

TEMPLE OF ISRAEL



BAR/BAT MITZVAH

HANDBOOK

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MAZEL TOV

Congratulations on entering into the process of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah! For Jewish families, Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrations are remarkable, life-affirming events. They provide a wonderful opportunity to welcome a new person into the community, as he/she takes an important step toward Jewish adulthood. It is also a chance to affirm a family's commitment to ongoing Jewish living and study, and to gather relatives and friends from everywhere to join in the *simcha* (celebration). They represent a new level of attainment in Jewish knowledge.

Our congregation considers Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies to be an important step along the path of Jewish learning. Your child began learning in our Religious School, and now is about to be immersed in a much more intense and meaningful process. After completing this important step, our congregation looks forward to celebrating with you and your family at Confirmation at the end of 10th grade.

The preparation process for B'nai Mitzvah (plural of Bar/Bat mitzvah) in our community has been carefully arranged to lead to a most meaningful and successful event - and more importantly, to a deep and abiding family relationship with Jewish learning and practice.

This Handbook should answer most of the questions you have about Bar/Bat Mitzvah traditions, and how one should approach this milestone in a life of Jewish learning and commitment. The word *mitzvah* means commandment. Just as there is a notion of obligation inherent in that concept, so too the requirements in this text must be met to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah in our congregation.

The most effective way to teach a child is to "live the lesson." The greater your family's level of involvement in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation process, the more meaningful the ceremony, and Judaism, will become.

Please read this Handbook carefully, and be certain to compile a list of any additional questions to ask the Rabbi.

EXPECTATIONS

What is expected of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

For more than two thousand years, Jewish parents have had the responsibility of educating their children, raising them to become links in the chain of Jewish tradition. The best-known of all Jewish prayers, the *Shema*, contains a commandment to all Jewish parents: "You shall teach the commandments diligently to your children." The Rabbis of the Talmud maintained that the world was dependent on this education. In their words: "The world exists only through the breath of school children."

A Jewish legend says that God withheld giving the Torah to the Jewish people until they could provide some form of surety. Only when they pledged their children did God accept this guarantee. Therefore, the legend concludes, each new generation must be taught the

Torah and all that is in it, for the vitality of Torah depends upon its interpretation and transmission from generation to generation.

Jewish tradition regards education as a life-long concern as study leads to action. Bar/Bat Mitzvah is one major milestone in a lifetime of study. During five years of formal instruction, boys and girls acquire knowledge about Jewish customs and ceremonies, Jewish history, values, the Hebrew language, and Bible. By no means, however, should Bar/Bat Mitzvah be understood to be a conclusion of Jewish study; the ceremony simply marks the celebrant's entry into the world of the adult study of Judaism.

Hebrew reading is an important component of this training and its mastery gives students great satisfaction. The study of Hebrew is valued among Jews for several important reasons. The Torah and other books of the Bible are written in Hebrew. Jews throughout the world pray in Hebrew. Hebrew is the spoken language of the modern State of Israel. And it is the Hebrew language that unites Jews throughout the world in a shared culture. For all these reasons, a demonstration of the ability to read Hebrew is central to Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will be expected to:

- Attend all Bar/Bat Mitzvah Services in the year preceding his/her celebration
- Demonstrate mastery of the Shabbat Services (chanting sections in Hebrew while reading other sections in English)
- Chant or read part of the Torah portion directly from the scroll
- Chant or read a section of the Haftarah in Hebrew
- Prepare and present a D'var Torah
- Do a Tzedakah project
- Demonstrate a basic knowledge of Judaism
- Commit to continue one's Jewish learning and involvement

Besides *kvelling* (bursting with pride and joy), the expectation for parents in a Bar/Bat Mitzvah service includes:

- Leading the candle lighting reading at the Friday night service
- Putting on the tallit
- Handing down of the Torah
- Offering a prayer for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah
- Leading the Kiddush and Motzi readings
- Parental comments to Bar/Bat Mitzvah (optional)

Honors are an important part of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. Family and friends who are given honors cease to be observers and become active participants. A variety of opportunities for family and friends exist within the Shabbat worship service.

Siblings or other young children should be given age-appropriate honors, such as helping to dress the Torah or opening the Ark. Siblings may also help in leading the *Motzi*, blessing over the challah, at the conclusion of the *Kiddush*. Older siblings can be given an *aliyah*.

Speaking Parts: Aliyot

An *aliyah* is the act of being called to the Torah. There are three parts to an *aliyah*, which can be given to one or more individuals:

- The blessing before the reading of the Torah;
- The English translation of the Hebrew Torah text; and
- The blessing after the reading of the Torah.

Some families choose to have one person recite both blessings and another read the English translation; other families give each part to a different person; still others have one person do all three parts.

