

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. That last point cannot be emphasized enough; this is a joint project. While it is true that the greater part of the burden of getting ready will fall upon your child, you, your family, and the congregation will have their own crucial role 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 indicate both ‘Bar’ and ‘Bat’ as a plurality.

Many people think that Bar/Bat Mitzvah is the culmination of a child’s Jewish Education. This could not be further from the truth! The focus and goal of the educational program at Temple Shaarei Shalom, is not to prepare your son or daughter to have the ability to ‘perform’ on one day, but to be literate, educated Jewish Adults. 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.

***Note:* Though your child might celebrate their Bar/Bat Mitzvah early in the 7th 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 define and explain your congregation’s B’nei Mitzvah Program. For more than 10 years we have been training youngsters for B’nei Mitzvah. In that time we have continually refined and improved our program. Our solemn oath is that each of us, and the staff of Temple Shaarei Shalom, will work with you and your family to ensure that every child lives up to his or her full potential. What we expect in return is that you be our partners in this task. If each of us does our part together, we will succeed.

Please take the time to familiarize yourselves with all of the material contained herein. Do not hesitate to ask questions or make recommendations. Again, *Mazal Tov*.

Rabbi Fratello

Cantor Judith Borden Ovadia

Miriam Schaffer, RJE

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B'nei 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 was 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 were held responsible for his behavior. His deeds, both good and bad, were visited upon them. After the age of 13, however, a young man became fully responsible for himself. It was his responsibility to follow the *Mitzvot* (commandments), not his parents. Should he fail to do so, he was the one to incur any punishments which tradition dictated.

With this new responsibility, of course, came new honors. The young man was 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 could be counted in the 10 men required for a *Minyan* (prayer quorum).

Orthodox, and many Conservative Jewish Congregations, maintain this view even today. In modern Liberal Judaism, however, we have re-envisioned what Bar Mitzvah is all about. Moreover we have extended the category to include young women as well. Thus a young woman becomes a 'Bat Mitzvah,' or 'Daughter of the Commandments,' and the same duties and honors, as well as its obligations and rewards, are extended to her as well. For example, in our congregation a woman who has become Bat Mitzvah may be counted toward the *Minyan*.

It is our belief that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah serves as a delineation point in the life of a young person. At age 13, they are charged with the obligation to form their own Jewish identity that is unique to them, and not solely the dictate of their family of origin. This unique Jewish identity is the product of your influence on their spiritual and religious development, the congregation's influence on their spiritual and religious development, as well as their own quest for understanding. We will impress this upon your son or daughter, and hope that you will do the same.

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.

Whereas we have certainly created our own modern understanding of what this rite of passage is all about, we also rely upon what tradition has to teach. 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 sacrament 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. Why is your child invited to ascend the Bema to lead the congregation in worship and prayer? Because the congregation has extended them that honor as a reflection of their hard work and study. It is an honor, not a right. It is a privilege not a perquisite.

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 congregation roughly two years in advance of their 13th 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 Literate 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, as well as the prayers in which they, as Jewish Adults, should be conversant.

What Our Students Should Know: Ideally, by the time our students have completed Sixth Grade, they are competent in at least the following Hebrew Prayers:

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|---|------------------------------|
| Candle Blessing | Ki Mitziyon |
| Nissim B'khol Yom | Barukh Shenatan |
| Blessing for Torah Study | Gadlu |
| Barekhu | Torah and Haftarah Blessings |
| Yotzer Or | Kiddush |
| Shema | Ha-motzi |
| Ve'ahavta | |
| Tefilah/Amidah (Avot v'Imahot, Gevurot) | |

You have an essential role to play in the mastery of these prayers. Teaching them in school is one thing, seeing them in action in the synagogue is something else. Your children *must* come to services to really understand the prayers in context. Seeing the Hebrew in use is essential that your child might master the various liturgical and scriptural pieces for which they will be responsible.

