



B'nei Mitzvah Manual



Bet Torah ▪ 60 Smith Avenue ▪ Mount Kisco, NY 10549 ▪ 914.666.7595



April 2017
Nisan/Iyar 5777

Dear Friends:

The Bet Torah community joins you in celebrating your child's educational journey to bar/bat mitzvah and beyond. We hope that this manual serves as a helpful guide in making the most out of this milestone in your family's life.

Similar to how the wedding is ultimately less important than the marriage, the bar/bat mitzvah is really an opportunity for a family to grow in knowledge and spiritual commitment before and after the day. We encourage you to use this manual as well as our wonderful staff and lay leadership as resources in helping your family to get the most out of this experience.

Much thought went into this manual and I would like to in particular thank Sandy Kellogg for her commitment in seeing that the manual captured both the necessary details as well as the spirit of our community. Susan Katz Truwit, Debra Hand and Adrienne Vogel also contributed to this document and we thank them as well. Finally, the ritual committee consistently engages in thoughtful dialogue around the bar/bat mitzvah training process and their efforts should be acknowledged.

Please know that if you have any questions along the way our staff and lay leadership are here to help. We are so happy that you are a part of this community.

I look forward to working with your family to make this a wonderful *simcha*,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aaron Brusso".

Rabbi Aaron Brusso

List of Important Synagogue Contacts

SYNAGOGUE PHONE NUMBER: (914) 666-7595

WWW.BETTORAH.ORG

RABBI:

Aaron Brusso	x108	rabbibrusso@bettorah.org
--------------	------	--------------------------

CANTOR:

Randy Herman	x109	rherman@bettorah.org
--------------	------	----------------------

B'NEI MITZVAH PROGRAM DIRECTOR:

Nili Ionascu	x128	nionascu@bettorah.org
--------------	------	-----------------------

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Michele Heller	x101	mheller@bettorah.org
----------------	------	----------------------

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL DIRECTOR:

Gina Fass	x102	gfass@bettorah.org
-----------	------	--------------------

RITUAL COMMITTEE:

Antony Schwartz, Chair		vpititual@bettorah.org
------------------------	--	------------------------

Jane Sheinfeld & Heidi Widom (B'nai Mitzvah Coordinators)		bnaimitz@bettorah.org
--	--	-----------------------

BOARD OF EDUCATION CHAIR:

Amy Horowitz		boardofeducation@bettorah.org
--------------	--	-------------------------------

BOARD PRESIDENT:

Lisa Ginsberg		President@bettorah.org
---------------	--	------------------------

FINANCIAL SECRETARY:

Alan Raboy		financialsecretary@bettorah.org
------------	--	---------------------------------

Contents

Bar/Bat Mitzvah: Becoming a Member of the Bet Torah Community	5
What does bar/bat mitzvah mean?	
Who becomes bar/bat mitzvah?	
The <i>Brit</i> (Covenant) between Bet Torah and Your Family	5-7
Bet Torah's Commitment to the <i>Brit</i>	
Bet Torah's Professional Staff Commitment	
Bet Torah Religious School Commitment	
Parent's Commitment	
Children's Commitment	
Services at Bet Torah	7-8
Expressions of Awe	
Decorum	
Shabbat Sanctity	
Attire	
The Bet Torah Team	
Parent as Teacher: Making the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Experience Meaningful	9
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Requirements	10-12
Religious School Education	
Service Attendance Requirements	
B'nei Mitzvah Training	
Parents' Financial Obligations	12
Services at Bet Torah	
Shabbat morning services	13
Shabbat Minchah/Maariv services	14
Weekday Rosh Chodesh services	15
Preparation and Description of Honors	16
How to Write a D'var Torah	17
<i>Kiddush/Oneg</i>	18
Approved Caterers	19
Discretionary Expenditures	20
<i>Tzedakah/Mitzvah</i> Projects	21
Advice on Supporting the Study Process	22
Bet Torah Bar/Bat Mitzvah Timeline	23-24

Bar/Bat Mitzvah: Becoming a Member of the Bet Torah Community

What Does Bar/Bat Mitzvah Mean?

According to Jewish tradition, becoming a bar/bat mitzvah signifies that a child has attained religious maturity. This important step brings both added privileges and increasing responsibilities, including being counted as one of the ten (the *minyan*) needed for communal prayer and being eligible to be called to the Torah.

On the occasion of the bar/bat mitzvah, your child will demonstrate his/her new status by applying many of the skills acquired through the years of religious study. These skills include chanting the week's *Haftarah* portion and part of the *Torah* portion, as well as leading the congregation in prayer.

Bet Torah wants our B'nei mitzvah to become a vital part of the Jewish community and engage actively in developing their Jewish identity. Many avenues exist for teens today, including attending Hebrew High School and congregational services, participating in Jewish summer programs, continuing family observance, and being active members of youth groups.

Who Becomes Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

A Jewish child who reaches the age of 12 1/2 (for girls) and 13 (for boys) is automatically considered part of the Bet Torah community.

As a Conservative Jewish institution, Bet Torah is bound by certain standards of Jewish law for establishing Jewish identity. A child in a family of conversion, intermarriage, or adoption may require additional steps to affirm his/her Jewish identity before becoming bar/bat mitzvah. It is important that families in these categories consult with the Rabbi at this point in the process.

The *Brit* (Covenant) between Bet Torah and Your Family

Bet Torah's Commitment to the *Brit*

Bet Torah is committed to joining with parents in creating in B'nei mitzvah a love for, knowledge of and commitment to Judaism. Our goals are to help prepare your child to play an active role in the spiritual life of Bet Torah and to stimulate in your child an eagerness to learn more. As a result, we want your child to feel comfortable not only at Bet Torah but at any synagogue in the world.

