

TBH B'nai Mitzvah Manual
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WHAT IS BAR/BAT MITZVAH?

A “legal age of maturity” is a familiar concept. In the United States, one must be 16 to legally drive a car, 18 to vote and 21 to purchase alcohol. At these various ages a person takes on a new set of rights and responsibilities in his or her community. Within Judaism, we too have a legal age of maturity. When a Jewish child reaches the age of 13 he or she is considered an adult within the Jewish community.*

Upon reaching this age, a Jewish child becomes a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The phrase means “son/daughter of the commandment” which traditionally implies that the person is now both obligated to observe the commandments and rituals of Judaism (responsibilities) and has the ability to fully participate in the life of the community, for example, by being called to the Torah, counting in a *minyan* and leading the community in prayer and others. In a contemporary understanding, the Jewish life and identity of a person over the age of 13 is theirs to make—it is their obligation to pursue Jewish life and Jewish commitment in a way that is meaningful and relevant to them.

The history of bar/bat mitzvah is long and sometimes ambiguous. Bar/bat mitzvah does not appear in the Torah at all. While the Torah makes reference to “legal ages of maturity,” often it is age 20 that is significant. At the age of 20, one becomes able to bear arms, and is counted formally in the census of the population through the donation of a half-shekel.

Later, in the post-biblical rabbinic era, the age of 13 began to develop in importance. Various statements in the Talmud imply that a person who reaches the age of 13 has standing in a variety of situations: a 13-year-old can give testimony in court, the vow of a 13-year-old is legal and a 13-year-old is required to fast on Yom Kippur. Indeed, in *Pirkey Avot*, a collection of ancient rabbinic ethical statements, we read, “At age 13 one becomes subject to the commandments.” On the other hand, various ritual acts which today are reserved for those who are Bar Mitzvah were, in Talmudic times, permitted to those under the age of 13. (The exclusive use of “bar mitzvah” here is significant since “bat mitzvah” did not develop until the 20th century.)

It is during the medieval period that bar mitzvah as we know it today began to develop. The age of 13 became more of a boundary marker, and various ritual acts were reserved for those who had attained this age. And, it is during the medieval period that the bar mitzvah began to be marked ritually. While customs varied from place to place, certain elements were standard—*aliyah* to the Torah, parent’s blessing (traditionally a blessing which released the parents from responsibility for the child’s conduct), *d’rash* (interpretation of Torah) and *se’udah* (feast). Even today while different congregations and different communities will have different traditions

* Traditionally the age of majority is 13 for a boy and 12 for a girl. Here at TBH, because we are guided by principles of gender equality and egalitarianism, we maintain 13 as the age of majority for both boys and girls.

surrounding what a Bar/Bat Mitzvah student must do, these elements are fairly universal.

For most of Jewish history, ritual obligations rested with men only. Today, however, within non-Orthodox communities, men and women share equally in the ritual life of the congregation. The innovation of the bat mitzvah is a recognition of that fact—both boys and girls are to be seen as equals in their development into religious maturity. The first Bat Mitzvah was Judith Kaplan, the daughter of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of the Reconstructionist movement. Kaplan held the ceremony honoring his daughter in 1922 at his synagogue, the Society for the Advancement of Judaism in New York.

What is clear from the development of bar/bat mitzvah practice is that one *becomes* Bar/Bat Mitzvah at the age of 13. The “bar mitzvah” developed to mark this change in status, but the change in status happens automatically. One therefore does not *have* a bar/bat mitzvah so much as one *becomes* a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Jews over the age of 13 are able to participate equally in Jewish communal life whether or not they had a ritual to mark turning 13.

On the other hand, the idea of *having* a bar or bat mitzvah is important. One can view the ceremony as an initiation rite in which one is welcomed into the Jewish people in a new way with a new status. The ceremony marks and affirms one’s Jewish identity, and is recognizes of the significant amount of study and work one has put in through one’s Jewish education. At a crucial time in a person’s life—the entry into the teen-age years—the bar or bat mitzvah ceremony marks this transition and provides a context and content for the future spiritual growth. Like all life-cycle ritual, the bar or bat mitzvah marks a time of transition. It is both an ending and a beginning in a person’s Jewish life.

