

The Columbia Jewish Congregation

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Handbook

B'NAI MITZVAH CLASS OF 2020

Columbia Jewish Congregation

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Introduction

It may seem hard to believe, but the day will be here before you know it! The day will arrive when your son or daughter will be called to the *Torah* to proclaim before friends, family and community that s/he is now recognized as a “young adult” member of the Jewish community, with all the rights and responsibilities that honor and privilege entails.

In order to help alleviate any anxiety you might have regarding the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, and to help you focus on the meaning of the day, we are providing you with the following guidelines to help you as you plan this special day.

CJC's Bar/Bat Mitzvah Philosophy

The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is a Jewish life cycle event that every parent anticipates, almost from the moment of their child's birth, and every child anticipates from their early years of Jewish schooling. It is a joyous event that celebrates an important time of transition for every child and every family, welcoming that child as an “adult” member of the Jewish community. It is also an event that requires a great deal of commitment and preparation on the part of both the child and the family.

The Columbia Jewish Congregation wants the preparation process to be meaningful for both the child and her/his family. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is not an opportunity to “perform” before family and friends and have a celebration afterwards; it is an event that marks the culmination of one's Jewish education as a child and the beginning of learning on a more adult level. *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is also an opportunity to affirm a child's and a family's sense of belonging to the Jewish community and to CJC.

We hope that the following information will answer many of the questions that you may have and prepare you to enter this exciting time in a family's life. Please read it carefully and let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Fee

The adoption of our sustainable dues structure (2017-2018) includes all fees for Lifecycle events. As a member, all pre-*Bar/Bat Mitzvah* classes, tutoring, cantorial services, congregational gifts and other expenses related to *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* preparation and the service itself are included in membership dues. Religious School classes at CJC are additional expenses. Please contact Robin Rosenfeld, Administrator at the office if you have any questions.

Working with the Rabbi

The first time the Rabbi meets with the family should be one year before the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. This meeting will serve as an introduction to the final year of preparation. About five months prior to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, weekly meetings will take place during which we will explore the *Torah* portion and plan out the service. To avoid phone tag and delays during these three months, a schedule will be prepared for the families. **It is the responsibility of the family to contact the Rabbi to set the first meeting.**

The writing of the *drosch* provides an opportunity for family learning. It is important that the student's parent(s) become familiar with the meaning and interpretations of the *Torah* so they can work with their child to focus his/her *drosch* on issues that are meaningful. The Rabbi will work together with the parents and child on the writing of the *drosch*. It is important to note that part of the Rabbi's goal is to help with interpretations and meanings, but not to write the *drosch* for the child. Ultimately, it is not important that the *drosch* be "perfect," but rather that it expresses the thoughts and feelings of the child.

Working with the Cantor

Working with the Cantor begins approximately 7 months before the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* tutoring allows for a one-on-one experience where both the child and Cantor learn from and teach each other.

The following skills are taught by the Cantor, keeping in mind the individual student's own abilities:

- 1) Blessings for the *Torah*. These blessings are central components of the *Torah* service. Learning them first prepares the student to begin studying the *Torah* and provides a sense of accomplishment.
- 2) Learning the *Torah* portion of the *parashat ha'shavuah* (weekly *Torah* portion) is taught, using vowels and *trope* (cantillation). When the *Torah* portion has been mastered with vowels, then it is studied without vowels. Learning *trope* (cantillation) is an important skill because it enables the child to transfer the skill to the reading of additional portions from the *Torah* during the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* or at later times in his/her life.
- 3) The Cantor will either teach the child the appropriate *Torah* and *Haftorah* portion or the *Torah* portion and the prayers of the service.
- 4) The last, but certainly not the least, important skill is helping the child to feel more able and comfortable to participate in the *Shabbat* service. It is always our hope that prayers and blessings have been taught and learned in the religious school classes and is further reinforced by attending *Shabbat* services over the years. In preparing for the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* these prayer skills are further reinforced. This allows him/her to participate in any *Shabbat* service, not just the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah Shabbat* service. This is one reason why the Congregation requires monthly service attendance during the year prior to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

Once the tutoring process begins please be sure to check that your child is indeed studying. It is important to the Cantor and congregation that the student takes responsibility for studying. At least 15-20 minutes of daily study outside of the 30 minute tutoring session is expected. Encourage your youngster to read his or her assignment out loud, to you, even if you do not know Hebrew yourself, at least twice per week.

When the Cantor is away from the office, a highly qualified tutor will be available for your child's lesson.

Supplies: When your child begins his/her tutoring, please bring a 3-ring binder with pockets, and notebook paper for taking notes. The Cantor will provide the student with a CD of the Saturday morning service (which is also available on our website) and a CD of the Torah portion. MP3's can also be emailed.

Special Considerations

Interfaith Families

We know that some of the children celebrating a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* at the Columbia Jewish Congregation are being raised in families where one parent is not Jewish. For many members of CJC there will be many non-Jewish family members in attendance at the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. It is important to the clergy and leadership of the congregation that everyone be made to feel as comfortable as possible at our B'nai Mitzvah services, so these are issues that should be addressed early in the preparation process with the Rabbi.

Attending other *B'nai Mitzvot* to see what they are like and what different families do is one way of becoming more comfortable. Providing a description of the prayer service to participants will help to make those unfamiliar with the ritual feel more in tune with what is taking place. *A copy of this description is included as Appendix E in this handbook.* In addition, there are numerous English readings that can be included in the service that would be appropriate and which could be read aloud by non-Jewish family members and friends. The Reconstructionist Prayer Book, **Kol Haneshama**, contains many wonderful readings for your selections. Please contact Rabbi Starr if you would like other sources.

We realize that raising a Jewish child in an interfaith family presents many challenges for parents, and we appreciate your efforts to provide your child with a Jewish identity. A *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is a time for a child to affirm his/her identity as a Jew and to commit him/herself to live as an adult member of the Jewish community; this is a responsibility not to be taken lightly. We also want to be sensitive to your family's needs and make the experience a meaningful and comfortable one for all involved. Please do not hesitate to bring up any of your questions or concerns at any time.

The non-Jewish parent can accompany the Jewish parent at all times including during an *aliyah* or passing of the *Torah*. The one leading a prayer or doing a ritual act such as opening the ark is doing so in the name of the whole community. Since the non-Jewish parent has decided not to become Jewish, they are asked not to lead us at those crucial spiritual times. They are encouraged to come up to do an English reading, speak to the child, and/or lead us in a secular song.

Families with Divorced or Separated Parents (See Appendix G for additional information)

We realize that many of our *B'nai Mitzvah* come from families where the parents are separated or divorced. It is important that we all work towards the goal of making the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* a meaningful and enjoyable experience for your child and all involved. If

there are any specific issues of which the Rabbi should be made aware concerning family configurations and dynamics, please inform her towards the beginning of the preparation process.

Please remember that a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is a time of joy and celebration and is for the child – not his/her parents. The ceremony should not be used as a time to play out negative family dynamics or interpersonal issues. All parents and other families who wish to be present and participate in the service should be welcome as a way of honoring your child and his/her relationships.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Educational Programs

“Coming of Age” Family Program

The “Coming of Age” program is a family program during the year prior to *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* that focuses on connections, community, and congregation. The program is coordinated by the Rabbi and Cantor, and provides the families with an excellent opportunity to continue to learn more about yourselves, your families, and the other *B'nai Mitzvah* families. Look forward to receiving information about two years before the ceremony.