As an egalitarian Conservative community, Bet Torah treasures its commitment to engage all of our congregants in the life of our synagogue. Our goal is to create a congregation of life-long learners, encouraging regular attendance at services, developing a variety of educational and social programs, and calling each other to action on behalf of others.

Bet Torah's Professional Staff Commitment

Our professional staff works as a team to prepare your family for the bar/bat mitzvah:

Rabbi Brusso guides your family through the rituals and choreography of the service and, with Morah Ronni Metzger, works with each child in preparing their *d'var Torah*, an explanation of their Torah portion.

Cantor Herman is responsible for the preparatory process as well as determining readiness for all those participating in leading services.

Nili Ionascu, Bar/Bat Mitzvah Coordinator, organizes tutoring, including lessons and rehearsals, and monitors service attendance.

Michele Heller, Executive Director, works with the family on all administrative aspects related to the bar/bat mitzvah.

The Religious School Director of Bet Torah's Religious School oversees our educational program including the six years which are dedicated to achieving the competencies required for B'nei mitzvah.

Bet Torah Religious School Commitment to the Brit

OUR MISSION:

Bet Torah Religious School is committed to instilling in each student a deep respect for and sound knowledge of Judaism, a sense of identification with the Jewish people and the State of Israel, and to providing the foundation for a lifetime of Jewish learning and personal growth.

A Bet Torah education is based on a broad understanding of the meaning of Torah, and the following principles and values:

Study and learning are lifetime pursuits.

Mitzvot are ways of responding to Torah, and of actualizing our potential as Jews and human beings.

Tzedakah is a way of life.

Prayer is an act of personal commitment and community connection.

Shabbat and Holy Days are positive personal and family experiences.

Israel is a source of history and identification.

Home and family are central institutions for the perpetuation of Judaism.

Synagogue is an aid and ally of family life, and the indispensable means by which we live and share as a community. (*Bet Torah Religious School Parent Handbook, p.3*)

Parents' Commitment to the Brit

As members of Bet Torah, you agree to honor the ritual obligations, customs and policies of our egalitarian Conservative congregation. You understand and agree to uphold the standards set forth in this manual.

Children's Commitment to the Brit

You were created in the image of God. As you prepare to involve yourself fully in the life of our congregation, there are many opportunities to help that image shine from within you. Here is what Bet Torah expects of you:

Act with respect toward others. When we treat everyone with respect wherever we are—at home, in school, in synagogue—we are recognizing the divine in others as well as in ourselves.

Satisfy all the requirements that have been established to prepare you for your bar/bat mitzvah, including attendance at 40 services.

Do your best! Every child's contribution is valued at Bet Torah, and we expect you to prepare for your bar/bat mitzvah to the best of your ability. We look forward to celebrating your accomplishments!

Services at Bet Torah

Shabbat is God's gift to the Jewish people. It is the spiritual highlight of our week. In entering this "Palace in Time" we have a chance to put aside the "busyness" of our lives and to come together to pray, to learn, and to thank God for all the goodness that is ours.

Bet Torah's statement of vision for Saturday morning is: "We come together as a community to celebrate the joy of Shabbat. Bet Torah welcomes families and individuals to participate in song, study, and prayer."

We remember our covenant with God by observing our obligation to keep Shabbat holy. In keeping with rabbinic tradition, the Saturday morning service is the focal point for Bet Torah's experience of Shabbat holiness. Everyone who enters our doors becomes part of our sacred community.

Shabbat begins Friday night. *We encourage families to attend Kabbalat Shabbat services with the community.* Kabbalat Shabbat services normally begin at 6:30pm. Your bar/bat mitzvah child will be invited to participate in the service. If your family plans on having a dinner at Bet Torah following services, please contact the Executive Director in advance.

To maintain the spiritual grandeur of the Shabbat experience, Bet Torah requires adherence to the following standards:

Expressions of Awe

Head coverings (a physical expression of humility, separating us from God)

All males are required to wear *kippot*.

Women in our congregation are encouraged to wear a head covering.

Tallit (a reminder of our commitment to the *mitzvot*)

All Jewish males past the age of bar mitzvah are required to wear a *tallit*.

As an egalitarian congregation, women have the same ritual obligations as men and are encouraged to wear a *tallit*, especially when receiving a Torah honor.

Girls who celebrate their bat mitzvah at Bet Torah are required to wear a tallit.

Decorum and Attire

The way we behave and dress demonstrates respect -- or disrespect -- for the sacredness of our services. As our religious tradition values modesty, we ask your cooperation in fostering a respectful environment in our synagogue among both your family and your guests. Please keep in mind that your child will be leading the congregation in prayer, and party attire is not appropriate; a *tallit* is a sacred ritual garment that should not be used as a cover-up. Similarly, females should not be wearing strapless or low-cut dresses, mini-skirts, or attire that displays bared shoulders or midriff. If a cover-up is needed, please use a jacket or sweater. Males should also dress accordingly, demonstrating a sense of respect.

