



Bar/Bat Mitzvah Handbook

Temple Beth El Boca Raton, Florida

Daniel Levin
Rabbi

Jessica Spitalnic Brockman
Rabbi

Pam Mandel
Rabbi

Lori Shapiro
Cantorial Soloist

Robin L. Eisenberg, RJE
Director of Jewish Learning & Living

Jan Catalfumo
Executive Director

Michelle Auslander Cohen
Cantorial Associate



Temple Beth El of Boca Raton
Maimonides Institute for Jewish Learning
333 Southwest 4th Avenue
Boca Raton, Florida 33432
561-391-8900

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INTRODUCTION

BAR/BAT MITZVAH

The celebration of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* marks the beginning of a young man or woman's transition for childhood to adulthood. It allows a family and their community, the opportunity to break away from the regular flow of life to pay attention to the miracle of life and human maturation. As a young person makes his/her way into adulthood, the ritual celebration of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* asks a child to show that they are ready to begin to take on adult responsibility, and that they have learned how the wisdom of our Jewish heritage is a tool to building a life in partnership with God.

HISTORY OF BAR/BAT MITZVAH

Bar/Bat Mitzvah literally means "Son/Daughter of Commandment." In earlier times, the term had legal weight in the community, signifying that an individual would be held legally responsible for his/her actions. A child was considered to be *Bar Mitzvah* upon reaching the age of thirteen. His father would be called to the bima at the service closest to his son's thirteenth birthday in which the Torah would be read, and he would recite a blessing thanking God that he was no longer legally responsible for his son's actions. In later years, a thirteen year-old boy was supposed to have progressed to a point in his Jewish education where he was prepared to read from the Torah and know a good deal of *Mishnah*. Having understood the basics of Jewish knowledge, the boy would be asked to show that he was ready to take the next step in his education by participating in a prayer service, reading from the Torah and Haftarah, and most importantly, giving a lesson or explanation of the weekly Torah portion called a *D'rash*. Following the celebration, it became customary to celebrate at a *seudat mitzvah* or a celebratory meal that was in keeping with the spirit of the occasion.

BAR/BAT MITZVAH AND REFORM JUDAISM

For many years, Reform congregations only celebrated Confirmation so that there would be equality between the participation of boys and girls. Later, the celebration of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* reemerged, and the requirements and participation of *B'nai Mitzvah* students vary from synagogue to synagogue.

Bat Mitzvah is a relatively new tradition – not more than seventy years old. It was introduced to emphasize the concept of equality of boys and girls in Jewish religious ritual and education. In most Reform congregations, the ceremony of *Bat Mitzvah* and the educational requirements are identical with those of *Bar Mitzvah*.

BAR/BAT MITZVAH AS PRACTICED AT TEMPLE BETH EL

At Temple Beth El, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony symbolizes in Jewish terms the passing of the child from intellectual, emotional and moral childhood to adolescence. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah is celebrated by participating in the Friday Evening as well as Friday night, Shabbat Morning or Afternoon (Mincha) service. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony demonstrates that the student has:

- * Achieved an elementary factual knowledge of Judaism and Hebrew.
- * Made a commitment to continue religious education through at least tenth grade, and hopefully beyond.

As a Reform Jew, a thirteen year old is obligated to continue to study his or her Jewish heritage and tradition.

Families are encouraged to share individual talents and interests in the service. Students, parents and siblings have done so in many unique ways. Some of these include playing melodies on musical instruments, and singing additional songs. Others have used their creative writing skills. Families have taken the message of Torah portions and made them part of their service. Some of these include: making a tallit, learning the rules of kashrut or building a replica of the Temple.

PREREQUISITE RELIGIOUS SCHOOL EDUCATION

- * A minimum of four years of religious school education, beginning in the third grade, or the equivalent thereof, as determined by the Director of Jewish Learning and Living, prior to and including the year of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony, is required for Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- * Included in the four year religious education requirement is satisfactory completion of all academic work and regular attendance at Sunday Morning and Mid-week Hebrew classes.
- * Students who transfer from another community will be accepted as candidates for Bar/Bat Mitzvah, provided they meet Temple Beth El's educational requirements. If remedial tutoring is required, it shall be at the parents' expense.

