

## A Few Words of Welcome, and how to Use this Handbook:

We welcome you to what promises to be a very exciting year for you and your entire family. This greeting may sound odd, as you may think that B'nei Mitzvah is just for a child, or for a child and his or her parents, but this is not the case. The most joyous and complete B'nei Mitzvah experiences come when there is an understanding within your family that this upcoming *Simkha* is for all of you, regardless of age or relationship. Though it is true that your soon to be 13 year old will shoulder the balance of hard work and commitment during the coming year, each and every member of your family will have their own roles to play.

*A Note on Terms:* You will see the phrase 'B'nei Mitzvah' many times in this book. Functionally speaking, 'B'nei' is the Plural of 'Bar' but may also indicates both 'Bar' and 'Bat' as a plurality.

Many people also think that Bar/Bat Mitzvah is the culmination of a child's Jewish Education. This could not be further from the truth! Attaining the status of Bar/Bat Mitzvah is just another step on the road to becoming an educated Jewish Adult, which is our ultimate goal. This journey begins with Consecration, continues through Bar/Bat Mitzvah to Confirmation, and beyond. This progression is our obligation, as we Jews are commanded to engage in a lifetime of learning. Though your child might celebrate their Bar/Bat Mitzvah early in their 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Year, they are required to finish the year, and the community expects that they will continue to Confirmation.

We have put together this handbook to as completely as possible define the structure and parameters of Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation and the requirements that our congregation maintains. At the same time, let it be said however that we understand that each and every student is unique. Some students will be capable of accomplishing much more than what we are asking for; and, correspondingly, some students may only be able to master a fraction of the material. We understand and anticipate the reality of both these circumstances. The congregation, clergy, and educational staff will work with you and your family to ensure that every child makes a comfortable stretch to live up to his or her full potential.

Please take the time to familiarize yourselves with all of the material contained herein. Do not hesitate to ask questions!

*Rabbi Fratello*

*Cantor Kaplan*

*Miriam Schaffer*

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## The Bar/Bat Mitzvah in Theory and Practice:

The term 'Bar Mitzvah' literally means, 'Son of the Commandments,' and in a practical sense, serves to delineate specific rights and responsibilities. Traditionally, to say that a young man is Bar Mitzvah, meant that he was an adult in the eyes of the congregation. Prior to the age of 13, a young man's parents are held responsible for his behavior. His deeds, both good and bad, are visited upon them. After the age of 13, however, a young man becomes fully responsible for himself. It is now his responsibility to follow the *Mitzvot* (Commandments), not his parents. Should he fail to do so, he is the one who will incur the punishments which tradition dictates.

With this new responsibility, of course, come new honors. The young man is entitled to read from the Torah, to lead the congregation in worship, and to be accorded the status of an adult. This latter point is essential, as he may now be counted fully in the 10 men required for a *Minyan* (prayer quorum).

In modern liberal Judaism this category has also been extended to include young women as well. Thus a young woman becomes a 'Bat Mitzvah' (Daughter of the Commandments), and the same duties and honors, as well as its obligations and rewards, are extended to her as well. In most Reform Congregations, as well as many Conservative ones, women over the age of 13 are included in the count to establish the presence of a Minyan.

*A Note on Terms:* The term 'Bar/Bat Mitzvah' is frequently used incorrectly as a verb. For example, we have all heard the phrase, "My daughter was 'Bat Mitzvahed.'" This is incorrect both in terms of grammar and theology. It is more correct to say that a child has become, or will become, a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

According to Jewish Law (Halakhah), one need not have a ceremony, one need not read from the Torah, one need not even attend a service, to become B'nei Mitzvah. Many Jews erroneously look upon the ceremony as a rite that must be performed on someone's behalf, without which their status as a Jew is in question. However, the change to adulthood occurs *automatically* at age 13. While it has become customary over the centuries for a young person to be given the right of reading from the Torah and leading a service in order to demonstrate their change in status, this is custom alone.

Even though customs and traditions may change, we must not lose sight of the fact that B'nei Mitzvah status is accorded automatically at the age of 13, and the rights and responsibilities, which come with it, are religious in nature, regardless of any other factors.