Service Attendance During the Year Prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah

In order to feel comfortable with the service, and with the preparation of the service outline, the CJC *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* guidelines (see Appendix B) require that the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* family attend one Friday night service and one Saturday morning service per month during the year prior to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. You may attend any congregation service, including clergy-led or lay-led, on Saturday. In addition to familiarizing yourself with the services, it will also enable you to feel more a part of the larger CJC community as your child prepares to become an "adult" member.

CJC members are welcome to attend all Saturday morning services, including those where a member of the congregation becomes a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. It is our hope that becoming more familiar with other members of the CJC community will encourage CJC members who may not be “invited” to your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* and reception to attend the service as a way of celebrating with you.

If you attend services at another congregation it will count towards your requirement, but we encourage your family to attend CJC services the majority of the time in order to help you feel more a part of the CJC community and hear the prayers and tunes we use.

B'nai Mitzvah Tzedakah and Mitzvah Projects

One should only use one's face, hands, and feet to honor one's Creator.
(Tosefta Brachot 4:1)

Becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* means that one now assumes responsibility for observance of the *mitzvot* (commandments). Three important *mitzvot* are the giving of *Tzedakah* (charity), *Gemilut Hasadim* (acts of loving kindness), and *Tikkun Olam* (repair of the world). Each child is required to create and implement some kind of *Tikkun Olam*/community service project. This project will be done under the supervision of the Rabbi. A final write-up of the project is due before the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* rehearsal. The description of the project should include what was done, what it felt like, and what was learned.

In Judaism, *tzedakah* is more than voluntary charity; *tzedakah* is an obligation. As part of becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* we hope that each child will choose charities to contribute to from the money s/he receives as gifts. Based on Jewish tradition, it is recommended that your child donate 10% of her/his monetary gifts to *tzedakah*. In addition, it is appropriate for parents to donate *tzedakah* in honor of your child's *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. You may choose from a variety of Jewish and non-Jewish causes that are worthwhile. In addition, you can research other Jewish and non-Jewish charities by using the Internet, libraries or consulting with the Rabbi.

Greening Your B'nai Mitzvah

Jews United for Justice (JUFJ.org) has produced a little booklet with a big mission: to work for the day when every one of the \$30 million dollars that Jewish families in our area spend on weddings and *Bar and Bat Mitzvah* celebrations every year will be spent in a way that reflects Jewish values. Each section of the booklet offers specific suggestions for how families can make purchasing choices for their special day in ways that are mindful of workers' rights and environmental impact. The book is illustrated throughout with Jewish teachings, and with the real-life stories of more than forty DC area families who made creative green and just choices for their own celebrations.

Go to: http://www.jufj.org/green_just_celebrations to download a PDF copy of the guide.

Supporting Your Community

In addition to *tzedakah*, Judaism has always viewed support of the community as the responsibility of all Jews. In keeping with this spirit, it is also appropriate to make a donation to one of CJC's funds to express your support and thanks for your Jewish community. The various funds are listed below. Each one serves a special purpose. Please review them and choose where you would like to make a donation.

The **Adult Education Fund** allows the congregation to maintain and expand its programming.

The **Padow Memorial Cultural Arts Fund** is named after Dr. Edward Padow, longtime CJC member and accompanist for the CJC choirs. This fund provides money to present musical and other cultural arts programs for CJC and the community at-large, including the Artist-in-

Residence weekend. This is an appropriate fund to contribute to in honor of the Cantor's participation in the service.

The **Lester Morss Scholarship Fund** is to help a high school or college student attend a program in Israel or a service project.

The **Long Term Fund** is to create an endowment that will provide for our future.

The **L'atid Fund** participants are Guarantors of the Future by pledging to donate a minimum of \$360 each year.

The **Prayer Book Fund** helps to defray the cost of printing and/or purchasing new prayer books for *Shabbat*, festivals, *shiva* (mourning) services, and the High Holy Days. Donations may be made in honor or memory of a person or an occasion and an appropriate bookplate will be placed inside the prayer book.

The **Sponsor an Oneg/Kiddush Fund** sponsors an Oneg or Kiddush in honor or in memory of a loved one.

The **Tikkun Olam Fund** is used to help provide money for social action functions, especially our monthly trips to the Shepherd's Table soup kitchen in Silver Spring where we provide food for hungry and homeless men and women.

The **Tzedakah Fund** anonymously helps people in need in the Howard County area.

The **Youth Group Funds** supports youth programming.

The **Rabbi's Discretionary Fund** is managed by the Rabbi and may be used to help those in need who prefer to come directly to the Rabbi for assistance rather than to the Congregation (though both processes are totally confidential). It is also used for donations to various charities or to purchase needed items for the congregation. Funding may not be used for the Rabbi's personal expenses. Often people make a donation to this fund in honor of the Rabbi's participation in the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* service.

The **Cantor's Discretionary Fund** is used to provide help for those in need, musical enhancement and materials to benefit the Congregation. Often people make a donation to this fund in honor of the Cantor's participation in the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* service.

In the CJC office, you will find information from Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger. This agency is one of many Jewish organizations doing good work in the world today. Mazon provides money to help the hungry; they recommend that families donate 3% of the cost of a *simcha* (celebration) to help those in need. In the past it was considered an obligation to invite the poor and needy as guests to our joyous occasions. Since this is no longer a common practice we must find another way to help feed those who are hungry. Donating 3% to Mazon is one way of doing this. We urge you to read their literature and consider

Mazon as a possible recipient of your *tzedakah* money. For more information visit their website: www.mazon.com

In addition, you may wish to ask your guests to bring a non-perishable food item to the synagogue on the *Shabbat* of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. These could be donated to the Food Pantry at The Meeting House that is managed by the Columbia Baptist Fellowship (CBF). This could be in addition to anything your family does in terms of giving to *tzedakah* or donating food. If you wish to do this, please contact the CJC office so that we can arrange to have the CBF food collection barrel placed by the door to the sanctuary. You may also wish instead to make your own food collection containers to place by the door and then we can arrange for the food to be placed in the Food Pantry. You may also wish to specify that people bring food that is certified as kosher in which case this can be donated to the Kosher Food Pantry of Jewish Family Services of Greater Baltimore, 5750 Park Heights Avenue, Baltimore, 410-542-6300.

A number of wonderful resources are available on the web to help you determine your project. In particular, www.mitzvahheroesfund.org, www.ichoice.org and www.actsofkindness.org are sites that may be exactly the catalyst for good work for you.

The following information (excerpted from ziv.org) may be useful to you in planning and implementing the mitzvah project:

“How can we add that special ingredient of *tikkun olam* or fixing the world to our upcoming *simcha* so that many more people can benefit from our happiness and joy? It’s really easy to find that special idea, the one you will enjoy working on and the one that will give you a special glow when you complete your work. In the process you will see how many other people’s lives have been changed because you cared and you care.”

The Questions We Need to Ask

1. What am I good at?
2. What do I like to do?
3. What bothers me so much about what is wrong in the world that I get very angry and want to do whatever I can to change it?
4. Whom do I know?
5. Why not?

