



Congregation Shaar Hashalom

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Manual



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1. Bar/Bat Mitzvah: A Family Event

There are many ways to increase the joy and parental involvement in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony to make this life cycle event even more meaningful. Begin by increasing your family's personal observances. Begin observing new mitzvot to acquaint your student and family with unfamiliar traditions. Remember, the second word for this event is *Mitzvah*. If your student sees the parent increasing his or her own observance, the student will learn that Judaism is for adults, too. If a student never sees a parent practicing Judaism, the student will learn that Judaism is something one outgrows, something just for kids. This might make the student want to do less, because he or she will want to be like the grown-ups who are the role models in the family.

Another way to increase the meaning of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony is to make the Bar/Bat Mitzvah day a true turning point in the life of your student. Permit your student to do things after that special day that he or she was not permitted to do before. Tell your student that he or she is maturing, growing up, and that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah marks the change.

Finally, take on a mitzvah project with your student, such as volunteering at a local hospital or charitable organization. You may wish to include the whole family in the project.

For further information regarding any of these suggestions, please consult with the rabbi.

1.1. Commitment

On or about your student's twelfth birthday, (i.e., one full year before the

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anticipated date of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah), meet with the Rabbi/Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutor to schedule and discuss the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. Although we have congregational standards for Bar/Bat Mitzvah, we are sensitive to the special needs and talents of our students. Please do not hesitate to contact the synagogue with concerns or questions. Let us work with you to make this life-cycle event special for your family.

1.2. What Will It Cost?

As costs change from time to time, a separate page (Cost Page) is attached. It details the various components of the costs associated with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, and will be billed approximately one year in advance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. Any qualified, outside tutoring used rather than the tutor provided by the congregation must be approved by the Rabbi and the Ritual Committee. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee includes:

- One Simcha tree leaf for the Tree of Life inscribed with the student's name and Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.
- Six months of weekly tutoring.
- The loan of a marked Siddur for the training period.
- Practice tapes.
- Photocopies of Haftarah and Torah portions.

Tutoring is available for longer than 6 months at an additional cost of \$50 per month. Please note, if the tutor is not notified in advance that a student will be absent, a \$20.00 no show fee will be accessed for the re-scheduled session. (The congregation is not responsible for rescheduling tutoring sessions that are missed if the tutor has not been notified in advance.)

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There may be additional fees for facilities usage, depending upon what the family is planning, and the number of guests expected. Contact the synagogue office for information. If any fees present a financial hardship to your family; please discuss this with the Financial Secretary. No student will be denied a Bar/Bat Mitzvah because of financial need.

1.3. *Postponing a Bar/Bat Mitzvah*

If a family fails to comply with the policies stated in this manual, or if the student is not sufficiently prepared as determined by the Rabbi and Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutor, the Rabbi and Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutor may recommend to the Ritual Committee the postponement of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah observance, or the limitation of the amount of the service the student will be allowed to lead.

The family will be contacted approximately three months before the actual Bar/Bat Mitzvah date if there is a strong possibility that this may happen.

Should there be a family crisis (e.g., a death in the family), it is the family's choice whether to continue. However, please remember that in Judaism, joy comes before sorrow.

Families are expected to notify the Rabbi and Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutor as soon as possible if they wish to postpone a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

2. Responsibilities

The student's responsibilities include study, practice, keeping tutoring appointments and attending services as well as Hebrew and religious school.

Two years of Hebrew training are required before entering the Bar/Bat Mitzvah program. If the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is held before the end of the school year, the new Bar/Bat Mitzvah will still be expected to complete religious

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and Hebrew school. Please consult with the Education Director if you have any questions or difficulties regarding this issue.

2.1. Bar/Bat Mitzvah Class

This mandatory class meets once a week after Saturday service for one year prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. After the new Bar/Bat Mitzvah has completed his/her religious ceremony, he/she is no longer a part of this class, but will continue in the grade-appropriate religious school training.