And the bar/bat mitzvah is more than a celebration for the individual. It is a celebration for a family as a member of that family grows older and enters a new phase in his or her life, taking another step towards independence. It is a celebration for a congregation, which has now a larger pool of people upon which to draw to guide it and lead it. And it is a celebration for the Jewish people, which gain a new bearer of the torch to carry forward the traditions and history of Judaism, becoming the next link in a very long chain.

At Temple Beth Hatfiloh, we recognize the various dimensions of bar/bat mitzvah. In keeping with tradition, we mark this rite of passage and have developed our own *minhag* and expectations. We celebrate with joy each young person who steps up to the *bimah* and takes his or her place as inheritor of Jewish tradition. We look forward to celebrating with you.

BECOMING BAR/BAT MITZVAH AT TBH: OUR REQUIREMENTS

The Temple Beth Hatfiloh community is proud to celebrate the Jewish coming of age of our young people through the ritual of bar/bat mitzvah. Our customs and expectations reflect this pride, and are detailed in this section.

Preliminaries

Financial obligations: The bar/bat mitzvah fee is payable in the fiscal year in which the student begins training. All additional financial obligations to TBH must be met before the date of the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony.

Ivreet enrollment: Students must have a minimum of three years of Ivreet (Hebrew) instruction at TBH before beginning bar/bat mitzvah training. Students are expected to continue in Ivreet at least until they begin bar/bat mitzvah training, to maintain their skills. Ideally, students will remain in Ivreet concurrently while in bar/bat mitzvah training.

Students joining our community more recently will be assessed for Hebrew level. TBH policy states that students will successfully complete at least one year in TBH Beit Sefer and show evidence of equivalent successful involvement in their previous Jewish community. While there is some room for flexibility, students must demonstrate a level of Hebrew proficiency appropriate for undertaking bar/bat mitzvah training.

Students' special needs or special circumstances will be addressed on an individual basis.

For the ceremony

In *Pirkey Avot* 1:2 (The Sayings of the Fathers), we read:

“Shimon the Righteous was one of the last survivors of the Great Assembly. He used to say: ‘Upon three things the world stands: upon the Torah, upon Prayer (*Avodah*), and upon Deeds of Lovingkindness (*G’milut Hasadim*).”

TBH bases its expectations for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's participation on this text.

Torah

Chanting: Students will study with the B'nai Mitzvah Tutor to first learn the system of Torah cantillation (commonly called *trop*). Then, with the help of the B'nai Mitzvah Tutor, the students will apply *trop* to their own Torah verses and learn to chant the verses from the Torah scroll. Students will also be given a downloadable copy of Trope Trainer, a Torah chanting software.

The Torah is divided into *parashayot*, or weekly portions. In observing the triennial system, we further sub-divide the *parashayot* into three sections, reading each section on a rotating three-year basis. A triennial section of a *parashah* can vary from about 30 to 50 verses (sentences).

Torah verses are grouped into *aliyot*. An *aliyah* contains a minimum of three verses. Sometimes an extra verse or two will be added to an *aliyah* to avoid interrupting the narrative in an awkward place. A full Shabbat Torah reading has seven *aliyot*. Students will aim to complete 5 *aliyot*, but the number may be adjusted as the tutoring progresses.

Giving a D'var Torah: Students will study their Torah portion with the Rabbi and identify a central question or issue of interest on which to focus. After a number of sessions of exploration through readings, research and conversation with the Rabbi, students will write a short speech explaining the *parashah*, the Torah portion. This *d'var Torah* (literally, "word of Torah") should include: a brief general summary of the *parashah*, evidence of the reading or research and most importantly, the students' understanding of the relevance of the *parashah* to their own lives.

Study: While they work individually on their Torah reading, the b'nai mitzvah class will meet weekly with the Rabbi during Ivreet time to learn about and discuss different aspects of what it means to be getting older and becoming a Jewish adult. Themes will include *mitzvah* and *mussar* (character). The class will include in class discussions, and an "interview project" in which students will be asked to interview people about what it means to be an adult.

