

# Bar/Bat Mitzvah

*Everything you need to know!*

New Rochelle, New York

2018-19/5779

**The B/M Student**

*Everything you need to know about your child's training, recitation of prayers and chanting of Torah.*

**Page 2**

**The B/M Family**

*Want to know what time services start? Photography? There's more!*

**Page 2**

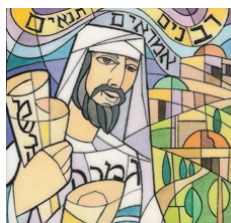


**Appropriate Dress**

*Don't buy that suit or dress just yet! Be sure to read this and give your child plenty of time to grow into that outfit!*

**Page 3**

**Honors/Aliyot**



*Who can we honor? And how?*

**Page 3**

**Other Considerations**

*Did we miss something? Here's where those questions are answered!*

**Page 4**

**More Questions?**

*Feel free to call the Temple if you have any unanswered questions!*

**914-235-1800**



## Keeping Bar and Bat Mitzvah in Perspective

Bar/Bat Mitzvah is about the acceptance of responsibility. This is the bottom line of becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. It's not about acquiring the skill of *k'riah*, the reading of the Torah. Rather, it's about acquiring the skill of responding to a challenge, a mitzvah. This is how Judaism defines maturity.

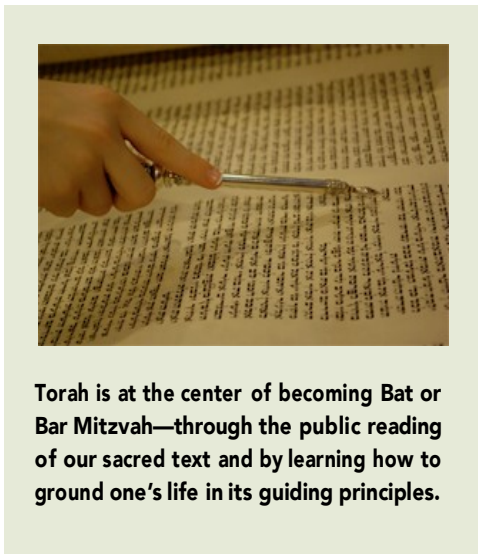
**Torah is at the center of Judaism.**

Everything we do as Jews, everything we believe, everything we value revolves around the Torah. The Torah is the testimony of our people's encounter with God. And however you interpret those events in the wilderness of Sinai some three millennia ago, the sanctity with which our ancestors embraced this legacy cannot be dismissed. This is why the first mitzvah we expect our children to fulfill is to stand before the Torah.

**Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a communal observance.**

It is not by coincidence that we choose to hold this "initiation" ceremony in public. To be a Jew means to live within a covenantal relationship—not only with God but with other Jews as well. Bar/Bat Mitzvah marks the entry of the child as a full-fledged member of the community. The awarding of an *aliyah*—being called to the Torah—is a gift of the Jewish people. For this reason, the marking

of the child's coming of age takes place in the synagogue—the communal home.



**Torah is at the center of becoming Bat or Bar Mitzvah—through the public reading of our sacred text and by learning how to ground one's life in its guiding principles.**

**The Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony is not a performance—it's a celebration.**

The synagogue is not a theater, the *bimah* is not a stage and the congregation is not an audience. Everyone in the sanctuary comes together to join in this sacred ceremony.

**The reception that follows the service is not a separate event; it is a continuation of the celebration.**

Judaism has a formal name for the meal after a Bar/Bat Mitzvah: *s'udat mitzvah*. This meal is part of the mitzvah, like the meal following a circumcision or a Passover Seder. It is a sacred gathering. This is not to say that it must be solemn, however. The spirit of the morning's celebration should continue through taking on the responsibility of mitzvot. The saying of blessings and the setting aside of a portion of one's bounty for the poor demonstrate that the morning's celebration is not an isolated event, but a standard to follow.

**The meaning of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is enduring only if it takes place within a context of continued Jewish growth.**

Becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is not the experience of a lifetime, it is a lifetime experience—a state of being that remains with us throughout our lives. The true measure of success comes not on the day one becomes a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, but in the days that follow. In other words, becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah should be thought of as a Jewish "commencement," marking a beginning—the beginning of a lifetime of mitzvot and a lifetime of learning. As such, it is our firm belief that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration is validated and enhanced by a commitment to continue religious education through confirmation and high school graduation, and participation in TIFTY, our Temple Youth Group.



## The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Student

### What is the preparation process?

Preparation for becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Temple Israel is fully integrated into *Chavaya*. This begins in 6<sup>th</sup> grade with Trope Class, taught by the Cantor. In Trope Class students learn the basics of Torah and Haftarah chanting, as well as some essential blessings. year there is also A series of three, mandatory family programs also takes place during the 6<sup>th</sup> grade year.

