



Temple Beth Shalom

Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Parent Handbook

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Temple Beth Shalom
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TIMELINE

Dates are relative to the *Shabbat* service when your child will be called to the *Torah* as a *bar/bat mitzvah*.

- Summer or Fall of 5th grade – date notification
- October-December of 5th grade – confirm date, receive bill for *bar/bat mitzvah* preparation fee, make deposit to hold date
- 12-18 months before – make reservation for renting the social hall if you plan to hold your party at the temple
- 9-12 months before– attend small group meeting of parents with the rabbi, receive materials, name of tutor, and information about renting the facility
- 7 months before – call the tutor to set up appointments
- 6 months before –check to confirm that you are in good standing with your temple financial obligations
- 6 months before – 1st tutoring session
- 3 months before – pay the balance of the *bar/bat mitzvah* preparation fee
- 2-6 months before–contact the temple office to discuss the *kiddush* after the *bar/bat mitzvah* service
- 2-5 months before –attend family meeting with the rabbi to discuss *d'var Torah* and service participants
- 1-3 months before – usher with your child at a Friday night *Shabbat* service and attend the service
- at the *bar/bat mitzvah* service immediately before your child's – usher with your child and attend the service
- during the week before – rehearse with the rabbi
- on the evening before – at the *Shabbat* service light the candles and lead the blessings over the candles, wine and *challah*

INTRODUCTION

Jewish milestones provide a meaningful way of marking time. They offer a special avenue for learning and grant us a unique opportunity to bring family and friends together in celebration. Temple Beth Shalom looks forward to guiding you through this special time in the life of your family. Our goal is to have you look back on the process with a deep sense of pride and accomplishment. The entire Temple Beth Shalom family wishes you much joy as you work towards this significant occasion.

Your son/daughter will be called to the *Torah* as a *bar/bat mitzvah* during a *Shabbat* morning or *kabbalat Shabbat* service. We look forward to welcoming his or her participation as a responsible member of the congregation.

CEREMONY DATE ASSIGNMENTS

The *bar/bat mitzvah* ceremony will be scheduled to occur on the *Shabbat* closest to the student's 13th birthday. Any day after the birthday is preferable, as long as it is available. The *bar/bat mitzvah* may be celebrated up to 30 days before the 13th birthday.

An exception to this policy may occur when the student will celebrate during the temple's biennial Israel trip. In this case, the *bar/bat mitzvah* can be celebrated within the year prior to the 13th birthday if the child is determined to be ready to become a *bar/bat mitzvah*. The determination will be made in consultation with the family, rabbi, and relevant religious and Hebrew school teachers.

If there are conflicts on the temple calendar (such as holidays and previously scheduled special services) or if multiple students share the same birthday, in consultation with the affected families, temple staff (at its discretion) will offer dates further away from the student's 13th birthday, doubling of families on one *Shabbat*, and celebrating on a Friday night.

Bar/bat mitzvah candidates are grouped yearly by **birth date** from July 1st through June 30th for

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scheduling purposes. The office staff will distribute date assignments, in writing, early enough to allow families to ask for a change if their date presents a problem. Families will have 30 days after receipt to confirm their date and pay a portion of the *bar/bat mitzvah* preparation fee to hold that date.

REQUIREMENTS

Here are the requirements of the program that must be met to avoid postponement of your child's *bar/bat mitzvah* ceremony:

Religious School Attendance

Lifelong learning is a core Jewish value. While tutoring can prepare a *bar/bat mitzvah* candidate to lead a congregational worship service, ongoing religious education is essential for the development of a mature religious identity. Regular attendance in religious school for a minimum of three years leading up to the *bar/bat mitzvah* ceremony is required. We expect that religious school attendance will continue through confirmation and hope that Jewish studies will be an ongoing part of every Jewish person's life. Special provisions can be made for students who attend a Jewish Day School and for new families moving into the congregation.

Service Attendance

Tefillah (prayer or worship) is a central part of our Jewish heritage. Attending services at Temple Beth Shalom is not only part of Jewish living, but also an important part of the educational curriculum for our religious school students. Attending services here helps our students to become familiar with the practices and customs of Reform Jewish worship and prepares them to lead a congregational service. Please consult the religious school policy on service attendance.

Ushering

At Temple Beth Shalom our congregation is a family in which we support one another both in times of need and during moments of joy. Your involvement in *Shabbat* services as an usher is a critical part of helping our members and their guests feel welcome and a part of our family. It also provides an opportunity for the *bar/bat mitzvah* student and one or both parents to become more comfortable with the *Shabbat* service. You may be asked to hand out service programs and assist congregants as needed throughout the service. The temple office staff will assign dates for your family to usher.

Your family will usher

- at a Friday night service during 1-3 months prior to the service; and
- at the *bar/bat mitzvah* service immediately preceding your child's *bar/bat mitzvah*.

Your family should attend the services at which you usher.