Shabbat Sanctity

The sanctity of Shabbat depends on our feeling that we already have all that we need. To create the proper Shabbat atmosphere, we refrain from a variety of activities. We expect that everyone who joins us for Shabbat will refrain from the following while in the synagogue building:

- Use of cell phones and other electronic devices
- Photography
- Writing or coloring
- Instrumental music
- Smoking
- Exchange of money
- Making deliveries to the synagogue after 2:00 p.m. Friday
- Removal of items (flowers, food, etc.) from the synagogue before *havdalah*

The Bet Torah Team

Bet Torah is proud that its services are conducted by the "Bet Torah Team":

Rabbi Brusso and Cantor Herman

Shlichei Tzibur (clergy or congregants who are trained to pray on our behalf and lead us in prayer, including the bar/bat mitzvah)

Gabai'im (the two individuals who stand on either side of the Torah reader and who follow the text carefully to assist the reader, correcting any errors)

Ushers appointed by the Ritual Committee

Congregants, family and guests who receive honors throughout the service

PARENT AS TEACHER: MAKING THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL

Remember the spiritual details as you plan the social details. How you commemorate this event sends a message to your child as s/he prepares to be an adult Jew. Use this special preparation year to teach your child what living a Jewish life means to you and your family. In this way, your child's becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah will be what it was meant to be – the beginning of an adult Jewish life.

Invitation. Content not contest. In addition to the colors and layers of paper consider using Hebrew, quotes from the Torah or other sources of Jewish wisdom. Designate a *tzedakah* that people can donate to instead of giving gifts and provide information in the invitation.

Read Torah. There is no stronger statement that can be made to your child than demonstrating that the skills are important to you too and useful years later. It is not only nice to read the day of your child's celebration but afterwards as well.

Attend Shabbat Services with your child. This sets an example for your child, affirms the family's commitment to the *Brit*, enhances your understanding of and familiarity with the Bet Torah service and provides a wonderful opportunity to integrate your family into our warm Shabbat community.

Study the Torah portion with your child.

Have a Friday night dinner at shul and a congregational luncheon. These reinforce the connection of your *simcha* to the larger community and reflect Jewish values.

Occasionally attend evening minyan with your child. This sets aside some quiet reflective time with the bar/bat mitzvah during an otherwise hectic year and communicates that our relationship with the synagogue is more than checking off a "bar/bat mitzvah to-do" list. It teaches that prayer is a regular feature of our community. Coming on a Sunday morning allows for a parent and child to share in the mitzvah of tefillin.

Choose a *tzedakah* with which you will have an ongoing relationship, ideally combining both action and financial support.

Add a mitzvah to your family's life, such as lighting candles, blessing children on Friday nights, saying *motzi* before meals, or deciding to enhance one's observance of kashrut.

Set aside a time for the bar/bat mitzvah to have a group conversation with family elders of the same gender.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Requirements

A. Bet Torah Religious School Education (or Equivalent)

We expect all candidates to achieve competencies in the 6 years of our Religious School curriculum starting with Bet (second grade), or the equivalent as determined by the Bet Torah Religious School Director.

B. Bat/Bar Mitzvah Attendance Service Requirements

We at Bet Torah are very proud of our Bar/Bat Mitzvah program. Our students are extraordinarily well-prepared and understand and accomplish a great deal on the road to this joyous event. Since a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a wonderful family and community simcha, regular attendance at our services by you and your children is both integral to our students' preparation and makes this time more meaningful for everyone.

While it is important for our pre-B'nei Mitzvah children to be comfortable with and proficient in our Shabbat services, attendance is also about *building community*. Our service requirement promotes that sense of community, weaving each family into the fabric of Bet Torah through the magic of Shabbat. In recognition of our children's busy lives, however, we offer credit for a wide range of services within our own **Bet Torah** community.

Students must attend at least 40 services before their Bar/Bat Mitzvah following the distribution of personalized service attendance cards during the fall of 5th grade.

A minimum of 25 (of the 40) services must be at Bet Torah from the following categories:

Shabbat or Festival morning service (students must be in the sanctuary before 10:00 a.m.), excluding Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur;

Shabbat afternoon (Minchah) or weekday Bar/Bat Mitzvah service at Bet Torah;

Vav (6th grade) Chavurah learning services;

The Vav Class Retreat in January, which counts for 3 of the 25 services; and

Friday night Kabbalat Shabbat Minyan services. Each such service is counted as a half credit, with a maximum of 5 credits possible.

15 of the 40 services from the following categories may be counted:

- Bet Torah Junior Congregation learning services during the Daled and Hey years (4th and 5th grade). Students may receive up to ten credits. Hey students have the option of attending *either* Junior Congregation or services in the main sanctuary.
- Attending minyan with a parent two days within a month, at least one of which is the family's assigned Minyan Duty date. One credit per month will be given.
- Services at another synagogue, only if necessary, as we strongly encourage fulfillment of the service requirement at Bet Torah. Students may receive a maximum of 5 credits.

Special Services for 6th Graders:

The *Vav Chavurah* is a special learners' service for sixth graders led by Bet Torah teens, which begins at 10 a.m. and ends at noon. It is held approximately ten times each year; check the Bet Torah calendar for dates.

The *Vav Class Retreat* is a weekend getaway for students in the Religious School sixth grade, along with Rabbi Brusso, the Educational Director and Religious School staff chaperones. The retreat is an opportunity for class bonding, learning and fun, and includes Kabbalat Shabbat/Maariv, services, Shabbat Shacharit, Minchah/Maariv/Havdalah and Weekday Shacharit.

In order to receive credit for a service, children need to:

Collect their personalized cards from the boxes on the table outside the Sanctuary and turn it in at the conclusion of services.

Be on time for the service, whether it is Junior Congregation, Vav Chavurah or in the main sanctuary..

Remain in the sanctuary as an active participant throughout the service. If you are disruptive or do not stay in the sanctuary, you might not receive credit.

Inform Nili Ionascu in writing and in a timely fashion of services attended outside of Bet Torah. *It is the Ritual Committee that determines if a service meets these guidelines and if credit can be given.*

Keep track of your services and be certain that you will meet the attendance requirements well in advance of your bat/bar mitzvah.

