



*Temple Shalom in Broomall*  
55 N. Church Lane, Broomall PA 19008

# B'nei Mitzvah Handbook

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Dear Bar/Bat Mitzvah Family,

You are about to experience one of the most meaningful and exciting moments in your family's life. Your child is approaching adolescence and nearing adulthood. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony marks and celebrates this remarkable transformation. The ceremony speaks of responsibility and recognition, of tradition, learning and growth. We at Temple Sholom in Broomall look forward to sharing this moment with you. We are here to guide you and support you as you enter this stage on your life-long Jewish journey.

Like all of our Jewish lifecycle rites, Bar/Bat Mitzvah brings a moment of personal and family change into the community. Your child will stand before a community of adults who have gathered for worship and learning to celebrate this unique moment of growth. Your child will do what only adult Jews are permitted to do -- lead the community in prayer and teach Torah to the community. The best preparation for this special moment is to be a part of our community. Come to the synagogue for worship and learning. Your participation says something very powerful to your child about the importance of community, of tradition, and of Judaism in your life.

Following your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah, it is important that your child continue his or her participation in Jewish life through a regular program of Jewish learning through Confirmation in 10th Grade and beyond. Temple Sholom offers a variety of learning options as well as a dynamic program of teen activities through our youth group, ToaSTY. Encouraging your child's participation in these programs reinforces the important lessons of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony.

We look forward to traveling this journey and celebrating with you.

Mazal Tov!

Rabbi Peter Rigler

Cantor Jamie Marx

Lori Green, Education Director

# Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation: Yesterday and Today

Listing the stages in a Jew's life, the *Mishnah* (around 200 CE) tells us that "thirteen is for *Mitzvah*." That is, traditional Jewish law holds that it becomes incumbent upon a thirteen-year-old male to fulfill the 613 commandments thought to be revealed by God. From this time unto the day of his death, the Jewish child is a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*, a "son/daughter of the commandments." According to Jewish tradition, each Jewish adult is tied to the moral and ritual laws of Judaism as a child is tied to his or her parents.

Sometime during the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, it became the custom to mark this stage of life by permitting the young man (at the time, it was only for males) to be one of eight adult males privileged to ascend (*aliyah*) to the reading desk on the *bimah* on a given Shabbat soon after his thirteenth birthday. At this stage, he would read some verses from the Torah scroll. Blessings thanking God as author of the Torah were recited before and after the reading of those verses. In that era, Jewish girls who reached the age of 12 had a responsibility to observe *mitzvot*.

By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it became custom to follow this first public ritual appearance with a party sponsored by the *Bar Mitzvah* family. This was usually held in the synagogue or at the family home on the *Shabbat* during which the young person ascended to the Torah. The very next morning, the *Bar Mitzvah* resumed his seat in his Talmud class in the community religious school, where he continued to study for five or more additional years. By the 18th century, some families had begun to hold festive meals in celebration of a girl's twelfth birthday.

With the advent of Reform Judaism in the 1800s in Germany, the early reformers looked askance at the *bar mitzvah* ceremony. While it was intended to signal the religious maturation of a young adult, they felt it had devolved into a mere "theatrical" experience and had become a "meaningless ceremonial." These reformers developed the service of Confirmation, which was conferred upon both girls and boys as early as 1846.

The first *bat mitzvah* ceremony in North America, which took place in May of 1922, was that of the late Judith Kaplan Eisenstein, daughter of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism.

Today in Reform Judaism, girls and boys are treated equally in the service and in their preparation. All children read from the Torah and all celebrate becoming *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* on their thirteenth birthday. At Temple Sholom, we continue this tradition of marking a young Jew's passage into adult Jewish responsibility through the celebration of *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah*.

Services at which students will be called to the Torah as *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* are held in our sanctuary. It is our congregation's role to support and celebrate this rite of passage along with members' families and friends.