Avodah

Leading prayers: Students will serve as *sh'lihot tzibbur* (emissaries of the community) leading the congregation in prayer. Students will study with the B'nai Mitzvah Tutor to learn the prayers, their meanings and techniques of prayer-leading. For a list of prayers, please see pp. 11-13.

Service attendance: Students are required to attend one TBH Shabbat service each month in the year preceding bar/bat mitzvah to familiarize themselves with the liturgy, melodies and customs practiced at TBH. Saturday morning attendance is

especially encouraged because it provides an opportunity to see the Torah service, which is not included on Friday night. Attending a service led by a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is also particularly helpful.

Prayer composition: As part of the course of study, students will be studying prayer and how it operates within Jewish tradition. Each student will compose an original prayer in English to be read during the bar/bat mitzvah service.

G'milut Hasadim

Mitzvah project: Students will participate in an approved, on-going, community-based *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) project for a minimum of 2 hours per month, at least once a month, in the year preceding bar/bat mitzvah. Students will work with the Rabbi on identifying the project. Students will also be expected to create a visual display of their project for display during the bar/bat mitzvah service.

TBH community project: As a group, the b'nai mitzvah class will develop an act of service or project to benefit the TBH community.

We recognize that students' abilities vary, and these standards are not intended to prohibit necessary adjustments for cause. Students who demonstrate proficiency and interest are encouraged to exceed the standard expectations. Please consult with the Rabbi for additional opportunities in expanded Torah reading and prayer leading.

TODAY I AM AN ADULT: THE CEREMONY

SHABBAT SERVICES

The Structure of the Services

The Shabbat service is the context for the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony, both because of the ritual privileges attained upon reaching the age of bar or bat mitzvah, and because the Shabbat service is the most regular time of community gathering. The ceremony involves leading part of the Shabbat service, reading and interpreting Torah, being called for an *aliyah* to the Torah as well as other presentations and blessings. The bar/bat mitzvah ceremony includes participation by the student in both Friday evening and Saturday morning services.

The Friday night (Erev Shabbat) service begins at 7:30 p.m., and welcomes in Shabbat. The initial ritual act is the lighting of the Shabbat candles. The service is divided into two main parts: *Kabbalat Shabbat* (“Welcoming the Sabbath”), a series of psalms and hymns, and *Ma’ariv*, the evening service. *Ma’ariv* includes the *Bar’chu*, the call to worship; the *Shema*, the central prayer of Jewish tradition proclaiming the Oneness of God and the interconnectedness of all life; and the *Amidah*, an opportunity for silent prayer. General themes of the prayer service include reflecting on Creation (nature), Revelation (the covenant with God, as defined through Torah) and Redemption. The service includes a *d’var Torah*, a sermon or discussion based on the weekly Torah reading or other themes, and is followed by an *oneg* (literally, “delight”), a reception when the congregation recites *kiddush*, the blessing over wine, and *HaMotzi*, the blessing over bread. During this service, the Bar or Bat Mitzvah will lead the congregation in prayer.

The Saturday morning service is the focal point of the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony. The service begins promptly at 10:00 a.m. and runs approximately 2 1/2 hours. The Shabbat morning service begins with *Birhot HaShahar* (Morning Blessings), a litany of blessings for body and soul that acknowledge the sanctity of our daily lives. This is followed by *P’sukei D’zimrah* (Verses of Song), a series of psalms and hymns celebrating Shabbat. Following that is *Shaharit*, the morning prayer service, which follows the same structure and themes as *Ma’ariv*.

The central point of the service is the reading of the Torah. First, the Torah is removed from the ark, paraded around the sanctuary and placed on the reading table. We put aside the *siddur* and take up a *humash*, a book containing the text of the Torah in Hebrew and English. A *parashah* of the Torah text is then changed in sections using *trop*, and individuals are honored with the chance to recite blessings over the reading.

