

Beth Israel of San Diego  
Lee and Frank Goldberg Family Religious School

# Bar/Bat Mitzvah Handbook 2019-2020



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## INTRODUCTION

*At five years the age is reached for the study of the Scripture, at ten for the study of the Mishnah, **at thirteen for the fulfillment of the commandments**, at fifteen for the study of the Talmud, at eighteen for marriage, at twenty for seeking a livelihood, at thirty for entering into one's full strength, at forty for understanding...*  
(Pirkei Avot 5:21)

Becoming a bar/bat mitzvah marks the beginning of a young man or woman's transition from childhood to adulthood. It offers a family and their community the chance to leave behind the everyday and focus on the miracle of life and human maturation. As a young person makes his/her way into adulthood, the ritual celebration of bar/bat mitzvah allows him/her to demonstrate readiness to begin taking on adult Jewish responsibility. It indicates that they recognize that the wisdom of our Jewish heritage is a tool to building a life partnership with God.

### THE HISTORY OF BAR/BAT MITZVAH

Bar/Bat mitzvah literally means "Son/Daughter of Commandments." In earlier times, the term had legal weight in the community, signifying that an individual would be held legally responsible for his/her actions. A male child was considered to be bar mitzvah upon reaching the age of thirteen. His father would be called to the bimah (pulpit) at the service closest to his son's thirteenth birthday. The Torah would be read, and the father would recite a blessing thanking God that he was no longer legally responsible for his son's actions. In later years, a thirteen year-old boy, having progressed in his Jewish education and understanding the basics of Jewish knowledge, was expected to participate in a prayer service, reading from the Torah and Haftarah, and most importantly, giving a lesson or explanation of the weekly Torah portion, called a D'var Torah. Following the celebration, it was customary to celebrate at a "seudat mitzvah" or a celebratory meal that was in keeping with the spirit of the occasion.

Bat mitzvah is a relatively new tradition – not more than one hundred years old. It was introduced to emphasize the concept of equality of boys and girls in Jewish religious ritual and education. In Reform congregations, the ceremony of bat mitzvah and the educational requirements are identical with those of bar mitzvah.

## PREPARATION FOR YOUR BAR/BAT MITZVAH

*Simon the Righteous was one of the last of the Great Assembly. His motto was: "The world stands on three things—the Torah, the [Temple] service, and loving acts of kindness." (Pirkei Avot, 1:2)*

### BY THE TIME OF YOUR SERVICE

Our b'nai mitzvah services are joyous occasions welcoming our young people into the age of Jewish responsibility. By the time of their service, our students will have:

- Achieved a basic factual knowledge of Judaism and an understanding of the values of Judaism, and will have learned Hebrew through prayers and reading of the Torah and Haftarah (Prophetic portions)
- Made a commitment to continue their religious education through high school and beyond. An adult Jew is obligated to continue to study his or her Jewish heritage and tradition throughout life.

### PREREQUISITE RELIGIOUS SCHOOL EDUCATION

- ❑ A minimum of three years of religious school education, or the equivalent, as determined by the rabbi in conjunction with director of the religious school, prior to and including the year of the bar/bat mitzvah service.
- ❑ Satisfactory completion of all academic work and 75% attendance at Sunday morning and mid-week religious school and Hebrew classes.
- ❑ Students who come to Beth Israel from another community will be accepted as candidates for bar/bat mitzvah, provided they meet Beth Israel's educational requirements.
- ❑ If remedial tutoring is required for any student due to missed classes, it shall be at the parent's expense.

## HOW ARE THE CANDIDATES PREPARED?

Our bar/bat mitzvah candidates are very well prepared and rehearsed by the time of their ceremony.

Time Before Service	With Whom	Topic
10 Months	Rabbi Berk	Introduction to program: Receive Introductory Packet Torah, Haftarah verses and D'var Torah <b><i>Parents and student attend.</i></b>
2 -3 Weeks after Initial Visit	Rabbi/Cantor Bernstein	Introduction to Ma'asei Mitzvah program, supervised tutoring, chanting, service preparation <b><i>Parents and student attend.</i></b>
7 Months 20 - Half hour sessions	Tutor	Learning how to read prayers, chant Torah and Haftarah portions.
6 Months Check up meetings every 4-6 weeks	Rabbi/Cantor Bernstein	Review progress
4 Months and Follow Up Meetings	Rabbi Berk or Assistant Rabbi	Begin work on D'var Torah (speech) Discuss service participation Receive Service Planner Packet and Forms
1 Month	Rabbi/Cantor Bernstein	Two rehearsals (one hour each)
The Week of	Rabbi/Cantor Bernstein	<b>Final rehearsal on bimah (one hour)</b> <b><i>Parents and student attend</i></b>