# Assignment of B'nei Mitzvah Dates

## WHAT DO WE NEED TO GET A DATE ASSIGNED?

Dates are assigned for most students in the third grade year. (For families joining after a student's third grade year, it is assigned as soon as all dues and fees are paid.) In order to receive a date for your student, the family must be a member in good standing. That means:

- Membership dues must be current
- Student must be enrolled and attending religious school through the year of the bar/bat mitzvah
- B'nei mitzvah fees (detailed at the end of this document) must be current

These requirements hold from the initial assignment of dates through to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. All dues and fees must be current *30 days* before the ceremony. The Temple reserves the right to cancel the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony if it is determined that the membership obligations are not fulfilled.

## ASSIGNMENT OF B'NEI MITZVAH DATES

Whenever possible, students are assigned a Bar/Bat Mitzvah date on the Shabbat that falls closest to their birthday. In situations where the birthdays of more than two children fall on the same Shabbat, a maximum of two children are assigned to a date, and the remaining children are moved to the next closest available Shabbat. Shabbat dates in July and August are not assigned. Children born in July or August will be assigned a date in late Spring or in the Fall.

There are also certain weekends during the year that cannot be assigned, e.g., around Passover and the High Holy Days. Children whose birthdays would fall on those Shabbatot are moved to the next available Shabbat. **Even if you do not have a double at the time your date is assigned, you may still become a double up to six months before the date.**

### *What Does it Mean if My Child is Doubled?*

Because we are blessed with so many children of Bar/Bat Mitzvah age who have coinciding birthdays, many of our Bar/Bat Mitzvah services will include two students. There are very few differences in the services, and those families that have been doubled in recent years have had very positive experiences. If you have specific questions about this type of service, please call and speak with a member of our clergy.

### *Where can I go for Bar/Bat Mitzvah Advice?*

Attend the large group meetings and the classes for Bar/Bat Mitzvah parents and their children offered during Religious School. Speak with your fellow congregants who have already been through this special lifecycle event and may

be going through it again. You may of course call a clergy member or any member of the office staff with questions about any part of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process.

#### JOINT B'NEI MITZVAH DATES

Sharing a b'nei mitzvah date is done out of necessity -- we are thrilled to have a growing b'nei mitzvah program and only so many Shabbatot available during the year. We strive to give each student and their families the same experience on their special day, regardless of whether the date is shared.

Regardless of whether the date is shared, students will be expected to learn the same amount of Torah, Haftarah, and prayers. In a joint service the students lead prayers on their own, so the prayers are divided up between the two students.

Families are designated an "A" family or a "B" family for the purposes of dividing up the prayers and some of the service honors, in alphabetical order by last name. You can see how the honors are divided up by looking at the **Service Honors and Family Info Sheet** on page 17 of this manual.

# Preparation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah

As a part of our Religious School curriculum, our students become familiar with the structure of the Shabbat service as well as the prayers of the Friday evening and Shabbat morning liturgy. Regular attendance at school, at-home practice, and attendance at Shabbat services are part of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* preparation experience.

We begin Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation with a meeting between the parents, the student, and the cantor to discuss the process. This meeting happens approximately seven months before the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date. If you have any questions about when your child will begin his/her preparation, please feel free to speak with Cantor Marx.

Each student will have a Google Doc, shared with the family and maintained by the Cantor and the tutor, which clearly lays out all assignments as well as feedback on each lesson. This allows full transparency in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process, and both the Cantor and the tutor are available via email or phone to answer any questions you may have about your child's progress.

## OUR PHILOSOPHY ON B'NEI MITZVAH

We want every student to be successful in preparing for his/her service and to have learned what we feel is an essential lesson about adulthood: responsibility. Our goal is to have each student understand their responsibility to *tikkun olam* ("repairing the world") and what it means to take responsibility for his/her actions.

We know that every student comes to our program with different strengths. Please share with us any insight you have as to what we can do to make this process a successful and empowering one for your child. We ask every student to work to the best of their ability and we strive to teach them how to break up this significant project into manageable pieces.

Although we assign a similar menu of prayers and verses to every student, we often tailor the length of the Torah or Haftarah portions to each student's pacing and assign prayers in a particular order to take advantage of the material that they have already mastered in Hebrew school.