#1 may include: giving big hugs, playing soccer, baking chocolate chip cookies, talking on the phone for hours, being a computer whiz, or drawing/ painting the most beautiful pictures.

#2. In order to answer what you like to do you will have to think a little bit more. What activities give you the most pleasure? Can you sit and read for hours? Are you really excited about playing the guitar or keyboard?

#3 "What bothers you?" Are we tired of hearing that there are untold numbers of kids who go to bed hungry every night? Are you enraged when you think about what terrible things happened when the World Trade Center was attacked? Do you feel uncomfortable when you visit a nursing home and see so many people just sitting and staring into space? Now--turn what bothers you into *Tikkun Olam* and make a difference.

#4 The classic example of "Whom do I know?" After the World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001 we saw unprecedented giving and helping from all parts of the country. Some people raised money by making American flag pins with safety pins and beads. Others held bake sales - anything to raise funds to help the victims. The late George Harrison of Beatles' fame went one step further. He remembered how his own father, a firefighter in his native England, put his life on the line every time he went out to fight a fire and then used the "Whom Do I Know" principle to raise tens of millions of dollars for relief for fallen firefighters. How did he do it? He called all of his friends, the most famous rock stars we know, and brought them together for an incredible concert. The result? Millions of dollars for relief for the victims of the terror attacks.

Know someone who enjoys playing a musical instrument as much as you do and would like to join you in a concert at a local nursing home?

Or, maybe you have a relative who is a dentist and is willing to give you dental supplies that can be donated to a dental clinic in Jerusalem?

Are you and your friends ace soccer players who could teach kids at a homeless shelter how to play?

There is no end to the answers to this question—you just need to think about it...and, do it!

#5 "Why Not?" is generally the easiest of all: almost always the answer is, "There's no real reason why not. So, let's do it."

Twining: Honoring Others

Jewish tradition teaches that we should remember bitter times even at our moments of greatest joy. Some families choose to remember a child who perished in the Holocaust by designating him or her as a "twin" at the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Other families may select Ethiopian, Soviet, or Israeli Twins. There are a number of sources available for you to choose "twining" as a mitzvah.

The Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Friends of Greater Washington will provide you with the name of a child who perished in the Holocaust as well as a certificate that identifies the name and town where the child was from. You may request a particular gender and/or location to make the experience more personal. The Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Friends need at least six weeks to make a match and get you the certificate. It is also proper to make

a donation to the organization in appreciation of its work. For information please contact Samuel Spiegel at **Remember a Child Project** (301) 881.2454.

The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous (JFR) makes available the names of Righteous Gentiles who helped hide and rescue Jews during the Nazi persecution for twinning. This program gives the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* the opportunity to identify with a rescuer and to have an understanding of what this person did during the Holocaust to save Jewish lives. Through a donation to the JFR you will help to promote their work and provide assistance to the elderly rescuers who still survive, many are in ill health or living in poverty. For more information please contact JFR at (212) 727-9955 or e-mail them at jfr@jfr.org. You can also find more information by accessing their web site at www.jfr.org.

- Ethiopian Twinning: North American Conference for Ethiopian Jewry: 212.233.5200
- Israeli Twinning: Amit: 410.484.2223.
- Soviet Twinning: Washington Committee for Soviet Jewry: 301.587.4455

Hiddur Mitzvah (The Beautification of Mitzvah)

There is an ancient tradition in Judaism of using whatever means possible to beautify our *mitzvot*. That is why Judaism has a long tradition of religious artwork that is meant to be used and not simply put on display.

Tzedakah Baskets

Placing flowers in front of the lectern or on the sides of the ark as a way of beautifying the room is customary at many synagogues. Though you may choose to use flowers, we suggest that you contact Jewish Federation of Howard County, 410-730-4976 to “*Tzedakah Baskets*” for the sanctuary and for the tables at your reception. These baskets are filled with non-perishable kosher foods and wrapped in decorative colored cellophane and ribbons. They also represent a donation made by your family. You may also choose to make a donation, and prepare your own food baskets for decoration as a way of taking a more active role in the project. By using food baskets as decorations you are beautifying your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* and providing help for those less fortunate. This *is hiddur mitzvah* in its truest sense!

Additional suggestions can be found for centerpieces, *kippot*, and invitations, on the resource page of this booklet.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Shabbat

The Friday Evening Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service

The Location of the Service

The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is held in The Meeting House in Room 100, which is the Congregation’s main worship space and holds up to 250 people. The Meeting House is wheelchair accessible and the bathrooms are ADA approved.

The Service

The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* will lead the Shabbat service and give a *drosh*. The family will be able to add readings, songs, and/or instrumentals to the service if they choose. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*

is required to come on Saturday morning to read from the Torah and recite the Torah blessings.

The Oneg

Many families choose to sponsor the Friday night Oneg. You may do this by donating funds to sponsor it, or you may bring in the food and beverages yourself. Please inform CJC's Administrator of approximately how many guests you expect for your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* at least 2 weeks in advance so the appropriate number of chairs can be set. In addition, please let her know if you have any special requirements.

CJC provides wine, grape juice, challah, and Kiddush cups along with someone to help set up the sweets and drinks for the Oneg (that you have purchased). A questionnaire will be mailed a few weeks prior to your simcha confirming the Oneg.

The Friday Evening Before a Saturday Morning Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service

Although the actual celebration of your child becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* will take place at the Saturday morning *Shabbat* service, attending *Kabbalat Shabbat* (Welcoming *Shabbat*) services on Friday night adds to the celebration and makes the entire *Shabbat* part of the experience.

The Cantor will work with your child so that he/she will be prepared to recite the full *Kiddush* over the wine on Friday night, as well as additional prayers. Family members can also choose to lead the blessings over the candles. Please consult with the Rabbi and the Cantor regarding participation in Friday night services.

We also ask, as part of your celebration, that you provide cakes, cookies or other light food for the *Oneg* (reception) following Friday night services. This can be arranged by the CJC Administrator. Sponsorship of the Oneg *Shabbat* (prepared by CJC, is \$54.)

The Shabbat Morning Service

The Location of the Service

The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is held in The Meeting House in Room 100, which is the Congregation's main worship space and holds up to 250 people. The Meeting House is wheelchair accessible and the bathrooms are ADA approved.

The Siddur (Prayer Book) and supplement

As part of the supplement you may wish to include an explanation of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* and a description of the *Shabbat* morning service. This is particularly helpful if there will be many non-Jewish family members in attendance. You may use the prepared piece that the office has (*please see Appendix E*) or you may wish to write an explanation in your own words. However, you must remember to show this to the Rabbi prior to printing the supplement. Additional examples of *B'nai Mitzvah* programs created by our families are available in the CJC office.

The Timing of the Service

The service will last approximately two and one-half hours or slightly longer if the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* falls on *Rosh Hodesh* or one of the Festivals. You should expect to reach the *Kiddush* table by 12:30 PM on most Shabbat mornings. Starting on time is essential, so please arrive early and ask your guests to do the same. All services will begin promptly at 10:00 AM.