Our Responsibilities to You:

Each student will be responsible for leading a Shabbat Morning Service, either by themselves or paired with another student. Our congregation takes pride that its students are capable of conducting the entire service with only minimal input from the Rabbi and Cantor, and we take our responsibility to educate and train your child very seriously. 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 celebrate becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah solo, or paired with another student. To make certain that they are able to do what the community expects, we have designed our B'nei Mitzvah Study Program.

A Note on Our Program: Many parents have asked why additional teaching and tutoring is required for B'nei Mitzvah. That is a fair question. Let us try to give you a fair answer. Our congregation very specifically is NOT a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Mill. As we said in the Introduction, our goal is not to groom youngsters to sound Jewish one day of their lives, but to live Jewish EVERY day of their lives. Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation is only one element of your child's Religious School Education. Moreover, as good as our teaching staff is, there is some material that they are simply not capable of teaching. Thus it is that your child must study with the Cantor and our tutoring staff to be fully prepared to lead the congregation in worship.

Our B'nei Mitzvah Study Program is made up of two components. Each one compliments the other. Each one has its own focus and goals. And, each is necessary to ensure that your child is totally prepared to lead the congregation in worship, which again, is our ultimate goal.

Torah Skills Class: This class will meet once a week during one trimester as part of your child's regular Religious School program. With the Cantor, the students will learn a basic introduction to chanting through the various cantillation symbols (trope) and their corresponding melodies. This will be done with the Ve'ahavta Prayer, with which they are already familiar. 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. In this class, they will also learn the other prayers associated with the

Torah Service. The Torah Skills Class is taught in a casual, supportive environment that presages the individual tutoring that will follow. Depending on a student's Bar/Bat Mitzvah date, the class may overlap with private tutoring or precede it. The students will receive the necessary materials for the class from the Cantor.

Lessons: Working one-on-one with the Cantor, with Ms. Tenenbaum, and/or with another educator provided by the congregation, each student will continue to practice the prayers that they already know, and will work to master new material unique to their service. This material includes their Torah and Haftarah portions.

Note: If you choose to have outside tutoring, the tutor must be approved by the Education Director. All expenses related to outside tutoring will be paid by the family.

During their first session with the Cantor all students will be given a booklet of their Torah and Haftarah portions. 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. Under the direction of the Cantor, your son or daughter will then review the Torah portion and select a block of approximately 12 verses that will make up the assigned excerpt of their Torah portion that they will be chanting from the Bema at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. The general prayers of the service that are changed or read can be found on the Temple Web Site under Education; Bar/Bat Mitzvah; Bar Mitzvah/Bat Mitzvah tunes and information. The Cantillation of the Torah and Haftarah will be sent directly as a MP3 to each student and the tutor.

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. The name of your child's Torah Portion is on the cover of this handbook.

Following the initial meeting with the Rabbi, each student will begin working with our teaching staff. As the date of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah nears, they will begin working one on one with the Cantor Again. Occasionally we are asked, "Are parents welcome to sit in on tutoring

sessions?” ***Yes! It is required for an adult to be with the student for each tutoring session.*** We want you to be fully cognizant of what your child’s assignments are and also what you can do to help them progress. The goal to be successful in leading the congregation in worship, is practice, Practice, PRACTICE. We require that your child practice their assignments 30 minutes a day, six days a week.

Additional Lessons: If, after consultation with the Cantor or the Director of Education, we feel that your child would benefit from extra study, we will inform you of that fact. If 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 any expense. All matters of B’nei Mitzvah preparation, and material for which your child is responsible, remain within the purview of the Rabbi and Cantor.

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 and Appendix I for a discussion about the honors). Also, the Rabbi and the student will together 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 various stage directions that your child and family will need to know. On the last two Thursdays prior to your child’s Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the Cantor will rehearse with the family in the Sanctuary. These ‘dress rehearsals’ will ensure that you are familiar with the setting, and understand the choreography and flow of the service. Parents are required to attend these sessions.