There are four tasks that we ask each student to undertake:

- Torah and Haftarah Chanting
- Leading parts of the service (prayers and readings)
- Completing a mitzvah project
- Giving a d'var torah (sermon)

## TORAH AND HAFTARAH CHANTING

Each student begins working on their Torah and Haftarah portions and prayers approximately seven months before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. Students meet weekly with Cantor Marx or with our tutor, Shelley White, for a 15 minute one-on-one session. All lessons are scheduled

directly with Cantor Marx at the mutual convenience of your schedule and the b'nei mitzvah tutoring schedule.

Recordings of the Torah and Haftarah portions are shared with the student and/or family using Dropbox, a free software program available from <http://www.dropbox.com/>.

## PRAYER CLASS

Concurrently with private lessons, students are also expected to attend prayer class once per week. We have two sessions that meet each week during the school year: Tuesdays from 5:30-6:15 PM and Wednesdays 4:00-4:45 PM. Students can attend either one each week; there is no cap on attendance and no RSVP is needed. All students are expected to attend prayer class beginning at the same time as private lessons are scheduled to start, and to continue attending until the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.

MP3 recordings of all of the prayers are available on the Cantor's Corner page of the Temple Sholom website: <http://www.temple-sholom.org/life-long-learning/cantor-s-corner/>.

## MITZVAH PROJECT

Each *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* student will be expected, as a part of his or her training, to participate in a "mitzvah project" to be agreed upon by the Clergy and the student at the beginning of the training program. This program will give the student an opportunity to apply the concepts of *tz'dekah* ("righteousness" or "justice") and social responsibility.

Here are some rough guidelines for choosing a mitzvah project:

- The mitzvah project should be a hands-on volunteer project (as opposed to, for example, writing a check to a nonprofit or asking your guests to bring canned goods).
- Students should plan to volunteer approximately 10-15 hours.
- The mitzvah project should be age-appropriate work. We don't expect you to start a foundation or raise \$50,000!
- You should choose a mitzvah project that you are excited to do. It doesn't benefit you nor the organization to volunteer grudgingly.
- The organization could be local, national, or international.

One great resource for mitzvah project ideas is The Mitzvah Bowl ([www.themitzvahbowl.com](http://www.themitzvahbowl.com)).

### *Sharing Your Mitzvah Project*

We encourage you to take lots of pictures of your mitzvah project volunteering! Each student is invited to share his or her mitzvah project work on our TV display in the main foyer. We will display your photos as early as one week before your bar/bat mitzvah and will share them until the Sunday following your bar/bat mitzvah.

The easiest and most effective way to share your mitzvah project is by creating a simple Powerpoint presentation with lots of photos and a few captions. You can also send a Microsoft



Word document or individual photos. Submit them to Marissa Kuperschmidt ([community@temple-sholom.org](mailto:community@temple-sholom.org)).

## D'VAR TORAH

The Rabbi will discuss the Torah and Haftarah portions with each student, helping them to prepare a speech for the day of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Meetings usually begin approximately two months before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.

## OTHER SCHEDULING CONSIDERATIONS

Approximately one month prior to the date of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the student should have all of his/her preparation completed and should be reviewing materials.

On the Friday prior to the ceremony, a run-through rehearsal will be held on the bima from 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM. During this session, the student will practice all of the prayers and readings, deliver his/her speech, and chant all of their Torah and Haftarah readings from the pulpit. It is the purpose of this session to prepare the student for leading the service in the sanctuary.

# Participation in the B'nei Mitzvah Service

## SHABBAT EVENING

During the *Shabbat* evening service prior to a child's *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony, the family is given the honor of lighting the Shabbat candles and reciting the Kiddush, the blessing over Sabbath wine. The student will also lead the chanting of the V'ahavta, Avot v'Imahot, and the G'vurot prayers.

For families who are sharing their b'nei mitzvah date, family "A" has the honor of leading the candles and family "B" has the honor of leading the Kiddush.

## SHABBAT MORNING

There are many opportunities for family members to participate in the morning service. Typically, parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts & uncles, cousins and close friends participate. Non-Jewish family members are welcome on the bimah of Temple Shalom.