## Preparation Prior the B'nei Mitzvah Year:

The dates for celebration of B'nei Mitzvah are assigned to students in our school roughly two years in advance of their 13<sup>th</sup> Birthday. This is a necessity as Calendars and Celebrations must be coordinated far in advance. If you will recall, the congregation sent out letters listing available dates for your child, which dates were unavailable, and a form for you to make your requests. Once the Temple received these, specific dates were assigned and your family was notified in writing.

***A Note on Dates:*** Once dates have been assigned, they *may not* be altered without approval. This policy must be strictly enforced, as we wish to avoid scheduling conflicts at any and all costs.

To this point, the religious education which your child has been given in our school has been primarily geared toward teaching them to be Fully Equipped Jewish Adults. Specifically our goal has been to acquaint them with the history and customs of our people, and to foster within them a sense of Jewish identity and community life. The 'Hebrew School' component of their education has been focused on teaching them Hebrew Decoding (reading) skills, and teaching them the prayers in which they, as Jewish Adults, should be conversant.

***What Our Students Should Know:*** Ideally, by the time our students reach their Seventh Grade Year, they are competent in at least these following Hebrew Prayers:

- The Barekhu
- Shema
- Ve'ahavta
- Amidah (Avot v'Imahot)
- Kiddush (Both Short and Long Form)
- Ha-motzi
- Candle Blessing
- Torah and Haftarah Blessings

(If you have specific questions about these prayers, what they mean, and how they fit into a worship service, ask your child! If they do not know, seek out the Rabbi, Cantor, or Religious School Director.)

In addition, our students must be able to decode and read Hebrew words with vowels. This is essential for them to master the various liturgical and scriptural pieces for which they will be responsible during their Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony.

## Preparation During the B'nei Mitzvah Year:

Each student will be responsible for leading a Shabbat Morning Service, either by themselves in paired with another student. Our congregation prides itself that its students are capable of conducting the entire service themselves, with only minimal input from the Rabbi and Cantor. Your child will lead the congregation in all elements of the service, in addition to reading a section of Torah and Haftarah, and delivering a speech to the congregation. This is true whether your child will be celebrating become B'nei Mitzvah solo, or paired with another student.

To be up to this task, approximately 5-6 months prior to the service, our students begin working with the Cantor. The Cantor's study with the students is made of two components.

***The Cantor's Class:*** This class will meet once a week as part of your child's established Religious School program. Together, with the Cantor, the students will learn how to chant Torah through learning the various cantillation symbols (trope) and their corresponding melodies. In as much as students benefit greatly when taught in small group settings, they will hear one another chant individually in class as well as in groups. To reinforce the material taught in class and to truly master it, daily practice at home is essential. The Torah Cantillation class is taught in a casual, supportive environment that serves as a precursor to the individual tutoring that will follow. Depending on the student's B'nei Mitzvah date, the class may overlap with private tutoring or precede it. The students will receive their necessary materials for the class from the Cantor.

***Tutoring:*** Working one-on-one with the Cantor, with Ms. Schaffer, or with another tutor provided by the congregation, each student will continue to practice the prayers that they already know, and will work to master new material for their own service. This material includes their Torah and Haftarah portions.

***A Note on Tutoring:*** If, after consultation with the Cantor or the Director of Education, we feel that your child would benefit from extra tutoring, we will inform you of that fact. If you feel that you wish to engage an outside tutor, please know you may only do so with express consent of the Rabbi and Cantor, and you will be solely responsible for all relevant fees. All matters of B'nei Mitzvah preparation, and material for which your child is responsible, remain within the purview of the Rabbi and Cantor.

***A Note on Torah portions:*** Our tradition divides the Torah into 54 separate sections, one of which, along with a specific selection from the books of the Prophets (the Haftarah) is read each Shabbat throughout the year. This system guarantees that the entire Torah is read over the course of a calendar year. As each student has already been assigned a specific date for their B'nei Mitzvah service, the assignment of a Torah and Haftarah portion has already been made according to this cycle. Your child's Torah Portion is listed on the cover of this handbook.