Each Child is Unique: The Congregation has basic goals that we want all students to strive for. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah should not be too easy, nor should it be an excessive burden. We want our students to make a comfortable stretch. We fully understand and recognize that some students will be capable of

accomplishing 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. We promise that we will not overtax a youngster who may not be fully capable. At the same time, however, we will certainly challenge those who are capable to do all that they truly are capable of. You expect the best from your child, quite frankly, so do we.

Your Responsibilities to Us:

In as much as a young man or woman attains a new status when they become B'nei Mitzvah, they also have specific requirements that are placed upon them. It is important to emphasize, however, that both the student 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.

A Note on August, September, and October B'nei Mitzvah: Summer is a time when students and families take time out of town, as do clergy and teaching staff. As such, there is a tendency to let things slip through the cracks. If your child will be called to the Torah in August, September, or October, we will try to begin their lessons earlier than those students scheduled other times of the year. However, you must also do your part. It is crucial that you make certain that your child studies over the summer and does not forget all that they have been working on. This will make the process much easier, and keep the last few weeks from being a mad, uncomfortable dash to the finish line.

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 8th 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 Students in Other Hebrew Language Programs: Students who are currently enrolled in Hebrew Language Charter Schools may receive their Hebrew Language Education in those settings. We require one day of Hebrew School attendance, however, since they are not learning Judaica or the fundamentals of Jewish worship.

Students who are currently enrolled in local Hebrew Language Charter Schools, and are ALSO attending daily afterschool Jewish Enrichment programs, receive both Hebrew Language and Judaica Education in those settings. We do not require religious school attendance until Sixth Grade, provided the afterschool enrichment program they are enrolled in teaches the fundamentals of Jewish Worship. If students are not learning Jewish prayer in their afterschool enrichment programs, but only what might be termed secular Judaic studies, we required one day of Hebrew School attendance.

Students who are currently enrolled in Day School Programs, receive both Hebrew Language and Judaica Education in that settings. As such, we do not require religious school attendance.

However, ALL students who are preparing for B'nei Mitzvah at Temple Shaarei Shalom, must be enrolled in both the Cantor's Torah Skills Class, and B'nei Mitzvah Lessons, and are responsible for all applicable fees. Moreover, any student who is enrolled in another institution of Jewish Learning in lieu of attendance at Religious School, must demonstrate a commensurate level of Hebrew ability to that of the Education Director.

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 year leading up to their B'nei Mitzvah celebration. These are to include:

- Three Friday Night Adult Services
- Three Additional Friday Night Services (these may include Intergenerational Shabbat, or Friday Night Worship in another congregation)

- Four Saturday Morning Services (three of which *must* be at Temple Shaarei Shalom)
- Adult High Holidays Services

A Note on Family Services: Why do we put a limitation on Intergenerational Shabbat and Children's Services at the High Holidays? These services are geared for children 10 and younger. They are appropriate for children that age. If your child is going to lead the congregation in worship, however, and if they themselves are going to be comfortable as Jews participating in worship, then it is critical for them to have an Adult view of worship. There is a special B'nei Mitzvah service sign in book located in the lobby before services.

Mitzvah Project: Students are expected to perform some sort of Mitzvah project during the year preceding their becoming 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 congregation has an active Social Action Committee, and the Chair of the Social Action Committee is available for consultation on Mitzvah Projects. Students should complete their projects no later than 1 month prior to their service. Should you wish, the Temple will publicize your child's Mitzvah project in the bi-weekly email blast.

Ushering: A custom in our congregation is that the families take over the ushering responsibilities for one another. You will be called upon to usher at the Bar/Bat Mitzvah of another B'nei Mitzvah family. You will find the information when you will be ushering in SchoolSpeak. This program helps to foster a cohesiveness and connection between families, and gives you a chance to see firsthand exactly how a B'nei Mitzvah ceremony is conducted. You will be responsible for handing out programs and books before the service, answering questions, and helping to collect books following the service.

In addition, B'nei Mitzvah and their families are given the honor of ushering at services during the High Holy Days. You will be contacted by the High Holy Day Committee about fulfilling this commitment.

Giving Opportunities: Tzedakah, the giving of charity, is a primary biblical commandment (Deuteronomy 15:7-8).