Participation that does not require any speaking includes opening and closing the *aron hakodesh* (ark). Speaking parts in English include reading the English translations of the Torah and Haftarah portions. Hebrew parts include the blessings before and after the Torah reading. There can be a maximum of 4 *aliyot*. The order of the *aliyot* generally is relatives or friends, then parents, and finally the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

### *Parents' Blessing*

Parents are invited to offer a blessing to their child as part of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. We have a sample blessing at the end of this packet.

Each family is unique...please talk to us if you have questions or concerns!

# Parental Responsibilities

It is customary for the parents to sponsor the Friday night Oneg Shabbat preceding the child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Approximately four months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, you will receive an Oneg Sponsor Form from the temple office.

It is also the custom at Temple Sholom in Broomall for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family to express their appreciation to the Temple by making a contribution to the clergy discretionary funds in honor of this joyous occasion. You may also donate to a Temple fund of your choice.

## *Dress Code*

It is important to honor these special occasions. Appropriate attire for both the Friday evening and the Saturday morning services, is expected. *Please make sure that shoulders are covered on the bima.*

## *Support*

Helping your child reach this wonderful milestone will make the journey more meaningful for you and for him/her. Ask your child to share his/her assignments with you. Attend services with your child. If you find your child is having difficulty with any step of the process, please contact the Cantor or Rabbi, or Education Director. Working as a team, with you leading the way, we can ensure a positive experience for your child.



# Facility Rentals at Temple Sholom

Temple Sholom is honored to have you here and want to help make this day as special as possible for you. Our Multipurpose Room is a wonderful space to hold a reception. There is a rental fee of \$650. If you or your caterer will be using our kitchen, there is a subsequent \$300 kitchen fee.

The Rental Agreement, available from the Main Office, goes into greater detail regarding price breakdowns. If you are interested in renting the Multipurpose Room here for your B'nei Mitzvah reception, we ask of a few things from you:

- Please sign and date our Rental Agreement at least 30 days in advance and return to Temple Sholom
- Your caterer must sign off on the Rules and Regulations regarding the use of the Kitchen and Multipurpose Room.
- You must sign off on the Rules and Regulations regarding the use of the Kitchen and Multipurpose Room.
- You and/or your caterer must provide a floor plan of how you would like the room set up two weeks before your Bar or Bar Mitzvah date.

If you have any questions regarding fees, logistics, or anything involving your reception, please do not hesitate to call or email Marissa Kupersmidt, [community@temple-sholom.org](mailto:community@temple-sholom.org).

## Who Do I Contact For...?

Name	Email	Questions About...
Rabbi Peter Rigler	<a href="mailto:rabbi@temple-sholom.org">rabbi@temple-sholom.org</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service planning and special needs accommodations</li> <li>• B'nei mitzvah speeches</li> <li>• Torah portion questions</li> <li>• Rehearsal schedule</li> <li>• Service honors</li> <li>• Mitzvah projects</li> </ul>
Cantor Jamie Marx	<a href="mailto:cantor@temple-sholom.org">cantor@temple-sholom.org</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutoring process and accommodations</li> <li>• Tutoring schedule</li> <li>• Prayer class</li> <li>• Service honors</li> </ul>
Abbey Krain	<a href="mailto:director@temple-sholom.org">director@temple-sholom.org</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership questions</li> <li>• Facility rentals</li> </ul>
Becky Krangel	<a href="mailto:bkrangel@temple-sholom.org">bkrangel@temple-sholom.org</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shabbat bulletin</li> <li>• Honors sheet</li> </ul>
Marissa Kupersmidt	<a href="mailto:community@temple-sholom.org">community@temple-sholom.org</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facility rental</li> <li>• Mitzvah project TV display</li> </ul>
Betsy Blackburn-Goslin	<a href="mailto:bookkeeper@temple-sholom.org">bookkeeper@temple-sholom.org</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Payment of fees</li> </ul>

# Sample Parent Blessing

Dear (Child),

Judaism believes that each person is born in the image of God and within each person there is a spark of Holiness. Not only is this an enabling power that guides us in our relationships with others, but to me, it is also a connecting channel between a person and God. I have seen this connection through you on many nights after you recited *Shema*. At first your prayer was an assurance that tomorrow will be a good day, but as you grew, so did the length of the time you took to pray with your eyes closed and your lips moving.

