program that say, "We respectfully request that you not take photographs or video during the service," and "Please remember to turn off or silence your cell phone during the service."

# A Bar/Bat Mitzvah Checklist for Parents

## One year ahead

- \* Schedule a date for the bar/bat mitzvah celebration
- \* Meet with the Rabbi
- \* Discuss the *d'var Torah* with the *bar/bat mitzvah* – ask, “What do you want to say?”
- \* Engage with your son/daughter in the preparation of prayers and Torah reading
- \* Use the resources on the Temple's website to learn the prayers and their meaning with your child.

## Six to nine months ahead

- \* Begin planning a *tzedakah* project with the *bar/bat mitzvah*
- \* Make a guest list and order (or make) invitations
- \* Arrange accommodations for out-of-town guests (hotel rooms, etc.)
- \* Create a plan for the reception; hire a caterer, restaurant, music, etc., if you are using
- \* Create a plan for transporting guests, if necessary
- \* Hire a photographer, if you are using one
- \* Pay any fees or deposits for use of the building

## Three months ahead

- \* Order kippot (yarmulkes)
- \* Submit the "Bar/Bat Mitzvah" Registration Form (page 32)
- \* Make sure you are in good financial standing with the Temple and review the Administrative Notices (page 31)

## Two months ahead

- \* Work with the *bar/bat mitzvah* to complete the *tzedakah* project
- \* Make decisions about giving service honors; get Hebrew names of people with aliyot
- \* Prepare service program
- \* Mail invitations
- \* Select clothes for the occasion
- \* Order food for the Friday night Oneg. (Contact Jill Saint of the Temple Sisterhood. There is a form on page 34).
- \* Send Torah blessings sheet to those honored with an aliyah.
- \* Submit the "B'nei Mitzvah Scroll Article" Form (page 33)

## One month ahead

- \* Work with *bar/bat mitzvah* on the *d'var Torah*.
- \* Prepare parents' blessings
- \* Finalize food, decorations and seating plans with caterers, restaurants, etc.
- \* Order kosher meals, if necessary, for guests requiring them
- \* Start writing “thank you” notes
- \* Locate the wimpel (Torah binder) that most of our students make in 6th grade to use in their *bar/bat mitzvah* service. Most of these are stored in the Rabbi's office.

## One week ahead

- \* Prepare wrapped candies for the service (if using)

- \* Confirm delivery times of food with the Temple staff
- \* Provide the final honors form to the Rabbi

Bring to Temple on the day of the service!

- \* The Bar/Bat Mitzvah's service binder
- \* *D'var Torah*
- \* Parents' blessing
- \* Programs
- \* Food for kiddush
- \* Tallit
- \* Kippot
- \* Candy (if using)

The Next Business Day and Beyond

- \* Remove all rental and non-Temple items from the social hall and foyer
- \* Provide a formal 5"x7" photograph of your child to the Temple for display
- \* Pick up items left at the Temple, especially the gifts from the Board, Brotherhood and Sisterhood, and the wimple made by the child (if used)

## B'nei Mitzvah Administrative Notices

**IMPORTANT:** Members must be in good standing with all financial obligations to the Temple three (3) months prior to the date of the bar/bat mitzvah service and remain in good standing for the date to be retained.

Dear Parents:

This is an important time in your child's life. Why worry about details at the last minute? **SO PLAN AHEAD !** To avoid confusion, it is important that we have the following information to help your special day run smoothly.

The following requirements are needed:

1. Please submit floor plan two weeks prior to event. This should include the number of chairs at each table, number of bars, and number of buffet tables. **IF FLOOR PLAN IS NOT SUBMITTED – NO TABLES WILL BE SET UP!**
2. Times that vendor, caterer, musician, etc. will arrive.
3. All deliveries must be made to Temple by 12:00 noon, Friday.
4. The caterer is responsible for the clean-up of appliances, kitchenware and the kitchen area. The caterer will also be responsible for the prompt removal of rubbish, food and trash, etc. from the social hall and foyer and discarded in the dumpster (rear of Temple) using plastic bags. The kitchen floors and countertops must be thoroughly cleaned.
5. The Temple assumes no responsibility for articles belonging to the caterer that are left on Temple premises.
6. The Temple is responsible for basic janitorial service for set-up and break down of tables and chairs only. No food, dishes, silverware, etc. are included.

For further information please contact Dottie in the Temple office at 942-8350 or [dottie@templesinairi.org](mailto:dottie@templesinairi.org) to set up an appointment at your convenience.