Students will be given a bound printed copy of their Torah and Haftarah portions at their first private tutorial session with the Cantor. The printed copy includes both the text with vowels and trope markings as well as the text without vowels—how it approximately appears in the actual Torah scroll—so that they can practice without vowels. The student will then be responsible to read through their entire Torah portion in English examining what the various themes are. Once the student has a good understanding of their portion, they will then choose which elements of their portion are most personally meaningful to them. Once the student determines this, they will then select a BLOCK of 12 verses that will serve as their assigned excerpt of their Torah portion that they will be chanting from the Bema at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. Once they have selected the verses, they will then notify the Cantor through e-mail what those verses are so that the Cantor can prepare a study recording for them. All students will be encouraged to chant the text, but each student should read at least 12 verses; Capable students will be encouraged to read more.

Each student will also read a selection from the Haftarah, as well. Each student is expected to chant (or read) a portion as well as the corresponding English Translation. Capable students will be encouraged to read (or chant) large parts of the Haftarah. Very capable students may be encouraged to read or chant the entire Haftarah.

***The Rabbi:*** Roughly six weeks prior to the service, the student and family will meet with the Rabbi. At this meeting you will have a chance to assign various honors to members of your family (see below for a list of honors). Also, the Rabbi and the student will develop and craft the student's speech.

***A Note About the Speech:*** While parents are invited and expected to participate in the process of writing the speech, they should not be tempted to write it themselves. The words and ideas are the student's responsibility. Nascent ideas and thoughts will be fully developed by the Rabbi, Cantor, student, and family working together.

***Final Preparation:*** The Cantor will work with the student to practice their entire service, including both the Hebrew and English elements, in addition to explaining and practicing the various stage directions that your child and family will need to know. We will make use of the sanctuary to be certain that you and your child feel completely comfortable in that setting, and to familiarize you with the choreography of the service. Parents are required to attend the Final Dress Rehearsal.

## The Ceremony Itself:

As previously stated, at Temple Shaarei Shalom, B'nei Mitzvah are Celebrated during Saturday Morning Shabbat Services. Services begin promptly at 10:30 AM.

*A Note About Inclusive Worship:* In many congregations members feel that Saturday Morning Worship has been 'hijacked' by B'nei Mitzvah celebrations, or that these ceremonies are somehow private ones just for a particular family and their friends. At Temple Shaarei Shalom, this is not the case. The ethos of our congregations is such that your child will lead a regularly scheduled worship service at which the entire congregation is welcome. That being said, however, this does not mean that any and all must be invited to your family's subsequent celebrations.

The regularly scheduled open nature of our Shabbat Worship is also the reason we do not have Afternoon or so-called Havdallah B'nei Mitzvah in our congregation. Since we do not have a regularly scheduled Shabbat Afternoon Service, we will not schedule such a service solely for the purpose of Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The same is true for other days of the week (Mondays or Thursdays) on which a child might traditionally celebrate becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

*A Note on Transliteration:* In some congregations B'nei Mitzvah students read transliterated texts (Hebrew texts written with English letters) during their ceremony. While we feel that transliteration may be a valuable tool for many worshippers, its use during the ceremony by our students is not in keeping with the ideals of our tradition, or with the goals of our Educational program. As such, B'nei Mitzvah students may not use transliterated texts while they are leading services. Any Hebrew that they read during their ceremony must be read in Hebrew.

While we don't expect that you will invite the entire congregation to any celebration you might be having, we do strongly encourage that you invite ALL of your child's classmates and teachers. Not only is this the Jewish thing to do, it also helps to foster and create a true sense of community within our B'nei Mitzvah Program. Let us bear in mind, recognizing and understanding the importance of the Jewish Community, and the role that that concept has had in our history, is an avowed goal of the B'nei Mitzvah Program. We will be happy to provide you with a list of students who will be celebrating a Bar or Bat Mitzvah during the same calendar year as your child. However, since we are very careful

at how we release mailing information, this list will only be released with the consent of the individual families involved.

The Rabbi and Cantor will coordinate the service, which each student will read, and the music, which will be sung. While each child, and each service is unique, the selections will not differ significantly from ceremony to ceremony.

***Kippah and Talit:*** We ask that our young men and women wear both a *kippah* (skull cap or *yarmulka*) and a *Talit* (prayer shawl) during their B'nei Mitzvah ceremony. These are important symbols of our faith, and part of the B'nei Mitzvah program is to learn about their proper use. The Rabbi can provide suggestions as to where these can be purchased, or provide 'loaners' if necessary.