While the Bar/Bat Mitzvah leads the congregation in prayer during the morning service as well, it is during the Torah service that he/she will be recognized in his/her new status. The Torah is symbolically passed down to him/her at the opening of the Torah service. He/She will then parade the Torah around the

congregation. Upon returning to the *bimah*, he/she will then chant from the Torah, and then be “called up” for an *aliyah*, a privilege reserved only for Jewish adults. The Torah is then raised and dressed in its garments, and the student will then deliver his *d’var Torah*.

Final aspects of the ceremony involve presentations and blessings. Following the *d’var Torah*, the President (or other representative) of the congregation will make a presentation. Following that, the parent(s) of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah will have an opportunity to address him/her. They remain on the *bimah* during the Rabbi’s charge, and will be asked to participate by placing their hands on their child’s shoulders during the Rabbi’s blessing. The Rabbi then invites the congregation to join in reciting the *Shehecheyanu* blessing—the blessing for reaching special and sacred events—and shower the Bar/Bat Mitzvah with candy as a symbol of sweetness.

The Torah is then placed back in the ark, and the service concludes with some final blessings, including the Mourner’s *Kaddish*, a prayer recited in memory of loved ones.

Immediately following the service, *kiddush* and *motzi*, the blessing over the wine and the challah, is recited in the sanctuary and introduces the celebratory meal.

Outline of the service

Below is the basic outline of the Friday evening and Saturday morning service. An asterisk (*) indicates the prayers led by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Erev Shabbat (Friday night)

Page	Prayer
	Opening niggun
7	<i>Yedid Nefesh</i>
5	Candlelighting
13	<i>Shalom Aleychem</i>
21-39	Kabbalat Shabbat psalms (selections)
41-47	<i>Lecha Dodi</i>
49	Psalm 92
51	<i>Tzadik Katamar</i>
55	<i>Hatzi Kaddish</i>
57	<i>Barechu*</i>
58	<i>Asher Bidvaro</i> (English)
61	<i>Ahavat Olam</i> "We are loved..."
65	<i>Shema</i> and <i>Ve'ahavta*</i>
79	<i>Mi Chamocha*</i>
81	<i>Ufros Aleynu</i>
85	<i>Veshamru</i>
91	<i>Amidah</i> : Opening <i>Kavanah</i> and silent*
107	<i>Oseh Shalom</i>
	<i>Mi Shebeyrach</i>
	<i>D'var Torah</i>
121-123	<i>Aleynu</i> and <i>V'anahnu*</i>
125	<i>Kakativ...*</i>
128	Mourner's Kaddish
	Announcements
133	<i>Adon Olam*</i>
119	Kiddush for Shabbat* (downstairs at oneg)

Shaharit shel Shabbat (Saturday morning)

Page	Prayer
141	<i>Mah Tovu</i>
	Presentation of the Tallit
153-161	<i>Birhot Hashahar</i>
162	Prayer for Body
165	<i>Elohai Neshama</i>
177-181	<i>Baruch She'amar</i>
183-231	Psalms (selections)
235	<i>Nishmat</i>
237	<i>Ilu Finu</i>
241	<i>Shochan Ad</i>

243	<i>Yishtabach</i>
245	<i>Hatzi Kaddish</i>
247	<i>Barechu*</i>
247	<i>Yotzer Or*</i>
248	“Let all beings acknowledge...”
269	<i>Or Hadash</i>
273	<i>Ahavah Rabbah</i>
277-285	<i>Shema*</i>
288	“True it is...”
291	<i>Mi Chamocha*</i>
295-305	Amidah: <i>Avot v’Imot, Gevurah*</i>
306-323	Silent Amidah
321	<i>Sim Shalom</i>
383	Torah Service— <i>Ein Kamocha*</i>
	Ark Opened
385	<i>Vayehi Binsoa*</i>
	Torah Removed, Passing of the Torah, Ark Closed
393	<i>Shema, Echad, Gadlu, * Lecha Adonai</i>
	Torah Procession
	Aliyah 1
	Aliyah 2
	Aliyah 3
	Aliyah 4
	Aliyah 5—Beit Sefer Teachers
	Aliyah 6—Parent(s)
	<i>Mi Sheberach</i>
399	Aliyah 7—Bar or Bat Mitzvah*
407	Raising of the Torah
	D’var Torah*
	President Presentation
	Parent(s) Speech
	Rabbi’s Charge and Blessing
	<i>Shehecheyanu</i>
422	Prayer for Peace
433	<i>Yehallelu</i>
	Ark Opened
441	<i>Etz Chayyim*</i>
	Ark Closed
445-449	<i>Aleynu... Va’anahnu...Kakativ...*</i>
451	Mourner’s Kaddish
459	<i>Adon Olam</i> (with Beit Sefer classmates)*
464	Kiddush (<i>Veshamru</i>) and HaMotzi*

