

Introduction

Bar/Bat Mitzvah is neither the "goal" nor the "end" of a Jewish education. It is a milestone in the life of a Jewish young person, marking the traditional age at which the transition from childhood to Jewish adulthood with all its attendant spiritual responsibilities takes place. By this age, it is assumed, children have become adequately familiar with the Jewish pattern of Mitzvot and ethical behavior. It is also assumed that they have acquired sufficient knowledge about Judaism to enable them to accept and fulfill the religious and spiritual responsibilities of an adult member of the Jewish people.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah is not the focus of our educational program, and our students are expected and encouraged to continue their formal Jewish studies on a more advanced level in our Hebrew High School. Nevertheless, much of what is taught in the elementary Religious School program does help prepare the student for his/her entrance into adult Jewish life, equipping him/her to participate fully in those activities and observances that characterize a positive, meaningful Jewish existence. In this sense, the Religious School program prepares the student not merely for the synagogue ceremony marking the attainment of the age of Jewish responsibility, but more significantly, for its aftermath: a life as an informed, knowledgeable, committed and responsible Jew.

This package has been prepared to assist you in the preparation of your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Within this package you will find the following:

1. Bar/Bat Mitzvah Standards
2. Procedures for Bar/Bat Mitzvah
3. A Guide For Bimah Etiquette
4. Friday Night Service Format
5. Saturday Morning Service Format
6. Aliyah List
7. Torah Blessings

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Standards (Section 1)

1. Minimum Age:

The minimum age for Bar/Bat Mitzvah is 13, according to the Jewish calendar.

2. Status:

All candidates for Bar/Bat Mitzvah must be halakhically Jewish, or must become so prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. No formal Bar/Bat Mitzvah training will commence until there is an agreement between the Rabbi and the family regarding the meeting of this standard.

3. Academic Standards:

Candidates for Bar/Bat Mitzvah must be enrolled in an acceptable program of Jewish studies for a minimum of 4 years prior to the beginning of Bar/Bat Mitzvah training. Occasionally a Bar/Bat Mitzvah student may begin this formal training during the Vav year of religious school, however, no ceremony may take place before the completion of the Vav year of religious school. A member of the religious school staff will ascertain the reading proficiency of each student prior to the beginning of formal Bar/Bat Mitzvah training. If their academic abilities are judged to be below standards, remediation may be necessary or the scheduling of the ceremony may have to be postponed. This may mean delaying the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date beyond the thirteenth year. The cost of any private tutoring will be the responsibility of the family.

It is fully expected that each Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate will complete the Zayin year of religious school regardless of the actual date of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Students who transfer into our school from other afternoon schools or who are enrolled in Jewish day schools, must be evaluated by a member of the religious school staff prior to the beginning of individual Bar/Bat Mitzvah formal training.

4. Preparation Standards:

Candidates for Bar/Bat Mitzvah are required to attend a minimum of one Friday night and one Shabbat morning service per month commencing with the setting of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. One year prior to the ceremony, students are required to attend a minimum of two Friday night services and two Shabbat morning services per month. Furthermore, at least one parent should accompany the student to each service. Extenuating circumstances to this standard must be pre-approved by the Rabbi. It is anticipated that regular attendance at services will enable both the student and the parent(s) to become more familiar with and thus more comfortable with the services in which they will participate.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Standards (Section 1) (cont'd.)

4. Preparation Standards (cont'd.):

There are many Shabbatot throughout the year on which there are no scheduled events, and on such occasions, the candidate may have an opportunity to participate in services. Such participation in services will enhance the student's ability to achieve a high level of proficiency regarding the prayers, order of the service, etc.

Habitual non-attendance at services or lessons, less than satisfactory participation in religious school classes, coming to individual lessons unprepared may result in the suspension of lessons or the postponement or cancellation of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. It should be noted that if extra tutoring or lessons are required, parents will be responsible for the costs.

5. Performance Expectations

All Bar/Bat Mitzvah students are expected to participate in both Friday evening and Shabbat morning services. Each student will be provided with a tape of the Friday night and Shabbat morning service to be used as a means of practicing the services during the week. The tape will be distributed approximately six months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Each student is encouraged to lead as much of each service as possible.

Two months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the family should contact the gabbai in order to set up time to go over both services to determine the candidate's level of proficiency. This session date should be three to four weeks prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah thus allowing adequate time for the student to strengthen areas requiring attention. Additionally, this meeting will serve as an appropriate time to go over the aliyah list for family honors, and to generally make certain everything, relative to the services, is in order.