POST BAR/BAT MITZVAH EDUCATION

At the age of thirteen, the student is barely able to begin to grasp the true importance and significance of Jewish teaching. Therefore, as a prerequisite for the celebration of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, an agreement by child and parent to continue formal Jewish studies through the tenth grade is made. By continuing religious education, the B'nai Mitzvah students prepare themselves for the significant ceremony of Confirmation.

The emphasis of Jewish education is to obtain knowledge that will enable each individual to live a Jewish lifestyle within a Jewish environment. It is in this spirit that the process of acquiring the knowledge of Judaism leads from enrollment in the religious school, through Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation, to participation in high school and youth group activities to adult learning and Jewish living within a congregation and community and in every area of human activity.

TZEDAKAH

CONTRIBUTIONS AT THE TIME OF BAR/BAT MITZVAH

At joyous occasions, and in the true tradition of our heritage and its custom of giving Tzedakah, you are encouraged to make a contribution to the synagogue at the time of this simcha.

It is also fitting for you to set an example for your child and encourage them to begin their obligation of Tzedakah by contributing to other worthwhile causes on the occasion of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Families are encouraged to individualize the service through tzedakah and mitzvah projects. Each child is expected to perform some type of gemilut chasadim (acts of righteousness). Students have collected food for the food bank, clothes and furniture for New Americans, and collected money for people with AIDS. Many families have used the centerpieces at their receptions as an opportunity for those who are less fortunate. They have included non-perishable food that went to the food bank, sports equipment which went to a center for abused children, and toys which went to a child development center for underprivileged children. Other families have planted a tree in honor of each guest and have asked guests to bring non-perishable foods to the service. The variety of projects, the enthusiasm with which families approach this part of becoming B'nai Mitzvah, and the benefits to those less fortunate, make this a significant part of our program. We are happy to help you choose a tzedakah project for your family.

FAMILY TZEDAKAH PROJECTS

Judaism is said to be “a way of life.” Based on this, we do mitzvot which govern the social relationships between one human being and another. Another word for mitzvah is “sacred obligation.” It refers to any opportunity to fulfill one's comprehensive duty to other human beings. It has also come to express any act of human kindness.

As part of our B'nai Mitzvah program, families are required to join Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidates in acts of tzedakah. Tzedakah projects that support Temple Beth El, other Jewish agencies and our community at large include:



Temple Beth El

General Fund Donation – no minimum
Children's Walkway - \$100 per brick
Beck Family Campus Walkway - \$100-
\$1000 per brick
Tree of Life - \$500 per leaf
Yahrzeit Plaque - \$650 per plaque
Sanctuary Seat Donation - \$500
Prayer Book Dedication - \$50 or \$75
Named Endowment Fund - \$10,000

Other Jewish Agencies

Jewish National Fund - \$10 per tree
Mazon - National Jewish Food Bank
recommends 3% of cost of party
ARZA - (Association of Reform Zionists
of America.) - Membership for
students, \$5. Includes personalized
certificate
Camp Jenny – NFTY STR Mitzvah
Corps bringing underprivileged children
to URJ Camp Coleman

Local Projects

Giving Tree – Adopt families
Daily Food Bank - use wrapped food as
centerpieces
Homeless People - give money or
needed items to needy families in our
community.
Florence Fuller — use sports
equipment/toys as centerpieces.
Boys & Girls Clubs - use sports equip-
ment/toys as centerpieces.
Envelope Stuffing - for temple or other
organizations
Get involved coaching sports for
special needs students, donate clothing
to the Occasional Closet, Volunteer at
the Humane Society, or create your
own project - collect shoes for the
needy, do a tennis rally to raise money,
send items to soldiers in Iraq.
Haven – used sports equipment

Feel free to speak with one of the Rabbis, Cantor, or Director of Jewish Learning and Living for additional suggestions!