Non-speaking Parts

When the ark is opened, the Torah is passed down from grandparents to parents to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Other honors include ark openers, a Torah lifter, (*hagbah*), and a Torah dresser, (*g'lilah*).

The Participation of Non-Jews

We welcome the participation of non-Jewish family and friends in the service. While there are some limitations, we very much want all of your guests to feel welcome. The Rabbi will be happy to discuss options with you, and find suitable parts for everyone you choose.

APPROPRIATE DRESS FOR THE BIMAH AND SANCTUARY:

The Ritual Practices Committee has from time to time discussed appropriate dress for children and adults as it relates to the Bimah and the Sanctuary. Those who participate during the service and come onto the Bimah either to hold and walk around with the Torah, read from the Torah, do a Torah blessing, read from the prayer book, light candles, or do the kiddush should be dressed appropriately. Also, adults should be role models for the children of our congregation.

Jeans, sweatshirts, golf shirts, t-shirts, tank-tops, strap dresses, shorts, short-short skirts, flip flops, and athletic shoes are out of character for the Bimah and the Sanctuary. Bare shoulders or exposed midriff are also not appropriate.

Shabbat and Festival dress should reflect the spirit of honoring the Sabbath and the Festival, as well as the Jewish value of modesty, so as to not detract from the dignity of the Bimah and reverence of the Service.

We are suggesting that any person (male or female, adult or child) who comes onto the Bimah be appropriately dressed.

In addition, it is recommended that a tallit and a kippah (both are available in the lobby at the front of the Sanctuary) be worn when carrying the Torah or doing a Torah blessing.

Appropriate dress for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah (person)

Respect and modesty are the key values which the Bar/Bat Mitzvah must display. A leader of the worship service should convey no less. A Bar Mitzvah should wear a suit or jacket with dress slacks, shirt and tie. A Bat Mitzvah should dress so that her shoulders, chest, midriff, and thighs are covered. Appropriate dress shoes are required. Moreover the Bar/Bat Mitzvah must inform guests of appropriate dress for attendance at a worship service.

In other words – dress for the service and not for a party.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS (PREREQUISITES)*

In order to be eligible for Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation, a student must meet the following requirements:

1. The student's family must be members in good standing. (Only the Executive Committee of the Congregation, with input from the Rabbi, has the authority to allow exceptions to this rule.)
2. The student normally must have regularly attended Religious School (either at the Temple of Israel or another Temple/Synagogue's religious school) for at least three consecutive years prior to the year of preparation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah, or demonstrate the equivalent degree of learning and commitment.
3. The student normally must have studied at least three consecutive years of Hebrew (either at Temple of Israel or another Temple/Synagogue's religious school) prior to the year of preparation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah, or demonstrate the equivalent level of ability.

* Each Bar/Bat Mitzvah is considered individually. Requirements may be adjusted depending on unique circumstances.

REQUIREMENTS

The Rabbi supervises all Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparations making the final determination on every aspect of the student's participation in the ceremony.

The Rabbi and Ritual Practices Committee are responsible for the content and quality of all religious services, and have control over that content, including that of Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service, Torah reading, Haftarah, and D'var Torah.

These are the requirements for all Bar/Bat Mitzvah students two years before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date:

1. In addition to continuing attendance at Religious School, all Bar/Bat Mitzvah students will have regular lessons with the Rabbi or an approved tutor. This lesson must be scheduled directly with the Rabbi beginning no less than six (6) months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date selected. Any missed sessions must be rescheduled and made up.
2. For the 12 months prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah, students must attend at least two (2) Shabbat services per month - one of which will be with a parent and stay for the entire service. This commitment can, on occasion, be met at other congregations; just bring the Rabbi a service bulletin or other form of information from the Temple/Synagogue you attend. Each Bar/Bat Mitzvah student and the Rabbi will maintain an attendance record. If the student falls behind, this may require more regular attendance at services as the Bar/Bat Mitzvah approaches.
3. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah must have a Tzedakah project approved by the Rabbi sometime during the six (6) month period of study. Completion of the project will be determined by the type of project selected.
4. During the Shabbat service, each Bar/Bat Mitzvah prepares and presents a *D'var Torah*, an interpretation or mini-sermon that includes an evaluation of the weekly Torah reading, and some personal observations on Bar/Bat Mitzvah. This *D'var Torah* is prepared by the students themselves, working closely with the Rabbi. It is a demonstration of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's immersion in the texts they have prepared for their ceremony, and the first "adult" Torah study that they have completed.
5. Within two weeks prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the family and the Rabbi will schedule a final run-through to go over the service during the Bar/Bat Mitzvah weekend. Parents need to be present for this run-through.
6. Bar/Bat Mitzvah students are participating in a scheduled congregation service, therefore service times remain as scheduled.