C. B'nei Mitzvah Training

Individual training starts approximately eight to nine months prior to the bar/bat mitzvah date. Each student attends weekly training sessions (20 minutes in length) with Nili Ionascu and/or Cantor. Each student has two full rehearsals, usually held on Monday and Thursday evenings the week of the bar/bat mitzvah.

Order of mastery for *Shabbat morning service*:

Required:

- Torah and Haftarah blessings
- Haftarah
- Maftir (last Torah portion)
- Torah service
- Friday Night Kiddish

Advanced Mastery:

- Musaf*
- Additional Torah readings
- Hallel* (when applicable)
- Shacharit*
- P'sukei D'zimra*

Order of mastery for *Shabbat afternoon service*:**Required:**

Torah reading
 Torah service
Havdalah

Advanced Mastery:

Minchah service
Maariv service

Order of mastery for *Weekday service*:**Required:**

Torah reading
 Torah service

Advanced Mastery:

Musaf (when applicable)
Hallel (when applicable)
Shacharit
P'sukei D'zimra

Please keep in mind that the requirements outlined in this manual must be met prior to the date of the scheduled bar/bat mitzvah, and failure to meet them could alter both the child's and family's participation in the service.

Parents' Financial Obligations

- Your family must be members in good standing and current with your dues payments.
- The bar/bat mitzvah fee (\$1,375 as of January 2017), covering tutoring and related expenses, must be paid upon confirmation of your child's bar/bat mitzvah date.
- As the entire congregation is invited to share Kiddush every Shabbat, each b'nei mitzvah family takes on the obligation of hosting the Kiddush on the weekend of their simcha so that the community can celebrate together. As of January 2017, the Bet Torah Basic Kiddush cost \$1,575, with an "Upgraded" Kiddush an additional \$400 (\$1,150 and \$1,750, respectively, per family if "doubled"); see page 18 for details. Alternatively, many families choose to bring in outside caterers.
- A fee of \$300 should your family require tables and chairs for Saturday Kiddush and you are using a caterer.
- A "Facilities Fee" of \$575 is assessed for Minchah (Saturday afternoon), Rosh Chodesh and all other "non Shabbat" bar/bat mitzvah services.
- Separate fee for room rental for evening party, and/or Bet Torah dishes; contact the Executive Director for more information.

Please note that all fees set forth above are subject to change annually. All questions regarding financial obligations should be addressed to the Executive Director.

Services at Bet Torah

A. Shabbat morning service

The Shabbat morning service has three major parts: *Shacharit*, Torah and Haftarah readings, and *Musaf*. *Shacharit* is preceded by preliminary blessings and psalms known collectively as *P'sukei D'zimra*, usually led by a congregant present when services begin.

Shacharit is led by an appointed person who represents our congregation. The *Shema* is a declaration of faith in the one God. It is followed by the *Amidah*, or “standing prayer,” which reflects on the gift of Shabbat. It is recited individually before the reader’s repetition.

The bar/bat mitzvah usually leads the Torah service. After beginning the service, s/he leads a procession of the Torah around the congregation. Upon returning to the *bimah*, the Torah is placed on the reading table, and the bar/bat mitzvah may deliver a *d'var Torah*. The bar/bat mitzvah and others then read from the Torah. **There are 8 aliyot; however, two are reserved for members of the congregation each week, and the first two must be recited by a Kohen and Levi, respectively (see description of honors, below).**

The bar/bat mitzvah is honored with and called to the *bimah* for the last *aliyah*, known as *maftir*. After the bar/bat mitzvah recites the concluding blessing, the Rabbi will ask the parents to recite the *Shehechyanu*, thanking God for allowing us to reach this special moment. The Rabbi will then offer a *MiSheberakh* prayer asking God to bless the bar/bat mitzvah on the occasion of being called to the Torah for the first time.¹ The congregation sings a song in celebration. After the Torah is lifted and dressed, the bar/bat mitzvah reads the Haftarah, with blessings before and after. At the conclusion of the last blessing, it is traditional at Bet Torah for family members to throw soft candies to sweeten the bar/bat mitzvah’s experience.²

The bar/bat mitzvah goes to the Ark for the Rabbi’s charge, after which s/he will receive the Priestly Blessing from Cantor Herman. The Torah service concludes with various blessings, including *Ashrei*, before returning the Torah to the Ark. The Rabbi then delivers a sermon.

Musaf, a shortened version of *Shacharit*, is the last portion of our service and is usually led by the bar/bat mitzvah. We first recite the *Amidah* as a *Hekhi Kedushah*; the leader begins aloud and the congregation joins through the *Kedushah*, after which all pray individually. Many B’nei mitzvah families have siblings and/or cousins join the bar/bat mitzvah in leading the concluding prayers: *Ein Keloheinu*, *Aleinu*, and *Adon Olam*.

A member of the board will present gifts to the bar/bat mitzvah, and services conclude with *Kiddush* and *Ha'motzi* recited from the *bimah*.

¹ If one parent of the bar/bat mitzvah is not Jewish, the *MiSheberakh* will be recited immediately after the Torah is lifted and dressed, so that the non-Jewish parent may stand next to his/her spouse and child during the prayer.

² Only soft Sunkist Fruit Gems may be used.

B. Shabbat Minchah/Maariv Service

The Saturday afternoon service, as celebrated as Bet Torah, has three major parts: *Minchah*, *Maariv*, and *Havdalah*. This service usually lasts an hour and a half, starting 15 minutes after “call” time and ending 15 minutes after Shabbat ends.