THE FAMILY CELEBRATES BAR/BAT MITZVAH

BAR/BAT MITZVAH INVITATION

Since the family will participate in the Shabbat Evening Service on the evening prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony, your invitation should request the presence of your guests at the Friday Evening service. Services will begin at 7:30 PM on the first, second, fourth & fifth Friday of the month. Services will begin at 6:00 PM on the third Friday of the month.

**The Shabbat Morning Bar/Bat Mitzvah Services
begin at either 9:00 AM or 11:30 AM.**

**The Mincha/Havdalah Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service begins at 6:00 PM.
No other service times should appear on the invitation.**

DRESS AT BAR/BAT MITZVAH

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah and family are requested to dress in a manner, which reflects the special religious nature of this ceremony. Ties and jackets for men and dresses/skirts for women are required for the Bima. **Formal evening wear is inappropriate at Bar/Bat Mitzvah services.**

FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS

It is the policy of Temple Beth El that every member be current in their financial obligations to the congregation, and remain so throughout the entire process, from the granting of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date, through Religious School, tutoring and culminating in the simcha of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Your cooperation is, therefore, requested in order to avoid any embarrassment to either the Temple or yourself. Please contact the Temple's Executive Director's office if you have any questions regarding your financial obligations.

FLOWERS AND ONEG SHABBAT ON FRIDAY NIGHT, KIDDUSH FOLLOWING BAR/BAT MITZVAH

A comprehensive fee to help offset the costs of the Oneg Shabbat, publicity photographs, flowers, a simple Kiddush, and individual Bar/Bat Mitzvah training, will be posted to your temple account approximately two years before the Bar/Bat celebration. In order for private instruction to begin on schedule, this fee must be paid in full one year prior to the service.

Shabbat Evening Oneg Shabbat: Parents of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah sponsor the Oneg Shabbat following the Shabbat Evening service as part of your fee. The Oneg Shabbat is provided by the Sisterhood. If you wish to provide additional items, you should contact Sisterhood at 561-391-8900.

Flowers: Parents of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah automatically sponsor the flowers on the pulpit. The Temple office orders flowers.

Kiddush: Every Bar/Bat Mitzvah is concluded with a small Kiddush in the form of juice and challah. If you prefer not to have such a Kiddush, please inform the School Office. If you wish to augment the Kiddush, please contact the Temple's caterer.

PHOTOGRAPHS

So as not to mar the sanctity of the occasion or disturb the religious service, no photographs of any kind may be taken during the service. It is best to take them either before or following the service or during the final dress rehearsal. The Rabbis and the Cantor can be available for staged photograph. If you wish them to be present, please contact the Rabbinic office. Videotaping is permitted during the service. Have your photographer/videographer contact the Temple Administrative office to coordinate details.

BAR/BAT MITZVAH RECEPTION IN THE SOCIAL HALL

If the congregant wishes to provide a reception, the Social Hall, Frances & Solon Cohen Atrium will be available through the Temple caterer. Requirements are that the premises be left in the same condition as they were found. Arrangements must be made through the Temple caterer Chez Gourmet at 561-395-3690.

BAR/BAT MITZVAH CELEBRATION

Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a time for family celebration and Jewish tradition teaches that a joyous gathering of family and friends should mark it. The joy of the occasion does not depend upon lavish gifts or expensive parties that may overshadow -- even defile -- the sanctity of the occasion that marks religious attainment in the growth of the individuals. A good rule for an enjoyable Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration is:

KEEP THE EMPHASIS ON THE MITZVAH - NOT THE "BAR"

Simple gifts, good books, or modest Jewish ceremonial and art objects convey a lasting impression that relatives and friends care and, more importantly, that they recognize the true significance of the occasion.

SERVICE ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS AT FRIDAY & SATURDAY SERVICES

B'nai Mitzvah students and their parents are asked to attend at least five (5) Shabbat Evening Services and five (5) Shabbat Morning or Mincha / Havdalah services during the year prior to the scheduled Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony, in order to familiarize themselves with the procedures of the service.