Approximately 7-8 months before your Bar/Bat Mitzvah date, groups of students and their families meet with members of the clergy for B'nei Mitzvah Orientation. The students then participate in small group learning on Thursday afternoons, beginning roughly 6 months before the date of Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

#### On these Thursdays:

With Cantor Schloss, students meet at "Torah Corps." These sessions allow students to prepare and practice parts of their service with a live congregation. It is a great way to get over nervousness and to share with one another all things Jewish. There are 12 - 16 class sessions.

With Rabbi Nichols, students meet at "Mitzvah Corps," where they learn all about doing mitzvot and the value of a "Mitzvah Project." It is during these sessions that students determine their individual projects (see below).

With Rabbi Weiner, students meet at "*Beit Midrash*," a class preparing them for text study and for writing a *D'var Torah* (see below). These are in-depth sessions held in Rabbi Weiner's office. There will be homework for each of the five sessions.

Throughout the entire process, all of our students will spend a great deal of time with each of our clergy members. When their time on Thursdays is complete, one month prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date, students have "final four" appointments. These include three individual 20-minute sessions with the Cantor and one 1-hour rehearsal with the entire family, in addition to meetings with Rabbis Weiner or Nichols to complete the *D'var Torah*.

### How much Hebrew will I have to prepare?

Each student is required to do the best that he/she can: no more, no less. Each Torah/Haftarah portion is different and is modified based on each student's ability. Generally, the amount of Hebrew is about 12-20 verses of Torah, 5-10 verses of Haftarah and several blessings during the service. Students should not compare themselves to each other, but should ask themselves, "Am I doing the best that I can?"

### How is an afternoon service different from a morning service?

The afternoon service has a somewhat different liturgy (prayers) than the morning service: the following week's Torah portion is read without a Haftarah reading and we conclude the service with *Havdalah*, marking the end of Shabbat.

### How much should I be studying at home?

When you begin your Torah Corps studies, you should try to commit to **20 minutes per day, at least 5 days per week**. You don't have to study for 20 minutes straight; you can break it up into several study periods (5 minutes here, 10 minutes there). As you progress and continue to learn more and more, and have more to review, your practice time may increase to **30-40 minutes per day**.

### What is the Mitzvah Project?

The mitzvah (commandment) part of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is not only centered around Jewish ritual, but also on doing acts of *G'milut Chasadim* (loving kindness). A Mitzvah project is a volunteer program that underscores the understanding that being a Jewish adult is not only about study and prayer, but also about helping others. Rabbi Nichols will meet with you well in advance to help you select a suitable project based on your interests and the community's needs.

### What about the Bar/Bat Mitzvah speech?

We call this a *D'var Torah* (word of Torah). It is an opportunity to interpret your Torah portion in a personal way. You will work on your *d'var Torah*

with Rabbi Weiner, first in class, and then individually. The *d'var Torah* will be centered around your Torah portion and the meaning you find in it. The *d'var Torah* is a teaching piece, not a time for "thankyous". We suggest that you thank those who have helped you reach this special day, by writing personal notes or by speaking publicly at your Bar/Bat Mitzvah party.

### What if I need extra Hebrew help?

If either you or the Cantor feels that you need some extra help, the Cantor is available for limited private sessions in addition to Torah Corps. If you need more regular help, we can recommend a tutor that you can engage privately.

### What if I have special needs?

We are here not only to challenge you, but to accommodate you. Never be shy about asking anything of our clergy. Each situation will be addressed individually. Furthermore, please bring any questions or concerns you have along the way to our clergy as soon as possible.

## The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Family

### When do we begin the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process as a family?

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah child and parent(s) will have an initial orientation meeting with the clergy about 7-8 months before the service, before Torah Corps begins. You will also have a private family meeting closer to the service when you will discuss the service, honors and any family situations or dynamics that are important for the clergy to know and understand.

### How can I learn more about the service?

The best way to learn about and feel comfortable with our service is by coming to services! The more often you attend services here at Temple Israel, the more confident you will feel singing the liturgy and participating in the readings. We especially encourage you to come to other Bar and Bat Mitzvah services on Shabbat. Remember, all services are open to everyone!

**What time will the service begin?**

Our Shabbat morning service begins at 10:30 a.m. Afternoon services begin at 5:00 p.m. We ask you to word your invitations to say that the service begins 1/2 hour earlier than the actual times to ensure that the guests arrive on time (i.e. 10:00 a.m. or 4:30 p.m.).

**How long is the service?**

A service with only one Bar/Bat Mitzvah runs about one hour and 45 minutes. Doubles tend to be about 20-30 minutes longer.