Passing the Torah

As part of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony you have the option of “passing the *Torah*” from generation to generation. The *Torah* represents Jewish teaching that is passed down from parent to child. When the ark is open, you have the option of asking grandparents, parents and child to stand in front of the ark as the *Torah* is passed from generation to generation. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* then holds the *Torah* during the processional around the congregation, followed by his/her family members. Many people find this to be a meaningful symbol of what is taking place during the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony.

Aliyot (Torah Blessings) and Honors

An *aliyah* (Hebrew for “going up”) is the honor given when a person is called up to the *Torah* to recite a blessing before and after a section of the *Torah* is read. During a single *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, there will be seven *aliyot*. Two are reserved for congregants to honor other congregational *simchot*, and the one which is recited by the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. At a double *B’nai Mitzvah*, both families will have the option of sharing all *aliyot*. An individual or a couple may recite an *aliyah*. In addition, please be certain that all those reciting the *Torah* blessings are familiar with the Hebrew. Each person reciting the *aliyah* will have a choice of reading the traditional or the Reconstructionist version.

If someone does not feel comfortable with the Hebrew or is “out of practice” **please provide them with the Hebrew and/or transliteration to practice ahead of time.** (These are available from the office. A pdf and cd or mp3 of the blessings with transliteration can be made available for you.) The blessings are also on our website. If the person still does not feel comfortable reciting the blessing it would be best to give him/her another honor, such as an English reading or opening or closing the ark. The recitation of the *Torah* blessing is a special and sacred honor and should not be taken lightly.

You will also need someone to perform the *g’lilah*, dressing the *Torah*, after it is read. The honor of *g’lilah* can be given to anyone who is Jewish and is often given to younger siblings or other pre-*Bar/Bat Mitzvah* children as a way of honoring them. The honor of *hag’bah*, the lifting of the *Torah*, is assigned by the Rabbi.

Photography and Videotaping

We realize that many families want to record every moment of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* for posterity. The following guidelines are in effect to preserve the sanctity of the *Shabbat* and to avoid disrupting the service:

- **Due to the distraction created by the use of a camera no photographs may be taken during the actual service.** Picture taking in the lobby or on the *bimah* should be completed by 9:30 a.m. Contact the Rabbi or Cantor if you wish to take pictures with the

Torah. It is recommended that the photographer “stage” scenes and photograph them prior to or following the service, or on the day of the rehearsal. If your guests ask, please inform them that they may take photos prior to or following, but **not during the service**.

- If you would like to arrange for pictures to be taken on the day of the rehearsal, please contact the office so that the room may be reserved for additional time. If you require the Cantor for pictures, please inform her ahead of time. If the photographer desires to use the *Torah* for photographs, (no more than 15 minutes), the Rabbi or Cantor must be present to open the ark and oversee the use of the *Torah*. Please make arrangements for this ahead of time.
- The videographer must stand behind the last row of seats and must remain stationary (i.e., using a tripod). Any wires, cords, cables, etc. must be set up so as not to be intrusive or present any hazards to people walking in the room.
- **Please review all of these guidelines with your photographer and videographer prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.**

Room and Oneg/Kiddush Setup

Please inform the CJC Administrator of approximately how many guests you expect for your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* at least one month in advance so the appropriate number of chairs can be set up. In addition, please let her know if you have any special requirements.

All families are responsible for providing the Kiddush after the service on Saturday. You may choose to bring food in yourself or, if you rent rooms through The Meeting House, you may prefer to have the Kiddush catered. If you choose to rent rooms through The Meeting House, please be aware that you may not use confetti or balloons.

CJC provides the wine, challah, grape juice, and Kiddush cups and someone to help set up the sweets and drinks for the *Oneg and the Kiddush*. If you prefer a more extended *Kiddush/luncheon*, you will be responsible for negotiating any extra duties with the person who sets up the *Oneg/Kiddush* and agreeing on appropriate monetary compensation.

It is important to remember that The Meeting House often has our worship space reserved for other services or events later in the day. This requires that the room be vacated no later than 2:00pm, unless otherwise reserved ahead of time. Please speak with the CJC Administrator with any questions.

Below is a list of what **the synagogue will provide for a basic *Oneg/Kiddush***. Please feel free to embellish as you choose. Please speak with The Administrator if you have any questions:

- Challah – a sharp knife for cutting and platter or basket for bread (*CJC provides two challahs – one for Friday night and one for Saturday morning*)
- Wine (Kosher Concord Grape) – 1 ounce plastic wine cups – tray to place them on (*CJC provides wine and grape juice*)

- White grape juice – 1 ounce plastic cups (*CJC provides grape juice*)
- *CJC provides tablecloths for the Oneg on Friday evening.* (The family provides the sweets, fruit, beverage and all paper products for Saturday's Kiddush.)

Kitchen Rental

According to the rules of The Meeting House you must reserve the kitchen if you are planning to use it for any preparation of the *Oneg/Kiddush* whatsoever (more extensive than the *Kiddush* setup described above). To find out about availability contact the CJC Administrator.

The Oneg/Kiddush (Reception) and CJC Dietary Policy

You have many options for the type of *Kiddush* that you will offer following the service on Saturday morning. Minimally wine, *challah*, fruit juice and some cakes or sweets are provided. If you desire to provide something more extensive, please take the following into consideration:

- The CJC dietary policy requires that any CJC event (including an *Oneg/Kiddush* or *Kiddush*/luncheon immediately following a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* and held in Room 100) be designated either dairy/pareve (neutral or vegetarian) or meat/pareve. Meat and dairy may not be served at the same function and no pork, shellfish or other clearly prohibited type of fish or meat may be served.
- For the sake of simplicity, and to allow anyone who is present to partake of the *Oneg/Kiddush*, it is best to provide dairy or vegetarian foods. If the *Oneg/Kiddush* is being catered you may want to suggest fruit and cheese trays, smoked fish, lox and bagels, pasta salad, etc.
- If you are not using a kosher caterer, please ask the caterer to consult with the Rabbi or the Cantor before planning your menu.

Donating Leftover Food

When providing a meal, there is usually a substantial amount of food that is not eaten. Jewish values frown upon the wasting of food; so all efforts should be made to assure that this does not take place. In addition to taking started trays of food home with you or giving them to friends, there are organizations to which you can donate untouched food which will then be used to help feed those in need.

If you are using a caterer, please discuss this with them ahead of time so that they will know that you want all suitable leftovers to be donated and not discarded. This is another opportunity to fulfill a *mitzvah* on this special day in your lives. Make sure you tell them that you want all of the leftovers packed up so that you can bring them to a nearby pantry or shelter after your party. Don't let them tell you they can't because they don't want to be sued. Here is a copy of the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Law (a federal law which states that no one can be held liable for any illness resulting from the donation of food).

Many people do not know about this law. It will be your proof if the caterer does not want to cooperate! A possible option is to contact Grass Roots, an organization that accepts donations of food to provide to those in need. They can be contacted at (410) 531-6006.

Selections from The New Federal Food Donation Law

The “Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act” appears in the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 as 42 U.S.C. 12672. The legislation essentially states that the donor of food to a non-profit organization to people in need is free of liability. This act provides uniform coverage for the entire country. The sections that relate to issues of liability have been italicized:

(c) Liability for damages from donated food and grocery products.