Tutoring

While most students receive complete preparation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah through our congregational program, some children may need extra assistance. Private tutoring by a competent, qualified tutor, working closely with the Rabbi's consent and direct supervision, is

beneficial. It will be the parents' financial responsibility to pay for this service. If the Rabbi determines that your child needs a tutor, make an appointment with the Rabbi in advance to arrange precisely what material your child should be working on.

Notification about absences

Parents are expected to give 24 hours notice for absences that are non-emergencies. Contact the Rabbi, tutors, teachers, or any person that your child had an appointment with before the scheduled appointment if he/she cannot make a lesson, session, or service. Parents must realize that the Rabbi, teachers, or tutors would be wasting an hour waiting for you, when they could have scheduled another activity in the time slot. In the event your child is getting extra tutoring, parents will be billed accordingly for the absence.

Scheduling a Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Each Bar/Bat Mitzvah family will attend a meeting with the B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator and the Rabbi, one to two years before the child's 13th birthday in order to go over the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Handbook in detail.

Each family should have decided on a date for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah they would like by the time they attend this meeting. It is important to have an alternate date choice as well.

Prior to the meeting, a letter and the handbook will be sent to each family asking them to select a date and submit that date within 2 weeks to the Rabbi.

For religious, congregational and community reasons, we do not schedule Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies during major/minor Jewish Holidays including the 9th of Av. Because of the Rabbi's family commitments, please avoid selecting a date for Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies during Thanksgiving weekend and the last ten days of the year. There are also occasional out of town conferences during which the Rabbi will be unavailable.

A Bar/Bat Mitzvah will be scheduled on a Saturday. If in the morning at 10:00 AM and if in the afternoon at 4:30 or 5:00 PM.

SUPPLIES, FEES AND CHARGES

1. There are no charges for the Rabbi's services, either for teaching Bar/Bat Mitzvah students, or for conducting the services themselves. There is also no charge for the use of the sanctuary. These are considered privileges of membership in our Temple. Should you or any of your guests wish to make a donation to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund, you are welcome to do so.
2. Students' families need to supply a notebook to take notes and a writing utensil.
3. Every Bar/Bat Mitzvah family will pay a Bar/Bat Mitzvah program fee of \$300 for all of the supplies and texts provided by the Temple during the process. Billing statement will

coincide with the beginning of the student's training with the Rabbi. Please make all checks payable to the Temple of Israel.

4. The following charges are for the use of the facilities and musicians:

Sanctuary (Temple of Israel)		
FACILITY/USE	RENTAL FEE	ONSITE CUSTODIAL FEE
Temple	Included in BM fee	None

Rosenthal Hall (Temple of Israel)		
FACILITY/USE	RENTAL FEE	ONSITE CUSTODIAL FEE
Oneg - Friday night	None	\$75
Kiddush - Saturday morning (0-2 hours)	\$50	\$50
Reception, Luncheon, or Dinner (0-4 hours)	\$75	\$25 / hour \$50 minimum

Rosenberg Hall (Reibman Center)		
FACILITY/USE	RENTAL FEE	ONSITE CUSTODIAL FEE
Saturday or Sunday afternoon (0 - 4 hours)	\$75	\$25 / hour \$50 minimum
Friday or Saturday evening (0 - 4 hours)	\$100	\$25 / hour \$50 minimum

Music (other than Friday night)	
Organist	\$75
Soloist, Charlotte Rosenberg	\$75
Mark Ferrer & Charlotte Rosenberg (Customized music)	\$300

PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND LOCATIONS ARE SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY

- * Minimum required for a Saturday morning Kiddush is to provide Challah and wine.

5. Clean-up charge for Reception, Luncheon, or Dinner will be determined for each event on an individual basis. Clean up charge is in addition to the charge listed above for the facility.

CONGREGATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

Bar/Bat Mitzvah families are responsible for the following congregational obligations:

1. Arranging for and preparing the Oneg Shabbat social after Friday night services. Guidelines for the Oneg Shabbat (the term means “Sabbath Joy” and is colloquially referred to as “the Oneg”) will be sent to the family several months in advance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The Oneg Shabbat can be fairly simple or quite elaborate.
2. Almost all families choose to make a donation to the Temple in honor of their child’s Bar/Bat Mitzvah. This could be to the Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund, the Tree of Life, or to any other Temple Fund. If you wish to make a sizeable gift to the Temple the president of the congregation can guide you in determining the possibilities.
3. The arranging and setting up of extra tables and chairs for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Shabbat services and reception is the responsibility of the family. This needs to be coordinated with B’nai Mitzvah Coordinator.
4. Please arrange that the family, guests, and Bar/Bat Mitzvah arrive at the Temple at least 30 minutes before the start of Services to allow time for introductions and familiarization to take place. It is also important for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to have some time for composure before the start of the Service.
5. All people who attend the service are welcome at the Oneg on Friday night and the Kiddush on Saturday morning. Please prepare for an additional 20 people. Also, please let the rabbi and B’nai Mitzvah Coordinator know any expectations for a meal at the Temple (guests only or open to all), so an appropriate announcement can be made and the appropriate fees are collected.
6. A digital photo of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, and a small (one-two short paragraphs) bio should be sent, via email, to the Temple office three weeks before the ceremony for inclusion in the Temple weekly email newsletter. Check with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Coordinator for samples of what other Bar/Bat Mitzvahs have done.