## MA'ASEI MITZVAH– PERFORMING MITZVOT

Ma'asei Mitzvah means “doing/performing mitzvot” in Hebrew. During the preparation process students will participate in our Ma'asei Mitzvah program, which will help them learn three elements of Jewish commitment: Torah, Avodah (worship) and Gemilut Chasadim (deeds of loving kindness). Students complete a total of at least 18 mitzvot. Of the 18 mitzvot, twelve are required and six are elective. By completing these mitzvot at least one month prior to their bar/bat mitzvah celebration, students will have a greater sense of God’s presence in their life, of the importance of mitzvot, and what it means to be a responsible member of the community.

### **Mitzvot Related to Torah**

#### **Required:**

- Make a commitment to continuing your Jewish education.
- Learn Torah trope (cantillation).
- Chant Torah and Haftarah.
- Write a D'var Torah.
- Attend 2 Torah Study classes on Shabbat morning with your parents

#### **Electives (minimum 2):**

- Write an autobiography, including your Jewish history.
- Write a book report related to a Jewish topic (approved by clergy).
- Create a family tree that goes as far back as possible.
- Write a report about a favorite Jewish personality.
- Attend a Beth Israel educational lecture or class.
- Study the Torah portion of the week with your family every Shabbat for one month.
- Learn Haftarah trope.
- Your own ideas. (Get permission from clergy.)

### **Mitzvot Related to Avodah (Worship)**

#### **Required:**

- Attend 12 Beth Israel services with your family the year prior to your bar/bat mitzvah. These should be: 6 Erev Shabbat services and 6 Shabbat morning or afternoon services when a bar/bat mitzvah is celebrated. Some of the Shabbat morning service attendance may be at the Shabbat Lay Led (Minyan) service in the Foster Family Chapel
- Attend two teen Erev Shabbat services.

#### **Electives (minimum 2):**

- Celebrate Shabbat at home each week, for a minimum of three months.
- Attend a bar/bat mitzvah celebration at another congregation.
- Attend a shiva minyan.
- Recite Sh'ma and V'ahavta for one month every evening before bedtime.
- Attend 2 Shabbat Lay Led morning services (Minyan) in the Foster Family Chapel.
- Recite the morning blessings including Sh'ma each day for a month.
- Your own ideas. (Get permission from clergy).

### **Mitzvot Related to G'milut Chasadim**

#### **Required:**

- Participate in Beth Israel's Hunger Project on two Sunday mornings with your parent(s).
- Give tzedakah in the Religious School every week.
- Deliver a "mish bag" through Beth Israel's Caring Community, visit a senior citizen home, and/or participate in another volunteer program on at least two different occasions.
- Participate in a Beth Israel Caring Community or Social Action project, or other approved project.

**Electives (minimum 2):**

- ❑ Donate 3% of the gift money you receive to the Beth Israel Hunger Project.
- ❑ Commit to doing the Hunger Project on 2 additional Sundays.
- ❑ Volunteer for our Caring Community, Social Action committee, or other organization doing g'milut chasadim (acts of loving kindness).
- ❑ Visit someone in the hospital.
- ❑ Usher at two Erev Shabbat services.
- ❑ Your own ideas. (Get permission from clergy).

**B'nai Mitzvah Boot Camp**

In addition to Ma'asei Mitzvah, students are strongly encouraged to attend the one week B'nai Mitzvah Boot Camp held during the summer before they become a bar/bat mitzvah. It is a wonderful way to fulfill many of the Ma'asei Mitzvah requirements, build their confidence, practice prayers, and bond with the clergy and their classmates, all while having a great time. The religious school office will contact you with details, but feel free to reach out to them.

**Mitzvah Projects for Your Bar/Bat Mitzvah:**

Each child is expected to perform some kind of g'milut chasadim (acts of righteousness) in preparation for his or her bar/bat mitzvah. Families are encouraged to individualize their mitzvah projects. Examples of past projects include: students have collected non-perishable food, clothes, and furniture for worthy causes, toys and sports equipment for abused and underprivileged children, and money for people with AIDS and others in need. Other families have planted a tree in honor of each guest or have asked guests to bring toys or non-perishable foods to the service. Many families have used the centerpieces at their receptions as a call to action to help those less fortunate.

We also encourage bar/bat mitzvah students to participate in one or more of Beth Israel's many Caring Community activities. These may include visiting elderly or shut-in members; delivering "mish bags" to ill, recently hospitalized, or bereaved individuals; making challah for mish bags or caring casseroles; interviewing an older member (or "sage") about his or her life and values; and more. Contact Katey Lindley, the Director of Caring Community, for ideas at 858-535-1111 ext. 2525 or [klindley@cbisd.org](mailto:klindley@cbisd.org).