(1) Liability of person or gleaner. A person or gleaner shall not be subject to civil or criminal liability arising from the nature, age, packaging, or condition of apparently wholesome food or an apparently fit grocery product that the person or gleaner donates in good faith to a non-profit organization for ultimate distribution to needy individuals

Babysitting

CJC provides babysitting space for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Families can hire a babysitter with whom you are familiar if you wish to have this room available. You can confirm the room rental with CJC’s Administrator.

Beginning the Process

Questions

Some frequently asked questions (and some answers):

Where do I start?

*CJC’s Administrator, Robin Rosenfeld, will help you with room reservations, *Kiddush* following the service, logistics, set-up information, and other related issues. She can be reached at 410.730.6044 or via email at robin@columbiajewish.org.

*Rabbi Starr will meet with your family to talk about the process. Please call her at the CJC office at 410.730.6044 x 102 or via email at rabbistarr@columbiajewish.org.

*The Cantor will work with your child on his/her portion and prayers. Contact the Cantor at the CJC office at 410.730.6044.

*Decide on your reception site after you’ve received a firm *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date with CJC.

When do we meet with the Rabbi?

Contact the Rabbi one-year before your date to set up a family meeting. She will meet with your child about five months before the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date to begin writing the *drosh*.

When do we meet with the tutor?

Contact the Cantor about 11 months before the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date to schedule tutoring.

What about the child who doesn't understand the need for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

Discuss this with the Rabbi to talk about ways of explaining the significance of the *B'nai Mitzvah* and alternatives within the framework.

How can we, as a family, learn about the Torah portion?

The Coming of Age program will feature discussions on studying *Torah* as a family. If there are members of your family or friends who would like to read or chant a *Torah* portion, please contact the Cantor as soon as possible.

Are we finally done with Hebrew School?

A *B'nai Mitzvah* signifies the beginning of adulthood. The learning **never** ends. We'll anticipate your child being part of the process to continue and expand his/her education. You'll see a number of ways for your child to participate in our teen programs in the next section.

Who addresses special unique cases?

The Rabbi is the best place to begin.

How standardized are our services?

There is a service outline that is followed by everyone and that allows a lot of room to make the service meaningful and individualized. Please share all your ideas with the Rabbi.

Will my child feel "double" special if they share a service?

In the past when we have had doubles, each child was assigned a particular part of the service to master and share: there is more than enough to learn. They both will be able to read *Torah*, lead the service, and give a *drosh*. There will be nothing significantly altered in the service except that we will double the joy we experience that Shabbat.

What would a child do at a Friday night B'nai Mitzvah service?

A child would lead as much of the Friday night service as possible, including writing and delivering a *drosh*. Then, on the next day, they will read one *Torah* portion along with the blessings before and after.

Why is CJC not considering summer B'nai Mitzvah?

CJC has worked hard to honor the original intention of introducing our young adults to their full community at the time of their *B'nai Mitzvah*. Part of this process is developing a close relationship with both the Rabbi and the Cantor. During the summer months, both the Rabbi and Cantor take well deserved vacations, and the synagogue plans feverishly for the High Holy Days and the beginning of Sunday School. In order for you to have the most meaningful experience involving your whole community it would be better to hold the *B'nai Mitzvah* between mid-August and the end of June.

Why is CJC not considering doing morning and afternoon services?

There are a couple of reasons for this decision. Since CJC is committed to making every service a congregational experience, and since congregants do not come to a *Havdalah* service, we would be hosting a private affair. Changing our policies and practice to make changes to add services and add on to the clergy time will require more serious consideration from the Religious Practices Committee and the CJC Board of Directors. This could be a consideration for the future. Currently, adding another B'nai Mitzvah service to the day would be too demanding for the clergy. The only exception to the policy is a child with severe disabilities. Contact the Rabbi if this is the case.

What is the difference between the various services?

A. *L'dor V'dor*, which means from one generation to the next, is an intergenerational service that allows participants to learn, pray, socialize, and meditate in a very friendly, spiritual, and educational setting.

B. *B'Yachad services*, which means together, bring together all constituents of CJC in an innovative, spiritual, and creative manner. Co-lead by clergy and lay leaders, this service allows our community to worship, learn, and experience different forms of worship.

C. *Chavurah* is a lay-led service which prides itself on allowing congregants to learn new skills while creating a comfortable environment for Jewish expression.

The Process Continues

At the beginning of this handbook, we conveyed our basic premise that a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is a process. Learning, growing, thinking, absorbing, giving to, giving back, and becoming part of the larger community are all outcomes. We believe that the process should continue after the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* in a healthy, respectful, cogent, and pleasurable way.

To that end, it is important to think about what comes next after the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. The Chai Program accounts for all of the continuing education, including, but not limited, to the following: Attending teen classes, participating in teen choir, serving as an aide in the Hebrew School, participating in youth group, working on an independent study project, reading Torah at a *L'dor V'dor* service, working on an independent mitzvah project, tutoring in the CJC, volunteering in the CJC office or working in the CJC library. The opportunities are endless.

Teen Programs

Independent Study (post bar mitzvah to grade 12)

Like to find out the why and wherefore? Think that studying one on one with your own timeline is more interesting than a class? Intrigued by the process and delighted by an outcome? This also looks terrific on your pre-college resume. You may wish to participate in this program, individually designed for you. You pick the topic, and study at your rate of speed, and earn learning along the way. Call or e-mail Rabbi Starr or The Cantor.

Teen Choir (grades 7-12)

Does rock and roll thrill your soul? Alternative music? Jazz and be bop? Come find your voice in the renovated and reactivated teen choir. Sing your heart out and be heard by many others. Good enough to cut a CD? Let's find out! Call The Cantor for more info.

Noteworthy (7th-12th grade)

Do you play an instrument? Are you thinking about a community service project? Can you give seniors about 4 hours of your time throughout the next 6 months? Let the music project fill you with delight. And, the senior citizens who are the audience (as well as the congregation), will be the most appreciative audience you've ever seen! Contact The Cantor for more information.

Youth Groups (6th –8th grades)

Spelunking. Karaoke. Community projects. Laughing. Eating. Making great friends. You can do it all at CJC. Interested in starting a sports team? How about a little touch football? Maybe volleyball? Maybe a running partner? For more information contact Phil Rogofsky at progofsky@yahoo.com.

Torah Readers

You can read it, sing it, and perhaps even translate it, so maybe you'd be willing to share your knowledge with the congregation at a Saturday morning Chavurah or Clergy-led service? The Cantor will make a cd or mp3 for you. And, if you're interested in learning some of the other trope, she'll be happy to start a class. Let Rabbi Starr or The Cantor know. (rabbistarr@columbiajewish.org).

College Packages

Interested in cooking or baking? Let's put some packages together for special occasions (Chanukah, Passover, Purim) to send to our college kids. Ideas and time are all we need! Let the CJC office know.

Tikkun Olam

Like putting your hands to work, building and rebuilding? The *tikkun olam* committee is reforming and reconfiguring ... and could use your help. Let the Rabbi or Cantor know.

APPENDIX A

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Policy of the Columbia Jewish Congregation

In order to prepare appropriately for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, it is important that a child receives an adequate Jewish education and that the child and her/his family become a part of a congregation prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah period. In this way the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is not viewed as an event isolated from the rest of the family's life, but rather as an integral part of a family's relationship to their Judaism and to their Jewish community.