***Honors:*** There are a variety of honors that a family may bestow upon their loved ones during a B'nei Mitzvah ceremony. These may include, but are not limited to: *Aliyot* to the Torah, Passing the Torah, Holding/Dressing the Torah, Opening or closing the Ark, and Reading selected prayers. The Rabbi will be able to provide more guidance and advice on what honors are available, and how they might be distributed. Your family will have the same number of honors to distribute whether your child will be celebrating their Bar/Bat Mitzvah Solo, or twined with another student.

***A Note on Interfaith Families:*** It is a reality that many families within our congregation come from households that represent more than one faith. Although there is an understanding that children who are enrolled in our school and B'nei Mitzvah program are being raised exclusively as Jews, we welcome both parents, and all members of a family to join in a child's B'nei Mitzvah celebration, regardless of their faith or family of origin. That being said, however, such participation must be theologically appropriate.

What does 'theologically appropriate' mean? It is not appropriate for a non-Jew to recite a blessing that says, "*Barukh Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh Haolam, Asher Kidshanu...*" (Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has commanded us...). Why is this not appropriate? A non-Jew does not accept commandedness in the way in which a Jew does. Moreover, it is not appropriate for a non-Jew to hold the Torah, or to participate in its dressing/undressing. Why? These are particularly sacred objects to the Jewish people, which non-Jews do not have the same connection to, nor reverence for.

Examples of what would be appropriate: If a parent would like to read a selection of scripture from the Hebrew Bible (sometimes referred to as the Old Testament), or if a parent would like to offer a blessing from their own tradition (with appropriate wording), they may. The Rabbi will work with families who have questions regarding this policy, or would like to come up with more ways in which non-Jewish family members might be involved in the ceremony.

***Oneg/Kiddush/Flowers:*** Families who are celebrating a B'nei Mitzvah in our congregation host the Oneg Shabbat on Friday Night and Kiddush (light reception) after services on Saturday. Moreover, those families also sponsor the flowers for the Bema for those services. Arrangements for the Oneg, Kiddush, and flowers are made with the Temple Office. Members of your family will be invited to participate during the Candle Lighting and Kiddush during the Shabbat Evening Service the night before your child's B'nei Mitzvah ceremony.

***Dress:*** We ask that young men and women dress appropriately for their Bat/Bat Mitzvah service, as they will be leading the congregation in worship. For young men we request they wear a coat and tie. For young women, we request they wear a dress, suit, or pantsuit, which is neither inappropriately short, nor overly ostentatious. We require that any family or guests who will be participating in the ceremony follow these same guidelines. No bare shoulders or 'spaghetti straps.'

***Candy:*** A long-standing custom common among Sephardic Jews (those from North Africa and the Levant) is to throw candy at a Bar Mitzvah boy following his Aliyah to the Torah, as a sign of sweetness and celebration. Many congregations in the United States have begun to imitate this custom. However, what was once a joyous sweet custom has become an excuse for some service attendees to attempt to 'peg' the B'nei Mitzvah, their families, or the clergy. In addition, the proliferation of candy has led some to believe that eating within the sanctuary is appropriate. Many congregations have reported damage done to their Bema, Ritual Objects, injuries, and, in at least one instance, a lawsuit. Given these concerns, and understanding that this behavior detracts from the sacred atmosphere of worship, the throwing of candy during B'nei Mitzvah ceremonies will not be permitted.

***Photography and Video:*** It is natural and understandable that you may want to capture this special day with pictures and/or videotape. While we recognize this, we ask that it be done in a way that is least disruptive to the sanctity and spirit of worship. We ask that there be no

photography during the service itself. Please convey this request to your family and guests, as well as to any professionals that you may hire for the day. If you would like to take pictures in the sanctuary and on the Bema, the building will be available as of 9:00 AM the morning of your child's B'nei Mitzvah, or you may take pictures after the service has concluded. If your child is paired with another student, both families will be given time on Saturday Morning to take pictures.

You are welcome to utilize the services of a Videographer, provided that person sets up his/her equipment and sets it running prior to the beginning of services, and does not actively 'film' during the service itself. Again, this policy is intended to preserve the sanctity of worship.

