



## ***BAR/BAT MITZVAH*** **GUIDE**

**REFORM CONGREGATION KENESETH ISRAEL**

**8339 OLD YORK ROAD  
ELKINS PARK, PA 19027**

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BLUE BELL, PA 19422**

**CLERGY STUDY: 215-887-8702**  
[www.kenesethisrael.org](http://www.kenesethisrael.org)

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Dear Parents and *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Students,

*Mazel tov!* You are now officially getting ready for your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Hopefully, it will prove to be one of the most important and memorable occasions in your family's history. A *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* can and should also be fun and rewarding for all of you.

*Bar/Bat Mitzvah* marks the coming of age of a young person and is an equally important milestone for his/her parents. In Judaism, *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is celebrated on or near one's thirteenth birthday and involves leading our *Shabbat* service, reading from the *Torah* and the Book of Prophets. In addition, each student will prepare a *D'var Torah* and complete a *Mitzvah* project. The exact requirements for your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* will be determined according to each student's skills and interests.

We look forward to working with all of you during the coming years. A *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is a great event and we are glad to be a part of yours! Please know that we are here to help you through this exciting experience in any way that we can.

Also please be sure to visit our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Resource Board, which is located between rooms #103 and #105 in the Religious School hallway. It is filled with resources, ideas and pictures.

L'Shalom.

Cantor Amy E. Levy  
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Director

Rabbi Lance J. Sussman, Ph.D.

Rabbi Kevin M. Kleinman

Rabbi Stacy Eskovitz Rigler

/alm



**Contact Information**  
of people who can help you  
during the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* process

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8339 Old York Road  
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Anita L. Madnick (Assistant to Cantor Levy & Rabbi Kleinman)	<a href="mailto:anita@kenesethisrael.org">anita@kenesethisrael.org</a>
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**Religious School: 215-887-8704**

Rabbi Stacy Eskovitz Rigler, Educator	<a href="mailto:educator@kenesethisrael.org">educator@kenesethisrael.org</a>
Lindsey Heller (Assistant to Rabbi Stacy Eskovitz Rigler)	<a href="mailto:lheller@kenesethisrael.org">lheller@kenesethisrael.org</a>

## A History of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Ceremonies

All societies determine a specific age that separates childhood from adulthood—the age when an individual assumes his or her religious and communal responsibilities to the society in which he or she lives. Like most traditions, the ceremonies connected with becoming a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* at age 13 evolved over time. It has always been viewed as one moment in the process of spiritual growth and commitment to the Jewish people.

The establishment of becoming a *Bar Mitzvah* at thirteen years plus one day for boys and a *Bat Mitzvah* at 12 years plus one day for girls has several origins. The Talmud records that during the time of the Second Temple (520 B.C.E.–70 C.E.), it was traditional for Sages to bless a child who had completed his first fast day at the age of 12 or 13. In *Pirkei Avot* (“Ethics of the Fathers,” second century C.E.) it is written, “At thirteen one is ready to do *mitzvot*.” By the time the Talmud was completed in the sixth century C.E., boys of thirteen years plus one day had assumed full responsibility for performing the *mitzvot*, hence the term *Bar Mitzvah*, “son of the commandment.” This also had legal ramifications: These boys were now counted in a *Minyan* and could act as witnesses. There was no formal rite, only a public blessing by the father that he was no longer responsible for the sins of the son since his son was now the age to be responsible for himself.

The earliest *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony consisted of blessing and reading the last section of the weekly portion of the *Torah*, the *maftir*, meaning the extra reading, since the boy was not a *Bar Mitzvah* until after the service, and reading the *Haftarah* portion. The most important part of the rite was a *d'rashah* or *d'var Torah*, a sermonette on the *Torah* or *Haftarah* portion. Since the *Bar Mitzvah* was assuming adult religious responsibilities, he was expected to show his understanding of those responsibilities to his family and, more importantly, to the community. Structurally, the *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony is essentially the same as it originally was. It wasn't until the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries that we find records of a *Bar Mitzvah* being invited to lead part of the worship service.

A public ceremony in celebration of a girl becoming a *Bat Mitzvah*, “daughter of the commandment,” did not come into formal being in North America until 1922. Dr. Judith Kaplan-Eisenstein, the daughter of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, blessed and read the Torah portion from a book “at a respectable distance” from the Torah scroll. The regular celebration of girls becoming *B'not mitzvah* came into prominence in Reform congregations, particularly in the second half of the 20th century, and is now generally identical in form to the celebration of a *Bar Mitzvah*.