Thank you for your cooperation.

# Bar/Bat Mitzvah Registration Form

On behalf of the entire congregation of Temple Sinai, we wish your family the best as you prepare for this special time in your child's life. Please complete this form and return to the Temple office. If you have any questions, please contact the temple office at 942-8350 or email: [dottie@templesinairi.org](mailto:dottie@templesinairi.org)

NAME OF BAR/BAT MITZVAH: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF BAR/BAT MITZVAH SERVICE: \_\_\_\_\_

PARENTS' NAMES: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ CELL: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF GUESTS: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

## **SOCIAL HALL RENTAL**

KIDDUSH LUNCHEON: \_\_\_\_\_ \$250.00\*

SATURDAY AFTERNOON AFFAIR: \_\_\_\_\_ \$400.00\*

SATURDAY EVENING AFFAIR \_\_\_\_\_ \$400.00\*

\*\*\*\*\*

Name of Caterer: \_\_\_\_\_ Entertainer: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

## FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

DEPOSIT PAID: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

BALANCE PAID: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Prices are subject to change



## B'nei Mitzvah Scroll Article

You may bring this form to the Temple office with a photograph or email to [gardenbub@cox.net](mailto:gardenbub@cox.net) (Sheila Grubman Black) or [dottie@templesinairi.org](mailto:dottie@templesinairi.org).

*There are several options available to you. Please check all that apply.*

\_\_ The attached picture is submitted for inclusion with one of the following article options. All pictures will be returned. Pictures with light backgrounds are preferred. I understand that my child's picture and name will appear online on the version of the *Scroll* on the Temple website.

Check here to request the omission of your child's *Scroll* article from the online version.

\_\_ The attached article is submitted for inclusion in the Temple Sinai *Scroll*. I understand that the article is limited to 125 words total. (We reserve the right to make editorial changes).

\_\_ I wish to have the editorial staff write an article using the following information. (We reserve the right to make editorial changes)

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s) Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service \_\_\_\_\_

School Name \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Special Recognitions (i.e. awards, honor roll, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Interests (i.e. sports, hobbies, music, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other activities \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Any other information you would like to add: \_\_\_\_\_

# Bar/Bat Mitzvah Oneg Shabbat

## **Sponsorship of Friday Evening Kiddush/Oneg Shabbat is \$150**

Families with a Bar or Bat Mitzvah on a Shabbat morning generally sponsor the Oneg following or preceding the service on the previous evening (Friday).

All 7:30 PM services are followed by a simple oneg. Your sponsorship will provide for a more elaborate celebration in honor of your child.

Please note that there is a 6:00 PM service on the first and second Friday of most months. There is a small pre-oneg at 5:30 PM on the first Friday at no charge. A sponsored oneg may follow the service at the request of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family.

All checks for Oneg sponsorship must be received at least 6 weeks prior to the service. Please make check payable to **Temple Sinai Sisterhood** and mail the check directly to:

**Jill Saint**  
**160 Shippeetown Road**  
**East Greenwich, RI 02818**

For additional information, please contact Jill Saint, 401-398-1914.

### **IMPORTANT:**

Two "Donation Baskets" (containing items to be donated to an organization or group) are encouraged. It is also possible to place a small arrangement of artificial flowers on the Bima as decoration (no fresh flowers are permitted on the Bima). Please inform the Temple Office who is sponsoring the baskets and the Oneg Shabbat so that it can be included in the service announcements.

## Bar/Bat Mitzvah Oneg Shabbat Form

Family Name \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_

## Your Feedback

No process is perfect and we're always trying to improve ours. The Rabbi, Cantor and the Director of Education want to hear your feedback about our education programs to convey it to the Education Committee, the Ritual Committee and our teachers. If you have comments or suggestions about any aspect of the Religious School, about your *bar/bat mitzvah* experience, or about this handbook, please feel free to contact the Rabbi about your concerns. Temple Sinai is committed to treating your comments with confidentiality and appropriate attention.

## So, You Still Have A Few Questions?

Please feel free to consult the Rabbi if you have any questions about your child's *bar/bat mitzvah* celebration. The Rabbi is happy to talk with you about meeting requirements, tutoring, the *d'var Torah*, honors, *kippot (yarmulkes)*, the *kiddush* following the service, the parental blessing, photography in the sanctuary, scheduling dates, Shabbat service attendance, special needs, the Torah blessings, tutoring schedule, *tzedakah* projects and more.

Just ask!