The Rabbi, who teaches the Bar/Bat Mitzvah class, should be notified in advance if a student is going to be absent. Parents are welcome to observe this class at any time. The objective of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah class is to explore the meaning of the individual prayers, the service structure, and the symbols of ritual observance.

2.2. Individual Tutoring

Requirements: A family must be in good standing financially with the congregation before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Tutoring begins.

Once the date of the event has been selected, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutor will schedule time to meet with the student for one-half hour per week, six months prior to the event. The tutor assists the student in learning his/her Hebrew prayers, Torah portion, and Haftarah portion.

There is an option of starting two months earlier for an additional fee. If you feel that your student needs to take advantage of this option, please notify the tutor as early as possible during the pre Bar/Bat Mitzvah year.

The practice tapes, photocopies of Haftarah and Torah portions will be provided by the tutor. In addition, the student will be given a weekly

progress report that will need to be signed by a parent and returned the following lesson. The tutor will help the student mark any personally purchased copies of the prayer books for service leadership. (Books may be purchased at the gift shop.) If a tape is damaged or lost please bring a blank 60 minute tape to the tutor at your next lesson, so that the tutor may replace it.

Prayer books are on loan to the student, and must be returned in good condition. The family must pay for lost books which includes the price of the book plus the marking time.

2.3. Service Attendance

Our experience has show that regular service attendance helps everyone gain the confidence and ability necessary to conduct services when their special day arrives.

We require parents and student to attend a minimum of two Friday evening services and three Saturday morning services per month for twelve months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Please do not routinely drop your student off at the synagogue and leave. This sends a negative message to your student regarding the value of this worship experience. If you must be absent on occasion, please be sure another adult is responsible for your student.

Attendance will be taken at every service. On Saturday morning the student must be at services by 10 a.m. for attendance to be counted. If your student is not regularly attending, the limitation policy regarding postponement will be considered.

2.4. Learning to Perform the Service

As soon as the Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate is prepared to lead a portion of the congregation's Shabbat service, and continues to meet the service attendance requirements, he or she will be given opportunities to do so.

With the approval of the tutor, the student (not the parent) should contact the Rabbi to schedule the date and the service portion that the student will perform on a Shabbat preceding the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. This helps the student take ownership of his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

The English in the Shabbat service is often difficult, since it consists of many words with which the student may not be familiar. Service attendance will help with this, but the student should practice reciting the English portions of the service at home, along with the Hebrew. We need the help of parents with this part of Bar/Bat Mitzvah training, because English recitation is not done in class.

2.5. Rehearsal

During the week immediately preceding the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, a rehearsal involving the student, parent, grandparents, and service participants is scheduled. This ensures a smoother service for the family, and reduces anxiety and tension.

2.6. Bar/Bat Mitzvah Speeches

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah student is asked to give three speeches. The first two are the speeches about the Torah portion and the Haftarah. The third one is the Bar/Bat Mitzvah speech. The three speeches should be reviewed with the Rabbi three weeks prior to the event.

2.6.1. Torah Speech

The Torah speech has two sections to it. The first section is a short overview of the Torah portion, telling the congregation what it is about, perhaps emphasizing a single, most interesting part. The second section to the Torah speech is an application of the Torah portion to modern times, making the Torah relevant to our day. This is an opportunity for the student to feel as though he or she is in the role of the Rabbi, teaching from the text. It does not have to be elaborate, or scholarly, but it should be relevant and reflect the student's thoughts.

2.6.2. Haftorah Speech

The Haftorah speech has three sections to it. The first section tells the congregation, which may contain, on the day of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, many non-Jews, why we read the Haftorah. Quite simply, before the Maccabees rebelled against Syria, Antiochus forbade the reading of the Torah, on threat of death. In order to instruct what should have been read from the Torah, on a given Shabbat, the Jews chose passages from the Prophets that reflected the theme of that Shabbat's Torah portion. For example, instead of reading, "in the beginning G-d created the heaven and the earth...." from Genesis 1:1, they read from Isaiah, 42:5-43:10, which begins, "He that created the heavens and stretched them forth..." Once the Jews rebelled, they continued to read from the Torah portion and the Haftorah associated it. The second section of the Haftorah speech is to tell the congregation what the Haftorah is about; and the third section is to tell them how it reflects the Torah portion.