POSSIBLE OPTIONS

If you wish to hand out a pamphlet describing the service, the meaning of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Ceremony, a description of the Temple and its ritual items, etc, check with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Coordinator for examples and details. The family is responsible for writing, printing and distributing the pamphlet. The pamphlet must be approved by the Rabbi at least one month before the date of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and before printing.

Scheduling a Bar/Bat mitzvah

Both the Friday Night Worship Service and the Saturday Worship Service are Community Services. It should be understood that scheduling a Bar/Bat Mitzvah provides a date for the B’nai Mitzvah to become of age in the Jewish Community. It does not mean that the service is a private service. Once the date is scheduled everything will be done to not schedule a

Temple event on that same day, but it does not preclude something else occurring at that service that is part of the Community. That could be a baby naming, a conversion, a Jewish speaker that just happens to be here at that time. Most of the time the Rabbi does not know in advance what might become part of that evening's schedule. The key is that everyone needs to be flexible with a growing congregation and a greater number of B'nai Mitzvah being scheduled.

INTRODUCTION TO BAR AND BAT MITZVAH

What is the meaning of Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

The words *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* are Hebrew terms indicating that a person has reached the status of an adult member of the Jewish community. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies mark this transition from childhood to adulthood.

Bar Mitzvah is a masculine noun, and *Bat Mitzvah* is the same noun in feminine form, meaning son/daughter of (God's) commandment." More precisely, becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah means accepting a transition; as a young person moves toward Jewish adulthood, he or she accepts God's commandments as binding in much the same way as a child accepts the commandments of parents. We often hear Jews using these terms as verbs, speaking of being "Bar Mitzvahed" and "Bat Mitzvahed," having a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, however these terms are incorrect. One does not have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah; he/she becomes one.

The nouns *Bar Mitzvah* and *Bat Mitzvah* suggest even more. The terms *bar* and *bat* denote membership in a group. They may be applied to every Jewish person from the age of thirteen, whether or not a ceremony takes place. At this age, one becomes a man or a woman of duty, committed to the ideals of Judaism, and remains one forever. The purpose of the ceremony is

to mark this major step toward Jewish adulthood, with all the privileges and responsibilities of that new status. The ceremony enables family and friends and the religious community as a whole to celebrate together the continuity of tradition and faith.

Keeping Bar/Bat Mitzvah in Perspective

Bar/Bat Mitzvah is about the acceptance of responsibility. In the final analysis, this is the bottom line of *becoming* a Bar/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.

The Torah is 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, what cannot be dismissed is the sacredness with which our ancestors have embraced this legacy. This is why the Torah and its teachings are central to this ceremony.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a community 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 Temple - the communal home.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony is not a performance: It’s a celebration. The *Temple* is not a theater, the *Bimah* is not a stage, and the *Congregation* is not an audience. More to the point, the only mistake one can make at a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is to lose sight of this truth.

Think of the reception that follows not as a separate event but as a continuation of the celebration. In fact, Judaism has a formal name for the meal after a Bar/Bat Mitzvah: It is a *s’udat mitzvah*. This meal is in honor of a mitzvah. It, too, is a sacred gathering. This is not to say that it must be solemn; it *is* to say, however, that the spirit of the celebration should be perpetuated through the doing of mitzvot. The recitation of the blessings and the setting aside of a portion of one’s bounty for the poor demonstrate that the celebration was not an isolated event but a standard from which 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. Indeed, the true measure 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 not an end point but a beginning - a beginning of a lifetime of mitzvot, a beginning of 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 to confirmation and throughout one’s entire life, and to participate in our Temple Youth Group.

When Does the Ceremony Take Place?

The celebration marking a Bar/Bat Mitzvah usually takes place when the boy or girl reaches the age of thirteen. The *Mishnah* (the oldest post-biblical collection of Jewish laws) states that vows made by a boy who is thirteen years and one day old are considered valid and he is eligible to lead the congregation in prayer, to serve on a Jewish court, and to buy and sell property. Girls too were eligible for all the obligations and privileges of Jewish women.

The Rabbis of the Talmud - completed in the 5th century - considered a thirteen-year-old boy and a twelve-year-old girl as physically and emotionally mature. They believed that, at these ages, boys and girls could tell right from wrong and could be held responsible for their own actions. Today, although we may consider thirteen as too young for people to be held responsible for *all* their decisions, we recognize the entry of youngsters into the teenage years as significant. As children reach their teens, they mature physically and intellectually and begin to relate to the world in new ways. They begin to examine adult beliefs with varying degrees of skepticism. If a young person is properly prepared, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony can help him/her reach independence in an impressive spiritual experience that speaks both to the intellect and to the soul.