## B'nei Mitzvah Requirements:

In as much as a young man or woman attains a new status when they become a B'nei Mitzvah, they also have specific requirements that are placed upon them. It is important to emphasize, however, that both they and their family must work together to realize these obligations. By doing the 'work' of B'nei Mitzvah together, your family will grow closer and come to a fuller understanding of the milestone that you all have reached.

***Religious School Attendance:*** While it is true that the focus of a student's work in religious school will shift to their upcoming B'nei Mitzvah during the months immediately preceding their service, students *must* maintain regular attendance and participation in their religious school class. Each student must be enrolled for the full year in our religious school during the year in which their B'nei Mitzvah will occur. This is true even if a child has entered 8<sup>th</sup> Grade at the time of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. In addition, we also require their continued attendance *after* their ceremony through the completion of the school year. There is an expectation that each and every one of our B'nei Mitzvah Students will continue their religious education to Confirmation in 10th Grade.

***A Note on Day Schools:*** Students, who are currently enrolled in Day School Programs, or other Jewish Primary Education Programs, do not need to be enrolled in our Religious School. They must, however, still be enrolled in the Cantor's Trope Class, our tutoring program, and are responsible for all applicable fees.

***Service Attendance:*** Prior to the ceremony, it is essential that students *and* their families attend services! Without a proper familiarity with the flow of worship, and the way in which services are conducted in our congregation, students and their parents will not understand what is expected of them. We require that students, *and their families* attend at least 12 services during the six months leading up to their B'nei Mitzvah celebration. These may include special holiday worship services and Intergenerational Shabbatot, but must include at least 3 Shabbat Morning Services with a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Appropriate measures will be put in place to ensure and record compliance with this requirement.

***Mitzvah Project:*** Students are expected to perform some sort of Mitzvah project during the year preceding their becoming a B'nei Mitzvah. This project may be something simple, such as raising and donating money to a homeless shelter, or may be more elaborate. Whatever the student chooses to do, the project should be tailored to his or her own interests and concerns.

The student should be prepared to speak about this project during their B'nei Mitzvah speech. The Rabbi is available for consultation on the Mitzvah Project, and must okay all projects. Students should begin their projects no later than 4 months prior to their service.

***Dues and Fees:*** It is understood and expected that your family will be current and up to date with all Temple bills before tutoring will begin. Such bills include, but are not limited to: Membership Dues, Religious School Fees, and B'nei Mitzvah Fees. If your family has previously worked out a payment plan with the congregation, you must be current with that plan. If paying said bills represents a hardship to you or your family, or you are not sure of how much you owe, please contact the Temple Administrator or our Treasurer ASAP. Please do not leave this detail until the last minute.

***A Note on Finances:*** MAKE SURE THAT ANY UNRESOLVED ISSUES ARE TAKEN CARE OF PROMPTLY, AS FAILURE TO BE CURRENT IN YOUR FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS MAY RESULT IN YOUR CHILD NOT BEING CALLED TO THE TORAH WHEN SCHEDULED.

***Ushering:*** A custom in our congregation is that the families take over the ushering responsibilities for one another. Specifically, the family who will be celebrating the next B'nei Mitzvah is invited to usher for the family immediately preceding them. This helps to foster a cohesiveness and connection between families, and enables a family to see firsthand exactly how a B'nei Mitzvah ceremony is conducted. Please be certain to make arrangements now to ensure that you will be available to perform this mandatory requirement.

In addition, we expect that B'nei Mitzvah and their families will help with ushering during the High Holidays. Your names will be submitted to the High Holiday Committee and you will be contacted about participating.

## Some Final Notes:

The issue of proper attitude cannot be stressed enough. There is a tacit understanding of reciprocal responsibility between families, students, and the congregation. We endeavor to educate students and provide them with an environment in which their Judaism may grow and flourish. In return, we expect that each child and their family will live up to any and all responsibilities. As stated above, this includes financial obligations, but more than that, includes less tangible moral and ethical obligations as well.

That being said, should there ever be an instance where a Bar/Bat Mitzvah student displays grossly inappropriate behavior, or repeatedly demonstrates a gross disregard for Temple Staff, Officers, or other authority figures, or repeatedly fails to live up to their requirements, that student's privilege of celebrating their Bar/Bat Mitzvah in the synagogue will be revoked. In addition, should a parent fail to ensure that their child live up to their obligations and requirements, or demonstrate a similar disregard for Temple Staff, Officers, or other authority figures, their child's privilege will be revoked.