We are happy to help you choose a mitzvah project for your family.

## THE WEEKEND OF YOUR BAR/BAT MITZVAH

### EREV SHABBAT AND CANDLE LIGHTING

Your family will participate in the Erev Shabbat, Friday evening, service on the weekend of the bar/bat mitzvah. Your family (parents/siblings of the bar/bat mitzvah) will participate in the candle lighting. In addition, the bar/bat mitzvah will participate in the service as assigned by the clergy.

### ONEG SHABBAT

Your family will be a host of the Friday Oneg Shabbat by virtue of your (tax deductible) contribution to our Oneg Shabbat and Kiddush Fund..

### BAR/BAT MITZVAH SERVICE TIMES

Beth Israel's Shabbat morning (Shacharit) services begin at 10:00 a.m. and Shabbat afternoon (Minchah-Havdalah) services begin at 4:00 p.m. Each service normally lasts 1.5 hours.

### GIFT PRESENTATIONS MADE BY CLERGY

One of our clergy will present each bar/bat mitzvah student with gifts on behalf of the Women of Beth Israel, the Men's Club of Beth Israel and the congregation in the senior rabbi's study before the service. The Women of Beth Israel gives each student a pair of Shabbat candlesticks and a Kiddush cup. The Men's Club of Beth Israel provides every student with a copy of *On The Doorposts of Your House*, a book of prayers and ceremonies for the Jewish home. The congregation plants a tree in Israel in honor of each student. Finally, a gift certificate is given to the bar/bat mitzvah from NFTY (North American Federation of Temple Youth) for travel to Israel.

### USHERING AND HANDOUTS

Please designate at least two people to act as ushers for the Saturday morning/afternoon Shabbat service. Anyone may serve in this capacity. Ushers will distribute Chumashim (books that contain the Torah and Haftarah readings) to your guests and all others who will be worshiping with us. Friday evening Erev Shabbat ushers are provided by the Men's Club of Beth Israel. Please contact the Men's Club if you wish to have someone from your family help usher on Friday evening.

Please do not prepare your own individual worship booklet or family pamphlet for the service.

### BAR/ BAT MITZVAH SERVICE

We encourage members of your family, both Jewish and non-Jewish, to participate in the service. Family and friends receive aliyot, lift the Torah (hagbah), dress the Torah (g'lilah) and open/close the ark. Parents and grandparents (Jewish and non-Jewish) participate in the Torah passing ceremony.

## PARENTS' ADDRESS TO THEIR SON/DAUGHTER

Parents are invited to present their bar/bat mitzvah student with his/her tallit and address their son/daughter with brief (two minutes total) personal words at the beginning of the service. Alternatively, you may choose to do this more intimately in the rabbi's study prior to the service. In either case, your words should be prepared in consultation with the rabbi. This is not meant to be an opportunity to praise your child's academic or extra-curricular accomplishments. Parents are encouraged to focus on the religious significance of bar/bat mitzvah, the moment as a rite-of-passage into Jewish adulthood, the passing down of the Jewish tradition and the Jewish values and ideals which parents hope their child has learned and will exhibit in later life. Parents are also encouraged to base their comments on a Jewish source or quotation, especially their son's/daughter's Torah portion.

## MUSIC FOR THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH SERVICE

Our clergy will be pleased to speak with you concerning any requests you may have for music to be used during the service. Please do not make any arrangements for music or instrumentals without permission.

## ALIYOT (TORAH BLESSINGS)

The act of going up to bless the Torah is called an aliyah, which means "ascending" in both the physical and spiritual sense. The traditional Torah blessings will be recited/chanted by Jewish family and friends of your choosing, before each reading from the Torah. Non-Jewish family and friends are welcome to accompany those reciting the blessings up to the bimah, **but do not recite** the blessing. All those receiving an aliyah must be at least 13 years of age. Those reciting the blessings must be capable of reading Hebrew or be proficient with transliteration. The clergy will be happy to review these blessings with you or to provide you with a CD of the proper Hebrew pronunciation. These are also on our website. The final aliyah (called maftir) will be done by the bar/bat mitzvah. The total number of aliyot and participants in the Torah service will be determined in consultation with the clergy.