In the Reform movement, men and women are completely equal, as are boys and girls. We do not hold Bat Mitzvah ceremonies at an age different than for Bar Mitzvah ceremonies.

Please also note that there is no rule that a Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony cannot take place after the age of 13. In fact, children who celebrate this occasion at a later time generally gain much more from the experience due to increased maturity.

What do Objects in the Temple Symbolize?

Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies usually take place in the Temple. The drama of the celebration is heightened by the presence of the Torah scroll and other religious symbols. Many of the ritual objects seen in Jewish sanctuaries date back to the beginnings of Judaism. They are intended to remind worshippers of basic beliefs, values, and a shared history.

The Holy Ark or *Aron ha-Kodesh* is found on the eastern wall of the Temple, as Jews traditionally face Jerusalem during prayer. Covered by a curtain or doors or both, it contains one or more Torah scrolls. This arrangement reminds us of the Ark containing the tablets of the Ten Commandments which was carried by the Israelites during their years of wandering in the wilderness. The *Aron ha-Kodesh* is on a raised platform (*bimah*), which includes a speaker's podium.

The Torah scroll (*Sefer Torah*) stored in the Holy Ark contains the Five Books of Moses, the first five books of the Bible. The Torah is written on parchment made from animal skin. No vowels appear in the Torah scroll because the vowel system as we now know it was introduced into the Hebrew language many years after the first scroll was written. The parchment is attached to two wooden rollers - each of which is called a Tree of Life (*Etz Chaim*) - and clothed in a mantle of embroidered fabric.

Silver ornaments may adorn the top of the handles, or a crown may be used to cover them. A silver breastplate may be placed at the front of the scroll. These Torah ornaments are reminiscent of the garments worn by the Cohen (priest) thousands of years ago. Also a carved silver *yad* or "hand" is attached; the reader uses this *yad* to follow the text.

Above the Ark, the Eternal Light or *Ner Tamid* burns continuously. Quite often there is a representation of the tablets of the Ten Commandments near the Ark, and a seven-branched *menorah*.

These familiar symbols transform the ordinary world into a sacred one in which prayer is natural and appropriate. Judaism helps us to create spiritual feelings within ourselves by creating a holy place - a house of God. Though any place can become sacred, the sanctuary is especially important due to our actions and intentions while in this space.

What are the Kippah and Tallit?

Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies use all the elements of dramatic liturgy. The words and actions are carefully prepared and the music is thoughtfully planned. But these ceremonies should not be seen as "theatrical" performances. Rather, they are *religious moments* shared with God

- moments designed to enhance spiritual goals. Those seated in a synagogue are not an “audience,” but a community of worshippers gathered in a congregation.

Careful attention is paid to two items of traditional attire: a skullcap, or *kippah*, and a prayer shawl, or *tallit*. They are worn by most Bar Mitzvah boys, and many Bat Mitzvah girls. While their use is optional in Reform practice, it is recommended in our congregation for both boys and girls.

The *tallit* is a four-cornered garment which is draped around the shoulders. At each corner are knotted fringes called *tzitzit*. Their purpose is explained in the Torah: *God spoke to Moses saying: Speak to the children of Israel and enjoin them to make for themselves tzitzit on the corners of their garments throughout the generations... Thus shall you be reminded to observe all My Commandments and be holy to your God. [Numbers 15:37-40]*

The *tallit* may be large or small, of any color, and made of any material, although wool and linen are never used together. (This mixture is forbidden in Deuteronomy 22:11.) The *tallit* has to meet only two requirements: it must have four corners, and each corner must have a white knotted fringe made of wool or of the same material as the *tallit*. Since the Torah commands that we be able to “see” the *tzitzit*, the *tallit* is worn only in the daytime, although those who lead the prayer service may wear one in the evening. Once a year, on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement from sin, the holiest day of the Jewish year, the *tallit* is worn in the evening as well, giving this service a special atmosphere of purity.

The wearing of a *tallit* is a privilege and mark of Jewish adulthood, serving as a constant reminder of the commandments. While the *tallit* was worn by a young man when he married, over time the custom changed so that a boy officially wears a *tallit* for the first time on the occasion of becoming a Bar Mitzvah. Since the second half of the 20th century, in liberal Judaism a girl officially likewise dons this robe of honor for the first time at the Bat Mitzvah ceremony. It is highly appropriate for the family to seek out and acquire a *tallit* as a special, life-long gift to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

What does it mean to be called to the Torah?