Please let the temple office know, if you cannot fulfill your obligation and make arrangements for another service at which to usher.

Financial Obligations

The Talmud teaches: *Ayn kemach, ayn Torah*: without financial support, learning ceases. You will be billed the current *bar/bat mitzvah* preparation fee (\$1,000) when your date is accepted. This schedule will allow you to spread payments if necessary. This fee must be paid 3 months before your date; otherwise, the *bar/bat mitzvah* may be rescheduled. Please contact the temple treasurer to make special arrangements. You must also be current with your other financial obligations with Temple Beth Shalom.

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The fee covers:

- Vouchers for tutoring sessions
- Tutoring materials
- Paper and electronic files of your *Torah* and *haftarah* portions
- *Mishkan T'filah* (*bar/bat mitzvah* edition, with your personalized dedication bookplate)
- Meetings with the rabbi
- Rehearsal with the rabbi
- Candy for tossing at the end of the service

The fee does **not** cover:

- Vouchers for extra tutoring sessions (which may be purchased from the temple office)
- Replacement *siddur* (\$50)
- *Bema* flowers (optional)
- Saturday *kiddush*
- Service programs
- Personalized *kippot*

Kiddush or Oneg Shabbat

Your family is obligated to supply the congregational *kiddush* following the Saturday morning service. (If your child's *bar/bat mitzvah* ceremony occurs on a Friday night, you will supply the *oneg Shabbat* that evening.) These refreshments may be catered by your family and friends or by approved professionals. Contact the temple office to work out the details.

You are expected to host the *kiddush* (or *Oneg Shabbat*) in addition to any private event you have planned. Temple Beth Shalom's social hall is the perfect place to host a private celebration following the service. Please contact the temple office for information on fees, the rental agreement, and a list of approved caterers. The social hall is not reserved for your event unless you sign a contract and pay the deposit to reserve the room.

If you choose to host a lunch at temple after a Saturday morning service and do not want to provide a separate *kiddush*, an alternative is to invite

congregants who attend the service to join your family and friends at the lunch.

FLOWERS (OPTIONAL)

Since the time of the first temple in Jerusalem, beautifying *mitzvot* has been an important part of our tradition. *Bar/bat mitzvah* families are encouraged to continue this tradition by providing flowers for the *bema*. Alternatively, some families have used *tzedakah* baskets in place of flowers and have donated them after the service to a suitable charity. Please limit the use of toys and other party-theme items to the social hall, not as a replacement for flowers.

Flowers can be provided in a single arrangement for the center of the *bema* or two smaller vases, one on each side of the lectern. Flowers for the service must be delivered by 3pm on Friday for all ceremonies. The family is welcome to take the flowers home after the service.

MITZVAH PROJECT

Students are expected to participate in a *mitzvah* project at some point during the year leading up to the *bar/bat mitzvah* ceremony. The student will select this project, along with his or her parents, and it should be something done to make the world a better place. The student will be expected to include a description of the project in the *d'var Torah* delivered during the *bar/bat mitzvah* ceremony.

CLERGY

The congregation will have a rabbi for all *bar/bat mitzvah* ceremonies. If you have a family relationship with outside clergy and wish him or her to also participate in leading your child's *bar/bat mitzvah* ceremony, please contact the rabbi to make this request at least six months in advance.

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TUTORING

To successfully prepare your child for this *simchah*, he or she should begin meeting with the assigned tutor six months prior to the ceremony. Tutoring should occur on a weekly basis for the next five months. This schedule will allow your child four more weeks to prepare on his or her own or receive additional tutoring if needed. The tutoring sessions will include an evaluation of your child's current abilities, necessary instruction, and an opportunity to read from the *Torah* scroll in the sanctuary.

If you want to tutor your child privately (not with the assigned temple tutor), you must notify the temple office no later than the first meeting with the rabbi, and the rabbi must approve the choice of tutor. The *bar/bat mitzvah* preparation fee will be reduced by the temple's cost of providing a tutor.

MEETINGS

Group Meeting with the Rabbi

10-12 months prior to the date of the ceremony, parents will meet with the rabbi in groups to discuss their children's ceremonies and the process of assigning the *Torah* portion. This meeting will include a discussion of:

- The meaning and religious significance of the *bar/bat mitzvah* ceremony and preparation for you and your child
- The tutoring process and the assignment of your child's tutor
- The service
- The *bar/bat mitzvah's d'var Torah* (speech)
- *Torah* blessings (so those who will recite them can practice before the service)

Family Meeting with the Rabbi

Approximately 2-3 months prior to your child's *bar/bat mitzvah* ceremony and after your *bar/bat mitzvah* preparation fee has been paid, the rabbi, you, and your child will meet and discuss:

- the *Torah* portion
- ideas for the student's *d'var Torah* (speech)
- *Torah* passing from generation to generation
- *aliyot* assignments (*Torah* blessing honors)
- other service honors (opening and closing ark, English readings, dressing *Torah* scroll)
- *Haftarah* portion
- the role of family members during the ceremony, including the participation of non-Jewish family members
- presentation of *tallit* before service
- an opportunity for your personal remarks to your child

After a child completes his/her *d'var Torah*, the parents usually say a few words to him or her to convey their feelings about the significance of this milestone in their child's development as a Jew. Please limit your remarks to less than five minutes. Comments on your child's other accomplishments are more appropriate for a social event later in the day.