**When I am asked to usher, what will I have to do?**

You will receive a letter one month in advance of your date asking you to usher for a service, usually the week or two before your family's Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. If you are not able to help on the assigned date, please call the Temple as soon as possible to exchange dates with someone else.

You have three primary jobs as an usher: 1) to be greeters to guests and congregants, inviting people into the sanctuary, showing them the appropriate prayer books and helping people (especially latecomers) find the appropriate page; 2) to help attendees who are not behaving appropriately (primarily 12-13-year olds) to either participate in the service more respectfully or to step out to the lobby; 3) to familiarize yourself with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service so that you can be more comfortable with the service when it is your turn.

**When can our photographer take pictures?**

For morning services, you may arrive as early as 8:30 a.m., provided you make arrangements with Anita Aronoff, our Executive Director. For afternoon services, it is common for families to take pictures starting at 3:00 p.m. Photography ends 30 minutes before the service. You may also choose to have photographs taken the week of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah as opposed to the actual day, provided you make arrangements with Anita Aronoff.

Your photographer may take pictures in many areas of the Temple, but your photographer may not open the ark until there is a clergy member present in the sanctuary. One of our clergy will help you with photographs with the Torah from 9:30-10 a.m., or from 4-4:30 p.m. for afternoon services. Should you wish to include pictures of your family with our clergy, please let us know so we can make arrangements for that as well.

**Can we take pictures during the service?**

In order to preserve the sanctity of the service, no photography or video recording is permitted during the service. If you wish your service to be video recorded, you can engage the Brotherhood

to do so through our synagogue's video system. And please turn off that cell phone!

**Isn't the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service a private affair?**

All services at TINR, including all Bar/Bat Mitzvah services, are public. Even though it is a big day for you and your family, the service is open to the general public. Some congregants may attend beyond your guest list. Similarly, you and your family are welcome at all Bar/Bat Mitzvah services. There is a balance between your family's participation during the service and the parts which our clergy lead. You will be called to the pulpit for several honors (see below). Every congregation has its own *minhag* (customs). In our synagogue, parental speeches, Bar/Bat Mitzvah thankyou, etc., do not take place on the pulpit, but if you wish, may take place at your reception. For the same reason, we do not allow programs or personalized service leaflets.

**Do you have direction cards to the Temple?**

Yes. Just ask and we can provide as many as you need.

**What about bimah flowers?**

You will be sent a letter about six weeks in advance of your date informing you of the modest fee for flowers to decorate the bimah.

**How is the Oneg Shabbat on Friday evening handled?**

Bar/Bat Mitzvah families participate in the Friday night service by leading the candle lighting and/or Kiddush. Please plan accordingly so your whole family can attend the Friday night service to begin your Shabbat celebration. In the same letter as that regarding the bimah flowers, you will be informed of the sponsorship fee for the Friday night Oneg in your child's honor and asked for your preference of Bar/Bat Mitzvah cake. You are welcome to sponsor a more robust oneg, arranged through Anita Aronoff.

**What is the kiddush after the service on Saturday morning?**

Following the Saturday morning service, a modest kiddush is provided (grape juice and challah). Your immediate family is called to the bimah near the end of the service, and the blessings are recited. Juice and challah are shared afterward in the lobby. Again, you may add to what is included by speaking with Anita Aronoff.

**What if we want to have our reception at the Temple?**

Please speak to Anita Aronoff, our Executive Director. She would be happy to help you plan your affair. What a great idea to follow the service by hosting your reception here!

## Appropriate Dress

**What is appropriate for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to wear?**

On both Friday evening and Saturday, it is appropriate for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to dress modestly. If a skirt or dress is worn, it must be modest (at least to the knees; shoulders and chest must be covered, as well.) A jacket and tie or a suit is also appropriate. For footwear, dress shoes, not sneakers, should be worn. Flats or low heels are best. Students should bring their shoes with them to the final four rehearsals in order to practice carrying the Torah with them on. Students should scuff up the soles/bottoms of new leather-soled shoes so they don't slide around.

**What is appropriate for family members and guests to wear?**

Although we do not dictate a dress code to those in the sanctuary, any guests or family members who will be on the pulpit should also follow suit (no pun intended) with our Bar/Bat Mitzvah students. All dress should be modest and appropriate. (e.g. dresses, suits, jackets and ties, dress shoes, not sneakers).

**What about a *kipah* (*yarmulke*) or a *talit*?**

In our synagogue, people are invited, but not required to wear ritual garments. You and your guests may wish to bring and/or wear *kipot* (*yarmulkes*) and *talitot*. Some families choose to provide special *kipot* for the day. Should the Bar/Bat Mitzvah wish to wear either or both, he/she should feel comfortable doing so.