It should be noted that the rite of confirmation originated in the Reform Movement in Germany in 1810 and included girls in 1817. Since it was felt that a 13-year-old was too young to understand the precepts of Judaism, the celebration of a boy becoming a *Bar Mitzvah* was dropped in favor of confirmation, which was held at age 16 or 17 because that was deemed a more mature age to assume the responsibilities of Judaism. Today, most congregations hold both ceremonies. Recognizing the importance of the *Bar/Bat*

*Mitzvah* ritual as well as a ceremony that marks a true understanding of what it means to be a Jewish adult.

Historically, all joyous occasions were celebrated in some manner, and becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* was no exception. However, unlike weddings at which we are commanded to rejoice with bride and groom, the *Bar Mitzvah* has no such mandate. In early years the celebrations varied from a simple *Kiddush* of wine, brandy, and cake following the service to more elaborate meals for the family and friends. The Rabbis urged families not to have elaborate celebrations and always to provide for the poor in order to fulfill the mitzvah. The *d'rashah* was delivered by the *Bar Mitzvah* some time during the celebration in order to emphasize its religious aspects. Gifts were generally limited to books, or religious items, or "sermon gifts," which were small amounts of money given as thanks for the sermonette. Among Moroccan Jews, this money was given to the boy's teacher.

Historically, *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* has been viewed as a first step in a young person's acceptance of the obligations to family and community as a responsible Jew. It was and should continue to be the beginning of a lifetime of the performance of *mitzvot*, study, prayer, and a commitment to share the destiny of the Jewish people.

### **KEEPING BAR AND BAT MITZVAH IN PERSPECTIVE**

- ***Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is about the acceptance of responsibility.** In the final analysis, this is the bottom line of *becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. It's not about acquiring the skill of *k'riah*, "the reading of the Torah." Rather, it's about acquiring the skill of responding to a challenge: a *mitzvah*. This is how Judaism defines maturity.
- ***Torah* is the center of Judaism.** Everything we do as Jews, everything we believe, everything we value revolves around the Torah. The Torah is the testimony of our people's encounter with God. And, however you interpret those events in the wilderness of Sinai some three millennia ago, what cannot be dismissed is the sacredness with which our ancestors have embraced this legacy. This is why the first *mitzvah* we expect our children to fulfill is to stand at the Torah.
- ***Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is a Community Observance.** It is not by coincidence that we choose to hold this initiation ceremony in public. To be a Jew means to live within a covenantal relationship—not only with God but with other Jews as well. *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* marks the entry of the child as a full-fledged member of the community. The awarding of an *aliyah*, "being called to the Torah", is a gift of the Jewish people. For this reason, the marking of the child's coming of age takes place in the synagogue—the communal home and is a community event. This is also why the service must meet communal standards such as form, length, and timing.

- **The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony is not a performance: It's a celebration!** The synagogue is not a theater, and the *bimah* is not a stage, and the congregation is not an audience. More to the point, the only *mistake* one can make at a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is to lose sight of this truth.
- **Try to think of the reception that follows as an event that can also contain Jewish Rituals and Values.** In fact, Judaism has a formal name for the meal after a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*: It is a *s'udat mitzvah*. This meal is in honor of the performance of a *mitzvah*. It, too, is a sacred gathering. This is not to say that it must be solemn; it is to say, however, that the spirit of the celebration should be perpetuated through the performance of *mitzvot*. The recitation of the blessings - donating centerpieces or gifts, and giving Tzedakah are the time honored traditions which put the event in prospective.
- **The meaning of becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is enduring only if it takes place within a context of continued Jewish growth.** Being a *Bat* or *Bar Mitzvah* is not the experience of a lifetime. It is a lifetime experience—a state of being that remains with us throughout our lives. Indeed, the true measure of *performance* comes not on the day one becomes a *Bat* or *Bar Mitzvah* but in the days that follow. In other words, becoming a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* should be thought of as a Jewish “commencement,” marking not an end point but a beginning—a beginning of a lifetime of *mitzvot*, a beginning of a lifetime of learning. As such, it is our firm belief that the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* celebration is validated and enhanced by a commitment to continue religious education to Confirmation and participation in our synagogue's Youth Group - KIFTY.

**“A *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is not a goal,  
it is one step in the student's Jewish education.”**

#### GOALS of OUR PROGRAM

1. To provide a memorable, challenging and exciting Jewish experience for our children.
2. To develop basic Jewish skills beginning in our Religious School including Hebrew reading, *Torah* cantillation, chanting of prayers and the interpretation of our ancient texts.
3. To have children lead a complete worship service.
4. To explore with students and families what it means to become a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.
5. To include families as an integral part of the process and service.

## **KI Bar/Bar Mitzvah Policies and Procedures**

### **Finances:**

Before a date for the service can be assigned a family must be in good financial standing (meaning all balances paid in full) with the congregation or arrangements must be made with the Executive Administrator.