Choir participation

The TBH choir sings during Friday night services on the first Friday of every month, except during the summer. The choir is not available to sing at bar/ bat mitzvah ceremonies on request.

Customizing the service

Becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is not solely an individual event, but a cause for communal celebration as one becomes an adult in the context of the Jewish community. Therefore, the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony maintains standard elements that are the same for all students at TBH. However, we recognize that each student is an individual and families are different, and some variations are possible—primarily through adding readings or alternative prayers. The Rabbi is available to discuss options and opportunities.

HONORS AND *MINHAGIM*

In addition to celebrating the student, the bar/bat mitzvah service is also an opportunity to honor family members and friends who play an important role in the student's life. This takes the form of allowing the family the opportunity to assign the usual Shabbat morning service honors, listed below.

Including Non-Jews in the Ceremony: TBH recognizes the important role non-Jewish parents, family members and friends play in supporting the Bar or Bat Mitzvah's journey and Jewish identity development. We encourage, therefore, the participation of non-Jewish family members in the service and ceremony. TBH policy, based in Jewish tradition and understandings of Jewish peoplehood and community, reserves certain synagogue functions and honors for Jews only. These are marked by an asterisk (*) in the list of honors. Outside of these specific honors, however, there are numerous opportunities to participate in the service.

List of honors:

***Erev Shabbat Candle lighting:** Shabbat candles are lit and the blessing is recited during the Friday night service. Though traditionally performed by women, any adult may light the candles.

***Opening and Closing the Ark:** There are two instances of ark opening/closing—before the Torah reading and after the Torah reading. The people who open the ark remain to close it each time. The two instances of ark opening/closing are treated as two separate honors. This honor can be performed by children or adults.

***4 *Aliyot*:** During the Torah reading service, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah will read his/her portion in seven sections. For each section, a person, or group, is honored with an *aliyah*, being “called up” to the Torah to recite a blessing before and after the reading. Four of those seven are to be given out by the

Bar/Bat Mitzvah and family. The last *aliyah* is reserved for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the sixth for the parent(s) and the fifth for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's Beit Sefer teachers. Those honored with an *aliyah* must be above the age of 13. To the best of your ability, please provide the full Hebrew name of the one to be honored. (The full Hebrew name includes the person's name and his/her parents' names).

Torah translation: Traditionally, the Torah was read both in Hebrew and the vernacular in the synagogue. Though the printed *humash* (book of Torah readings) obviated the need for a spoken translation, a spoken translation adds meaning and makes the service more accessible. This is also a meaningful way to honor those family members and friends who can not be called for an *aliyah*. Reading the translation can be performed by one person or up to seven people. The translator will be called up when the *oleh/olah* is called up.

***Raising the Torah and Dressing the Torah (*Hagbah, Glilah*):** After the Torah is read, the scroll is lifted up for all to see, then dressed in its cover and crowns. These are two different honors assigned to two different people. The person assigned to raise the Torah should be physically able to lift the scroll by holding it upright by the handles.

English readings: There are numerous opportunities to embellish the service with English readings. Our prayerbook, *Kol Haneshamah*, has many meaningful readings that can be added to the service. The Rabbi will place these readings in the service where appropriate. Please consult with the Rabbi if you wish to use readings other than those in the siddur.