It is always an honor to be called up to recite the blessings before and after the Torah scroll is read. This act is known as an *aliyah*, (literally, “ascending”). It takes its name from the fact that the worshipper ascends the *bimah*, the platform. But this physical act of going up is symbolic of a greater spiritual one. The act of moving from the Diaspora to the Land of Israel is also called *aliyah*. And, for those who are in Israel, all travel in the direction of Jerusalem or the Temple mount is “ascending,” while all travel away from Jerusalem is referred to as “descending.” The Temple worshipper called to the Torah thus makes a symbolic spiritual ascent.

On the day of a young person’s first *aliyah*, family and friends have the opportunity to share the honor. On the Sabbath, the Torah portion is traditionally divided into sections. In the Talmudic period, each person who was called for an *aliyah* read the Torah portion. Today, the reading is generally done by a trained individual. The person who is honored with an *aliyah* recites a blessing before the reading and another after it. In some congregations an *aliyah* can be shared, with individuals reading together. Where family or friends have the

ability to chant an *aliyah* from the Torah the Rabbi will be delighted to coordinate their participation.

There are many occasions on which a Jewish adult may be honored with an *aliyah*. An engagement, the birth of a child, recovery from a serious illness, a son's Bar Mitzvah, a daughter's Bat Mitzvah, a wedding anniversary, a *Yahrzeit* commemorating the death of a relative - all these and more may be reasons for being honored in this way.

Traditionally, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is called for the recitation of the final portion of the Torah reading. The person who receives the honor of reciting this portion is referred to as the *maftir* (for a male) or *maftirah* (female), the one who "concludes." As our B'nai Mitzvah are the only ones to chant Torah at these services, the custom of chanting just the last section is symbolized by him/her reciting the blessing for this section. All are usually called to the *bimah* by their Hebrew names. On the Shabbat of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the family of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah receives the privilege of choosing most of the people called for these honors. It is necessary to find family or friends who are capable of chanting the Torah blessings in Hebrew, and also to find out their Hebrew names in advance of the Shabbat of Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Again, the Rabbi can be of assistance in providing recordings and photocopies of the blessings.

Reciting the Torah blessings is symbolic of the young person's acceptance of adult Jewish responsibilities. In this way the young person makes the journey upward officially for the first time - the first *aliyah* - an act that echoes the very first *aliyah*, when Moses ascended Mount Sinai to receive the Torah. This connection transforms all the arduous preparation into a sacred religious act as the youngster becomes a full participating member of the Jewish community committed to its historic Covenant with God.

What is Haftarah?

A prophetic selection from the Bible is assigned to each Torah portion and is read at the conclusion of the Torah service. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah generally chant this section taken from the Prophets, called the *haftarah*, the "conclusion." Each selected reading is related in one way or another to the ideas in the particular Torah portion or to the time of the year.

Special blessings are recited before and after the *haftarah* is read. The blessing before the reading stresses the divine inspiration of the prophets. After the *haftarah* reading, the reader thanks God for giving the Torah, Shabbat, Israel, and the prophets, and for the chance to pray.

Please note that the term *haftarah* (not haftorah) is completely distinct from the word "Torah." The Hebrew lettering is different, and they mean different things in Hebrew ("haftarah" is a "conclusion," while "Torah" means "teaching").

What is D'var Torah?

During the Shabbat Service, each Bar/Bat Mitzvah prepares and presents a *D'var Torah*, an interpretation or mini-sermon that includes an evaluation of the weekly Torah reading and some personal observations on Bar/Bat Mitzvah. This *D'var Torah* is prepared by the students themselves, working closely with the Rabbi, who will advise and guide you through the

process. It is a demonstration of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's immersion in the texts they have prepared for their ceremony, and the first "adult" Torah study that they have completed.

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING A D'VAR TORAH

A *D'var Torah* (literally, a "word of Torah,") is a simple explanation of the Torah portion, followed by a connection to our lives today, and to the significance of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

It is made up of four sections:

- 1) Introduction: "My Torah portion is called _____ and is from the book of _____ chapter(s) _____.
- 2) A couple of paragraphs explaining what is happening in this portion.
- 3) A few paragraphs using examples from one's own life or what has been observed in the world, which shows how the portion relates to today and what lessons can be learned from it in the modern world.
- 4) A conclusion summarizing what has been said and/or relating it to becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Please Note...

The *D'var Torah* is not a thank-you speech. It is a teaching. On this day, you are a teacher. Also, use the form below to get started.

My Torah portion is called _____ and is from the book of _____ chapter(s) _____.

The portion tells about/tells the story of: _____

What interests me in reading this portion is: OR This portion reminds me of (something from my life or today's world): _____

What my Torah portion tells me about becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is: _____

GUIDELINES FOR THE PARENTAL PRAYER

Rabbi Eliezer ben Rabbi Shimon said: A man is responsible for his son until the age of thirteen; thereafter he must say, Blessed are You who has now freed me from the responsibility of the boy.