2.6.3. Bar/Bat Mitzvah Speech

The third speech is the Bar/Bat Mitzvah speech. This also has three sections to it. In the first section, the student tells the congregation what this experience means to him or her, why he/she has studied so hard, and worked so hard for this day. The second section can be called the "Thank you's to those people who brought about this Bar/Bat Mitzvah day. In the third section, the student expresses how this day is not the end to his or her involvement with Jewish learning and the congregation and indicates how the student will continue to be involved.

2.7. *Open Service Policy*

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration is part of the on-going Shabbat Services of our congregation. Since every service is an "open service" please anticipate the members and visitors attending, in addition to your invited guests.

3. Preparing For the Celebration

3.1. *Bulletin Announcements and Invitations*

It is customary to print the Bar/Bat Mitzvah notice or invitation in the Shofar. The Shofar deadline is the 20th of each month. Please submit your invitation the month preceding the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. There is no charge for this service.

The Shofar editor has a box in the office and can be reached via email at shofar@shaarhashalom.org.

3.2. *Printed Booklets And Service Formats*

There may not be enough chumashim available for all guests to be able to

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follow the reading of the Torah portion and the Haftarah. If, for this reason, you wish to prepare a printed booklet containing these items, please follow these guidelines:

- Set an appointment with the Rabbi to learn what constitutes a service according to halachah and our congregation minyan. The text approved by the Rabbi is available from him via email or CD.
- Prepare your booklet and present it to the Rabbi at least one month before the service.

As a rule, changes in the text of the congregation's Shabbat service are not permitted. If you have a special request however, please consult with the Rabbi at least one month before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Please provide a written sample. Any changes in our regular service format should be approved by the Ritual Committee, and this allows the Rabbi and/or the Ritual Vice President. sufficient time to review the changes, and to present the final product to the committee, if necessary.

3.3. *Ritual Items*

The synagogue has a limited supply of Kippot available. It is possible to order head coverings that are imprinted with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's name and the date of the event. A good suggestion when ordering is to send an invitation to the supplier, so that the colors can be matched more closely.

A few tallitot are available for guests on a first-come, first-serve basis. These are located right outside the Sanctuary doors.

3.4. *Instrumental Music*

Instrumental music is permitted for special Shabbat and Holy Day services;

however it is not permitted during a Bar/Bat Mitzvah service or as entertainment at the Oneg or Kiddush. This is because the day is about the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and nothing should take away from that.

3.5. *Oneg and Kiddush*

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah family sponsors the Oneg Shabbat following the Friday evening service, and a Kiddush luncheon for the congregation following the Shabbat morning service. (Adult Bar/Bat Mitzvah families are requested to follow the same procedure) The Kiddush luncheon is considered part of the congregation's regular Shabbat celebration. Call the synagogue office for information regarding the requirement. No private parties or set ups are allowed before 2:30 p.m. on Saturday. Also no entertainment of any kind is permitted at the luncheon.

The family is responsible for providing or paying for the purchase of kosher grape juice and wine, and at least two kosher challot for the occasion.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah families are asked to supply any and all consumable and disposable items which may be needed for the Oneg and Kiddush. The congregation gratefully accepts any unused, non-perishable items; however, perishable food items should be removed from the kitchen, or may be donated for religious school or club use.

Please remember, the Oneg/Kiddush can be as elaborate or as simple as you wish. Many congregants have friends and relatives provide all the food (kosher, dairy or parve) for both the Oneg and Kiddush. Kosher caterers and or professional kitchen staff to help prepare and serve are available, or you may hire your own helpers, as long as you provide them with the detailed instructions, which are available. Before your event, clean food preparation

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areas, utensils and working appliances are provided in the synagogue's kitchen, should you need to use it.

For information concerning available staff for hire, call the synagogue office. The congregation does not have kitchen help on staff.

For information regarding the use of the synagogue kitchen, please refer to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah kitchen info at the end of the manual. You may also contact the office at 281-488-5861.