Minchah is usually led by the bar/bat mitzvah. It begins with *Ashrei*, followed by *Hatzi Kaddish* and an abbreviated Torah service. The bar/bat mitzvah leads a procession of the Torah around the congregation; the Torah is then placed on the reading table, and the bar/bat mitzvah may deliver a *d’var Torah*.

Only three *aliyot* exist at this service, usually taken by each parent and the bar/bat mitzvah. After the bar/bat mitzvah recites the concluding blessing, the Rabbi will ask the parents to recite the *Shehechyanu*, thanking God for allowing us to reach this special moment. The Rabbi will then offer a *MiSheberakh* prayer asking God to bless the bar/bat mitzvah on the occasion of being called to the Torah for the first time.³ The congregation sings in celebration, after which family members may throw soft candies to sweeten the bar/bat mitzvah’s experience.⁴

The Torah is lifted and dressed, and the service continues with various blessings including the Prayer for our Country, the Prayer for Israel, and the Prayer for Peace, typically led by a family member. The Torah is then returned to the Ark following another procession.

The bar/bat mitzvah remains at the Ark for the Rabbi’s charge, after which s/he will receive the Priestly Blessing from Cantor Herman.

The Rabbi will announce the *Amidah*, recited as a *Hekhi Kedushah*; the leader begins aloud, and the congregation joins through the *Kedushah*, after which all pray individually. The service ends with the full *Kaddish*, *Aleinu*, and Mourners’ *Kaddish*. The bar/bat mitzvah often leads this part of the service as well.

Following the conclusion of *Minchah*, the Rabbi instructs those wearing a *tallit* to remove it. A member of the board will present gifts to the bar/bat mitzvah. A responsive reading, “The Gift of Shabbat,” is recited at this point. *Maariv*, usually led by the clergy or a congregant, is a short service with the *Shema* and its blessings, the *Amidah*, and the concluding prayers.

Havdalah, usually led by the bar/bat mitzvah, is the ceremony of separation to mark the end of Shabbat. The family will be invited to the reader’s table, and the lights dimmed. Blessings are recited over wine, spices, and a special candle.

³ If one parent of the bar/bat mitzvah is not Jewish, the *MiSheberakh* will be recited immediately after the Torah is lifted and dressed, so that the non-Jewish parent may stand next to his/her spouse and child during this prayer.

⁴ Only soft Sunkist Fruit Gems may be used.

C. Weekday Rosh Chodesh Service

The weekday Rosh Chodesh service has three major parts: *Shacharit*, Torah and Haftarah readings, and *Musaf*. *Shacharit* is preceded by preliminary blessings and psalms known collectively as *P'sukei D'zimra*, usually led by a congregant present when services begin.

Tefillin are worn for the portions of the service leading up to Musaf. Bet Torah girls and all Jewish men with Torah honors must wear tefillin.

Shacharit is led by an appointed person, often the bar/bat mitzvah. The *Shema* is a declaration of faith in the one God. It is followed by the *Amidah*, or “standing prayer,” which contains a series of blessings appropriate to weekday concerns, and includes an additional paragraph for Rosh Chodesh. We recite the *Amidah* as a *Hekhi Kedushah*; the leader begins aloud, and the congregation joins through the *Kedushah*, after which all pray individually. *Hallel* (psalms of joy) is recited next, often led by the bar/bat mitzvah.

The bar/bat mitzvah usually leads the Torah service. S/he leads a procession of the Torah around the congregation; the Torah is then placed on the reading table, and the bar/bat mitzvah may deliver a *d'var Torah*. S/he and others then read from the Torah.

Only four aliyot exist at this service. The bar/bat mitzvah is honored with and called for the last *maftir* aliyah. After the bar/bat mitzvah recites the concluding blessing, the Rabbi will ask the parents to recite the *Shehechyanu*, thanking God for allowing us to reach this special moment. The Rabbi will then offer a *MiSheberakh* prayer asking God to bless the bar/bat mitzvah on the occasion of being called to the Torah for the first time.⁵ The congregation sings in celebration, after which family members may throw soft candies to sweeten the bar/bat mitzvah's experience.⁶

The Torah is lifted and dressed, and the service continues with various blessings including the Prayer for our Country, the Prayer for Israel, and the Prayer for Peace, typically led by a family member. The Torah is then returned to the Ark following another procession.

The bar/bat mitzvah remains at the Ark for the Rabbi's charge, after which s/he will receive the Priestly Blessing from Cantor Herman.

Musaf, a shortened version of *Shacharit*, is the last portion of our service and is usually led by the bar/bat mitzvah. After the Rabbi indicates that *tefillin* may be removed, the *Amidah* is recited as a *Hekhi Kedushah*; the leader begins aloud and the congregation joins through the *Kedushah*, after which all pray individually. The service ends with the full *Kaddish*, *Aleinu*, Psalm for Rosh Chodesh (English) and Mourner's *Kaddish*. *Adon Olam*, usually led by the bar/bat mitzvah and siblings, concludes the service.

⁵ If one parent of the bar/bat mitzvah is not Jewish, the *MiSheberakh* will be recited immediately after the Torah is lifted and dressed, so that the non-Jewish parent may stand next to his/her spouse and child during this prayer.

⁶ Only soft Sunkist Fruit Gems may be used.