In order to assure that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a meaningful experience for all involved, the Columbia Jewish Congregation has instituted the following policy regarding congregational membership, school enrollment and Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation. In devising these policies the leadership of the congregation is well aware that congregational membership and school enrollment requires not only a commitment of time and energy, but of finances as well. We will do everything possible to assist families in need and thereby enable them to join the congregation and enroll their child(ren) in the school. If you have concerns regarding finances, please contact the congregation's treasurer and/or the school's educational director to discuss these issues.

If you have questions about any aspect of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah policy, or if you feel that you may find it difficult to comply with any of the guidelines, please contact the appropriate person (i.e., Rabbi, Cantor, Educational Director or President) as soon as possible so that potential problems may be avoided and the process can be positive for everyone involved.

APPENDIX B

BAR/BAT MITZVAH GUIDELINES

In order for a child to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at the Columbia the Congregation, the congregation requires that:

1. The child must be enrolled in CJCS, the Congregation's religious school, beginning no later than the third grade. (If a family is new to the area, attendance at another accredited religious school will be considered.)
2. The family joins the Congregation by the time the child enters the third grade. (If a family is new to the area, previous membership in another congregation will be acceptable.)
3. All Bar/Bat Mitzvah students prepare with Cantor Kintisch and Rabbi Starr. In addition, all Bar/Bat Mitzvah students and their parents are expected to attend CJC's Bar/Bat Mitzvah family education program, as this is an integral part of the preparation process.

4. Bar/Bat Mitzvah students and their parents attend a minimum of one Friday night and one Saturday morning service per month during the year prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. This will help provide a sense of community for the students and their families, help them feel more comfortable at services, and help create a greater sense of belonging to CJC and to the larger Jewish community.
5. Bar/Bat Mitzvah students create and implement a Mitzvah Project.
6. Families must continue to be in good standing at the time of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
7. CJC encourages the family to continue membership in the congregation and encourages the child(ren) to continue attendance in the Religious School following their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Families may not resign from the congregation following the Bar/Bat Mitzvah of one child and then re-join prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah of a subsequent child.

ASSIGNMENT OF DATES

The Administrator will inform the parents of the dates that are available to be reserved for Friday night and Saturday morning mitzvah services. The Rabbi and Cantor will schedule a meeting with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah class about three years prior to the observance date. Parents must confirm their attendance in advance. Attendance is mandatory.

Dates will be assigned on a first-come, first-serve basis. Dates selected may be on or after the child's thirteenth (13th) birthday (calculated either by the Hebrew or Gregorian calendar).

In order that a Bar/Bat Mitzvah date may be assigned:

- The family's membership must be in good standing;
- For each child, CJC must receive an application; and
- Child's parents must attend date-assignment meeting.

LIFNIM MISHURAT HADIN

"And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD." (Deut. 6:18). It is a Jewish ideal to always act beyond the letter of the law. The Rabbis teach that if we behave towards others lifnim mishurat hadin (literally, "inside the line of law"), with generosity and kindness beyond what is strictly required, then we might hope that God will act lifnim mishurat hadin with us, and forgo the harshness that rigorous application of justice would require.

Lifnim mishurat hadin is a Talmudic provision by which the Rabbis afford halackhic leniency. Therefore, CJC's policies provide that, upon showing of good cause and that it is in the interest of justice, case-by-case adjustments will be made.

Any adjustments to these policies will require the parents to meet with, and obtain the approval of, the Rabbi and a representative of the Board appointed by the President.

Adjustments to Bar/Bat Mitzvah Dates

Upon showing of good cause, a bar/bat mitzvah date up to thirty (30) days in advance of the child's thirteenth birthday may be approved.

Special Circumstances

In the event that a child is not enrolled in the School by the fourth grade or does not meet the educational requirements or has other special circumstances, the Rabbi and Educational Director will discuss the situation with the family and determine if an individualized plan is appropriate. If it is appropriate, an individualized plan of study will be developed that will enable the child to achieve the education and skills necessary for Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

In a case where non-educational guidelines (i.e., attendance at service, membership in CJC, etc.) are not met, the Rabbi and a representative of the CJC Board will meet with the family to discuss the situation and arrive at a mutually satisfactory solution, so that the child may continue towards Bar/Bat Mitzvah. It is understood that failure to follow any or all of the guidelines may result in a delay of the actual Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony beyond the age of 13. The Rabbi and/or Educational Director or President should be contacted as soon as possible if the family finds that there may be difficulty following any of these guidelines

APPENDIX C

THE TIMELINE FOR PREPARATION

(post this in a prominent place)

2+ years prior: Date is assigned. ***All** outstanding financial obligations to CJC and CJS must be brought up-to-date. Please contact the office or the Treasurer if you have any questions regarding this.

- * Attend an orientation meeting for all parents along with the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* child.
- * Attend the Family Education "Coming of Age" Program.

2 years prior: Coming of Age program begins.

1 year prior: Family must be members in good standing. Tutoring with the Cantor begins. Make an appointment with the Rabbi to talk about how your child will be prepared for the special day. As part of CJC's attempt to individualize the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* service each family will at this time have an opportunity to determine whether their child will concentrate on

learning the Torah and Haftorah portion or the Torah portion and prayers of the Saturday morning service.

6 months prior: Meet with the Cantor to discuss a *mitzvah* project.

5 months prior: Begin meetings with the Rabbi weekly to plan the service and write the *drosh*, (commentary).

One-month prior: Inform the CJC office of the number of guests you are inviting and any special requirements you might have.

One month notice is needed for a single Bar/Bat Mitzvah, for a double, 4 months' notice is required.

- Present Rabbi with any materials for a supplement, or that you plan to have read at the service, for approval. The Rabbi must review all supplementary materials before printing.

- Provide the Rabbi with the final order of service, including the names of those reading English parts.

- Provide the Rabbi with Hebrew names of all those reciting *aliyot* (Torah blessings). This should include the Hebrew names of both of the person's parents. If Hebrew names of parents are not known, please provide English names.

Rehearsal: Rehearsal for a single Bar/Bat Mitzvah with the Rabbi will take place on the Thursday ten days prior to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* at 4:00 pm The rehearsal involves reading the *drosh* and commentary aloud, reading from the Torah (and Haftorah) and reviewing logistics for the service. If you and/or your tutor feel that your child might need more than one rehearsal, please make arrangements with the Rabbi a few months earlier. **At the time of the rehearsal please:** - Bring your Torah (and Haftorah) portions, blessings, *drosh*, and tallit.

APPENDIX D:

PARENT CHECK LIST

The following information should help you create a smooth plan for your B'nai Mitzvah event at the synagogue. The most important contact will be with the CJC office to help you coordinate logistics.

THE OFFICE STAFF'S RESPONSIBILITIES ON SATURDAY MORNING:

- Room set-up for service--pulling out the cart of prayer books, taking out the *tallit* tree, having basket of *kippot* out, etc.
- Preparation of bima
- *Kiddush* set-up in back of room (when no caterer is present), including tables, challah, pouring wine and juice

- Returning prayer books, *tallit and, kippot* to storage

PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES PRIOR TO SERVICE:

___ Let the CJC office know how many guests you are expecting for seating three weeks before the service. Be sure to allow for 20 additional congregation members to ensure adequate seat set up and prayer book availability.