In order for tutors to be assigned to students the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* fee must be paid in full and all other balances must be paid or arrangements must be made with the Executive Administrator.

The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* fee covers the following

- 18 to 20 tutoring sessions
- Rehearsals with the Cantor
- Meeting with our Senior Rabbi, Lance J. Sussman and Assistant Rabbi, Kevin M. Kleinman
- Oneg*
- Bimah* flowers
- Materials for the student
- Administrative support

**If there are any financial questions or concerns please speak with our Executive Director, Brian D. Rissinger.**

### **Requirements for receiving your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah date:**

#### 1. School enrollment:

It is required that our students attend Religious School during the *B'nai Mitzvah* process. All children should be enrolled in our Religious School program or an equivalent for three (3) years prior to becoming *Bar or Bat* Mitzvah. It is expected that all students be enrolled in Confirmation Academy and continue past *B'nai Mitzvah* through Confirmation.

2. Age: The student must be 13 or within 4 months of their 13<sup>th</sup> birthday.

3. Grade: The student should have completed the 6<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum before having a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

4. Havdalah Service: [During the assignment process the Morning services will be filled with up to two children per service and then Havdalah services will be considered.](#) There is an [additional \\$250 charge for a Havdalah Service.](#)

### **Service & Reception Information:**

#### 1. Attire:

Your child will wear a robe for their service provided by the congregation. Your child has the option of wearing a *kippah* (a head covering) and/or a *Tallit*.



Formal wear is permitted on the *Bimah*; however, it must be modest. For women participating in the service, dresses should have sleeves or they should wear a jacket or shawl and necklines should be conservative. Because of the high pitch of the stairs we suggest that skirts should neither be too short or too long. Men and boys should wear jackets, ties and dress shoes. Please be careful on the steps, especially in the Main Sanctuary. If you wish, the Bride's Room can always be made available to you for changing after the ceremony to party attire.

## 2. Video/Photo

Video may be taken in both the Chapel and Main Sanctuary. The photographer and videographer must not move about and cannot take flash photos or use supplemental lighting. This will give you the option of being able to have a video and at the same time help us maintain the dignity of the service your child will be leading. Both professionals should see the Executive Administrator or usher who will help guide them for appropriate camera placement.

**Photographers are not allowed to handle Torahs or move microphones as this tends to upset the system just prior to the service.** The family will be held responsible for any damage by photographers or videographers.

## 3. Guests:

Unescorted children should sit in the front rows of the Chapel or Sanctuary. Please assign a few adult guests to sit near the children to insure good behavior. This will help limit any distractions from the service. If guests are disruptive, they will be asked to leave the service and/or the building.

## 4. Length of service:

Our 10:30 a.m. service is approximately 90 minutes long and the 5:30 p.m. service is approximately 75 minutes long. Please plan your reception accordingly. **We cannot shorten your child's service to accommodate the party.**

## 5. Food Policy:

We request that you and your guests do not bring any food or drink into the Sanctuary or Chapel. When serving food to your guests please note that our Congregation does not allow pork or shellfish in our building. Kosher catering is available.

## **KI Bar/Bat Mitzvah Time Line**

### **4th Grade:**

Initial meeting with Cantor (*Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Coordinator), Rabbis and other staff to discuss the *B'nai Mitzvah* program, answer questions and to receive *B'nai Mitzvah* date request forms. Dates will be assigned based on availability.

### **Sixth grade year:**

There are *B'nai Mitzvah* family education sessions. During these sessions students and families will explore and learn a great deal about *B'nai Mitzvah*, the ceremony, and our Jewish heritage. They are a vital part of our program!

### **8 - 9 Months before:**

Approximately 8 - 9 months before the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date - First meeting with Cantor Amy Levy:

- a. Child will receive his/her *B'nai Mitzvah* notebook
- b. Cantor will go over the Torah & Haftarah portions
- c. Cantor will go over family data information
- d. Tutor will be assigned

Then students will begin intensive work for their *Bat/Bar Mitzvah* ceremony. **You should contact the tutor** following your meeting with the Cantor to set up times and sessions. (The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* fee covers approximately 18 sessions with the tutor. Any additional sessions are at the family's expense)

Also 8 - 9 months prior to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date **make an appointment to meet with Rabbi Kleinman** to develop your *mitzvah* project

### **Approximately three months before the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*:**

- a. Meeting with Rabbi Sussman to discuss *D'var Torah*
- b. Three appointments with Cantor Levy and one with Rabbi Kevin M. Kleinman. These are "*bimah*" appointments. They will take your child to practice his/her portion on the *bimah*, finalize reading/singing parts for the service.
- d. Finish *mitzvah* project and make display board for congregation.
- e. One more appointment with Cantor Levy for the family rehearsal. This happens the week prior to the ceremony. Parents are expected to attend the family rehearsal and should bring the completed honors form from this booklet.