Preparation and Description of Honors

Preparation

At each Shabbat morning service, two *aliyot* are reserved for the congregation. For example, a bar/bat mitzvah family would have the opportunity to assign the Kohen, Levi, Shlishi, Shishi and Sh'vi'i *aliyot*, leaving the Revi'i and Chamishi *aliyot* for the congregation and Maftir for the bar/bat mitzvah child. **On the Shabbat mornings where there is a double B'nei mitzvah, five *aliyot* (including Kohen and Levi) will be allotted to each family.**

Eight weeks prior to your *simcha*, please meet with the Rabbi to review the honors available to your family and guests. Some of your honorees may be unfamiliar with Bet Torah's service and traditions, or perhaps have not had an *aliyah* in years. To ensure that everyone is prepared and comfortable with what they have been asked to do, please review the procedures related to the honor with Nili Ionascu or Cantor Herman.

Prior to turning in your Honors sheet to Leila Tavares, please obtain the Hebrew name and his/her parents' Hebrew names of each person who will receive an *aliyah*. If a member of your family or a guest wishes to read Torah, they will need to have his/her chanting reviewed by Nili Ionascu or Cantor Herman.

Please note that Torah honors are faith statements and faith acts and are therefore most appropriately performed by Jewish participants; speak with the Rabbi for guidance involving roles for non-Jewish relatives or guests in our service.

Description of Honors

1. ***Aliyot*** (chanting the blessings before and after a Torah reading): Everyone called to the Torah for an *aliyah* must supply their Hebrew names and are required to recite the blessings in Hebrew. Both Jewish men and women over the age of 13 are eligible for an *aliyah*. The first and second *aliyot* are reserved for individuals with *Kohen* and *Levi* lineage, respectively.

2. ***Ha'magbiah*** (Lifter of the Torah): The Torah scroll is quite heavy and needs to be raised by someone who can safely care for the sacred scroll.

3. ***Ha'golail*** [***Ha'golelet*** - female] (Dresser of the Torah): This person dresses the Torah with the tie, mantle, *yad*, and crowns after it is lifted and shown to the congregation. Often a couple is called up together as *Ha'magbiah* and *Ha'golelet*.

4. Opening and closing the Ark at the beginning of the Torah service.

5. Carrying the Torah at the start of the Torah service.

6. Carrying the Torah at the end of the Torah service

7. Opening and closing the ark at the end of the Torah service.

8. Optional English responsive readings.

All women who come to the bimah for an honor are encouraged to wear a tallit; all married women are strongly encouraged to wear a headcovering.

How to Write a D'var Torah

Approximately eight weeks before the bar/bat mitzvah, the bar/bat mitzvah will start to meet with Rabbi Brusso and Morah Ronni Metzger in six separate half hour sessions to study the appropriate Torah portion with the goal of putting together a d'var Torah. Parents are asked to attend the first meeting.

Continuing the process begun in the Vav Etgar program, each child will read his/her Torah portion in English with their parents and come up with a list of questions. The bar/bat mitzvah will then study various rabbinical and scholarly commentaries on the text.

During the third session, the child will decide on a topic to write about. The topic will take the form of a question s/he is asking about the content of the Torah portion.

The following is a basic outline of what is generally included in the d'var Torah. The Rabbi and Morah Metzger will assist in creating the speech.

Introduction – One or two sentences that focus the congregation on the issues that will be raised.

Background - A brief summary of pertinent facts in your Torah portion that provide people enough context to understand the issue you will be addressing.

Question & Discussion – The central question you are asking about your Torah portion.

Sources - Two-three Jewish sources or thinkers and their approach to the question you raised.

You as a source - What is your perspective on the question you asked?

Apply to your life in general - How does this issue at hand apply to your life? What have you learned that you will apply to your life going forward?

Please note that the d'var is not the place for “thank yous.” We recommend including “thank yous” at a Friday night dinner, the celebration and/or a service program booklet (an example of which will be available by calling the main office).

B'nei mitzvah will have an opportunity to practice delivering their d'var Torah in the sanctuary during rehearsals the week leading up to the bar/bat mitzvah.

Please be sure to e-mail a copy of the d'var Torah at least a week in advance of the bar/bat mitzvah to ltavares@bettorah.org.

Kiddush/Oneg

You are invited to have *kiddush* lunch at Bet Torah every Shabbat! The congregation has the opportunity to celebrate Shabbat together with the Bat/Bar Mitzvah family. It is the responsibility of every Bar/Bat Mitzvah family to sponsor the *kiddush* following the Shabbat morning service on the day of their *simcha*.

You may choose to sponsor a Standard Kiddush, which is Dairy or *Pareve* (contains no specific dairy or meat products) and contains the items listed below. In order to streamline the process for the family and to adhere to the laws of *Kashrut*, Bet Torah has entered into a contract with a supplier to provide a *kiddush* on a weekly basis. If you utilize this service, you must let Michele Heller know how many guests you will be expecting. Alternatively, you may choose to sponsor a more elaborate Kiddush, with a personally selected menu, using one of the approved caterers listed on the next page.

Standard Bet Torah *Kiddush* – *Basic*: includes the following:

fruit platters	challah	soda and juice
vegetable platters	paper goods	coffee and tea set-up
bagels and cream cheese platters	wine	cookie platters
		custodial help

Standard Bet Torah *Kiddush*- *Upgraded* includes *Basic Kiddush* and the following:

tuna salad, white fish salad and egg salad

As of January 1, 2017, *Standard Kiddush* costs are as follows:

Standard Kiddush- Basic: \$1,575 – including tables & chairs

Standard Kiddush- Upgraded: \$1,975 – including tables & chairs

In the event of a shared Shabbat morning bar/bat mitzvah, the cost to each family is \$1,350 for the *Standard Kiddush- Basic* and \$1,575 for the *Standard Kiddush-Upgraded*.

If you choose a more elaborate *Kiddush* with a caterer of your choosing, a charge of \$300 is added for tables and chairs.

For all *Kiddush* options, the family is responsible for tablecloths. Dishes are available for rent as well.