As clearly stated in the opening section of this handbook, the status of B'nei Mitzvah is not predicated on participation in a ceremony, or having any specific rites performed on one's behalf, and, as such, this revocation does not pose any religious disability. In as much as the celebration of becoming a B'nei Mitzvah within a synagogue is an honor bestowed by the congregation upon a young person and their family, and is not an inalienable right, such action is well within the rights and purview of the congregation. This penalty will not be applied capriciously, and will only be used in the most extreme of circumstances. In such instances where such action becomes necessary, one oral and one written warning will be issued to the family and the student, before any action is taken. Should such action become necessary, it will only be done with the consultation, and approval, of the Temple Board.

So, there you have it. All you ever wanted to know about the B'nei Mitzvah process in a nutshell. Hopefully, this handbook will serve to answer any questions you may have, and will be useful as you wade through the exciting waters of the coming year. Should you have any further questions or concerns, once again, do not hesitate to contact either the Rabbi, Education Director, or Vice President in charge of Education. We are filled with anticipation for this wonderfully joyous event, and look forward to celebrating many *Simchas* with you and your family.

## Appendix I

### Prayer Checklist:

This document provides an outline regarding which prayers students will be responsible for during their service. It will be useful to refer to this while you are preparing for your ceremony. Remember, however, this list is not all-inclusive. Each student will be encouraged to live up to his or her full potential. The pages listed correspond to pages in our prayerbook, *GATES OF PRAYER*.

#### **Required Prayers:**

<u>Prayer</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Check when Complete</u>
Tallit	282	_____
La'asok B'divrei	284	_____
Nisim B'chol Yom	286	_____
Barekhu	301	_____
Yotzer	301	_____
Shema	303	_____
Ve'ahavta	303	_____
Avot	306	_____
Gevurot	307	_____
Havu Godel	417	_____
Barukh Shenatan	418	_____
Shema Ekhad	418	_____
Gadlu	418	_____
Torah Blessing #1	419	_____
Torah Blessing #2	419	_____
Haftarah Blessing #1	420	_____
Haftarah Blessing #2	420	_____
Kiddush	719	_____
Motzei	722	_____
Torah Portion		_____
Haftarah Portion		_____
Student's Speech		_____

#### **Optional Prayers:**

<u>Prayer</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Check when Complete</u>
Asher Yatzar	284	_____
Chatzi Kaddish	300	_____
Ahavah Rabbah	302	_____

## Appendix II

### B'nei Mitzvah Timeline:

This Timeline should assist you in understanding what events need to take place when in the months and weeks ahead of your child's B'nei Mitzvah celebration. Dates are approximates.

□	B'nei Mitzvah Dates are Assigned	2 Years in Advance
□	Parent Meeting is held regarding program	1 Year in Advance
□	Family must be Current with all Temple Fees, Or current with an approved plan	1 Year in Advance
□	Student Starts with Cantor	5-6 Months in Advance
□	Students Must Begin Mitzvah Project	4 Months in Advance
□	Family Makes Arrangements for Oneg/Kiddush/Flowers	2 Months in Advance
□	Student and family meet with Rabbi	6 Weeks in Advance
□	Student Must Complete Service Attendance Requirement	4 Weeks in Advance
□	Student Practices in Sanctuary with Cantor	2-3 Weeks in Advance
□	Family Ushers at Preceding B'nei Mitzvah	Varies

FAQs:

**Must a Jew have a B'nei Mitzvah?**

Curiously enough, the answer is no. The status of B'nei Mitzvah (lit. Son/Daughter of the Commandments) is an automatic one, which is bestowed when one reaches 13 years of age. The Celebrating of a B'nei Mitzvah in a congregation is an honor extended by a congregation upon a young person. (See page 3)

**How many services must my child attend prior to their B'nei Mitzvah?**

We require that our young people *and their families* attend 12 services during the 6 months leading up to their B'nei Mitzvah ceremony. These may include any worship service, but at least 3 must be Saturday Morning Services with a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. (See page 13)