### ***Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Service MAZAL TOV!!! And then...**

8- 9<sup>th</sup> Grade - Confirmation Academy

10<sup>th</sup> Grade - Confirmation

11 - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade I.M. Wise Program at Gratz College

College - Advanced Jewish Studies and Israel Study Program  
And beyond!

## The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Student

### WHAT DOES A BAR/BAT MITZVAH STUDENT DO?

There are basically four areas of participation for a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* at a Shabbat morning service: to be a *sh'liach tzibur*, "leader of worship;" to chant from the Torah and the *Haftarah*; and to offer a *d'var Torah* or teaching on the week's Torah portion.

#### ***Sh'liach Tzibur***

One of the oldest and most prestigious roles in the synagogue is to be the *sh'liach tzibur*. Literally, the "representative of the community," the *sh'liach tzibur* leads the congregation in prayer. Each *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* student joins with the clergy in this sacred role.

Most of the Hebrew prayers for the service have been learned in religious school. The basic Hebrew prayers expected of a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* are:

- *Bar'chu*
- *Yotzer*
- *Sh'ma/V'ahavta*
- *Avot—Imahot*
- *G'vurot*
- *Kiddush*

The student must also know the *Torah* and *Haftarah* blessings.

In the instance of a *B'nai Mitzvah*, the liturgy will be shared, and prayers will be added to accommodate two students. The specific additional Hebrew prayers will be determined in consultation with Cantor Levy.

#### **The *D'var Torah* (A teaching of our Torah)**

Prior to the reading of *Torah*, the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* will deliver a brief (three to four minute) introduction to the week's *Torah* portion. This teaching will be prepared in consultation with the rabbis. Guidelines for the preparation of a *d'var Torah* can be found in this guide book.

#### **The *K'riat Ha'Torah* (Torah reading)**

Each *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* assumes the role of the *baal (at) k'riah*, *Torah* reader, for the day. This entails the learning of three *parashiyot*, selections from the week's *Torah* portion, which usually amounts to 12 to 15 verses.

The *Torah* scroll itself is unvocalized (without the diacritical vowels or accents); moreover, each student is expected to learn the trope or traditional cantillation melody. This will be taught by the student's tutors during the preparation process.

The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* will chant the *Torah* blessings for the third *aliyah*. (The previous *aliyot* are given to family members and friends.)

## **The Haftarah**

Following the reading of *Torah*, the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* student will chant the *Haftarah* or secondary biblical reading. Like the *Torah* reading, the *Haftarah* is chanted according to a specific melody to be learned with/from the tutor. The number of verses to be read will be determined by the ability of the student.

## **Friday Night**

It is customary for the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* students and their families to participate in either the candle blessing or the *Kiddush* at the Friday night service of your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Appropriate attire for worship services, i.e. men and boys, shirt, slacks and sports coat, ladies and girls skirt or dress or dress pants.

## **Materials**

Each student will be provided with a binder which has a copy of his or her *Torah* and *Haftarah* portions, which contains the Hebrew texts and English translations, as well as helpful commentary, and materials of the service itself. Prayer CD's for 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades can be found on our website [www.kenesethisrael.org](http://www.kenesethisrael.org)  
**These CD's are important for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring process.**

## **Mishkan Tefillah**

Our congregation has a new prayer book. It will be used though religious school, bar/bat mitzvah tutoring and at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. Students will choose prayers in their 7<sup>th</sup> grade Confirmation class under the guidance of Cantor Levy.

## **An Important Note:**

Our congregation takes great pride in making every *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* celebration special, even though the participation of each student is basically the same. There are occasions, however, when special circumstances necessitate an adjustment in the student's participation. We will do everything possible to work with each student as an individual, with the ultimate goal of maximizing his or her self-esteem and sense of accomplishment. Please feel free to discuss with us any concerns you might have.

## **How is he/she prepared?**

Regular Religious School attendance, in addition to special tutoring sessions, prepares your child for this experience. In addition, the school has implemented *Tefillah* expectations to ensure that your child is familiar enough with the service to lead it. Following is a summary of the expectations and a list of worship opportunities at KI.

## **T'FILLAH EXPECTATIONS:**

All students are required to attend *Shabbat* services. Attendance at High Holy Day services does not count toward these expectations. **In order to verify**

**attendance at services, students should approach the rabbis after the service for a star. One credit is given for each service attended.** If your child attends services at another synagogue, please advise the Religious School Office in order for him/her to receive the proper credit (although no more than two should be from other congregations).

