



Congregation  
**BETH AM ISRAEL**  
*Building Meaningful Jewish Lives Together*

# Bar/Bat Mitzvah Handbook

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Haverim -

What a momentous time for your family as you embark on the journey of your child's becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah! We are grateful that you have chosen to celebrate this life passage as part of the Beth Am Israel community and we are excited to share in your simcha with you.

In the eyes of Jewish tradition and practice, Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a biological fact. At the age of 12 for girls and 13 for boys, an individual takes on the obligation of mitzvot, a new level of commitment to the community, and a new status. Over the centuries, we've come to mark this moment of transition with a celebration, choosing to make this passage meaningful by building a set of rituals around it. A young teen's first Aliyah to the Torah is a great simcha for that individual, for the family, and for the entire community. We aim to honor each of those layers in the course of planning and preparing with you for your child's celebration.

In this booklet you will find a great deal of information and material, all of it meant to help you to find your way through this coming year of planning and preparation. The section entitled "Ceremony" details the parts of our Shabbat worship in which you and your child will participate. The "Preparations" section describes, in detail, the schedule of meetings and rehearsals leading up to your families simcha. Both "Logistics" and "Celebrations" provide a listing of the many practical details involved in making your simcha joyful and uniquely yours.. The booklet also contains an Appendix filled with resources that we hope will be of help and support to you along the way. We're delighted to be able to share this booklet with you and please contact us with any questions.

One final note for your consideration: Becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah at Beth Am Israel involves a communal celebration and an affirmation of one's Jewishness in the presence of one's classmates and community. In order to honor this communal layer of the celebration, we encourage each family to invite the other students in their child's class at Beth Am Israel to the ceremony.

Mazal Tov to you, your child, and your entire family! We are so pleased to be part of this life journey with you.

L'shalom,

Rabbi David Ackerman

Hazzan Harold Messinger (B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator for Ritual, Prayer, and Mitzvah projects)

Jessica Glickman (B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator, Program Coordinator and Administrator)

Grace Gershkoff, Executive Director

Leo Fuhrman, Education Director

## CEREMONY

### Friday Evening Service

All children becoming b'nai mitzvah on a given weekend are expected to attend the Friday evening service their families (This includes children celebrating a b'nai mitzvah on Shabbat afternoon, Sunday, or Monday mornings). The service runs from 6:00-7:15pm. Occasionally, a special program may be scheduled which would change the starting time. Please confirm the starting time with the synagogue office. Traditionally, the b'nai mitzvah leads the *sh'ma* and *v'ahavta*, *veshamru*, *hatzi kaddish*, and the evening *kiddush* (blessing over the wine). B'nai Mitzvah kids who express interest and/or are capable are welcome to participate in Kabbalat Shabbat on an instrument/singing and in leading the Ma'ariv/Evening service as well. Please speak directly with Hazzan Harold about these opportunities.

### Shabbat Morning Service

Shabbat services are a communal celebration of the holiness of the day, and our congregation welcomes that Bar/Bat Mitzvah child into our community as a full participant. Our Shabbat morning begins at 9:00am with several study and alternative prayer options, and we encourage you and your family to choose one in which to participate. The formal service begins at 9:45am. Your family is invited to sit in the first rows near the *bimah*, and to participate in the entire service. At around 10:00am, the Rabbi and parents (or grandparent(s), or other family member) will present a *tallit* (prayer shawl) to the child, and the blessing for wearing a *tallit* will be said in the presence of the congregation.

Candy Toss: The candy toss (showering the B'nai Mitzvah with sweetness) is a way we mark this joyous celebration. At the conclusion of the Haftarah, we have a custom of **gently** tossing candy at the b'nai mitzvah child. We will provide and distribute soft candy. (No throw back by the B'nai Mitzvah, please!)

Following this, parents are invited to give their child a short blessing (between 1-2 minutes) followed by blessings from the Rabbi and Hazzan. Services will then conclude around 12:00pm

In general, the B'nai Mitzvah child chants the Torah blessings and *maftir* (additional portions of the Torah, consisting of approx. 3-4 verses of Torah), the *Haftarah* (prophetic reading of the week) and *haftarah* blessings, and leads parts of the Torah service. The B'nai Mitzvah also prepares and presents a *d'var Torah* (a 5-8 minute long Torah teaching relating the Torah/Haftarah), which s/he works on with the Rabbi. A full list of prayers the B'nai Mitzvah may lead is in the appendix.

## CEREMONY

### Honors

A form listing the honors in detail is in the appendix. Please complete and review the form with Hazzan Harold or Jessica Glickman two weeks prior to the service. During Shabbat services, family member or friends may:

- ♦ Chant a section of Torah
- ♦ Carry the Torah
- ♦ Come up to the *Bimah* to open/close the ark or to dress the Torah (*gelilah*)
- ♦ Have an *Aliyah* (chant the blessings before and after the Torah reading)
- ♦ Offer a prayer/poem in English.