We also offer a number of opportunities throughout the year for parents and Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidates to study together. We encourage parents to participate in these sessions. Additional educational opportunities are provided for parents through our Continuing Education program.



USHERING

All Bar/Bat Mitzvah families are asked to usher at one Shabbat Evening Service.

Our Shabbat Services schedule is as follows:

First, second, fourth and fifth Fridays of the month 7:30 PM.

Third Friday of the month 6:00 PM

All Bar/Bat Mitzvah families are asked to usher at one Shabbat Morning Service.

It is important for you and your child to become familiar with the service, and serving as ushers gives you the chance to see what you will enjoy in the upcoming weeks. More importantly, it is a great mitzvah you perform for your fellow Bar/Bat Mitzvah family. On the day of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah, you will need other family ushers to direct your guests and keep order in the sanctuary. We also suggest that you appoint a few of your friends to sit among the children to promote proper conduct in the sanctuary. When you serve as ushers, it is necessary for both you and your child to stay for the entire service.

On Shabbat Evening:

Please arrive with your child 20 - 30 minutes before the service to welcome congregants at the front door of the Temple or at the sanctuary doors and distribute materials.

On Shabbat Morning or Afternoon:

Families should arrive at the sanctuary entrance approximately 20 - 30 minutes prior to services to welcome congregants and distribute materials.

PARTICIPATION ON SHABBAT EVENING OF BAR/BAT MITZVAH

FRIDAY EVENING:

Please arrive at the Temple 30 minutes prior to the service and go to the Rabbi's Study. All celebrants will participate in one of the following:

CANDLE BLESSING

- a. Bar/Bat Mitzvah family will sit on the Bima.
- b. Service begins with the Opening Song.
- c. Family then goes to the Cantor's lectern on which the Shabbat candles have been placed, when Rabbi announces that the service will continue with the lighting of the Shabbat candles by the family.
- d. Parents and child read/chant the Ritual of Lighting of Candles, as outlined in the instructions handed out by the Chairperson of Religious Activities.

KIDDUSH

- a. Bar/Bat Mitzvah family will sit on the Bima.
- b. Service begins with the Opening song and continues with Ritual for Lighting of Candles. Rabbi announces . . ."The Kiddush will be led by _____. It can be found on page 719."
- c. Family goes to lectern on Cantor's side.
- d. Parents and child read/chant the Kiddush as outlined in the instructions handed out by the Chairperson of Religious Activities.

VAHAVTA

- a. Same
- b. After the Shema you will go to the lectern on the Cantor's side.
- c. Parents & Child chant/read the Vahavta.

ALEINU

- a. Bar/Bat Mitzvah family will sit on the Bima.
- b. After the Torah Service and Sermon, the Rabbi will announce, "The Aleinu will be led by _____. It can be found on page 282. Please rise."
- c. Parents and child go to open the ark and chant or read the Aleinu as outlined in the instructions handed out by the Chairperson of Religious Activities.

PERSONALIZED BOOKLETS

One of the ways some families choose to personalize their simcha is to create a booklet for use during the service. This booklet is completely optional and may include some or all of the following:

- Welcome letter from family
- Description of sanctuary symbols
- Explanation of Bar/Bat Mitzvah
- List of aliyot and other honors
- Special readings

Sample booklets are available in the School Office. The Rabbinic, Cantorial and Educational Staffs are available to help you if you decide to create a booklet.

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT ALL CAMERA-READY BOOKLETS
BE APPROVED BY
ROBIN EISENBERG AT LEAST FOUR WEEKS
PRIOR TO THE SERVICE.

BROTHERHOOD PRESENTERS

At the conclusion of the service, a member of Brotherhood will present a gift to each child. One of the head ushers will arrange to have a Brotherhood member present to be an usher and to make this presentation. Should you desire to have a family member or close friend (either must be a member of Brotherhood) make an additional presentation, please let your officiating Rabbi know at the rehearsal. Family members and friends may also wish to participate in the readings during the services. Please coordinate such participation with your officiating Rabbi well in advance. For more information, please refer to accompanying literature in folder.