___ Let the CJC office know if you are planning a special table set-up. Normal set-up includes 2 rectangular tables in the back on the right side as you walk in the room for *Kiddush*, and 1 rectangular table by the door for kippot and programs.

___ Let the CJC office know your arrangements for photography and videography.

___ If you are having a caterer for *Kiddush* after the service, inform the CJC office that a caterer will be present.

PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES ON SATURDAY MORNING:

___ Bring all food, drinks, paper products, kippot, programs, and centerpieces you are providing for *Kiddush* to the CJC office by Friday at 12:00 pm. CJC will provide one challah, wine, grape juice, and small cups. If you plan to provide your own supplies or supplement these already provided, let the office know what you will be providing at least 1 week before the date.

___ Bring your child's prayer book, *tallit*, speeches (parent and child), copies of readings, and program guides.

___ If distributing candy at end of service, provide soft, individually wrapped candy and 2-3 baskets. The ushers will be happy to distribute the candy during the *Kiddush*, the blessing over the wine.

___ If you plan to distribute the wine for *Kiddush* to guests in their seats, arrange for 3-4 guests to do so right before *Kiddush* (alternatively, wine can be left on the back table to drink after the service)

___ Arrange for your photographer to be finished by 9:30am. As an alternative, the photographs may be taken after the rehearsal, around 5:15pm. Please inform the CJC office of your photography plans. If you wish to have photographs with the Torah, this can be done only at the rehearsal.

___ If videotaping, inform videographers that they must be set up by 9:30am. Set up is in the back of the room by the *Kiddush* table. They must remain stationary, with no standing on chairs or tables.

___ If having unescorted young guests, arrange to have responsible adults sit with them to maintain decorum. There should be one adult for every ten teens or children.

Appendix E: SERVICE EXPLANATION – *Text of handout*

Welcome to the Shabbat morning service at Columbia Jewish Congregation. If this is your first visit to our congregation, you may have some questions. It is our hope that this information will provide you with some answers to your questions. Please feel free to ask the Rabbi or Cantor additional questions after the conclusion of the service. (If you are in need of a hearing loop, please let the usher know.)

Shabbat Shalom - a peaceful Sabbath to you. Jews gather together on the Sabbath, a time of rest and renewal, to pray and to study the teachings of our traditions. The mood is quiet, reflective, receptive, and sometimes joyous, as we pray and study the Torah – as individuals and as part of our community.

Columbia Jewish Congregation is a Reconstructionist congregation, egalitarian in nature and working in partnership with G-d. Many of the men and women cover their heads with a *kippah* (a skullcap or *yarmulke*) as a sign of respect and piety. Some of the congregants wear a prayer shawl called a *tallit*. The special fringes denote the 613 commandments in the Torah, and as we wrap ourselves in the shawl, we have a sense of protection and shelter.

We use the prayer book, *Kol Haneshama*. You'll notice that it is read from right to left, because we read Hebrew from right to left. There are many commentaries included, as well as transliterations of the Hebrew, so that you can get a sense of the meaning of the prayers. Please take the time to follow along in English, or read the transliterations with the congregation. Here is a general order of the major parts of the service.

The Sabbath morning service is divided into the following principal parts:

Birchot Ha-Shachar (Morning blessings). These preliminary blessings help us to move from sleep to spiritual wakefulness. We include thank-you prayers, including blessings of gratitude for the body, mind, and soul. During the course of the morning, we recite many blessings. Jews are sometimes called “blessing seekers” because of the number of blessings we have, both in and out of the synagogue.

P’sukei-de-Zimra (Verses of Song) are a series of psalms of praise and gratitude, sung or read, silently as well as aloud.

Shacharit (Morning Service) begins the formal public worship of the morning. This part of our service includes the *Bar’chu*, the formal call to worship, in which we rise. Bowing, the service leader begins this prayer, sings, “Bless G-d who is to be blessed.” The congregation then responds, also bowing. The *Shema* prayer is probably the most universally recognized

prayer, beginning with “Hear, O Israel! *Adonai* is our G-d, *Adonai* is One.” The first lines are then followed by several paragraphs from the Torah (Deuteronomy and Numbers). Some in the congregation will cover their eyes while chanting the first line of the *Shema*, to permit total concentration on these words and their meaning.

We stand for the silent prayer, the ***Amida*** (literally “standing.”). We read the *Amida* silently, sitting when finished. You are invited to use this time for private prayer or meditation, and to sit when finished. Some people read these pages in Hebrew, some in English, some compose their own personal prayers. Some bow when reciting certain phrases praising G-d. The Cantor leads a repetition of the *Amidah* after we are finished with our silent prayer. We focus on celebration and gratitude for the Sabbath, ending with the hope that our prayers will be accepted, and we end with a prayer for peace.

The **Torah Service** is the next major part of the service. If you are attending a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, this is the part of the service where the 13-year-old participates most actively, because he or she today joins the adult Jewish community, assuming adult responsibility and obligations. This newest member of our adult community is given the honor of an *Aliyah*, of being called to the Torah to recite a special blessing for the first time.

We hold the Torah with great reverence. When the ark is opened, note the *ner tamid* (eternal light). This light reminds us of the Temple in Jerusalem, as well as of the earlier Tabernacle in the desert, where we are reminded that we each carry the light of the Torah within us. As the Torah is carried around in a processional, many people will touch the Torah with their *tallit* or prayer book. The congregation always rises when the Ark is opened and does not sit again until the Ark is closed and the Torah is laid down on the reading table.

After the processional, the “portion of the week” is read. You will see people going up to the reading table, reciting blessings of thanks for the gift of the Torah, and then reading along as the reader chants. The Torah is printed differently from the text you have in your book. It is written on parchment, with no vowels or punctuation of any kind. It has been written entirely by hand by a scribe. There can be no errors in the writing of the Torah. The musical notes are not printed in the Torah – the reader has practiced for many hours in order to pronounce the words correctly, and to use the right notes and phrasing.

We read the Five Books of Moses over the course of the year. The same Torah portion will be read on any particular Sabbath morning, no matter where we are in the world. After the portion is read, and the Bar or Bat Mitzvah has been called to the Torah to complete the portion, chanting the *Maftir* (completion section), the Torah is lifted and turned for all to see. The Bar or Bat Mitzvah may then chant the *Haftorah*, a prophetic message related in some way to the Biblical reading of the day.

The Bar or Bat Mitzvah and the Rabbi give a talk, or d’var Torah, usually picking up on some theme or event we have just read about in the Biblical portion. Because the Torah is so concise in its telling of our story, lends itself well to uncovering the meaning and commentaries and expansion of the text. After the talk is completed, we return the Torah to the Ark and move into the concluding part of the service. We rise again, and sing a prayer

from the Book of Proverbs affirming, “The Torah is a tree of life to those who grasp it, its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace.”

We chant the **Aleinu** prayer, praying for the day when all will be united and accept G-d’s Sovereignty.