Inclusion of Non-Jewish family and friends during the service. A non-Jewish person may:

- ♦ Accompany a Jewish person to take an *Aliyah*
- ♦ Accompany a Jewish person in opening/closing the ark where the Torah is kept
- ♦ Read the Prayer for Our Country
- ♦ Read an alternative reading or poem (this must be pre-approved by the Rabbi)

A non-Jewish person **may not**:

- ♦ Carry the Torah
- ♦ Dress or Lift the Torah

Please note: The honor of lifting the Torah (*hagbah*) is designated for Beth Am Members only. Family or friends, regardless of experience, are not assigned this honor.

## CEREMONY

### Chanting Torah

Many parents feel that in order to mark this moment, they desire to read Torah on the same day as their child's B'nai Mitzvah. We strongly urge parents, however, to not take on reading Torah (especially if you have not read since your own Bar/Bat Mitzvah!). It is our experience that in many cases, parents, especially those reading for the first time end up spending time 'cramming' for their Torah reading at the last moments, taking them out of the moment. Naturally, there are those who are very capable Torah readers and for whom this will not be a burden or distraction. However, even in those situations, we still advise not taking on any major role but rather, being present and focused solely on your child and the simcha. This moment truly only happens once.

If a family member or friend would like to chant Torah, please notify Hazzan Harold at least **three months** in advance. We can provide a recording of the Torah readings and/or blessings. Please make sure to coordinate all Torah readers with Hazzan Harold. It is very important that any family or friend who takes on this honor is prepared to read no later than 10 days before the B'nai Mitzvah. We ask that any reader be in touch with Hazzan Harold to read their portion over the phone (or send a recording of them reading). ***Hazzan Harold reserves the right to ask people who are not prepared to respectfully step down from reading. Please give the maximum amount of time to friends and family to prepare when developing your honors list.***

### Parent's Blessing

At the conclusion of the Torah service, parents are invited to give a short blessing, sharing your hopes and wishes for your child going forward. You may write your own, use a traditional blessing, or a combination. Please plan to speak for no longer than two minutes. Please provide Rabbi David with a copy of your blessing before the rehearsal date.

### Kiddush Following the Shabbat Service

On Shabbat mornings there is a communal kiddush following the service that is sponsored by that week's B'nai Mitzvah family (this is part of the B'nai Mitzvah fee). If you would like to have a sit-down luncheon at Beth Am Israel, a night time party, or a Friday night dinner, please contact the office to make arrangements. Please also see the "celebrations" section of the handbook, which has more detail on planning events at BAI.



## CEREMONY

### Alternative Prayer Service Options

For some kids and families, the Shabbat morning service is not the best option for celebrating the ritual aspects of the B'nai Mitzvah. In special circumstances, we can offer families an alternative to the Shabbat morning service. This include a Shabbat afternoon (Mincha), or in rare cases, a Sunday Morning service where Torah is read. Please speak directly to Rabbi David and Hazzan Harold if this option feels like it might be right for you and your family.

### Decorum

For many guests, both Jewish and non-Jewish, our Shabbat morning service will be a new and unfamiliar experience. Ahead of your celebration, please share with your guests our practices and customs with regard to behavior in our Sanctuary. In the appendix, there is a sample letter that addresses the following items related to decorum, one we encourage you to send to your guests:

- ◆ No loud talking is permitted in the sanctuary during services
- ◆ No cell phone use (texting, calls, video or still photography is permitted at any time)
- ◆ There is no writing, drawing, use of electronics, photography, videography or recording on the synagogue premises during any Bar/Bat Mitzvah service or luncheon, including services that take place on a non-Shabbat morning. Please ask your guests not to use cellphones or cameras while on synagogue premises.
- ◆ The synagogue will provide ushers for the service to help guests get to their seats, maintain decorum, and provide guidance as to when people may enter the Sanctuary.

### ***Kippot* (Head Coverings):**

- ◆ All men and women (whether Jewish or not, and regardless of age) who go up to the bimah, must wear a *kippah*. Men going up for an *Aliyah* must also wear a *tallit*, and women are encouraged, but not obligated, to wear a *tallit* as well. Please advise any of your guest who will be up on the *bimah* of this policy.
- ◆ *Kippot* and lace head coverings are always available. Many families prefer to order special *kippot* to commemorate the simcha. Please take your *kippot* home after the service; any that are not taken home will be donated by the synagogue.