Special *minhagim* (customs):

In addition to these standard synagogue honors, we at TBH also observe several customs that make the ceremony more meaningful.

Oneg: TBH hosts a weekly *oneg* (reception, lit. "delight") after the Friday night service. On the Friday night of the bar or bat mitzvah ceremony, it is customary for the bar or bat mitzvah family to be responsible for the oneg. This can be done by the family itself or by other relatives or friends. Another possibility is for families within a b'nai mitzvah cohort to provide the oneg for each other.

Kiddush: Similarly, after Saturday morning services it is customary to have some food and drink. While some families may choose to hold their receptions immediately following the service while some later, all families will be asked to provide a light Kiddush for all to enjoy after the service, whether they are continuing on to the reception or not. This could range from cookies and cake to a larger luncheon. The blessings over the wine and challah will take place in the sanctuary at the end of services. (If the primary reception is

at TBH immediately following the service, then it is expected that all who are in attendance may attend.)

Presentation of the Tallit: In Jewish tradition, the *tallit* (prayer shawl) is worn by Jewish adults. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will wear a *tallit* for the first time at the bar/bat mitzvah service, and the family may wish to ceremonially present the *tallit* and say a few words.

***Passing the Torah:** As the sacred text of the Jewish people, the Torah is handed down from generation to generation. We “enact” this handing down by taking the Torah out of the Ark and passing it to a member of the oldest generation present, then down the family tree to parent(s), then to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. (Each generation may be represented by more than one person.)

Parent Speech: The parent(s) of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah are invited to speak from the *bimah* after he/she has delivered his/her *d’var Torah*. This is an opportunity for the parent(s) to share some words with your child. The form of the parent speech and what is said varies from family to family. Some parents may want to share their personal thoughts and feelings at that moment. Some may want to offer some words of advice at this important occasion. Whatever form the speech takes, what is important is that it is an authentic reflection of parent and child. Please feel free to ask the Rabbi for guidance or ideas.

Candy: In recognition of the sweetness of the event and the joy felt at a bar/bat mitzvah ceremony, it is customary at TBH to gently shower the Bar/Bat Mitzvah with candy after the community recitation of the *Shehecheyanu* blessing. In order to maintain a joyful, yet safe, environment for the candy tossing, the following guidelines apply:

- Only certain candies are allowed, provided by the congregation.
- A limited amount will be supplied.
- Congregants will be instructed to “gently toss” the candy
- Only children under 10 will be permitted to collect the candy
- This *minhag* is optional, and families may choose not to participate.

If you would like to include this *minhag*, please designate people ahead of time to hand out the candy (this is a good opportunity to include young children). The Rabbi will indicate during the service when to distribute the candy, usually between the parent’s presentation and Rabbi’s charge.

Memorials: The memory of close family members and friends no longer with us can become more acute during times of celebration such as this. It is the custom at TBH to announce the names of those the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and his/her family are remembering when we announce the weekly *yahrzeit* list. Please indicate to the Rabbi whom you wish to be included.

Other components

Other considerations regarding the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony:

Flowers: Flowers on the *bimah* add a distinctive touch to the event. Families may wish to provide flowers for the bar/bat mitzvah service. There is room for two large displays.

Attire: Because Shabbat is a holy time and the sanctuary a sacred space, we ask that attire be respectful and appropriate. Also, because the Bar/Bat Mitzvah will be handling and carrying the Torah scroll around the sanctuary, please be sure that he/she wears appropriate shoes.

Photography and video: Photographic cameras—including camera phones—are not permitted in the sanctuary during Shabbat services. Video cameras may be used at such services after consultation with the Rabbi if the equipment is set up prior to the service, is stationary and is located behind the rearmost seats in the sanctuary so as to be minimally obtrusive. A family may take photographs in the sanctuary before or after services—if before, please be finished a half-hour before the service begins (9:30 a.m.).

Internet transmission: On certain occasions, because of illness or disability, a family member may not be able to travel to the bar or bat mitzvah ceremony. In such cases, accommodation can be made to transmit the service via Skype or similar means. Please consult with the Rabbi.