**Must my child be enrolled in Religious School?**

Yes. The Education Committee with the full support of the Temple Board mandates that a young person must be enrolled in our religious school during the year of their B'nei Mitzvah ceremony. This is true even if the child will be in 8<sup>th</sup> Grade during the year they celebrate their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Moreover, they must also maintain a good attendance record. If your child is currently enrolled in a day school, or other Jewish primary school, this requirement is waived. Your child must be enrolled in the tutoring program, however, and you are responsible for any payments. (See page 13)

**How many years of education must my child have before participating in a B'nei Mitzvah service?**

A student must have had 3 years of Religious Education before they are given the honor of celebrating their B'nei Mitzvah. They need not have spent all that time in our school, but in an equivalent institution. During their B'nei Mitzvah year however, the child must be enrolled in our school, and their family must be members in good standing of our congregation.

**When are B'nei Mitzvah Celebrated? May we celebrate one on Saturday Afternoon?**

B'nei Mitzvah ceremonies in our Temple take place during a regularly scheduled Shabbat Morning service. Our worship begins promptly at 10:30 AM. We do not have B'nei Mitzvah services which take place on Saturday Afternoons, or on other days. (See pages 6 and 9)

**Is there anything that could cause a B'nei Mitzvah to be postponed or canceled?**

Unfortunately, yes. If a family is delinquent in their dues, or other financial obligations to the Temple, or if they fail to adhere to mutually agreed upon payment plans, a child from that family will not be called to the Torah when scheduled. In addition, should a child fail to live up to their obligations, or should they or their family display gross disregard for Temple Staff, its Officers, or show other types of inappropriate behavior, their B'nei Mitzvah may be similarly postponed, or canceled outright. (See pages 14-15)

**Must my family host an Oneg Shabbat the night before my child's B'nei Mitzvah? Are we expected to host a reception for the entire congregation following the ceremony? What about flowers for the Bema?**

Yes, you are expected to host the Oneg the Friday Night before your child's B'nei Mitzvah. In addition, you must provide a light Kiddush following services on Saturday. This is true even if your family is leaving "immediately after services." (See page 11) Arrangements for these things, as well as for flowers for the Bema are handled through the office.

**What prayers are children expected to know for their B'nei Mitzvah?**

An expansive list of the required and optional prayers for our B'nei Mitzvah students, are included in Appendix I. (See page 16)

**What is my child's Torah portion? May I choose one or another?**

Assignment of Torah portions is dependent upon the date on which your child will celebrate their B'nei Mitzvah. In as much as these dates are set roughly 2 years in advance, your child's Torah portion has already been determined. (See page 7)

**What exactly does a service consist of? What honors may we bestow upon family and friends?**

A description of the service, and a list of what types of honors are available, begins on page 10.

**Must my child wear a Kippah (Yarmulke) and talit (tallis)?**

Yes. We require our students to wear both Kippah (Yarmulke) and talit during their B'nei Mitzvah services. One component of learning about Judaism is to gain a proper understanding of Jewish ritual objects, and to be conversant in their correct use. The congregation can provide 'loaners' if a family is unable, or uninterested, in purchasing these items. (See page 10)

**I have non-Jewish family members. Are they able to participate in my child's B'nei Mitzvah service?**

By all means, yes. We welcome all members of a child's family who wish to participate in the B'nei Mitzvah ceremony. We do request that these honors be given out in theologically appropriate ways. If a family member would like to offer a prayer from their own faith, they are welcome to do so, provided the Rabbi approves of the wording. (See page 10)

**May pictures be taken during the ceremony?**

You are welcome to take pictures prior to the ceremony, or after its conclusion. We request that you, your family and friends, or any professionals you engage for the event, do not take pictures during the ceremony itself, as doing so detracts from the sanctity of worship. If you would like to invite a professional or friend to videotape the ceremony, they are welcome to do so. However, any equipment must be set up in the back of the sanctuary prior to the start of the ceremony, and no active 'filming' may be done during worship. (See page 12)

### ~~What about programs?~~

~~The congregation does not provide programs for B'nei Mitzvah ceremonies. If you would like to have one for your child's ceremony, you are more than welcome to prepare one. The Rabbi is available to make suggestions, or to proof read. (See page 13)~~