## PREPARATION

### Becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah

As part of becoming a Bar/Bat mitzvah, students are expected to complete the following formal educational requirements or their equivalent. We recognize that learning differences, family situations and other circumstances occur. Please reach out to Rabbi David, Hazzan Harold or the Education Director to discuss any matters that may be specific to your child.

- ◆ Engage in Jewish study for five or more years, either by attending classes in a religious school program approved by the Education Committee, or as worked out between the B'nai Mitzvah family, the Rabbi and the Education Director.
- ◆ Attend Shabbat morning services during the year prior to the B'nai Mitzvah and/or complete whatever service requirements are in effect for the year prior to the B'nai Mitzvah. Parents should attend as well to become familiar with the service.
- ◆ Engage in a year-long mitzvah project to culminate with the B'nai Mitzvah celebration, determined by the child and family and approved by our B'nai Mitzvah coordinator.

### B'nai Mitzvah Workshops

An informational meeting to discuss the practical “nuts and bolts” of celebrating a B'nai Mitzvah will be held in the fall for 6th grade parents. Throughout your child's 6th grade year, the Rabbi and Hazzan will lead a series of workshops for the B'nai Mitzvah and his/her parents to attend. Together we explore the meaning of the B'nai Mitzvah ceremony, and what it means to become a young Jewish adult with responsibility to the Jewish community and the entire world. These workshops are interactive and fun!

### B'nai Mitzvah Tutoring

Approxiametly 10 months to a year prior to the B'nai Mitzvah date, your child will begin individual tutored lessons. Tutors play a primary role in preparing the B'nai Mitzvah student to:

- ◆ Chant their Haftarah and the blessings before and after the Haftarah
- ◆ Chant a small portion of Torah and recite the blessings before and after
- ◆ Lead key parts of the service, as determined by the tutor and in consultation with the Hazzan.

## PREPARATION

Generally, students will meet with their tutor once a week during the months leading up to the B'nai Mitzvah, although this varies according to schedules, needs of the student, etc. Students are encouraged to do as much as they can and to feel successful in their preparation.

Arrangements for tutoring are made privately between the family and the tutor. Hazzan Harold can help you choose a tutor that will be appropriate for your child, but in all cases, please check with the Hazzan before finalizing any tutoring agreement. Outside tutors, that is, tutors who are already 'pre-approved' by Beth Am Israel, must be in contact with Hazzan Harold prior to starting tutoring to coordinate expectations, tunes, etc.

### Rehearsal

Rehearsals will generally be scheduled on the Wednesday of the week before the B'nai Mitzvah. **For veteran BAI B'nai Mitzvah families this is a significant change from years past. Our aim is to have students be better prepared and feeling more at ease on the day of their B'nai Mitzvah. This also allows more time for any kids to polish their prayers/readings.**

All preparations for the B'nai Mitzvah should be completed by this date including:

- ◆ All prayers and Torah/Haftarah readings must be polished and ready
- ◆ d'var Torah: A final draft completed and approved by Rabbi David. The final draft should be brought to the rehearsal in its final form along with any items you wish to use during the bar/bat mitzvah (i.e. Tallit, Yad, etc.)

The rehearsal will take place with the Rabbi and/or Hazzan and will be scheduled for your family, usually from 4-6pm. There are cases when the rehearsal date is moved, both for synagogue and family reasons. If you anticipate a conflict, please contact the office.

### **Photography & Videography:**

**It is highly recommended that photography be done at a DIFFERENT TIME than the rehearsal.** This takes much of the stress and anxiety off the rehearsal and cuts the total time for the rehearsal in half. Please speak with Jessica to discuss different scheduling options.

If you choose to take pictures on the same day as the rehearsal, please arrange for your photographers to come at least one hour before rehearsal is scheduled, during which time they will be able to set up and take formal shots of your family. During the rehearsal itself, when the Rabbi is present and the Torah is taken out, the photographers are welcome to take candid shots of the practice as long as they do not interrupt the run-through. **Please remember, no photography or videography may be taken on Shabbat during any part of the B'nai Mitzvah service or reception (if the reception is held at BAI).**

## PREPARATION

### d'var Torah

The d'var Torah (Torah teaching) is a core piece of the B'nai Mitzvah process. We encourage you as parents to spend some time with your child reading your child's Torah portion, discussing the themes within and asking questions about how the Torah portion connects or resonates with him or her - it may or may not, and that's OK. Often the child will relate his or her mitzvah project to the Torah portion. A preliminary meeting with the Rabbi will be scheduled about 6 months before the B'nai Mitzvah. This allows your child to become acquainted with the parashat, get resources, and ask any questions they might have. Approximately 2 months prior to the B'nai Mitzvah, a meeting will be scheduled for your child to meet with the Rabbi to prepare his/her d'var Torah in more detail.