Family/friend honors include: (these honors are available for those who are halakhically Jewish)

- a. Shabbat candle lighting (brokha) (more than one person can participate)
- b. Open Ark doors on Friday evening (2 persons)
- c. Close Ark doors on Friday evening (2 persons)
- d. Open Ark doors on Saturday morning (2 persons)
- e. Open and close Ark curtain for Torah Service (up to 2 persons)
- f. Up to five aliyot (blessings over the Torah), this is in addition to the Maftir (Bar/Bat Mitzvah).
It is our policy to allow a grandmother and grandfather to share an aliyah.
It is also our policy to allow a mother and father to share an aliyah.
- g. Hagbah (lift the Torah) (1 person)
- h. Gelilah (Wrap the Torah) (1 person)
- i. Open and close Ark curtain after Torah Service (up to 2 persons)
- j. Close Ark doors on Saturday morning (2 persons)

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Standards (Section 1) (cont'd.)

Please note, that in section f. grandfathers, fathers, sons, and daughters may not follow one another, nor may grandmothers, mothers, sons, and daughters follow one another.

Ushers during services will be provided by the synagogue.

6. Time Line

-18-24 months	-12 months	-6 months	-2 months	-3 to 4 weeks
Date picked 18-24 months prior to 13 th birthday	Minimum of 2 Friday and 2 Saturday services per month	Individual lessons begin and student receives tape of services	Family schedules meeting with gabbai Approval of (optional) B/B booklet by the Ritual Committee	Family and student meets with gabbai
Minimum of 1 Friday and 1 Saturday service per month	Family receives call from B/B Mitzvah Coordinator			

7. Fee Structure

The fee for Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation is \$250. This covers the cost of trope lessons, service tapes, and any other related expenses. This fee is separate from dues, tuition, and donation given to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund.

8. Bar/Bat Mitzvah Coordinator

Description of duties:

Available to answer questions regarding social aspects of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process. It is the responsibility of the coordinator to contact the B/B Mitzvah family 12 months prior to the event. All matters concerning Friday night services, Saturday morning services, or ritual requirements should be directed to the Rabbi or Ritual Committee chair.

Scope:

The coordinator will be knowledgeable in all aspects of the operation of the synagogue pertaining to Bar/Bat Mitzvah. This includes, but is not limited to, questions concerning kashrut, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah time line, how to arrange for time for the use of the kitchen facilities, area function accommodations, event planning, etc.

Procedure for Bar/Bat Mitzvah (Section 2)

1. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah and family are to be at the Synagogue no later than fifteen minutes prior to the scheduled beginning of services. Generally, services begin at 8:00 PM on Friday night evenings, except the first Friday evening of the month when our family service is held at 7:00 PM. Shabbat morning services begin at 9:00 AM.
2. Parents, siblings, and grandparents will usually be seated in the first row(s) of the Sanctuary.
3. Please be certain that the Aliyah list is given to the Rabbi or the Gabbai two week prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah as no writing is permitted on Shabbat.
4. When preparing your list of Aliyot and honors, please keep in mind that only members of the Jewish faith may participate in the Torah service. It is very helpful to send a copy of "Guide for Bimah Etiquette" to those who will be participating so that they will be adequately prepared. Those with close family members who are not Jewish may discuss with the Rabbi how they might participate in some aspect of the service.
5. Except for the parents and grandparents of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, only one individual will be called to the Torah for each Aliyah.
6. All males (non-Jewish guests included) must wear a kippah (yarmuka) while in the Synagogue. All Jewish males over the age of 13 should also wear Tallit (prayer Shawl) in the Sanctuary during Shabbat morning services. Everyone who is called to the Bimah must wear a head covering.
7. Please discourage guests from bringing gifts to the Synagogue as nothing may be taken out of the Synagogue until after Shabbat has ended.
8. Reminder: No photography, videography, tape recording, is permitted on Shabbat (Friday night as well as Saturday morning) nor is smoking permitted anywhere in the building or on the grounds. Synagogue telephones can only be used on Shabbat in the case of an emergency. Cell phones are not permitted to be used anywhere in the building or on the grounds during Shabbat.
9. At the conclusion of Saturday morning services, parent(s), sibling(s), grandparent(s), will follow the procession of those leaving the Bimah and proceed directly to the entrance of the Sanctuary for the blessing over the wine and challah. Please do not stop to greet relatives and friends at this time. There will be ample opportunity to do so at the Kiddush, after the blessings have been recited.
10. The Synagogue will provide ushers during services.