## Honors/Aliyot

**What is an "aliyah" exactly?**

"*Aliyah*" means to go up in both a physical and spiritual sense. It is the time at which people are invited up to the *bimah* before the Torah in order to bless the reading.

**How many *aliyot* are there?**

During our services there generally are four *aliyot*. Three of them are for family or guests. The last *aliyah* is for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

**Who may have an *aliyah*?**

Any family member or guest who is at least 13 years old and Jewish may have an *aliyah*. A non-Jewish parent of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah may be called up to accompany the Jewish parent for an *aliyah*. There are other honors (see below) in which non-Jewish family and guests may also participate.

**What other honors are there to give out for Saturday?**

Jewish or non-Jewish honorees may read the English translation of the Torah Portion. Jewish and non-Jewish honorees may undress and dress the Torah. Grandparents (and great-grandparents), and parents may go to the ark for a ceremony of passing the Torah from generation to generation.

**Do you have to speak/read Hebrew to receive an honor?**

No. We provide transliteration of Hebrew prayers. We encourage you to practice before the service, and our clergy are more than willing to help you.

**Are there honors on Friday evening?**

Your family will be asked to bless the Shabbat candles and/or the Shabbat wine (in English), or open and close the ark (only in the case of three Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies in one weekend). You should plan on being in the sanctuary the Friday evening prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony, 15 minutes earlier than the service begins.

**When do we decide who gets what honors?**

Some months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah day, you will have a meeting with Rabbi Weiner to go over many details of the day, as well as to reflect on the meaning of the whole experience. You will receive an honors sheet at that time. Please return it to the office two weeks before your service. The clergy are always available to help with any questions you may have regarding honors.

**We have a unique family situation (e.g. divorce, medical problem) that requires some special attention. Can you accommodate us?**

Of course! Please bring such situations as soon as possible to the attention of the Rabbis and the Cantor. We are here to help and to ensure that you have a rewarding and meaningful Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience.

**Other Considerations**

**Is it appropriate to invite my child's Chavaya class?**

YES! We understand that if a child is close with only two or three other classmates that it may be awkward to invite the entire class. However, if you are planning on inviting at least half of the class (or at least half of the boys or girls), we ask you to invite the entire class (or all of the boys or girls).

We are proud of the welcoming nature of Temple Israel of New Rochelle; we do not want anyone to feel left out. Being 12 or 13 is challenge enough without additional issues like peer-pressure and fitting in.

**How can we show our appreciation for the synagogue on this occasion?**

There are several ways: first and foremost, please remember that the Temple is an extension of your home. Unfortunately, we have had incidents where children present at services or parties have caused damage to our facilities. Please encourage all your guests to treat the Temple like your home.

Second, it is appropriate to make a donation in honor of your son/daughter to the Temple. There are many funds to choose from and any contribution, large or small, is most appreciated.

Last, but certainly not least: Bar/Bat Mitzvah is not the end of Jewish Education! We want your child to continue to participate in *Chavaya* through Confirmation and then High School Graduation. This time of Bar/Bat Mitzvah is only the beginning of real Jewish learning as a young Jewish adult. Our High School is very creative and engaging and our students who have completed our program through 12th grade have been very grateful for the education and experiences they received here.

**I received my Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony date but would like to change it. How?**

We understand that there are a wide variety of reasons for changing a Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. If you would like to change your date:

Contact Cantor Schloss (cantorschloss@tinr.org) and let him know you are requesting a change of date. If you have a new date or dates in mind, you should communicate that, but be aware that the date can only be changed to a date that was previously offered to the entire class. In other words, we will not change you to a date which has already been blocked out due to Temple programming. Likewise, we do not guarantee that anyone gets a "single" service. Every religious service at Temple Israel of New Rochelle is shared with the community, and often that means shared with another student. It only adds to the joy of the day.

Once you have communicated your request, phone calls and e-mails are made by Temple

Staff in order to accommodate your needs. This often takes a few days or weeks, since other families may need to be contacted and made aware that they will be sharing a date with your family. Due to the logistical arrangements necessary to facilitate such a change there is a \$350 fee for a date change.

When a date has been found that you and the Temple agree will best fit your family, we can hold your date change for two weeks. Once we have received your \$350 change fee, we will put it on our Temple's "Master Calendar."

You will then receive, in writing, confirmation of the date change. It is only then that you should re-book caterers, photographers, etc. Date changes are not guaranteed until you have received written confirmation from the Temple that the date has changed.

We are happy to help you in any way we can, but please understand that calendaring at the Temple is often challenging due to the amount of programming we run throughout the year for our Temple Community. Your understanding is greatly appreciated!