Please follow this timeline for d'var Torah preparation:

*Six Months Out* - First Meeting with the Rabbi to discuss the parashat and d'var Torah

*Two-Three Months Out* - Second Meeting with the Rabbi on d'var Torah. Either final approval or further formulation of ideas will occur.

*Six Weeks Out* - Student completes the first draft of the d'var and submits it to the Rabbi for comments.

*Four Weeks Out* - Student submits the final draft to the Rabbi for any edits or comments. If needed, student resubmits or has an in person meeting.

*Two Weeks Out* - Rabbi signs off on final draft. The student has time to format and practice ahead of rehearsal.

*At B'nai Mitzvah Rehearsal* - Student reads final, edited and approved d'var Torah out loud.

### Tzedekah & Mitzvah Projects

Learning to give *tzedakah* (charity) instinctively is an essential part of becoming an adult Jew and is central to the B'nai Mitzvah process. We remember the less fortunate, especially at moments of great happiness and we encourage each child to make a meaningful contribution to a cause he or she selects. Ideally, each child should choose at least one Jewish and one general charitable cause. A list of suggested organizations can be found on our website. Please contact our G'milut Hassadim Committee at [mitzvot@bethamIsrael.org](mailto:mitzvot@bethamIsrael.org) to coordinate your child's mitzvah project.

B'nai Mitzvah families are likewise encouraged to give *tzedekah* as an expression of gratitude for your simcha. We encourage parents to participate in this work by contributing 3% of the cost of your celebration to a charity of your choice. This act powerfully reinforces your child's understanding that in times of joy we must remember our fellow human beings in need.

## LOGISTICS

### Financial Information

Parents must be members in good-standing and all financial obligations to BAI must be current, including payment of any room rental fees and the B'nai Mitzvah fee, which includes:

- ♦ **Kiddush Sponsorship:** The B'nai Mitzvah family sponsors the traditional congregational kiddush on Shabbat. This sponsorship presents an opportunity for the B'nai Mitzvah family to share the joy of their simcha with the rest of the congregation. This fee covers our standard light kiddush. If you wish to have a larger sit down luncheon, there is an additional rental fee. Please contact the office for more details.
- ♦ **Van:** All Shabbat mornings when there is a B'nai Mitzvah and school is in session require the use of a van to shuttle guests between BAI and our off-site parking across the street.
- ♦ **Security Guard:** A security guard is present on all Shabbat Mornings for safety, security and traffic concerns in our parking lot.

### Parking and Transportation

On a typical Shabbat morning with a B'nai Mitzvah and school is in session, our parking lot does not meet our needs. Overflow parking is available on most Shabbat morning at the old St. Justin's Church at the corner of Hagys Ford Rd. and Tower Lane. The synagogue will arrange for a shuttle van between BAI and these lots. Our van service runs from 9am-1:30pm. If you wish to have the van run for additional time, please contact Dave's Limo directly at 215-288-1000. You will be responsible for additional fees.

Please inform your guests in your invitation about the off-site parking, and suggest they park in these areas without first driving through the BAI parking lot, unless there is a need for an elderly or disabled passenger to be dropped off at the building. Directions and a map to the off-site parking lots are in the appendix; feel free to send these to your guests.

Some families have hired vans or school buses to transport guests to and from the synagogue. If you are considering a bus for transport, please contact the office about logistics and timing.

If you have family/friends who are not able to use the shuttle van, please let the office know and reserved signs can be arranged. Please note there are a limited amount of spots that can be reserved.

### Guest Arrival

Our formal Shabbat morning services begin at 9:45am. Please feel free to let your guests know that they are more than welcome to join us at 9:00am for one of our spiritual/learning offerings.

## CELEBRATIONS

If you would like to hold your reception (sitdown kiddush, Friday night dinner, or Saturday night party), please contact the office as soon as possible. It is possible that more than one family may be interested in using the facility on any given date, so it is best to book the space early.

### Vendors

**General Vendor Information:** Common vendors include caterers/servers, florists, photographers, musicians, etc. Some families also may hire decorators or party planners, bus companies, etc. Please feel free to contact the office with questions.

**Insurance Certificates & Liability Releases:** Please provide Beth Am Israel with names of every vendor who will perform services in the building within 45 days of the event (this includes friends/family who will be helping in some capacity - photography, decorating, etc and all drop off items as well). Each vendor you use MUST provide BAI with an insurance certificate. If an insurance certificate is not available the vendor must sign a liability release before performing services. Should a vendor not provide an insurance certificate or a liability release (which can be obtained from the office), they will not be permitted to work in the building. For most vendors, this is standard practice. If you or your vendor(s) have questions, please contact the office.