The Rabbi then reads a list of people whose *Yahrzeit* (anniversary of death) is commemorated. Those commemorating the *Yahrzeit* rise and recite the **Kaddish** prayer. Many of us stand with the mourners, in solidarity and to remember those who have no one to recite *Kaddish* for him or her. This prayer, glorifying G-d, helps us reconnect with the values and beliefs we held before this death. This prayer keeps us connected to and supported by our synagogue community.

We conclude with a hymn and blessings over wine and bread. Following the service, we wish each other a Shabbat Shalom, and join together for the *Kiddush*.

Appendix F

Tips for Divorced or Separated Parents:

How to Help Make Your Child’s Bar or Bat Mitzvah Wonderful

You and your child undoubtedly will remember the Bar or Bat Mitzvah experience for your lifetimes. While the preparation and the big day can be both joyful and stressful for all involved, when parents are separated or divorced, there are some unique challenges for you and for your child.

First and foremost, this learning experience and the Shabbat ritual itself are your child’s experience! Keep the focus on him or her. While you will be filled with pride at your child’s poise and accomplishments, it is not your day. Regardless of how hard you have worked to make the day happen, how much you feel the wonder of his/her growing up (and perhaps the sadness too), or how much money it is costing, it is not about you.

Second, in addition to remembering that the day belongs to the child, it is important for divorced/separated parents to find meaningful ways to come together for this big event.

What does all this mean in practical terms? What has worked for many other separated or divorced parents? Here are some tips:

Before the Big Day:

1. Remember, it is most important for you to conduct yourself cordially with the other parent and also when you speak about the other parent to your child. Whether the child lives with you, whether the other parent is involved in the education process, whether he/she is helping to pay for the education or celebration – this person is your child’s parent forever, and loyalty bonds are deep and vital to a child’s well-being. Don’t do or say anything that might seem to your child that you are pressuring him/her “to take sides.” Allow your child to express his or her feelings about the day and about the family situation, and be empathic when listening.
2. As early as possible, both parents should meet with the Rabbi and Cantor to make a plan for both the service and the celebration to follow. If possible, try to divide

responsibilities with the other parent, giving each a real role and “say” in the day. In this way, both parents are likely to be fully invested in the preparations, in the education and perhaps tutoring, and in the plan for the service. Thus, there is a reduced chance of misunderstanding or sabotage.

3. Make sure that all important decisions for the service (aliyahs, readings, etc.) and the invitation list are cleared with the other parent or at least known to the other parent, so there are no surprises. Also both parents should involve the child in the planning, so that the child is not surprised on the day of the event.
4. When communicating with the other parent, keep the focus on your child and on the event, not on prior or existing conflict or fears. Remember that extended family “on the other side” are your child’s family – grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, friends – and you play a key role in making their attendance and participation comfortable and fun. Being gracious to them is *an act of love for your child*. It also models mature behavior, and your child will be watching and listening for guidance on how to feel and behave.
5. If you have a “significant other” in your life, find a way to involve her/him without, in any way, supplanting the biological or adoptive parent or close relatives of your child. As delicate as this can be, it is another important dimension of your role that is focused on the benefit to your child and the well-being of the families going forward.
6. Consider getting outside help from a counselor if the relationship with the other parent is too complex or tense.

On the Big Day:

7. Parents should try to sit together at the front of the sanctuary, along with all grandparents, step parents and key relatives. Create a visual message that this family has come together for this child, regardless of the circumstances of the parents’ relationship. “Rise to the occasion,” if for only a few hours. You will be amazed at how this coming together will provide deep comfort for your child.
8. When you come to that special moment in the service during which you speak from the bima about your child, keep the focus on her/him – accomplishments, talents, efforts – nothing embarrassing and nothing that is likely to contribute to strain between your child and siblings or with the other parent. Cordial, positive, joy-filled – these are the desired tones to create. Absolutely no mention of the strain with the other parent! Please keep this speech to a 2-3 minute time limit.
9. When it comes time to thank those involved in making the Big Day happen, find a genuine way to acknowledge the other parent, grandparents, etc. Your child is the listener who will most benefit.

In Conclusion:

By following these suggestions for a great celebration, you are also helping to pave the way to a future of other important life cycle events that you will probably be sharing with this extended family – graduations, weddings, babies, funerals. You may even find that this coming together paves the way for a more amiable relationship with the other parent in general.

And enjoy yourself at this great simcha!

Appendix G

RESOURCES

There are many creative ways of infusing your simcha with meaning. Please take a few minutes to look through the following samplings and see what would be the most appropriate for your family. Please note that this is not a recommendation for one company over another company.

Mitzvah Kippot

Want to have the most beautiful kippot for your guests? Ones that no one has ever seen before? Brightly colored and beautifully patterned? Call MayaWorks, Kathleen Morkert, 773-506-4905, mayaworks-chi@attbi.com, www.mayaworks.org. These kippot will not only wow your guests but will also help support the women who make them in remote villages of Guatemala. (These women are VERY busy—you need to place your order very early.)

Centerpieces

When it comes to your party, there are so many things you can do for centerpieces:

1. Books, books and books! An arrangement of kids' books, audio tapes, video tapes and CD's can be then be given away to a deserving organization in your area.
2. Food, food, and food! An arrangement of canned and boxed foods in a basket can then be donated to a local pantry or shelter.
3. Want to go the traditional route with flowers or plants? Arrangements of individual plants and flowers can be broken up and distributed to the local hospital, shelter or nursing home, or you can ask your Rabbi or synagogue office to give you the names of congregants who might enjoy some. You can do this with bima arrangements, too.
4. Speaking of bima arrangements....don't forget you can make attractive baskets of toys and stuffed animals and distribute them as well.
5. Are you a sports fanatic? Try collecting sports equipment and arrange it as centerpieces. After the party? Give it away to local shelters where kids may not have their own equipment.
6. Use your imagination! There are hundreds of ways to do this—just keep thinking Mitzvahs!

Books

****=in the CJC Library**

****The Bar Mitzvah Book** – by Moira Paterson

****A Spiritual Journey: The Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah Handbook** – Seymour Rossel

****For Kids--Putting God on Your Guest List : How to Claim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Bar/Bat Mitzvah**

by Jeffrey K. Salkin

****Putting God on the Guest List : How to Reclaim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah**

by Jeffrey K. Salkin, et al

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Survival Guide - by Randi Reisfeld

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Basics : A Practical Family Guide to Coming of Age Together -- by Cantor Helen Leneman (Editor), et al;

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planbook - by Jane Lewit

Whose Bar/Bat Mitzvah Is This, Anyway? : A Guide for Parents Through a Family Rite of Passage

by Judith Davis

The Complete Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planner : An Indispensable, Money-Saving Workbook for Organizing Every Aspect of the Event-From Temple Service to Receipt

by Linda Seifer Sage

The Complete Bar/Bat Mitzvah Book : Everything You Need to Plan a Meaningful Celebration -- by Patti Moskowitz

Websites:

For terrific tzedakah suggestions, check these websites:

www.actsofkindness.org

Creating a Fabulous Mitzvah-Projects Booklet for *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Families:

Rabbi Neal Gold, 732-545-6484, goldnd@aol.com

The A to Z of How to Choose a Project for Your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*: Thomas Cohen, 215-765-1320, janetcohen@compuserve.com

Gathering Sports Equipment at a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* to Be Donated to Kids In Need:

Mark Guterman, 973-379-2274