Kippot: As a unique keepsake, one may order personalized *kippot* with a stamp of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's name and date on the inside.

Programs: The family may wish to provide a program to welcome guests to the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony. Programs typically include a description of the service and the synagogue. This text will be provided to you. One may also include a brief summary of the Torah portion, the list of honors, an announcement of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's *mitzvah* project, personal words, etc. Sample programs are included in the appendix. Please give the Rabbi a copy for review prior to making copies.

CELEBRATION!: *SE'UDAT MITZVAH*, THE *MITZVAH* MEAL

During the ceremony, the Torah scroll is handed down through the generations. As we move from the sanctuary to the reception, we are still celebrating the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's acceptance of the mantle of Jewish tradition. Therefore it is appropriate to consider Jewish tradition when planning various aspects of the *se'udat mitzvah*, the meal that marks the performance of a *mitzvah*.

Invitations

A bar/bat mitzvah ceremony is a TBH communal celebration as well as an important event for the extended family. Because worship services are open to everyone, we don't "invite" people to attend the service. If you plan an off-site *se'udat mitzvah*, you may invite whomever you desire. As a means of building community, it is expected that you invite the Beit Sefer classmates of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. If you plan an on-site *se'udat mitzvah* immediately after the service, it is expected you will include everyone who attends the service in the further celebration.

Blessings

We begin the meal with *Kiddush*, the blessing over the wine or juice, and *HaMotzi*, the blessing over the challah. These blessings will be recited together in the TBH immediately following the service, whether or not you are holding your *se'udat mitzvah* at TBH.

Celebration and Fun!

The bar/bat mitzvah celebration should be festive. The rite of passage and significant, and the opportunity to bring together a large number of family and friends is in and of itself a reason for a party! A wide variety of *se'udot mitzvah* settings have been chosen: a simple light meal for everyone in the social hall, a potluck lunch, a picnic at a lake, a catered buffet or sit-down lunch at a restaurant or banquet facility, a dinner reception in a hall or club.

Many families have music at the *se'udat mitzvah*: recorded music played by the family or a DJ, or live music. Klezmer, Israeli, and other Jewish music add to the Jewish celebration. There are a number of simple Israeli and Ashkenazic folk dances which guests can quickly learn. One custom is to raise the Bar/Bat Mitzvah in a chair while the guests dance around him/her.

Moderation

Shortly after the custom of *se'udat mitzvah* arose in the Middle Ages, local Jewish communities raised concerns that such feasts might become wasteful and ostentatious displays of wealth. TBH encourages celebrations which balance Jewish

values of moderation with the desire to celebrate this unique event in the life of a child and family.

Tzedakah

How appropriate to celebrate one *mitzvah* by doing another *mitzvah*! There are many ways to incorporate *tzedakah* into the *se'udat mitzvah*:

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah may choose to ask guests to make a **donation in lieu of gifts** and specify an organization.

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, is an organization which raises money from the Jewish community to prevent and alleviate hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds. TBH is a MAZON partner congregation, which means that parents are expected to donate 3% of the costs of the bar/bat mitzvah celebration; the Bar/Bat mitzvah is expected to donate 3% of the cash gifts he/she receives to MAZON.

While table centerpieces are not necessary, some families have made **centerpieces using collected canned food**. They wrapped the cans in see-through colored plastic wrap and then attached balloons. After the *se'udat mitzvah*, the canned food was donated to the food bank.

Food left over from the reception may be donated to Safeplace, the Salvation Army, or other organizations. If you are considering this, please call ahead to make arrangements. In some cases, the organization may be able to pick up the food.

Jewish Food Traditions

If you choose to hold your *se'udat mitzvah* in the TBH social hall, you will need to follow our congregational food policy. If you choose to hold your *se'udat mitzvah* off-site, we encourage you to honor Jewish tradition in choosing your menu. We encourage you to avoid serving pork or shellfish and to avoid dishes which mix meat and milk products.