3.6. *Kosher Foods*

Any food brought into the synagogue and/or prepared in the synagogue must comply with the synagogue's established policies of kashrut (dairy or parve only). If non-kosher food is accidentally brought into the synagogue, there will be a \$150 charge for rekashering. If you are in doubt please consult with our Rabbi, who is the congregation's final authority on kashrut.

3.7. *Deliveries*

Deliveries of flowers, food items, printed materials, etc. must be made before 2:00 p.m. on Friday afternoon. The secretary leaves and the office close at this time. Any requests for keys to open the building, at times when it is not usually open, must be made in advance with the Facilities Chair. No deliveries may be made on Shabbat or holidays.

3.8. *Set Up*

The Sanctuary, Social Hall, and Gathering Space are dedicated spaces for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah event.

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As soon as you have decided upon the number of guests and the type of reception you are planning please check with the synagogue Administrative Assistant. They will direct you to the congregation coordinator who will help you plan your event. Nothing may be rearranged in the gathering space, social hall or sanctuary while you are decorating for your event. No decorations are allowed in the sanctuary, except for a single centerpiece in front of the lectern, without the rabbi's permission. Approval is also needed for any gathering space or social hall decorations. Additional seating (in excess of 160) in the sanctuary must be arranged through the congregation coordinator.

Check with the Facilities Chair if you wish to remove anything in either the social hall or Sanctuary for storage in the classrooms; for more detailed information in this area, call the office.

3.9. Clean Up

It is the responsibility of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family to see that the Sanctuary, Social Hall, Synagogue Kitchen, Gathering Space, as well as any classrooms used for babysitting are cleaned, swept and left in the same or better condition than it was found before the event.

3.10. Babysitting

Often very young children who have been brought to services do not have the patience to remain quiet in the Sanctuary for long spans of time. This can be very disruptive, and may be especially disturbing to the student who is leading the service. Therefore, parents are encouraged, as a courtesy to their guests, to make arrangements for a babysitter. A Religious School classroom may be used for this purpose. Check with the synagogue Administrative

Assistant to see what arrangements may be made for access to the classroom, and about any fee for its use.

4. The Congregation's Service

4.1. Service Starting Times

The Friday night services begin at 7:00 p.m. and the Saturday morning service begins at 9:30 a.m. Please invite your guests to come at least fifteen minutes earlier than these scheduled times. Advise them that your child will be leading the service from the beginning and they would be very disappointed if their guests arrive late.

4.2. Candle Lighting Ceremony

This is a warm and wonderful way to involve mother, grandmother, or other Jewish relatives of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to share in our celebration.

Shabbat candles are lit at sundown. If sundown occurs before the service begins, the candles are "pre-lit", and the blessing is recited at the beginning of the service. If sundown occurs during the service, the candles are lit at the time of blessing. Check with the Rabbi for the appropriate procedure for your event.

4.3. Kiddush Blessing

At the conclusion of the service, the Kiddush and Motzi will be led in either the gathering space or in the Social Hall. Adult friends or older children may be asked to serve the wine, grape juice, and challah. The wine and grape juice should be placed on serving trays and the challah in baskets.

4.4. *Aliyot and Other Honors*

On Shabbat we hold a community service, at which your family will be honored on the occasion of your student's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Every effort will be made to reserve as many aliyot and honors for your family as possible. However, please keep in mind that as our congregation grows, it will be increasingly likely that other families will need or deserve to be honored during this service as well. According to the *halachah*, we call to the Torah in a timely manner those with babies needing to be named, couples on the eve of their wedding, those leaving for Israel, those who have recovered from an illness, or those observing yartzeit to name only a few. In the back of this manual is a form for you to fill out, where you will list the names, both English and Hebrew, of those whom you wish to honor with aliyot. Put the list in the Ritual Vice President mailbox at least two weeks before the event.

It is traditional to call a Cohen first, followed by a Levi, but this may be waived with the permission of the Rabbi.