A “Facilities Fee” of \$575 is assessed for all Minchah (Saturday afternoon), Rosh Chodesh and other “non Shabbat” bar/bat mitzvah services to cover expenses of re-opening the synagogue.

A separate “room rental” charge will be assessed for evening celebrations. Separate fees also apply to dish rental. Contact Michele Heller as early as possible for details and/or to book the Social Hall for your celebration.

All fees are subject to annual increases. Please contact Michele Heller regarding any financial or *Kiddush* -related questions.

In addition, please note the following:

Bet Torah staff oversees the *Kiddush*, ensuring that the tables and room stay neat and clean and that the food is replenished so that your guests can enjoy themselves.

***Kiddush* fees need to be paid at least one week in advance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and cannot be billed or charged.**

Keep in mind that the number of your guests may exceed standard *kiddush* expectations.

Your guests may still sample the *kiddush* before leaving for your afternoon celebration.
****If you choose to cater a more elaborate Kiddush, please add 70 congregants to your total number of *Kiddush* guests.**

Please refer to the following list of approved caterers:

Approved Caterers

Dairy Only

Bagel Emporium
 393 Main Street
 Armonk, NY 10504
 Tel: 914-273-9111
 Michael Rozins

**Full Service Caterers – Kiddush or
 Friday Night Dinner**

Foremost Glatt Kosher Caterers
 65 Anderson Avenue
 Monnachie, NJ 07074
 Tel: 201-664-2465
 Jeffrey Becker or Rick Bardari

Dairy/Meat Prepared at Bet Torah

Rene Leon Catering
renesleon@gmail.com
 Tel: 914-261-6932

Jon Everin
 23 Drake Street
 Mount Kisco, NY 10549
 Tel: 914-666-4217
 Cell: 914—299-6504

Bakery Products Only

Pastry Corner
 209 East Main Street
 Mount Kisco, NY 10549
 Tel: 914-666-5916
 Dairy Pastries & Cakes
 Parve by Order

Small Friday Night Dinner (meat or dairy)

Jon Everin
 23 Drake Street
 Mount Kisco, NY 10549
 Tel: 914-666-4217
 Cell: 914-299-6504

Rene Leon Catering
renesleon@gmail.com
 Tel: 914-261-6932

Sammy's Kosher Market
 (Meat Only)
 720 Bedford Road
 Bedford Hills, NY
 Tel.: 914-241-4477

Any food served at Bet Torah must adhere to strict standards of kashrut.

1. Packaged goods must have a symbol indicating *kashrut* certification.
2. All baked goods must be purchased at bakeries where the Rabbi has approved the *kashrut*.
3. ***No foods prepared in homes may be brought into Bet Torah, even if the home is kosher.***
4. Any kosher caterer other than those above must be approved by Rabbi Brusso; contact the Executive Director as soon as possible.

Discretionary Expenditures

Kippot and Tallitot

The synagogue provides *tallitot* and *kippot* and lace doilies for the guests and congregants to use. Some families choose to order festive or personalized *kippot*.

Flowers

Although they are not required, families often choose to provide one fresh floral arrangement for each side of the *bimah*. If you wish to supply them, a small floral arrangement and decorative soap and paper towels can be placed in the rest rooms. If you choose to supply flowers, please avoid any of the lily species.

Candies

If the family chooses to shower the child with candy following the Haftarah, the family must purchase Sunkist Fruit Gems. Only 25 packets may be used and should only be distributed to the first two rows of the family section.

Booklets/Service Programs

One of the responsibilities of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family is to provide the synagogue office with the family honors, Torah Readers and a family statement for the weekly Shabbat pamphlet. We have examples of past programs for you to review.

Synagogue Photographs

Photography is not permitted on Shabbat. Photographs at the synagogue are usually taken during the week prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Families should contact the Executive Director 2-3 weeks prior to schedule a date and time. Photographs can be taken prior to 4 pm. If photographs are taken on a Friday, they must be completed by 2pm.

Friday Night Dinners

A family opting to host a Friday night Shabbat dinner at the synagogue, a great way to celebrate your *simcha*, must make a request with the Executive Director approximately 3 months in advance. Friday night dinners must be scheduled in coordination with Kabbalat Shabbat services, and the caterer must be approved by the Executive Director when scheduled.

Sisterhood Judaica Shop of Bet Torah

Support Bet Torah by using our Sisterhood Judaica Shop for many of your *simchah* needs. The gift shop would be happy to supply you with *kippot*, *tallitot*, *tefillin*, and other items for your bar/bat mitzvah.

Please contact the office for hours of operation.

*****All items to be delivered or brought into the synagogue for use during any part of Shabbat must arrive at Bet Torah before 12 noon on Friday.***

Tzedakah/Mitzvah Projects

A Mitzvah Project is simply the fulfillment of the Jewish traditions of *Tikkun Olam* -- Repairing the World and *Gemilut Hasadim* -- our commitment to acts of loving kindness as adult members of the Jewish community. It is the responsibility of every Jew to reach out to one another.

MITZVAH PROJECT 101: HOW DO WE GET STARTED?

While invitations, DJ's and decorations can consume hours of thought, one of the most rewarding experiences is the focus on the true meaning and responsibility of becoming a B'nei Mitzvah. Consider the following:

What values, issues, ideals are most important to your child and your family?

What are your child's strengths, and what do they like to do? Sports, dance, animals, academics – all help to determine the type of project that would engage your child.

What “enrages” your child? How can they make a difference, and how can your family contribute to a solution?

Can acquaintances be of assistance? Are there friends, politicians or local celebrities that can be called upon to help? Can teammates help with a collection?