Use of the TBH Social Hall

The TBH kitchen and Social Hall are available for rental by TBH members for their celebrations. If you plan to hold your primary celebration immediately following the service, there is no fee for use with the understanding that it is an extension of the service and everyone who attends the service is welcome to attend. (However, the bar or bat mitzvah family will still be responsible for clean up.) If you plan to hold your primary celebration in the TBH Social Hall at a different time, there is a fee for use. Please contact Carla in the TBH Office for rental information and building use guidelines.

HOW DO I GET THERE?: STAGES IN PREPARATION

The bar/bat mitzvah generally takes place during the 7th grade year. Depending on the timing of the ceremony, preparation may begin during the 6th grade. Preparation for bar/bat mitzvah involves group meetings and individual study and practice.

As bar/bat mitzvah preparation will add to students' workload, families must be mindful of the need to balance time allotted to other extra curricular activities and to preparing for this once-in-a-lifetime event. Preparing for bar or bat mitzvah is a big commitment and requires persistence and practice, and results in a tremendous sense of achievement and accomplishment.

Orientation

About one year before the ceremony, parents and students will meet with the Rabbi and the B'nai Mitzvah Tutor to discuss and clarify expectations of the bar/bat mitzvah preparation process. Students and parents will sign contracts agreeing to the terms of the preparation process.

Student's initial meeting with Rabbi

Students will meet with the Rabbi shortly after orientation to explore their Torah portion's themes. Then, as they start learning to chant their Torah verses, they will already have a general understanding of the text.

Family and parent meetings with Rabbi

Students and their parents will meet with the Rabbi periodically during the year to discuss the significance of the bar/bat mitzvah process, review honors, etc.

Trop class and tutoring

Students will study with the B'nai Mitzvah Tutor to first learn the system of *trop*. Then, during individual sessions with the B'nai Mitzvah Tutor, the students will apply *trop* to their own Torah verses, and learn to chant the verses from the Torah scroll. *Trop* classes will begin roughly one year before the ceremony, give or take a few months. The *trop* classes meet once per week for 45 minutes, for ten. Then individual lessons begin and continue up to the date of the ceremony.

The B'nai Mitzvah class will meet on Wednesdays during the 7th grade year, and is an integral part of the spiritual and emotional preparation of becoming bar/bat mitzvah.

Mitzvah project (ongoing)

Students are expected to identify and begin their *mitzvah* project when they begin *trop* training. The intention of the mitzvah project is to work towards alleviating suffering of humanity, the earth or other living things. Students are encouraged to work in a direct service capacity if possible. Students have volunteered at the Animal Shelter, the Food Bank, Books for Prisoners, convalescent and senior nursing homes, the Earth Service Corps. Students have organized TBH's participation in the CROP Walk. Students have tutored in reading and math in their former elementary schools. Many projects are possible. The Youth Education Director will guide the Mitzvah Project participation.

Service attendance (ongoing)

Students are required to attend one TBH Shabbat service each month in the year preceding their bar/bat mitzvah ceremony to familiarize themselves with the liturgy, melodies, and customs practiced at TBH. Saturday morning attendance is especially encouraged because it provides an opportunity to see the Torah service, which is not included on Friday night. Attending a service led by other bar/bat mitzvah students is also particularly helpful. The Rabbi takes attendance!

D'var Torah preparation

Preparation for the *d'var Torah* will run concurrently with the preparation of the Torah reading beginning about two months before the bar or bat mitzvah ceremony. Students will work individually with the Rabbi to develop their *divrei Torah*.

Biography for Short Schrift

We print a short biography of upcoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah, to aid the community in rejoicing at his/her coming of age. Students are asked to fill out a form indicating their interests, talents, family members, etc.

Rehearsal

Bar/bat mitzvah rehearsals are held soon before the ceremony, usually on the preceding Thursday afternoon. The students will have the opportunity to practice all the prayers they will be leading on Friday evening and Saturday morning, to chant from the Torah, to present their *d'var Torah* and to familiarize themselves with the flow and order of the services. In addition, family members or friends who will be given honors or readings can also use this opportunity to practice their part.

Ceremony and Celebration

YOU MADE IT!!! MAZEL TOV!!!