A Guide For Bimah Etiquette (Section 3)

As you know, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family is permitted to select Jewish family members, friends, or congregants to participate in the service. Each participant is given an Aliyah (witness to the reading of the Torah) or other honor, as described below. (SEE SECTION 1 IN THIS PACKAGE FOR THE NUMBER OF ALIYOT AND OTHER HONORS THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO CHOOSE). This guide is intended to familiarize you and the people who are awarded honors with the customs we follow at Temple Beth Abraham. It will help everyone feel more comfortable in approaching the Bimah. Please feel free to direct any unanswered questions to members of the Ritual Committee or the Rabbi.

1. HONORS

- A. ALIYAH (plural is ALIYOT) - The honor of being called as a witness to the reading of the Torah. It literally means "going up." The Rabbi or the Reader will point to the portion that is being read. The person with the Aliyah takes the fringes of his or her tallit, or a prayer book, and touches the portion that is being read and then kisses it. This person will chant in Hebrew the blessing before the Torah is read, move slightly to the side, and hold the Torah open for the reader. At the conclusion of the Torah reading, the Rabbi or the reader will point to the section that was read and the person with the Aliyah will take the fringes of his or her tallit, or a prayer book, and touch the portion that is being read, kiss it, and then chant the blessing after the reading. At the conclusion of the blessing, move to the side of the Torah reading table (right side as one faces the Congregation). Remain there until the next person has completed his or her Aliyah.
- B. HAGBAH - Lifting the Torah off of the reading table . The person lifting the Torah should be able to raise the Torah above his or her head. Once the Torah is lifted, the person will walk to the side of the Bimah, and sit down, while still holding the Torah. You will be assisted by the person with the honor of Gelilah (see below).
- C. GELILAH - "Dressing" the Torah. This person will replace the sash which binds the Torah, place the covering over the Torah, and hang the breastplate and Yad (pointer) over the front of the Torah. The person honored with Gelilah will be handed the crown(s) to be placed on the top of the Torah.
- D. OPENING OR CLOSING THE ARK DOORS - It is suggested that two people be assigned to open the Ark Doors and two people assigned to close them. Each Ark Door is on its own set of tracks. The person opening the left Ark Door should slowly slide the door to the left until it stops, while the person opening the right Ark Door should slowly slide the door to the right. The person closing the left Ark Door should slide the door slowly toward the middle of the Ark until it stops, and the person closing the right Ark Door should slowly slide the door toward the middle of the Ark until it stops.
- E. OPENING OR CLOSING THE ARK CURTAINS - The drawstring is located on the left side of the Ark.

2. APPROACHING THE BIMAH

When you are called for any of the HONORS listed in Section 1A through E, you approach the Bimah on the right side of the reader's table (as you are facing the Bimah). Before leaving the Bimah, it is customary to shake hands with each person on the Bimah. If you are so inclined, it is perfectly fine to give the Bar/Bat Mitzvah a kiss.

After you have shaken hands with everyone on the Bimah, you will leave the Bimah from the left side (the opposite side from where you approached the Bimah). It is customary to take the "long way" back to your seat, symbolizing a reluctance to leave the Torah. It is customary to shake hands with anyone who extends a hand, as they wish to congratulate you on your honor. You may hear the greeting "yasher koach" which means, "may your strength increase." The traditional response is "baruch t'hiyeh" which means "may it be for a blessing." Other appropriate responses are thank you or Shabbat Shalom.

3. HEBREW NAMES

If you are called to the Bimah for an aliyah, hagbah, or gelilah, you will be called by your Hebrew name, followed by the title of the honor you are receiving, which will also be in Hebrew. If you are opening or closing the Ark or the Ark curtains, you will be notified to approach the Bimah at the appropriate time.

4. RITUAL CLOTHING

A. Head coverings must be worn by anyone coming on to the Bimah.

B. All Jewish males over the age of 13 must wear a tallit.

5. HELPFUL HINTS

A. If you have an aliyah, practice the blessings that you will be reciting. There is also a plastic card on the reading table which has the blessings in Hebrew and in transliteration.

B. Follow the directions of the Gabbaim. He or she will guide you to a chair, and will be helpful in reminding you what to do should you forget.

C. Please dress in a manner suitable to the solemnity of Shabbat.

D. Remember that this is an honor, and that you have been asked to specially help in the service and celebration. The community is sharing the joy of celebration, and while it may be somewhat intimidating to approach the Bimah, you have been honored in being asked to do so.

Enjoy!