**Delivery, Storage and Pick-up:** All deliveries for Friday evening or Shabbat morning MUST arrive on Friday before 1pm. No deliveries are permitted on Shabbat. Deliveries for post-Shabbat events may not arrive during Shabbat. Please coordinate with the office and Rabbi David about approved timing.

Food and beverages must be certified kosher and may be stored in the walk-in refrigerator or dry-box. Please clearly mark all food and supplies with your name and the date, as there may be multiple events on any given weekend.

All supplies and equipment not belonging to BAI must be removed in a timely manner. Beth Am Israel assumes no responsibility for loss or damage to any items left behind.

**Photography and Videography:** Photography and videography are not permitted during a party on Shabbat. If you wish to take photographs during rehearsal, you may do so. (Please see "Rehearsal" in the "Preparations" section for more details on photography and videography.)

**Music:** Live or recorded music may be played at a reception in the Synagogue social hall. If you plan to play music, please contact the Hazzan for specific guidelines.

## CELEBRATIONS

**Youth Supervision:** Teenage and youth parties require the attendance and supervision of at least one adult for every five children, as well as the hiring of a security guard. Parents are responsible for overseeing all areas, including bathrooms, the kitchen, unused areas of the building, and outside areas.

**Caterers:** Please check with the BAI office before entering into any contractual arrangement with a caterer. BAI only allows approved caterers (see appendix) to work in our building. **All agreements with caterers must include setup, food preparation, service, and cleanup. Our custodial staff is not responsible for these tasks. Families/caterers are also responsible for all paper goods, silverware, coffee/tea, linens, etc.** If you are interested in using a kosher caterer not on the list, please ask the office. All food served at the synagogue must meet our kashrut requirements.

If you choose to use a drop-off caterer, pre-arranged platters, or plan to cook in the BAI kitchen yourself you will need to hire partyhelpers ( Joy Edelman - partyhelpers@comcast.net) or have family/friends available for Shabbat morning to setup, serve food, and cleanup. There will also need to be a mashgiach present at all times.

### Kitchen Usage & Kashrut

Whether you are cooking or have a caterer, please take note of the following guidelines:

- ◆ No food or beverages should be left out on tables or counters. If you have leftover food, please consider sending leftover food to a food bank or shelter in the area. You can contact the G'milut Hassadim committee if you need help arranging it.
- ◆ All dishes must be washed and put away in the appropriate locations
- ◆ Beth Am Israel often holds several events in a single day; please be considerate and leave the kitchen and premises clean for the next event.

### Kashrut Guidelines

Please read these abbreviated guidelines carefully (a full version is available in the office) and adhere to them when you are bringing in or preparing food in the synagogue. Special care must be taken to ensure that all food served at BAI meets our kashrut standards. Any costs related to the violation of BAI Kashrut policies are the exclusive responsibility of the family sponsoring the event.

## CELEBRATIONS

### Kashrut Guidelines Continued

- ♦ No food may be brought in from home under any circumstances. The only acceptable food in the BAI Kitchen is:
  - ♦ Cooked meals provided by an approved kosher caterer
  - ♦ Fresh fruits and vegetables
  - ♦ Baked goods from pre-approved bakeries
  - ♦ Kosher food cooked in the BAI kitchen in accordance with the BAI Kashrut Guidelines and under appropriate supervision by the Rabbi
  - ♦ All items must be prepackaged, sealed, and bearing an appropriate hechsher (a plain K hechsher is not acceptable in the BAI kitchen)
- ♦ All food prepared in the BAI kitchen must be under the supervision of an approved mashgiach (supervisor). BAI's mashgichim are members of our community who volunteer to ensure that BAI's kashrut policies are observed and to help you with any questions as they arise during food preparation.
- ♦ On Shabbat, food may be assembled and reheated in the kitchen, but not cooked.
- ♦ Only kosher wine may be served
- ♦ No sterno (or like fuel source) is allowed on Shabbat

### Setup and Decoration

**Room Setup Logistics:** BAI can accommodate up to 225 people for a sit-down meal. We provide tables and chairs based upon availability; you may need to arrange for additional tables and chairs depending on your guest count.

Any discussion regarding room setup or other details related to your party should be directed to the office. Our education program, as well as other programs, may be taking place at the same time as your celebration, so all setups will reflect consideration of traffic flow. If you are planning to book a caterer, they may help you determine the setup. Please give a description of the way you'd like the room set up to the office at least two weeks prior to the B'nai Mitzvah.

**Synagogue Decorations:** You are welcome to beautify the sanctuary and other parts of the building with flowers or other decorations

- ♦ Decorations may only be placed in rooms which have been reserved in the contract.
- ♦ Only draperies using free standing poles are permitted. Please do not hang items from walls or ceilings without pre-approval from the BAI office. No pins, tacks, or other adhesive can be used as is damages the building.
- ♦ All decorations must be removed at the completion of the event.