Grades 3 - 4 Four (4) *Shabbat* services per year\*\*

\*\*All of the Grade 3 service credits must be fulfilled in order to receive an application and date for your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*

Grades 5-6 Six (6) *Shabbat* services per year – (3) of which must be Junior Congregation services on *Shabbat* mornings

An attendance record is kept in the Religious School Office and posted in the hallway nearby, so you can easily determine your child's outstanding requirements. Notices of your child's status are also mailed home at regular intervals.

### **Worship opportunities for our students include**

**Family Shabbat Services** – Usually the FIRST Friday of each month at 7:15 p.m. These services are traditional KI Friday night services with a special family friendly sermon. Many of the services are led by a specific grade and there is often a dinner before the service.

**Junior Congregation** - For **students in grades 3-7** from 10:30-11:30 a.m. (usually the third Saturday). This service is an opportunity for students to lead a *Shabbat* morning service on their own. Students will take turns leading prayers, acting out the *Torah* portion, and learning about the *Shabbat* morning service in a fun, interactive way. **Junior Congregation is also great preparation for a child's *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.**

**Shabbat Services - For the Congregation.** When there are no Family Services, Friday evening worship begins at 8:00 p.m. and Saturday morning services are held at 10:30 a.m. ALL ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND!

**Rydal Park Shabbats** - are held on the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) Saturday of every month at 2:00 p.m. Rydal Park is located on the Fairway and Susquehanna Road, Rydal, PA.

**Blue Bell Campus Shabbat Service** is usually on the third Friday of the month. Family Shabbat Service and program starts at 6:00 p.m.

### **WRITING YOUR D'VAR TORAH**

Before reading the *Torah* each child will give a brief *D'var Torah*. The talk should run between 2-4 double-spaced typed pages. The average length is 2.5 pages. THE *D'VAR TORAH* SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY YOUR FIRST REHEARSAL WITH THE CANTOR.

The following is a guide for you as you develop your talk:

1. Read the English translation of your *Torah* portion provided from the Plaut *Torah* commentary.
2. Now, read the commentary to the portion from Plaut. You may also want to consult the pages in Plaut immediately before and after your portion for additional discussion.
3. Begin by writing a 1-3 paragraph summary of your portion.
4. Next, identify a theme in your portion. For example, it may be about "justice," or "forgiving," or "rebellion." Write 2-3 paragraphs about the theme and apply it to your own life.
5. Connect the theme to your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* experience.
6. Discuss your *mitzvah* project.

Select Web Resources:

[www.urj.org](http://www.urj.org) ("Learning")  
[www.learn.jtsa.edu](http://www.learn.jtsa.edu) ("*Parashat HaShavua*")  
[www.jrf.org](http://www.jrf.org) ("*D'var Torah*")

### **WRITING YOUR "THANK YOU" STATEMENT**

As a separate document, write a brief "thank you" statement. One or two paragraphs should do it. If you are in a double *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, be sure to acknowledge your partner. Possible people to thank: your teachers, clergy, family, God.

### **Mitzvah Projects**

There are no real secrets to good *Tzedakah* work, no magic formulas, and no exotic twists of mental agility. The good will of good people - and people who want to be good people - can bring about grand and glorious changes in the world, and these changes can be far more dazzling and extensive than we would normally think possible. In that sense - the extent of what *Tzedakah* can achieve - there is something mysterious and magical, but the actual doing of the *Mitzvah* is the simplest-of-simple-things: we just do it, and marvelous things happen.  
 Danny Siegel  
*Gym Shoes and Irises*

One of the meanings inherent in becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, is that you, are responsible for your doing a mitzvah project. At KI, an important element in the *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah*, is doing a *mitzvah* in the form of a *Mitzvah Project*.

All families are asked to consider committing to MAZON: A Jewish response to hunger (see below) as part of their *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* experience.

A wide variety of projects from which you can choose or may be stimulated to create, is listed below. Our office will make an appointment with Rabbi Kleinman as soon as you have had your first meeting with the Cantor. That allows us

approximately nine months before your *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* to discuss the various possibilities, to create and complete your own project.