The great Rabbi Maimonides, 900 years ago, identified eight levels of giving Tzedakah according to their degree of merit:

1. Giving begrudgingly
2. Giving less than you should, but giving it cheerfully
3. Giving after being asked
4. Giving before being asked
5. Giving when you do not know the recipient's identity, but the recipient knows your identity
6. Giving when you know the recipient's identity, but the recipient doesn't know your identity
7. Giving when neither party knows the other's identity
8. Enabling the recipient to become self-sufficient

Temple Shaarei Shalom through the financial generosity of its members and the actions of its clergy, staff and members is blessed to continually fulfill levels 3 – 8 of giving Tzedakah.

In keeping with this tradition, we share with our B'nei Mitzvah families some of the giving opportunities to our Synagogue:

- The donation of a Walkway Brick at the entrance to the Temple that honors your child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah. This is not just any red walkway brick. It can be your engraved family landmark here at TSS.
- The donation of a Gold Leaf on the Temple's Tree of Life, commemorating your child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah. This is not just any leaf. It does not fall off a tree. It remains on the TSS Tree of Life, symbolizing the continuity of this life cycle event.

Please contact Linda Gulko, Administrator at lgulko@templeshaareishalom.com or (561) 364-9054 ext. 103 to learn more.

Dues and Fees: It is understood and expected that your family will be current and up to date with all Temple bills *before B'nei Mitzvah Lessons* will begin. Such bills include, but are not limited to: Membership Dues, Religious School Fees, B'nei Mitzvah Fees, Oneg and Flower fees, and Kiddush. If your family has previously worked out a payment plan with the congregation, you must be current with that plan. If outstanding balances represent 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, Please, 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.

Behavior Expectation: 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 demonstrates a similar disregard for Temple Staff, Officers, or other authority figures, their child's privilege will be revoked.

The celebration of becoming a B'nei Mitzvah is an honor bestowed by the congregation upon a young person and their family, and is not an inalienable right. 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 after consultation with, and approval of, the Temple Board.

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 congregation 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 very strongly encourage that you invite ALL of your child's classmates and teachers. Not only is this the Jewish thing to do, but it also helps to foster and create a 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. The Temple office 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.

The Rabbi and Cantor will coordinate the service, which each student will read, and the music, which will be sung. As we said before, 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 *yarmulke*) 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 experience wearing them. 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, 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 twinned with another student. (A full list of what honors are available, an explanation of those honors, and a sample honors worksheet are found in Appendix I.)

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 family member would like to read a selection of scripture from the Hebrew Bible (sometimes referred to as the Old Testament), or to offer a blessing from their own faith 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.

Programs and Publicity: The Temple office will make up a program for Saturday Morning Services. The various members of your family who will be participating in the service will have their names listed in the program. Families also have the option of producing their own program for Saturday Morning Services. This will be covered in the first meeting with the Rabbi or Cantor. In addition, prior to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah you will be contacted by our publicity staff who will request a picture and some basic information about your child that we will publish in the *NEWS AND VIEWS*. You are proud of your son or daughter and all that they have accomplished so are we!

Oneg/Kiddush/Flowers: Families who are celebrating a B'nei Mitzvah in our congregation are required to sponsor the Oneg Shabbat on Friday Night, the flowers on the Bema for Friday night and Saturday morning Shabbat Services and the Kiddush (challah, wine and juice) after services on Saturday. Arrangements for the Oneg, Kiddush, and flowers are made by 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: It is natural and understandable that you may want to capture this special day with pictures. 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, please contact the Vice President of Religious Services to schedule a time. You may take pictures before and after the Shabbat Moring Service. If your child is paired with another student, both families will be given time on Saturday Morning to take pictures.

Live Streaming: The Temple will be doing live streaming of the Service. If anyone would to view the Service from their iPad or computer, they can go to our website:

www.templeshaareishalom.com

and watch the Service. You will also be receiving a DVR within two weeks of your child's B'nei Mitzvah that you watch on your computer.