THE ROLE OF THE NON-JEWISH PARTICIPANT IN THE SERVICE

There are options for people of all faiths to participate in the *Shabbat* morning service, such as English readings. For the ritual of opening the ark, undressing and redressing the *Torah* scroll, temple policy states that there must be at least one Jewish participant.

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THE REHEARSAL

During the week of your child's *bar/bat mitzvah* ceremony (usually on Wednesday evening or Friday morning), the rabbi will guide you and your family through a rehearsal of the *Shabbat* service. Feel free to dress casually for this meeting and please bring any questions you have as well as your child's *d'var Torah* and *Mishkan T'filah*.

Please bring a list of the names of relatives you want the rabbi to read before the *kaddish* prayer on Saturday.

FRIDAY NIGHT BEFORE YOUR SERVICE

The rabbi will explain your role in the upcoming Friday evening service, when your family will lead blessings over the candles, wine, and *challah*.

THE SERVICE

During the *Shabbat* service the *bar/bat mitzvah* will lead the congregation in worship, chant from the *Torah* and *haftarah*, chant the blessings before and after those biblical passages, and read his or her *d'var Torah*.

The family may not add to or delete from the standard *Shabbat* service. You may discuss music for the service with the rabbi if you have specific preferences.

Photography and Videography

Still photography is not permitted during the service (by professionals or by your family members, regardless of the device used) because of the disruption it creates. Pictures may be taken after the final blessing, while candy is being thrown.

Your family may take photographs in the sanctuary before the service. You may arrive as early as 9am.

The rabbi will be available by 9:30am to take pictures with the *Torah*. Please contact the temple office to confirm this time to take family pictures or to arrange another time frame.

Video equipment may be used if it is set up at the back of the sanctuary where it does not interfere with people's ability to walk safely in the sanctuary and if it is not moved or adjusted during the service. Please make sure that your photographer or videographer understands this policy.

Your photographer or videographer must bring his or her own extension cord and may not remove the lectern microphone while taking pictures.

Kippot

The congregation provides *kippot* for worshippers who choose to wear them. If you would like additional or personalized *kippot*, please feel free to bring them and place them in our *kippah* box.

Tallitot

While it is not required, many parents purchase a *tallit* (prayer shawl) for their child's *bar/bat mitzvah*. If you choose to do so, the rabbi will include a brief private ceremony immediately preceding the service when you can help your child put on a *tallit* for the first time. *Tallitot* can be purchased from the Sisterhood's or other Judaica Shop or you may borrow one from the temple.

Service Programs

Many families choose to create a service program for friends and family. There is a template on the temple web site. We encourage you to consult with other members of the congregation who have prepared these in the past for helpful information and tips or ask the office staff for samples.

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Guests with Small Children

Temple Beth Shalom has a family room from which one can see and hear the service. While the room is not soundproof, it does allow adults with small children who are more active and vocal than is appropriate in the sanctuary to participate in the service. An adult must stay with the children at all times and must ensure that his or her children do not disturb the worship in the sanctuary.

BAR/BAT MITZVAH IN ISRAEL

Every other year Temple Beth Shalom organizes a trip to Israel with the opportunity to become a *bar/bat mitzvah* there. Despite the change in venue, our commitment to education remains unwavering. The prospective *bar/bat mitzvah* will still be expected to attend religious school classes, learn the elements of our service, and fulfill all of the requirements listed in this handbook. The preparation fee is the same, regardless of the location of the ceremony. In the fall following the trip, the students help to lead a *Shabbat* evening service in which they speak from the *bema* about this unique experience and the families provide that evening's *Oneg Shabbat*.

PARTY INVITATIONS

While there is a distinction between what goes on in the sanctuary and what goes on at the party, that distinction is ambiguous because they both reflect on the single event. While we do not wish to legislate who should be on a family's guest list, we remind everyone that it would be unacceptable if one or two individuals from the Hebrew School class were excluded. This would be hurtful to the excluded child and painful for the congregation. This does not mean that you must invite the whole class. It only means that if you have invited the majority of the class, then please reconsider the decision to exclude a few.

CONCLUSION

This document and related materials are available on the *bar/bat mitzvah* page of the temple web site.

If you have any questions not answered in this handbook, please do not hesitate to contact the synagogue. *Mazel tov* from all of us at Temple Beth Shalom on your upcoming *simchah*.