List of Previous Mitzvah Projects at KI:

Walking Greyhounds  
Visit Local Senior Centers  
Raising a puppy to become a seeing-eye dog  
Environmental Clean Ups  
Collecting Books  
Collecting Toiletries for Shelters  
Volunteer to help at Special Olympics  
Volunteer to tutor children in your school & KI Religious School  
Aids Walk-a-thon  
Selling items for Charity  
Making Therapy Dolls  
Painting Murals  
Collections for Cradles to Crayons  
Mitzvah Mittens  
Canned food drive  
Charity Fashion Show  
Help an elderly neighbor  
Write letters to Israeli soldiers

**Ongoing KI Social Action Projects**

High Holy Day Food collection  
*Mitzvah* Day  
Rydal Park visits  
For other information regarding ongoing projects please contact Rabbi Kevin M. Kleinman, [rabbikleinman@kenesethisrael.org](mailto:rabbikleinman@kenesethisrael.org)

Obviously, this is not a complete list. You can find your own favorite organization to which you can contribute. The most important thing is that you work or give, no matter how much. This is one of the ways in which you can show that you are taking on adult Jewish responsibilities. You should spend at least ten hours of your time doing your *mitzvah* project.

**Other Ideas:**

1. Give of your time:
  - a. Volunteer to work in the synagogue and/or the religious school
  - b. Visit the elderly—family members, a neighbor, or a nursing home
  - c. Work on an ecology project
  - d. Work in a soup kitchen
  - e. Collect old but usable clothes, toys, tapes, videos, etc., and give them to the needy and the homeless
  - f. Participate in a walk-a-thon for some cause
  - g. Work on a project for Habitat for Humanity

In addition, many families choose to donate some of the money they receive as gifts to *Tzedekah* to help the hungry, the poor, and the homeless

Some suggested recipients are:

Mazon—The Jewish Response to Hunger (U.S. or Canada): Donate 3% of the cost of your celebration or a part of your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* gifts **[www.mazon.org](http://www.mazon.org)**

United Jewish Communities (formerly UJA and Federation): Supports many Jewish organizations in Israel, the U.S., Canada, and around the world **[www.ujc.org](http://www.ujc.org)**

The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) **[www.hias.org](http://www.hias.org)**

The American Jewish World Service **[www.ajws.org](http://www.ajws.org)**

Habitat for Humanity **[www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org)**

A local soup kitchen

A local organization for the homeless and the poor.

Help support medical research and medical support groups  
Specific disease groups: Cancer treatment and care, The Kidney Foundation, AIDS, MS, Heart **Hadassah [www.hadassah.org](http://www.hadassah.org)**

Help other support groups - For abused children and adults  
P-FLAG: Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays **[www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)**  
JACS, AA, and other organizations dealing with substance abuse  
The Jewish Guild for the Blind **[www.jgb.org](http://www.jgb.org)**

Help Jewish Causes.

The Fund for Reform Judaism **[www.urj.org/development/fund.shtml](http://www.urj.org/development/fund.shtml)**

ARZA/WORLD UNION, North America **[www.rj.org/arzawuna/](http://www.rj.org/arzawuna/)**

WUPJ: World Union for Progressive Judaism **[www.wupj.org](http://www.wupj.org)**

WRJ: Women of Reform Judaism **[www.rj.org/wrj](http://www.rj.org/wrj)**

NFTB: North American Federation of Temple Brotherhoods / JCS: Jewish Chautauqua Society **[www.nftb.org](http://www.nftb.org)**

HUC-JIR: Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion  
**[www.huc.edu](http://www.huc.edu)**

Leo Baeck School in Haifa

Jewish National Fund (trees in Israel) **[www.jnf.org](http://www.jnf.org)**

Religious Action Center **[www.rac.org](http://www.rac.org)**

Help your Synagogue

Give to any of the tzedakah funds

Sponsor a scholar-in-residence or artist-in-residence

Sponsor any of our educational or musical programming



## WHAT DOES THE PARENT DO?

The process of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* should involve the whole family, starting with the assignment of date. For the student it entails study and meeting with the Cantor and Rabbis in order to learn and be evaluated on the progress that has been made toward meeting and understanding the requirements she or he must meet in order to become a responsible Jew. This process ultimately may require tutoring and rehearsals as the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date approaches.

For the parents it usually means meeting with the Cantor, either in seminars or individually, to discuss strategies for parent involvement and *mitzvah* projects that they can do separately or in conjunction with the child's *mitzvah* project; as well as to discuss the *s'udat mitzvah*/reception plans the family may be contemplating. This may involve conversations on the ways to maintain the sanctity of the occasion or detail handouts on such practical arrangements as the *oneg*, *Kiddush*, flowers, caterer, photography, etc.

The religious part of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony occurs in the Sanctuary or the Chapel. Choosing to focus on Jewish values during your later celebration will continue to sanctify the day and make it special and memorable. Remember, everything we do with our children teaches them something. Decide as a family what you are celebrating and what this moment in your life means. This decision will help guide you through the rest of the planning stages.