# B'NAI MITZVAH TIMELINE

## **During your child's 4th Grade Year:**

- ♦ Bar/Bat Mitzvah date is assigned - tell family and friends to save the date!!

## **1-2 years Before:**

- ♦ Attend "Nuts & Bolts" B'nai Mitzvah workshop
- ♦ Make arrangements for a tutor, making sure to check in with the Hazzan first
- ♦ Reserve a reception and/or party space
- ♦ Reserve hotel rooms for out-of-town guests

## **1 Year Before:**

- ♦ Initial meeting with the Hazzan/B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator to discuss all aspects of the service including prayers, preparation, honors, tutoring, etc.
- ♦ You'll receive an email from the office to discuss logistics, calendaring, and general expectations
- ♦ Attend B'nai Mitzvah workshop (for parents and children), usually held on Sunday mornings 4 times throughout the 6th grade year.
- ♦ Meet with caterer, musicians, florist, photographer, etc. as necessary. Please check with the office for a list of approved caterers.

## **8 Months Before:**

- ♦ Mitzvah project proposal completed and given to the Hazzan

## **6 Months Before:**

- ♦ First meeting with the Rabbi to discuss the d'var Torah; set dates for additional meeting, usually 1-2 months before the B'nai Mitzvah.
- ♦ Set date to meet with the Hazzan for an informal meeting (usually 2 weeks before the B'nai Mitzvah, students only)

# B'NAI MITZVAH TIMELINE

## 4 Months Before:

- ♦ Finalize Guest List
- ♦ Order out Invitations
- ♦ Order Kippot (optional)
- ♦ Order a Tallit for the B'nai Mitzvah

## 2-3 Months Before:

- ♦ Begin filling out honors form, including Hebrew names
- ♦ Send out Invitations
- ♦ Touch base with the BAI office to start determining details of your event
- ♦ Meet with the Rabbi to discuss the d'var Torah
- ♦ Make sure all vendors have submitted an insurance certificate/liability release

## 1 Month Before:

- ♦ Order additional van service if necessary
- ♦ Submit draft of d'var Torah to the Rabbi

## 2 Weeks Before:

- ♦ Submit list of honors, parent's blessings, and program blurb to the office
- ♦ Submit final setup to the office
- ♦ Informal meeting with the Hazzan to review Torah/Haftarah reading and prayer leadership

## 10 Days Before:

- ♦ Rehearsal (please contact the office if you have a conflict asap)
- ♦ All supplies dropped off before noon on the Friday before the B'nai Mitzvah

## Day of:

- ♦ Bring to BAI - List of Honors, parent's blessing, child's binder of materials, bottle of water, tissues, etc.
- ♦ Relax, take a deep breath, and ENJOY! MAZAL TOV!

# HONORS WORKSHEET

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Name (Including the **FULL Hebrew and English Name**):

---

English Date of B'nai Mitzvah: \_\_\_\_\_

Open & Close Ark (during Torah processional - 2 people - English name only)

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

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

Carry Torah (processional - 1 person - English name only)

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

Note: Please DO NOT assign a Torah lifter. BAI will designate a congregant to lift the Torah.

Dress Torah

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

Carry Torah (recessional - 1 person - English name only)

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

Open & Close Ark (during Torah recessional - 2 people - English name only)

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

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

The following prayers may be given to a non-Jewish family/friend. You may assign up to two people for each reading.

Prayer for Our Country:

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Prayer for Israel (can be read in Hebrew or English - Hebrew reader must have strong Hebrew reading skills)

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# HONORS WORKSHEET

## Aliyot to the Torah (the Torah blessing)

You are given 4 aliyot to assign to family and friends. This includes the aliyah that the parents take, normally the 7th Aliyah. This does NOT include the “maftir” Aliyah for your B’nai Mitzvah child. Parents are generally called up for the 7th Aliyah, so that they can be on the bimah for their child’s Maftir Aliyah (a non-Jewish parent is invited to join their Jewish spouse for this Aliyah). You may have up to two people come up for a given Aliyah.

If you know in advance that the person(s) is a Kohen or a Levi, please indicate that on the worksheet. Kohain will have the 1st Aliyah and Levi the 2nd.

If you have a preference for which Aliyah you would like for specific honorees, please indicate that as well. Please be explicit if assigning specific aliyot.