## MORNING BAR/BAT MITZVAH KIDDUSH

Each bar/bat mitzvah family will host a challah and wine Kiddush reception in the foyer of the Social Hall immediately following a 10:00 a.m. bar/bat mitzvah service. The clergy will join you and help to lead the brachot (prayers) with your bar/bat mitzvah student. Wine, grape juice, and challah will be provided for the entire congregation through your Oneg Shabbat/Kiddush Fund contribution. Families wishing to provide additional food to supplement the Kiddush refreshments should coordinate these arrangements with our Facilities Coordinator at 858 535-1111, ext. 2572, or at [mstrebe@cbisd.org](mailto:mstrebe@cbisd.org).

## HAVDALAH SERVICE

At the conclusion of all Minchah/afternoon bar/bat mitzvah services in the Glickman-Galinson Sanctuary, your family will participate in a Havdalah service, signifying the conclusion of Shabbat.

### **HOLDING A RECEPTION IN THE SOCIAL HALL**

The David & Dorothea Garfield Social Hall adjacent to the sanctuary is an excellent, convenient and versatile venue for those wishing to hold a reception. Please make arrangements directly with our Facilities Coordinator at 858 535-1111, ext. 2572, or at [mstrebe@cbisd.org](mailto:mstrebe@cbisd.org).

### **BAR/BAT MITZVAH PARTY**

Your bar/bat mitzvah is a time for celebration! Jewish tradition teaches that a joyous gathering of family and friends should mark it, but the joy of the occasion does not depend upon lavish gifts or expensive parties that may overshadow - even defile - the sanctity of an occasion that marks religious attainment in the growth of an individual. A good rule is to *keep the emphasis on the "mitzvah," not on the "bar" or "bat."*

## POST BAR/BAT MITZVAH EDUCATION

### BAR/BAT MITZVAH EDUCATION

At the age of thirteen, the student is just beginning to grasp the true importance and significance of Jewish teaching. Therefore, as a prerequisite for the celebration of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, an agreement by child and parent to continue formal Jewish studies through high school is made. By continuing religious education, the bar/bat mitzvah students prepare themselves for the significant ceremony of Confirmation.

The emphasis of Jewish education is to obtain knowledge that will enable each individual to live a full Jewish life as he/she moves to university and/or the working world. It is in this spirit that the process of acquiring the knowledge of Judaism leads from enrollment in the religious school, through bar/bat mitzvah and Confirmation, to participation in high school and youth group activities to adult learning and Jewish living within a congregation and community and in every area of human activity. We believe this commitment insures the integrity of the bar and bat mitzvah service as a celebration of the student's entry into responsible Jewish life and not as an end to their Jewish religious education, like a graduation.

## Follow the road through Beth Israel's Lee and Frank Goldberg Family Religious School



## **ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES**

### **POSTPONING A BAR/BAT MITZVAH DATE**

Occasionally it becomes necessary to postpone a bar or bat mitzvah service due to inadequate progress or lack of attendance on the student's part. We will always make parents aware if the student needs additional help. If a postponement seems likely or even possible, the rabbi or Director of Education will inform you at least three months in advance.

### **BETH ISRAEL DIETARY RULES**

In keeping with the spirit of Biblical dietary laws (kashrut) and Jewish tradition, everyone at Beth Israel shall adhere to the following rules:

1. No trefe (forbidden) foods shall be served: e.g. pork, shrimp, shellfish, catfish, and all other fish that do not have both scales and fins.
2. Dairy products and meat, including poultry, shall not be mixed in the same food. However, they can be served alone if separated on the buffet table.

If you are in doubt, please contact the rabbi.

### **THE TRADITION OF TZEDAKAH**

#### **Giving Tzedakah in Honor of Bar/Bat Mitzvah:**

The word tzedakah is often translated as "charitable giving," but literally means "justice" in Hebrew. For Jews, giving to those less fortunate is a sacred obligation and a way of life. Part of our Ma'asei Mitzvah program is devoted to encouraging the practice of tzedakah and to having our students begin this life-long tradition. At joyous occasions, it is a Jewish tradition and a wonderful example to your child to make a contribution to a worthy cause. We encourage supporting Jewish causes as well as local, nature-oriented causes and those supporting Israel. Many bar/bat mitzvah families have given a donation to the Hunger Project, which members of Beth Israel have supported for over thirty years.

### **DRESS AT BAR/BAT MITZVAH**

We strive to educate our students and families that the sanctuary is a special place for us. One way we show respect is with our dress. Therefore, Beth Israel has established guidelines for our Shabbat and bar/bat mitzvah services. Men and boys should wear coats and ties; women and girls may wear dresses or suits. Sleeveless attire is not permitted on the bimah. If you will be celebrating at a party immediately following the ceremony, please bear in mind that party clothes may not be appropriate for a worship service; modesty and good taste should underlie your decisions.