What time commitment can your child realistically put towards this effort to make the most of the experience, yet not tax their already overscheduled week?

Would your child prefer to work directly with local beneficiaries for a hands-on project, or collect money and/or items to benefit those farther away, perhaps in Israel?

What kind of resources will your child need to get started?

Can the project be integrated into the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration, either reflected in the invitations or party or by asking guests to contribute?

MITZVAH PROJECT 201: SETTING A GOOD EXAMPLE

Bet Torah recognizes that many families have particular causes and charities to which they are financially dedicated. Parents can set an example of righteous action by donating a percentage of bar/bat mitzvah expenses to organizations such as UJA, JNF, AJWS, or Bet Torah partners:

MAZON: The Jewish Response to Hunger (suggested donation is 3%)

www.mazon.org/How_You_Can_Help/Ways_to_Give/Lifecycle_Events/Bar-Bat_Mitzvahs.asp

I've Done My Part (varying donations) www.ivedonemypart.org

Supporting the Study Process

Helping Your Child Achieve Their Goals

The many months of study and preparation leading to your child's bar/bat mitzvah can be somewhat demanding, and may come to feel like a burden for a child whose schedule is too overloaded. The following are suggestions for relieving the stress which your child may feel:

Help your child set up a special place at home to practice their prayers – a place in which they can work undisturbed and be able to sing without being heard by others.

Establish a set 3 times a week study schedule, 30 minutes each session. Some children are at their best in the morning, before school; some are best at night when more relaxed, but not tired.

Consider using the phrase “Torah study” rather than “practice time.” If possible, sit with your child while s/he studies and say, “Show me what you’re learning.”

Praise your child for each step forward. Have your child perform for 15-20 minutes 2 times a week after dinner when everyone is relaxed, and give positive feedback to your child. Rather than ‘play the heavy’ and criticize their work or closely monitor their development every step of the way, allow yourself the opportunity to be their parent and to enjoy your child for who they are, not what they do or don’t do.

Never make negative remarks about your child’s vocal ability or style. It takes time and effort to feel comfortable leading prayer. It’s more about how your child *feels* about singing the prayers, than how your child *sounds*. “God listens to the melody of your heart.”

Encourage other family members to listen to your child and validate their efforts. Positive attention is a great motivator.

Remember that there are always peaks and valleys in the learning process. You and your child should expect times of discouragement, accept them, and focus on the positive fact that s/he’s learning. Remind him/her that everything worth doing takes time and effort.

Attending services with your child is a positive model. It will also help make the prayer book and worship service more ‘user friendly’ to you. Afterwards, share your sense of your experience of the service together.

Encourage your child to try out their skills by leading portions of the service whenever possible. These experiences will reassure your child that they have the skills necessary to succeed.

---adapted by Cantor Randy Herman

Bet Torah Bar/Bat Mitzvah Timeline

Daled and Hey Religious School Years: 4th and 5th graders may earn a maximum of 10 credits for attendance at Junior Congregation at Bet Torah towards service requirement.

Hey Religious School Year:

September: Bar/Bat Mitzvah Surveys are sent to parents of children who will turn 11 in the year beginning the next January. For example, parents of children born in 2003 (and who will turn 13 in 2016) will receive the questionnaire in September 2013. *Note: some Daled students may be included in this group.* The questionnaires must be completed and submitted to the Ritual Committee by November 1st.

October/November: Service attendance cards are distributed at a special service.

January: Bar/Bat Mitzvah date assignments are mailed to parents. Parents must acknowledge their acceptance of the dates and submit the required fee, \$1,375 as of January 2017 but subject to annual increases. The fee covers the costs of B'nei mitzvah tutoring and related expenses.

March: Parent Orientation meeting held, Bar/Bat Mitzvah Manuals distributed.

Winter/Spring: Contact the Executive Director as soon as possible after receiving your date if you wish to reserve or rent the Bet Torah Social Hall for a luncheon or evening reception.

Approximately One Year prior (June/July): Letter explaining tutoring process and scheduling sent out to parents of children with Bar/Bat Mitzvah dates during the following academic year (September – June).

8-9 Months prior - Lessons begin; Red Bar/Bat Mitzvah book and CD given at first lesson.

Three (3) Months prior - Contact Executive Director about catering Saturday Kiddush, and, if desired, Friday night Shabbat dinner at Bet Torah.

Three (3) Months prior – Rabbi's Assistant will call/email to schedule D'var Torah meetings.

Six (6) Weeks prior - Inform Cantor Herman of any additional Torah Readers.

Three (3) Weeks prior -Contact Executive Director to schedule photographs at Bet Torah.

Two (2) Weeks prior - Have additional Torah Readers read to Cantor Herman or Nili Ionascu for approval. Send draft of D'var Torah to Rabbi for approval.

One (1) Week prior – A Board member will contact you to learn about your child in order to help the Board member prepare a speech.

One (1) Week prior -Two Rehearsals will be held with Nili Ionascu and Cantor Herman.

12:30 pm Friday prior - All deliveries to Bet Torah must be completed.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date -Mazal Tov!**PLEASE NOTE:**

This timeline only applies to the Bet Torah Bat/Bat Mitzvah process as it relates to the Bet Torah Synagogue *only*, including preparation, training and specific logistical matters. It does not include any information, recommendation or representations about matters which do not involve Bet Torah. It is included for general reference only and may not be completely inclusive. Please refer to this Manual and contact appropriate Bet Torah staff for more detailed information.

The reference to a specific religious school year is for reference only. *Bar/Bat Mitzvah dates are assigned by birth year*, not by religious school grade, so a child may not be in the specific religious school year mentioned.