-*Midrash Genesis Rabbah 63:10*

The tradition of the parent reciting a blessing upon a child's coming of age is quite ancient. The above text indicates that it was ritualized and probably performed on the occasion of the child's first *aliyah*. And although it might seem a bit inappropriate to recite a prayer freeing yourself from responsibility for your child, its underlying principle should be most instructive in preparing your remarks to your son or daughter. Indeed, in many ways the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony marks the individuation of the child: It is the commencement of a young person's acceptance of adult responsibility and the freeing of the parent from that task.

The intent of the parental prayer in our service is to afford the mother and/or father the opportunity to publicly acknowledge - in a sacred setting - the joy and pride they feel at that moment. More important, however, they can also use that time to share their hopes and dreams for their child, particularly in relation to his or her being called to the Torah. In other words, it's an opportunity to articulate the meaning of the moment.

This ritual is not to be confused with the addresses that take place at the *s'udat mitzvah* or celebration. This is a unique opportunity - in the presence of your community as well as friends and family - to ask for God's blessings for your son or daughter. The gesture should be addressed to your child, not the congregation. Moreover, it should be directed toward the future. Where is it that you hope this moment will lead your child? What do you hope that he or she will take from it?

You may wish to use some of the examples provided below or write something entirely unique. In any event, it is important that you prepare your remarks in advance. We also respectfully request that each parent's remarks not exceed two minutes. When you are done, please feel free to hug and/or kiss your child. Crying is permitted.

Sample prayers

Into our hands, O God, You have placed Your Torah, to be held high by parents and children and taught by one generation to the next.

Whatever has befallen us, our people have remained steadfast in loyalty to the Torah. It was carried into exile in the arms of parents that children might not be deprived of their birthright.

And now I pray that you, my child, will always be worthy of this inheritance. Take its teaching into your heart, and in turn pass it on to your children and those who come after you. May you be a faithful Jew, searching for wisdom and truth, working for justice and peace. Thus will you be among those who labor to bring nearer the day when God will be One and God's name will be One.

Gates of Prayer

May your eyes sparkle with the light of Torah,
and your ears hear the music of its words.

May the space between each letter of the scrolls
bring warmth and comfort to your soul.

May the syllables draw holiness from your heart,
and may this holiness be gentle and soothing
to you and all God's creatures.

May your study be passionate,
and meanings bear more meanings
until life arrays itself to you
as a dazzling wedding feast.

And may your conversation,
even of the commonplace,
be a blessing to all who listen to your words
and see the Torah glowing on your face.

Danny Siegel

Praised is God who has granted new responsibility to _____ and to us. As _____ begins to enjoy his/her new status among the Jewish people, a status that redefines our own role in his/her life, may God grant us the wisdom to continue as guides and counselors, allowing _____ to live in accordance with the teachings of our Torah as a responsible Jewish adult.

Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam

(For a male) *shep'tarani mei-ancho shelazeh.*

(For a female) *shep'tarani mei-anshah shelazoh.*

Praised are You, *Adonai* our God, who rules the universe, who has freed us of some responsibilities and conferred new ones upon _____.

The Rabbinical Assembly

Aliyah Primer

Below are the basic fundamentals of being called to the Torah (*aliyah*), at Temple of Israel. Meaning to “go up” or “ascend,” *aliyah* also implies a spiritual ascent. An *aliyah* is considered to be one of the most sacred privileges in Judaism. Consequently, you must be Jewish and “of age” (i.e., a Bar/Bat Mitzvah) to qualify for an *aliyah*. Indeed, the ceremony of Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a celebration of a child’s first *aliyah*.

Hebrew Name

Proper form requires you to be called to the Torah by your Hebrew name. This includes not only your given name but the name(s) of your father and/or mother. The formula would thus be:

For men: *Ya’akov **ben** Avraham v’Sarah*
For women: *Rachel **bat** Avraham v’Sarah*

Although Hebrew names are the benchmark for this tradition, Yiddish names are also acceptable. If no Hebrew name was given, the rabbi will be happy to help you choose one.

Going Up

When your name is called, go to the *Bimah*, pulpit, and stand to the left of the reader. The Rabbi will point to the place in the *Sefer Torah*, scroll, where she or he is reading. Touch that spot with the *tzitzit*, fringes, of your *tallit*, prayer shawl, or the corner of your *siddur*, prayer book; and then kiss the *tzitzit* or the *siddur*. At this point the reader may close the scroll and some people, while reciting the *b’rachah*, blessing, choose to grasp the two wooden posts of the scroll.

The First Blessing

Below is the blessing recited in Hebrew prior to the reading of the Torah. You should recite the first line, wait for the congregation to respond with the second line, then repeat that second line, and read the rest of the first blessing.