I hope that you didn't let the attractions or distractions of growing up pull you away from this link. Remain a child at heart and continue to wonder at the many ordinary, yet amazing goings-on around you. Add to your Jewish knowledge to gain further wisdom and insight into the adult life. As I always say...feed your soul. Know that faith gives you strength to overcome any challenge in life.

Let your deed, not words, tell who you are and what you believe in. May you always be inspired to do good! And may we always see in you good health and happiness.

We love you, and Mazel Tov!

**Saturday Morning Service Honors and Family Info Sheet  
for Solo Bar/Bat Mitzvah**

Student Name (as you'd like it listed): \_\_\_\_\_

B'nei Mitzvah Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Siblings (incl. ages): \_\_\_\_\_

Grandparents that will be present:

Name

Nickname

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Service Honors**

Tallit Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

Open Ark: \_\_\_\_\_

Torah Pass: \_\_\_\_\_

Disrobing Torah: \_\_\_\_\_

Aliyot (Torah honors):

Include first/last name and relation to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah

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

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

3. Parents \_\_\_\_\_

4. Student \_\_\_\_\_

Alternative Poems or Readings: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Redressing Torah: \_\_\_\_\_

Close Ark: \_\_\_\_\_

Kiddush and Motzi: \_\_\_\_\_

**Special Yahrzeits:**

Those family members closest to you who have passed away. Please print first and last name.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**Saturday Morning Service Honors and Family Info Sheet  
for Joint B'nei Mitzvah**

Student Name (as you'd like it listed): \_\_\_\_\_

B'nei Mitzvah Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Siblings (incl. ages): \_\_\_\_\_

Grandparents that will be present:

Name

Nickname

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Service Honors for All Students:**

Tallit Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

Torah Pass: \_\_\_\_\_

Aliyot (Torah honors):

Include first/last name and relation to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah

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

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

3. Parents \_\_\_\_\_

4. Student \_\_\_\_\_

Alternative Poems or Readings: \_\_\_\_\_

**Special Yahrzeits:**

Those family members closest to you who have passed away. Please print first and last name.

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**Service Honors for "A" Students:**

Open Ark: \_\_\_\_\_

Disrobing Torah: \_\_\_\_\_

Kiddush: \_\_\_\_\_

**Service Honors for "B" Students:**

Redressing Torah: \_\_\_\_\_

Close Ark: \_\_\_\_\_

Motzi: \_\_\_\_\_

## An Overview of the B'nei Mitzvah Process at Temple Shalom

<p><b>The Four Tasks</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Chanting Torah and Haftarah</li> <li>2. Leading parts of the service</li> <li>3. Mitzvah project</li> <li>4. Speech</li> </ol>	<p><b>The Timeline</b></p> <p>6th Grade: Explore Torah portion/themes          6-7 Months Out: Tutoring and prayer class begin          4-6 Months Out: Begin volunteering for project          2-3 Months Out: Meetings with Rabbi Rigler on speech, service, and Mitzvah Project          1 Month Out: Rehearsals in the Sanctuary begin</p>
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### Types of Lessons/Meetings

	Meeting with...	Length	Schedule	Task
Individual tutoring	Cantor Marx or Shelley White, BM tutor	15 mins, weekly	Mon-Thu afternoons	Torah and Haftarah
Group prayer class	Cantor Marx	45 mins, weekly	Tues 5:30-6:15 PM <b>OR</b> Wed 4:00-4:45 PM	Service leading
Mitzvah Project	N/A	10-15 hours of volunteering	All volunteer work should be done 2 months out	Mitzvah project
Speech writing	Rabbi Rigler	60 minutes	By mutual agreement	Speech
Rehearsals	Rabbi Rigler	60 minutes	By mutual agreement	Torah and Haftarah, Service leading, Speech
Final run-through	Cantor Marx	2 hours	Friday before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, 10-12:00 PM	Torah and Haftarah, Service leading, Speech