WOMEN OF REFORM JUDAISM (SISTERHOOD) PRESENTERS

At each service, the WRJ gives each child a gift. This presentation is even more special when the Sisterhood member is a relative or family friend. It is necessary that this person be a member of Temple Beth El's Sisterhood. For more information, please refer to accompanying literature in folder.

THROWING CANDY

The throwing of candy is a custom that in recent years has been “borrowed” from wedding tradition. When the couple was called for a blessing upon their upcoming marriage, they were showered with candy to wish them years of sweetness together. It poses a safety hazard. Please **do not** plan to throw candy during your celebration.

SCHEDULE FOR BAR/BAT MITZVAH SESSIONS

GROUP SESSIONS

By attending meetings and classes, families gain a better understanding of Temple Beth El's Bar/Bat Mitzvah process. Families will receive notification of these sessions as they are scheduled. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend all meetings to receive pertinent information. Your child will be only as committed to his or her studies as you are. When your child begins the Bar/Bat Mitzvah class, you will receive a personalized Bar/Bat Mitzvah Schedule to help you understand and participate in the process.

□ **BAR/BAT MITZVAH RETREAT**

(Approximately 15-26 months prior to B/B/M date)

In addition to distributing each family's personalized Bar/Bat Mitzvah Manual, we will discuss the importance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony from the family's perspective. During the question and answer session about participation, we'll cover picture taking, gifts, etc. A segment of time will be devoted to the topic, "What's It All About - Creating a meaningful Bar/Bat Mitzvah." We'll also cover projects that the family may want to undertake, enhancing the meaning of this special day.

□ **B'NAI MITZVAH CLASSES BEGIN AT TBE - THURSDAYS,**

4:30 - 6:00 PM (Approximately 9-12 months prior to B/B/M date)

One parent should plan to attend the very special opening class session of the B'nai Mitzvah class. Torah portions, individual tutoring schedules and B/B/M workbooks will be distributed to parents in attendance. All students eligible for this class will be tested prior to joining the B/B/M Class. Please encourage your child to study prayers which have been taught as well as sight-reading (unfamiliar prayers). If there is a problem with your child's reading level, you will be informed. Students must successfully complete this class before continuing with their private instruction. In addition to studying relevant topics with one of the rabbis, students will learn to chant the prayers with Cantorial Soloist Lori Shapiro, and will mark their service parts with her.

□ **PHOTO SESSION**

(Approximately 4 months prior to service)

We will be taking individual "head-shot" photos. As these will be the photographs used in the Temple's Chronicle and other publicity, please see that students are dressed appropriately for the occasion.

INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS

SIX MONTHS PRIOR TO BAR/BAT MITZVAH DATE

INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTION

Six months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date, students begin individual instruction. Each student must demonstrate his/her ability to read Hebrew before this instruction begins. For those students with Bar/Bat Mitzvahs occurring prior to February, their training begins early enough to leave time for camp, vacations, etc.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are strongly encouraged to attend as many training sessions as possible to remain up to date on their child's progress. Your child will be only as committed to his or her studies as you are. The following B/B/M Schedule will help you understand and participate in the process.

INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS

In preparation of Hebrew and English prayers for Friday Evening and Shabbat Morning and Afternoon Services, the following schedule will be followed, providing the student completes each task. If not completed, the training will concentrate on that area until successfully completed.

PRIVATE tutoring schedule

MEETING THE RABBI - One Session - 45 minutes

What's It All About? - Each family will spend time with the Rabbi who is conducting their service. It is an opportunity to get to know each other and discuss the meaning of this experience. At this time, the Rabbi will also discuss family participation in the service and other ways to make the service special.