### **FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS**

It is the policy of Congregation Beth Israel that every member be current in their financial obligations to the congregation, and remain so throughout the bar/bat mitzvah process, from the granting of the bar/bat mitzvah date, through Religious School tutoring, culminating in the simcha of the bar/bat mitzvah. Please contact Bethany Ratner, Membership Coordinator, at 858

535-1111, ext. 2554 or the office of Executive Director Lesley Mills at 858 535-1111, ext. 2511 if you have any questions regarding your financial obligations.

### **PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY**

Please inform your photographer and/or videographer as well as family members of the following policies: No still photography may be taken by anyone inside the sanctuary during the service itself. However, still photographs WITHOUT FLASH may be taken from the foyer at any time. Photographs may be taken in the sanctuary any time up to 45 minutes before the start of the service or after the service has concluded. A Torah may be taken out of the Ark and opened or held only by appointment and with the supervision of a trained Beth Israel employee or volunteer. These photos may be taken 45 minutes before the service or during the week. The service may be videotaped from the back of the sanctuary. Video cameras may only use available lighting during the service. Please make sure that your photographer and/or videographer understands this policy.

## GLOSSARY

**ALIYAH (plural ALIYOT):** Aliyah literally means “going up.” During the Torah service certain congregants will be called up to the pulpit (bimah in Hebrew) to bless the Torah before and after its reading. It is a special honor to receive an Aliyah, usually reserved for those especially close to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

**BIMAH:** The raised platform area in the front of the sanctuary. The pulpit.

**CHAZZANUT:** The ancient art of Hebrew chanting. The cantor (chazzan or chazzanit in Hebrew) is skilled at chazzanut, and knows both traditional and modern ways to chant the prayers, Torah and Haftarah.

**CONFIRMATION OR KABBALAT TORAH:** A ceremony created by the Reform movement, in which young Jewish adults in tenth grade confirm their allegiance to Judaism and the Jewish people. Kabbalat Torah means “receiving the Torah” in Hebrew.

**D’VAR TORAH or D’RASH:** D’var Torah means “a word of Torah” in Hebrew. A D’var Torah or D’rash is a short sermon based on the week’s Torah portion, delivered by the child during the bar/bat mitzvah service. The D’rash wrestles with the text and presents one understanding of one of its many messages.

**HAFTARAH:** An excerpt from the Prophets (*Nevi'im* in Hebrew) portion of the Hebrew Bible that is read following the reading from the Torah. There is a literary or thematic connection between the Torah portion and the Haftarah.

**KIDDUSH:** Kiddush is both a prayer and an act. As an act it is the sanctification of Shabbat usually done with wine. Kiddush is also the prayer over wine in which Shabbat is hallowed. In an extended sense of the word it includes the Shabbat morning reception, which begins with the Kiddush prayer over wine.

**KIPPAH:** This head covering (also known in Yiddish as *yarmulke*) is a sign of modest reverence for God. In a Reform synagogue the wearing of the kippah and the tallit is optional and extends to men and women.

**MITZVAH:** Literally means “commandment,” though in Yiddish and modern English it is also used for any good deed.

**PARASHAH:** Another term for the weekly Torah portion that is read and studied during the service. Also called the sidra.

**SIDDUR:** means “order” in Hebrew and refers to the weekday and Shabbat prayer book, which contains the order of prayers. Our congregation uses the Reform Movement’s siddur, the Mishkan T’filah.

**SE’UDAT MITZVAH:** Sharing a meal with the community as a way to celebrate is rooted in Jewish tradition. The bar or bat mitzvah feast was declared a se’udat mitzvah, a meal celebrating a commandment, in the sixteenth century.

**TALLIT:** The prayer shawl worn by Jewish adults in fulfillment of the commandment in the Torah, “You shall attach tzitzit (fringes) to the four corners of your garments.” (Deut. 22:12) The fringes are knotted in such a way that they remind the Jew of all the commandments in the Bible. Both kippot and tallitot are available in the rack as you enter the sanctuary and are optional in Reform Judaism. Tallitot are traditionally be worn during morning services, but not in the afternoon, except on Yom Kippur.

**TORAH:** The word “Torah” really has two meanings. In its broadest sense it refers to the entire body of Jewish laws, lore, and teachings. In its narrowest sense, it refers to the scroll on which is written the five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Every Shabbat a consecutive portion of the Torah is read and studied.

**TZEDAKAH:** The word tzedakah is often translated as “charitable giving,” but literally means “justice” in Hebrew. For Jews, giving to those less fortunate is a sacred obligation and a way of life.



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