**Please include the FULL ENGLISH NAME AND FULL HEBREW NAME OF EACH HONOREE.** Full Hebrew name means their Hebrew first name and middle name (if known) followed by Ben (son of) or Bat (daughter of) and their parent’s first name. (Ex. Yochana bat David v’ Tova)

Aliyah:

English Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrew Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Aliyah:

English Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrew Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Aliyah:

English Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrew Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Aliyah:

English Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrew Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Letters to Guests

Dear friends/parents of \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to share with you our excitement as \_\_\_\_\_'s Bar/Bat Mitzvah approaches and to convey a message requested by our synagogue.

Beth Am Israel's leadership has asked that we emphasize the following points, which I quote below:

- 1) Modesty and respect in dress is a deeply held value at Beth Am Israel. Clothing worn in a House of Worship is more modest than party clothes.
- 2) In an effort to preserve the distinctive quality of Shabbat (Sabbath), our practice at Beth Am Israel prohibits the use of cell phones and other electronic devices. We ask our guests, and one another, to turn cell phones off or to set them to vibrate, and put them away. If there is an emergency need to use a cell phone, please step outside the building.
- 3) Please be aware that at Beth Am Israel, all men, whether Jewish or not, are asked to wear kippot/head coverings as a sign of respect. Women are welcome and invited to wear kippot if they so choose. This request includes school-age children.
- 4) We ask that school-age guests of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah sit on the main sanctuary level, in the fixed seats to the right of the bimah (stage), not upstairs. This location best enables the guests to connect with the service and to connect positively with the B'nai Mitzvah.

Thank you in advance for helping us maintain our traditions at Beth Am Israel and celebrate \_\_\_\_\_'s milestone with us.

Warm regards,

\_\_\_\_\_Family

# A Guide to Writing Your d'var Torah

Your d'var Torah (literally a “word of Torah”) is an opportunity for you and your family to study the Torah portion together, and then for you to teach us something that you have learned. It is a way of bringing your voice into the conversation that is Torah by adding it to the text itself, the tradition, our ancestors, and the Jewish people as a whole. In this way your voice becomes a part of the greater Torah that is the collective Wisdom of our People.

## Preparation

In preparation for writing your d'var Torah:

- ◆ Read the entire parasha carefully. Outline the plot, action, storyline, or content of the whole parasha, and be able to answer the following questions:
  - ◆ What is the parasha's name? In what sefer/book of the Torah is it found?
  - ◆ Who are the major characters (if any)?
  - ◆ What is the context/setting of this parasha (what happened before and after?)
  - ◆ What is this parasha about?
- ◆ With members of your family, re-read and discuss the parasha. While you study together, think about and ask yourself and each other:
  - ◆ What questions do you have about this parasha and its content? Is there anything that you found challenging? Disturbing? Interesting? Inspiring?
  - ◆ Can you identify with any of the characters, their situations, their actions? How is their situation/problem/dilemma similar to and/or different from yours?

## Meeting with the Rabbi

Approximately six months before the B'nai Mitzvah service, the student and at least one parent will meet with the David for about an hour to study the parasha and begin to organize the d'var Torah. The most important part of this meeting will be to help figure out what you want to talk about. There are a number of different ways to come up with a topic to discuss, all of them based on your studying the parasha:

- ◆ Something in your portion you found particularly interesting
- ◆ An overall general theme or value (creation, freedom, leadership)
- ◆ A very specific point of a story or law (the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, the mitzvah of tzedekah)
- ◆ A topic that other commentators found worthy of discussion

## A Guide to Writing Your d'var Torah

- ◆ Your mitzvah project suggests an idea that you can connect to your parasha
- ◆ The connection between your Torah portion and the Haftarah

A second meeting lasting about a half-hour, this time usually only with the Rabbi and the B'nai Mitzvah student, will occur about a month before, to continue the writing process and work together to prepare.

### Writing Your d'var Torah

1. Using your outline, write a short introductory summary of what your parasha is about. Depending on the parasha, this should be about 1/2 to one page long.
2. Introduce the topic that you are going to discuss. If it is a story from the parasha, tell us the story in greater detail. If it is a law or ethical principle, describe and explain it in more detail. How does it relate to the parasha as a whole (how is it connected)?
3. What is the lesson this text is trying to teach? How do the characters or action of the story illustrate the lesson? What do traditional commentaries have to say about your topic? Do they add any information, understanding, or insight? How do you feel about what they have to say? (Feel free to agree or disagree, but make sure you explain why.) Can you find parallels or make connections with your life, or the world today? Give a few examples, especially from your own experience.
4. Does your mitzvah project connect to your parasha and your teaching? Can you make a connection to it? How has your project been an example of your teaching? What have you learned that might help explain what the Torah is trying to tell us in this parasha?
5. Tie it all together. Summarize your points and draw some conclusions about how to understand the Torah's teaching and what we can do to put these lessons into practice. Your d'var Torah should be approximately 4-6 pages long - typed, double spaced, 14 point font (easy to read). This may vary depending on your topic and comments. Your d'var Torah should be ready to be delivered at your rehearsal, where it will be read for practice.