The parents are called together for the seventh aliyah. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah is called for the *maftir* or eighth aliyah. In addition to aliyot, two others may be honored by being called to raise and dress the Torah (Hagbaha and Gelila).

During the Torah service, there are two lay leaders who act as Gabbai'im. These positions require training. Please choose two congregants who are trained for this position. You should give your honors list to the person you choose for Gabbai Rishon at least two weeks in advance.

It is our custom to pass the Torah down from generation to generation, to

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symbolize the continuity of our heritage. This is done immediately prior to the reading of the Torah. We ask all parents, grandparents and great-grandparents who are Jewish to participate in this ceremony. Only those who are Jewish may participate during any part of the Torah services.

If you wish to honor relatives who are not Jewish with an English reading from our regular prayer book, please ask the Rabbi about what is appropriate. Request this at least two weeks before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Parents of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah may prepare a short message or blessing to deliver to their child from the bimah. This is done immediately following the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's speech. Please remember that you are speaking from the bimah in front of the Torah. The speech should be respectful and appropriate.

The family may also designate individuals to open the Ark for *Aleinu* on Friday evening and Saturday morning services.

5. Etiquette

5.1. *Appropriate Dress*

We request that worshippers in our synagogue be modestly & properly attired. As an example, low-cut, strapless, sleeveless or bare midriff garments, shorts, miniskirts, or jeans are not proper attire. No one should come to the synagogue in dirty or torn clothing, or wearing shirts with suggestive writing. Shoes must be worn at all times throughout the synagogue. No one will be allowed on the bimah unless properly attired.

5.2. *Head Coverings and Tallitot*

Men and boys must have their heads covered while in the building. Baseball caps are not appropriate. Women are expected to have their heads covered when they are on the Bimah. It is our custom and strong preference that both men and women come to the bimah wearing a tallit if they are honored with an aliyah, or when raising or dressing the Torah.

It is appropriate for the service leader only to wear a tallit on Friday evening. Non Jews do not wear a tallit at any time, but must have their heads covered.

5.3. *Prayer books*

Siddurim (prayer books), Chumashim (Bibles), and printed booklets containing G-d's name are placed in the pews' book holders or on the chair. They are never placed on the floor. Please make all guests aware of this.

5.4. *Phone Calls and Pagers*

No cell phones or pagers are to be turned on in the Sanctuary. Physicians and others who anticipate possible emergencies are asked to set their phones and/or pagers to vibrate, etc. We discourage the use of the synagogue phone on Shabbat, and will not answer a ringing phone. Please tell your guests to make their plans in advance, since our telephone will not be available to them for use.

In the event of emergency physicians and others should ask the ushers how to use the phone in the kitchen.

5.5. Photography

Photography is permitted in the synagogue, until 30 minutes prior to the beginning of the service. Many families find it convenient to have a photographer at the dress rehearsal, which is held on an evening during the week immediately preceding the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. At this time it is permissible to take pictures while the Torah is out, etc.

Audio and video recordings are permitted during our Shabbat services, but the equipment should be inconspicuous. Walking around with cameras is not permitted. Not flash equipment or lights are allowed.

5.6. Sanctuary Exit and Family

It is not appropriate for anyone to enter or leave the Sanctuary at any time when the ark is open, the congregation is standing during the amidah, or when the Torah is being read. Please ask the usher to ask your guests to remain in the gathering space until these portions of the service are completed.

6. Order of Aliyahs

	English Name	Hebrew Name
Kohen (or B'mkom ¹)	_____	_____
Levi (or B'mkom)	_____	_____
Third Aliyah	_____	_____
Fourth Aliyah	_____	_____
Fifth Aliyah	_____	_____
Sixth Aliyah	_____	_____
Seventh Aliyah Parent(s)	_____	_____
Maftir (Eight Aliyah)	_____	_____
Hagbahah	_____	_____
Gelilah	_____	_____
Hagbahah ²	_____	_____
Gelilah	_____	_____

Please return this completed form to the Gabbai Rishon at least two weeks before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.

¹ B'mkom means in place of...

² If needed for a second Torah