Celebrating at the Synagogue: Temple Shaarei Shalom has multiple social halls, as well as a fully stocked catering kitchen. We welcome you to have a celebration at the Synagogue following the service. If you would like more information on renting space for your family's celebration, please contact the Temple Office.

Honors:

There are a number of honors that you may grant to family members and friends that will be attending your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah Celebration. We have included a list of the various honors as well as any limitations of who is or is not eligible to perform them. If you have a particularly large family, we will work with you to be as creative as possible in granting honors. Similarly, if your child has been twinned with another student, you will still have the same number of honors to distribute. At the end of this section is a sample honors worksheet. When you meet with the Rabbi, you will work together to choose who will fulfill the various honors. The Rabbi will be more than happy to offer advice or suggestions in distribution of the honors.

Friday Night Honors:

- ***Candle Lighting:*** One or more members of your family are invited to come forward at the beginning of the service, read a passage in English, and then light the Shabbat Candles. Following this, the Cantor chants the blessing.
- ***Kiddush:*** One or more members of your family are invited to come to the Bema, read an English passage about the meaning of the Blessing over the Wine, and then join in as the Cantor and/or student chants the blessing. Following this, the honorees are invited to open the ark prior to the *Aleinu* Prayer.

Saturday Morning Honors:

- ***Presentation of the Tallit:*** At the very beginning of the service, someone from your family is invited to present the Tallit to your son or daughter. This is an honor that might be performed by anyone.
- ***Ark Openings:*** There are three different times during the morning service in which the Ark is opened. You are welcome to invite 1-4 (occasionally more) guests to come open the Ark. This is an honor that might be performed by anyone.

- ***Aliyot:*** Most students in our B'nei Mitzvah Program will be reading three *Aliyot* (sections of the Torah text). The last of these three is reserved for your child. That means you are able to give out two *Aliyot* to guests/members of your family. In order to fulfill this honor, not only must the individual(s) be Jewish, they must also be familiar with the two prayers and the choreography of how they are said. Rabbi and Cantor are able to help should you require assistance.
- ***English of the Torah Portion:*** You may invite one (or more) members of your family or guests to come and read the section of Torah that your child will chant in Hebrew, in English. The Cantor will provide you with a copy of what is to be read. This may be done by anyone.
- ***Holding/Dressing the Torah:*** Following the reading of the Torah, two people from your family/guests will be called upon to come up to the Bema and hold and redress the Torah. They will be directed in this task by the Rabbi and other Board Member on the Bema. These honorees must be Jewish, and at least one must be B'nei Mitzvah (i.e. older than 13).
- ***Family Blessing:*** Following your child's speech, the Rabbi's charge to the B'nei Mitzvah, and presentations from the congregation, you will be called upon to share a few words with your child on their special day. We ask that you keep your comments brief, and speak *to* your child, not *about* them.
- ***In Memoriam:*** This is not an honor per se. Rather, we will ask you to give us the names of any loved ones from your family who have passed on that you would like to remember on the day of your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. We will include these loved ones when we read the list at the end of the service prior to the *Mourners Kaddish*. Many times we are asked, "Well... how far back should we go?" The guidance we suggest is that you mention only those who your son or daughter knew during their lifetimes, or others of great significance that should not be left out.

Sample Bar/Bat Mitzvah Honors Worksheet:

Date of Service: _____

Name: _____

Hebrew Name: _____

Parents Names: _____

(Candles): _____

(Kiddush): _____

Presentation of Tallit: _____

Open Ark: _____

Portion: _____ Pages: _____

1st Aliyah: (_____) _____

2nd Aliyah: (_____) _____

3rd Aliyah: (_____) _____

English: _____

Hold/Dress: _____

Haftarah: _____ Pages: _____

Open Ark: _____

Family Blessing: _____

Open Ark: _____

In Memoriam:

Appendix II

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: [OPT=Optional]

| <u>Prayer</u> | <u>Page</u> | <u>Check when Complete</u> |
|---|-------------|----------------------------|
| Morning Blessings | | |
| Tallit—Read | 282 | _____ |
| Shehecheyanu—Read | 282 | _____ |
| Asher Yatzar first line OPT—Read | 284 | _____ |
| La'asok B'divrei—Read | 284 | _____ |
| Nissim b'chol yom—Chant | 286 | _____ |
| Kaddish OPT—Chant | 300 | _____ |
| Sh'ma and Blessings | | |
| Bar'chu—Chant | 301 | _____ |
| Yotzeir whole prayer | | |
| or first paragraph OPT—Read | 301 | _____ |
| Ahavah Rabat 1 st sentence—Chant | 302 | _____ |
| Sh'ma—Chant | 303 | _____ |
| V'ahavta—Chant | 303 | _____ |
| Amidah | | |
| T'filah—Chant | 306 | _____ |
| Avot v'Imahot—Chant | 306 | _____ |
| G'vurot—Chant | 307 | _____ |
| Final blessing prayer for peace—Read | 313 | _____ |
| Torah Service | | |
| Havu Godel—Read | 303 | _____ |
| Ki Mitzion/Baruch Shenatan—Chant | 418 | _____ |
| Sh'ma/Echad—Chant | 418 | _____ |
| Gadlu—Chant | 418 | _____ |
| Blessing before Torah—Chant | 419 | _____ |
| Blessing after Torah—Chant | 419 | _____ |

Haftarah

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Blessing before Haftarah—Chant | 420 | _____ |
| Blessing after Haftarah—Chant | 421 | _____ |
| Aleinu OPT—Chant | 615 | _____ |
| Kiddush—Chant | 719 | _____ |
| Motzi—Chant | 722 | _____ |

Friday Night

| | | |
|--|-----|-------|
| Ahavat Olam—Chant (see B'nei Mitzvah Book) | — | _____ |
| Sh'ma—Chant | 303 | _____ |
| V'ahavta—Chant | 303 | _____ |

Prayers for Parents and Honorees

The following prayers for parents and honorees are provided on the back of this page.

- Candle Blessing
- Blessing before Torah
- Blessing after Torah

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. All dates are approximates.

- B'nei Mitzvah Dates are Assigned 2 Years in Advance
- Parent Meeting is held regarding B'nei Mitzvah program 1 Year in Advance
- Family must be Current with all Temple Fees,
or current with approved plan 6 Months in Advance
- Student Starts with Cantor and Tutoring Staff 5-6 Months in Advance
- Family Makes Arrangements for Oneg/Kiddush/Flowers 5-6 Months in Advance
- Student has mastered all requisite prayers 2 Months in Advance
- Student and family meet with Rabbi 6 Weeks in Advance
- Student has mastered the Torah Portion w/o vowels 1 Month in Advance
- Students Must Complete Mitzvah Project 1 Month in Advance
- Student Must Complete Service Attendance Requirement 4 Weeks in Advance
- Preliminary Rehearsal in the Sanctuary with Cantor 2 Weeks in Advance
- Final Rehearsal in the Sanctuary with Cantor 1 Week 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 3-4)

How many services must my child attend prior to their Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

We require that our young people *and their families* attend 12 services during the year leading up to their B'nei Mitzvah ceremony. These must include 3 Adult Shabbat Evening Services, 3 Adult Shabbat Morning Services at Temple Shaarei Shalom, as well as Adult Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur Services. (See page 9-10)

Must my child be enrolled in Religious School?

Yes. The congregation 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 8th 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 9)

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

A student must have had at least 3 years of Religious Education before they are given the honor of celebrating B'nei Mitzvah. To acquire the requisite Hebrew Skills, we strongly recommend that young people begin *no later* than 3rd Grade. 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 13)

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 12 and 13)

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 sponsor 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 16) 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 II. (See page 21 and 22)

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 pages 14-15. A fuller explanation of all of the honors is found in Appendix I.

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 15)

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 pages 15-16, and Appendix I)

May pictures/video 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, refrain from taking pictures during the ceremony itself, as doing so detracts from the sanctity of worship. We no longer permit videotaping in the sanctuary during services. (See page 17)