FIRST MONTH with the Rabbi - Four Sessions - 30 minutes each

Each student reviews the English translation of his/her Torah and Haftarah Portion. With parents, students and staff, the historical and/or ethical implication of the readings are discussed. Students are responsible for writing their own speeches, which include a summary, description and personal interpretation. At the end of the month, every student will leave with speeches in hand.

SECOND MONTH with Tutor - 4 Sessions - 30 minutes each

Most students spend one month reviewing all of the Hebrew prayers in the Service.

THIRD MONTH with Cantorial Soloist - 1 Session - 30 minutes

Students are introduced to their Torah Portion in Hebrew.

THIRD MONTH with Tutor - 3 Sessions - 30 minutes each

Students continue to learn their Torah portion in Hebrew.

FOURTH MONTH with Robin Eisenberg - 1 Session - 60 minutes

Robin checks child's progress on Torah and prayers and offers additional support.

FOURTH & FIFTH MONTHS with Tutor - 9 Sessions (total 12) - 30 minutes each

Students learn melodies for prayer service. Then continue to learn Torah Portion with and without vowels and how to chant. The Haftarah portion is taught.

LAST THREE WEEKS with Cantorial Soloist - 3 Sessions - 1 hour each

Review and final preparation in the sanctuary.

FINAL REHEARSAL

The Rabbi conducts a final rehearsal during the week prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah with all family members who are involved in the Service. Photographs of the ceremony may be taken at this dress rehearsal as no photography is allowed during the B/B/M Service. (Videotaping is allowed during the service.)

THROUGHOUT THE PREPARATORY PERIOD...

The Director of Jewish Learning and Living is in contact with all instructors and clergy. If needed, additional sessions with Robin Eisenberg and/or the child's tutor will be scheduled. This is Temple Beth El's way of giving additional support.

BAR/BAT MITZVAH PROCEDURES - PREPARATION PROCESS

WHEN	WHAT	WHO	PURPOSE
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GROUP SESSIONS

15-26 months prior to BBM date	BBM Retreat	Rabbis, Cantorial Soloist, Executive Director, Director of Jewish Learning & Living	Distribute BBM Manual, discuss importance of BBM ceremony, financial obligations, preparation process, personalizing the experience, mitzvah projects, etc.
9-12 months	B'nai Mitzvah Class	Rabbi, Cantorial Soloist, Director of Jewish Learning & Living	Distribute Torah portions, class syllabus and personalized flow chart for individual preparation (1 st session). Judaics (Rabbi), Prayer Chanting (Lori Shapiro)
4-6 months	Photo Session	R/S office staff (1), photographer	Publicity photos

PRIVATE SESSIONS

6-1/2 months prior to BBM	Intake Meeting	Rabbi officiating at service	“What’s it all about?” Get to know each other, discuss the importance of this experience. Discuss family participation, booklet, mitzvah project
First month (begins 6 months prior to date)	Meetings for speech writing	Rabbis	Study Torah and Haftarah portions. Work on Torah & Haftarah speeches.
Second month	4 Sessions w/Tutor #1	Prayer Tutor	Review and master all prayers in the service
After 2 nd month	Meeting w/Cantorial Soloist	Cantorial Soloist	Check prayers, introduce Torah chanting
3 rd , 4 th & 5 th months	12 Sessions w/Tutor #2	Torah/Haftarah Tutors	Learn to chant Torah with and then w/o vowels, learn to chant Haftarah. Review prayers
After 3 rd month	Meeting w/Cantorial Soloist	Cantorial Soloist	Spot-check prayers, review Torah learned thus far. Alert Director of Jewish Learning & Living if extra attention from tutor is needed.
8 weeks before BBM	“8-Week Rehearsals”	Robin Eisenberg	Run through the service including Hebrew, English, Torah, Haftarah, and speeches.
Last 3 weeks before BBM	“3-Week Rehearsals”	Cantorial Soloist	Run through the service, “choreography”, practice reading from Torah
Week of BBM	Final Rehearsal	Rabbi officiating at service	Run through entire service with all family members involved in the service