## RESOURCES

*Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary*, Rabbinical Assembly & United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism/Jewish Publication Society: This is the *Chumash* that we use in our services. It has two layers of commentary on each page plus a number of more in-depth articles in the back on a wide range of general topics. Check these out to see if there is something related to your parasha or your topic.

*The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (Plaut), Union of American Hebrew Congregations: This *chumash* offers line-by-line commentary and short topical articles, as well as “gleanings” of related quotes from a wide range of traditional, academic, and modern texts and thinkers.

*A Torah Commentary for Our Times* (Fields), UAHC Press: A three volume set that gives a short summary of each parasha and several subjects with commentary from classical and modern sources.

### For Parents:

- ♦ *A Spiritual Journey: The Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah Handbook* by Seymour Rossel, 1994
- ♦ *Putting God on the Guest List: How to Reclaim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah* by Jeffrey K. Salkin, 1992
- ♦ *The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planbook* by Jane Levit & Ellen Epstein, 1996
- ♦ *Bar/Bat Mitzvah Basics* by Helen Leneman, ed. 2001
- ♦ *Entering Jewish Prayer* by Rabbi Reuven Hammer

### For Children 9-12:

*The Bar Mitzvah Lessons* by Harry Squires, 1980

*A Bar Mitzvah of a Different Kind* by Esther Adler, 1990

*Pink Slippers, Bat Mitzvah Blues* by Freida Wolff, 1989

*Good if it Goes* by Gary Provost, 1990



## DIRECTIONS & PARKING

Congregation Beth Am Israel is located at:

1301 Hagys Ford Rd.

Penn Valley, PA 19072

Please note: When entering our address into a GPS, use “Narberth” as the city.

### **Parking:**

Beth Am Israel has limited on-site parking, with no parking on driveways, landscaped areas, or Hagys Ford Rd. We have arranged for parking less than a 1/4 mile away at the former St. Justin's Church lot (corner of Hagys Ford Rd and Tower Lane). A shuttle van service is provided (on days when there is school) for your convenience. Please exercise extreme caution if you choose to walk to BAI as there is no crosswalk in front of Beth Am Israel and we are located on a blind curve.

### **Directions from I-76 East or I-76 West using the Belmont Ave. Exit**

- ♦ Take the Belmont Ave exit toward Green Lane
- ♦ If coming from I-76 East, turn right onto Belmont Ave
- ♦ If coming from I-76 West, turn left onto Belmont Ave
- ♦ Turn right onto Rock Hill Rd.
- ♦ Turn right onto Conshohocken State Rd.(PA 23) - there is a wawa on your right
- ♦ At the dead end (near the VFW) turn right to stay on PA 23
- ♦ Turn right onto Hagys Ford Rd (If you reach Hollow Road gone about .4 miles too far)
- ♦ Beth Am Israel is down the hill on the right

### **Directions from I-76 West using the Gladwyne Exit**

- ♦ Merge onto I-76 West and take exit 337 toward Gladwyne
- ♦ Turn left onto Hollow Rd.
- ♦ Turn left onto Hagys Ford Rd
- ♦ Beth Am Israel is down the hill on the left, just past Welsh Valley Middle School

# WHAT'S NEXT?

## Continued Participation in Religious Services

All students are welcome and encouraged to fulfill their new roles as adults in the Jewish community by further developing the skills and connections they have begun in their process of becoming a B'nai Mitzvah. As young adult members of the congregation, opportunities to lead services and participate in other communal activities and mitzvot are available throughout the year.

## Jewish Learning Opportunities

**LMAHH (Lower Merion Area Hebrew High):** We hope that each B'nai Mitzvah child will continue his/her Jewish learning and deepen his/her personal involvement in our communal life. We offer a high-quality Jewish educational program for teens entitled LMAHH. For more information about this program for 8-12th graders, please contact the Hazzan.

**Confirmation/Siyyum:** Teens who complete three years of study in our Prozdor program, or two years in an acceptable post B'nai Mitzvah educational program (Barrack, Gratz, etc) and the final confirmation year at BAI, are eligible for confirmation, a ceremony celebrating their commitment to ongoing Jewish learning. Please contact the Rabbi for more information.

**Madrichim (Guides):** The Madrichim program is designed for B'nai Mitzvah students through grade 12 who want to develop both their leadership skills and Jewish knowledge. In addition to studying Torah, students act as teacher's aides in our education program. They receive supervision and training in teaching as well. Upon completion of this program, students are awarded with a certificate in Jewish leadership. Upon graduation, students are often able to teach in a religious school while attending college.