Besides *kvelling* (untranslatable!!), the parental involvement in a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* celebration includes:

- Offering the English readings for the candle lighting or *Kiddush* on Friday night;
- Participating in the ceremony of handing down of the *Torah*
- Having the second *aliyah*, this involves reciting the Torah Blessings
- Offering a prayer and some words to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*

Most of all, the parent is responsible for transporting the student to the many *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* tutoring sessions, ensuring that the child has consistent Religious School attendance, supporting and listening to the child throughout the experience. While we caution parents against pressuring students unnecessarily parents should remind their child to review Hebrew once a week at home from 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade and to practice daily (even for a brief amount of time) during the 10 months prior to the ceremony.

## Parent Prayer:

**QUALITY TIME** By Gail Machlis

When Sharon was born, we knew she would become a Bat Mitzvah 13 years later, and so we kept a journal of every day of her life, which we'd like to share with you this morning.



Rabbi Eliezer ben Rabbi Shimon said: A man is responsible for his son until the age of thirteen; thereafter he must say, Blessed are You who has now freed me from the responsibility of the child.

-Midrash Genesis Rabbah 63:10

The tradition of the parent reciting a blessing upon a child's coming of age is quite ancient. The above text indicates that it was ritualized and probably performed on the occasion of the child's first *aliyah*. And although it might seem a bit inappropriate to recite a prayer freeing yourself from responsibility for your child, its underlying principle should be most instructive in preparing your remarks to your son or daughter. Indeed, in many ways the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony marks the individuation of the child: It is the commencement of a young person's acceptance of adult responsibility and the freeing of the parent from that task.

The intent of the parental prayer in our service is to afford the mother and/or father the opportunity to publicly acknowledge—in a sacred setting—the joy and pride they feel at that moment. More important, however, they can also use that time to share their hopes and dreams for their child, particularly in relation to his or her being called to the *Torah*. In other words, it's an opportunity to articulate the meaning of the moment.

### **WHO ELSE CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE SERVICE?**

Honors are an important part of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony. Family and friends who are given honors cease to be observers and become active participants. A variety of opportunities for family and friends exist within the *Shabbat* morning or *Havdalah* evening worship service.

Below is a basic guide to *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* honors. Included in this *B'nai Mitzvah* handbook is an honors work sheet. If you have any questions, please speak to

the Cantor. We will give you complete instructions of choreography and content during the family rehearsal.

CD's are available to parents who would like to chant the Torah Blessings, ask Cantor Levy.

*Speaking Parts:*

### **Aliyot**

An *aliyah* is the act of being called to the *Torah*. There are three parts to an *aliyah*, which can be given to one to three individuals:

- The blessing before the reading of the *Torah*
- The blessing after the reading of the *Torah*

Each *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* student involved has a total of three *aliyot*. The first *aliyah* is often for grandparents. The second *aliyah* is for the parent(s). The third *aliyah* is for the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* student. The blessings can be done in Hebrew or English.

### **To love and to care**

Family members may recite a poem or text. We have some texts that we have found for you.

### **Nonspeaking Parts**

When the ark is opened, the *Torah* is passed down from generation to generation in the family. This usually includes grandparents. Other honors include Ark openers, *Torah* dresser, and Ark closers. We will also try and find roles for other family members.

### ***The Participation of non-Jews***

***We welcome the participation of non-Jewish family and friends. We very much want all of your guests to feel welcome.***

*The involvement of younger siblings and children*

Siblings or other young children should be given age-appropriate honors, such as helping to dress the *Torah* or opening the ark. Siblings may also help in leading *hamotzi*, blessing over the *challah*, at the conclusion of the *kiddush*. Older siblings can be given an *aliyah*.

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### **The Party**

*A few years ago a young boy was asked, "What is the theme of your Bar Mitzvah?" His reply was, "I'm not having a "theme"! I'm having a Bar Mitzvah!"*

The party is a joyous and significant part of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* celebration. It is important to keep the spiritual dimension of this *Simcha* in the party.

Remember, the "theme" of the day is the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* - a commitment to Judaism.

**Receptions at KI:** When you receive your date confirmation, you will also receive a room reception reservation card. Rooms are confirmed on a first come first served basis. No rooms will be available until the administrative office is notified that dates have been confirmed and your card has been returned. You

will also receive information concerning fees, caterers, etc. when your date is confirmed.

**Here are some ideas to enhance the spiritual aspect of the party:**

**Centerpieces:** Use your imagination and think of centerpieces that can be used by others after your party is over.

- Books nicely arranged can be donated afterward to our book drive.
- Baskets of food are a lovely decoration which can be given to our KI food collection.
- Athletic equipment creatively wrapped & decorated can be donated to our schools.

**Hamotzi and Birkat Hamazon:** *Hamotzi* is a blessing thanking God for the opportunity to have a wonderful meal. The *Birkat Hamazon* is the concluding blessing reminding us to be thankful when we are finished eating and feel satisfied. These are especially appropriate at a festival meal.

**Havdalah:** If your party is in the evening you can begin your party with a *Havdalah* ceremony. This ceremony involves using a candle, spices and wine which brings the Sabbath to a conclusion and begins a new week with the hope that we carry with us the sweetness and light of *Shabbat*. It is beautiful and brief. Please ask the Cantor for information on how to lead a *Havdalah* service.

**Themes:** Many *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* parties have themes which are not appropriate to the occasion. If you do choose a theme for your party, think about a Jewish one. Some examples are:

- Great Jewish heroes and personalities.
- Geographical places in Israel.
- Events in Jewish history.
- Jewish expressions, poems and songs.

Even if you do not choose a Jewish theme, consider the values and message that the theme might convey.

**Honors at the party**

You might want to honor those who have influenced the life of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* child. The student may speak of teachers or other family members who have been important in his/her life. This is a good opportunity for the parents to give a longer speech to their child and for other relatives and friends to say a few words.

**HONORS**

**Please complete as much of this form as possible and bring it to the family rehearsal. You do not need to fill every space.**

Your child's Hebrew name:

(Name) Ben/Bat (Father's Hebrew name) v' (Mother's Hebrew name)

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Passing the *Torah* (This includes parents and grandparents)

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<i>Aliyah #</i>	Name of participant & relationship to student
1.	
2.	
	Hebrew name for student
3.	

*P'tichah* (Opening the Ark)

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

*S'geurah* (Closing of the Ark)

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

"To Love and To Care"

(reading): \_\_\_\_\_

*Motzi* and *Kiddush* or *Havdalah* depending on the service (this is often done by siblings)

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Others to include:

*Yahrzeit* names:

Comments:

## Bibliography

*Books to take on your journey*

### Religious Texts:

- **On The Doorposts of Your House** CCAR Press - A prayer book for home use.
- **The Torah** by W. Gunther Plaut.
- **The Haftatarh** by W. Gunther Plaut
- **Tanakh -- The Holy Scriptures.** A copy of a new J.P.S. English translation of the Jewish bible, published by Jewish Publication Society, New York.

### Jewish Background:

- **Jewish Literacy** - the most important things to know about the Jewish religion, its people, and its history by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin.
- **To Be a Jew** - a guide to Jewish observance in contemporary life, by Rabbi Hayim Donin, published by Basic Books, Harper Collins.
- **The Jewish Home - A Guide for Jewish Living**, by Daniel B. Syme, published by URJ

### B'nai Mitzvah planning books:

- **Whose Bar/Bat Mitzvah is This Anyway?**, by Judith Davis, published by St. Martin Press.
- **Putting God on the Guest List: How to Reclaim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Child's Bat/Bar Mitzvah**, by Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin, published by Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock, Vermont
- **Putting God on the Guest List for Kids** - Jewish Lights Publishing
- **The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Plan Book** by Jane Lewit and Ellen Epstein, published by Scarborough House, Maryland

## Terms to Know

### ***Bimah***

The raised platform in the Temple where the service is conducted.

### ***Siddur***

The Jewish prayer book.

### ***Kippah***

Jewish head covering - also known in Yiddish as a *yarmulke*.

### ***Tallit***

The Jewish prayer shawl.

### ***Torah Scroll***

The scroll is made from parchment and contains the five books of Moses.

### ***Parasha***

The *Torah* portion of the week. Also referred to as *Sidrah*.

### ***Aliyah***

This is the honor of "going up" to the *Bimah* and chanting the blessings before and after the *Torah* reading.

### ***Haftarah***

The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* student chants the *Haftarah*. This is a section from the second part of the Jewish Bible known as the *Neviim* - The Prophets. The section chosen for each week is connected to a theme of the *Torah* reading.

### ***T'filah***

The Hebrew word for Jewish prayer

### ***Mitzvah***

A *Mitzvah* is an "obligation" or a responsibility to the commandments written in the *Torah*. There are many types of *Mitzvot* we can perform which add a spiritual and holy dimension to our lives. Plural is *Mitzvot*

### ***Mazel Tov***

Means congratulations or best of luck

### ***Simcha***

A *joyous event*

### ***Yad***

The pointer that is used to read the *Torah*. A *Yad* is also a hand.

### ***Aron Kodesh***

The place where the *Torah* scroll is stored.

### ***Ner Tamid***

The Eternal Light above the *Aaron Kodesh* (the Ark)

Updated 12/1/10 3:18 p.m.