Bar’chu et Adonai hame’vorach.

The congregation responds: *Baruch Adonai ham’vorach l’olam va-ed.*

The reader responds: *Baruch Adonai ham’vorach l’olam va-ed.*

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam

asher bachar banu mikol ha-amim

v'natan lanu et Torahto

Baruch Atah Adonai Notein ha Torah.

Praise *Adonai*, the One to be praised. *Praise Adonai*, the One to be praised, forever. Praised are You, *Adonai*, our God, Ruler of the universe, who has chosen us from among the peoples and given us the Torah. Praised are You, *Adonai*, the Giver of the Torah.

The congregation responds, “*Amen.*”

The Torah Reading

Following the conclusion of the first *b'rachah*, the reader will read the selection from the Torah.

The Concluding Blessing

Following the translation of the Torah selection, the concluding *b'rachah* is offered. Again, the person offering the blessing will touch the place in the *sefer Torah* (scroll) with the *tzitzit* (fringes) of his or her *tallit* (prayer shawl) or the corner of his or her *siddur* (prayer book) and may choose to grasp the posts of the Torah scroll while reciting the blessing.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam

Asher natan lanu Torat emet

V'chayei olam nata b'tocheinu.

Baruch Atah Adonai notein haTorah.

Praised are You, *Adonai*, our God, Ruler of the universe, who has given us the Torah of truth and implanted within us eternal life. Praised are You, *Adonai*, the Giver of Torah.

The congregation responds, “*Amen.*”

After the Concluding Blessing

Following the concluding *b'rachah*, the person(s) who was called to the Torah should now move to the reader's right and remain there until the next *aliyah* is concluded. Then that person returns to his or her seat.

After all of the sections are read, an English translation will follow.

HONORS

Please complete this form and bring it to the family rehearsal.

(Opening and closing the ark when Torah is removed):

1. _____

2. _____

Passing the Torah (parents, grandparents, great-grandparents):

<i>Aliyah #</i>	Hebrew Name	English Name
1.		
2.		
3.		

Hagbah (Lifting the Torah): _____

G'lilah (Dressing the Torah): _____

(Opening and closing the ark when Torah is returned):

1. _____

2. _____

TZEDAKAH OPTIONS: WAYS TO ENRICH THE MITZVAH

Tzedakah is an obligation in Judaism: It involves giving of our time and/or money to others. Here is a list of things to do and organizations that your family might consider. If you don't know about these organizations, check them out. It's good to learn about the ways in which people are doing *tikkun olam*, "repairing the world."

Obviously, this is not a complete list. You can find your own favorite way or organization for making a contribution. The most important thing is that you work or give, no matter how much. This is one of the ways in which you can show that you are taking on adult Jewish responsibilities.

1. Give of Your Time:

- Volunteer to work in the temple and/or the religious school
- Become active in the Temple Youth Group
- Visit the elderly - family members, a neighbor, or a nursing home
- Work on an ecology project
- Work in a soup kitchen
- Collect old but usable clothes, toys, tapes, DVDs, etc., and give them to the needy and the homeless
- Work on projects during Mitzvah Day at the temple
- Participate in a walk-a-thon for some cause
- Work on a project for Habitat for Humanity

2. Give of Your Money:

a. Help the hungry, the poor, and the homeless

- Mazon - The Jewish Response to Hunger (U.S. or Canada): Donate 3% of the cost of your celebration or a part of your bar/bar mitzvah gifts
www.mazon.org
- United Jewish Communities (formerly UJA and Federation): Supports many Jewish organizations in Israel, the U.S., Canada, and around the world:
www.ujc.org
- The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS): **www.hias.org**
- The American Jewish World Service: **www.ajws.org**
- Habitat for Humanity: **www.habitat.org**
- A local soup kitchen
- A local organization for the homeless and the poor.

b. Help support medical research and medical support groups

- Local hospitals or nationally recognized specialty hospitals
- Specific disease groups: Cancer Care, The Kidney Foundation, AIDS, MS, Heart
- Hadassah: **www.hadassah.org**

c. Help other support groups

- For abused children and adults
- P-FLAG: Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays: www.pflag.org
- JACS, AA, and other organizations dealing with substance abuse
- The Jewish Guild for the Blind: www.jgb.org

d. Help Jewish Causes.

- Union for Reform Judaism: www.urj.org/give/
- ARZA/WORLD UNION, North America: www.rj.org/arzawuna/
- WUPJ: World Union for Progressive Judaism: www.wupj.org
- WRJ: Women of Reform Judaism: www.wrj.org
- MENRJ: Men of Reform Judaism: www.menrj.org
- HUC-JIR: Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion www.huc.edu
- Commission a piece of new liturgical music (speak to the cantor or rabbi)
- Leo Baeck School in Haifa
- Jewish National Fund (trees in Israel): www.jnf.org

e. Help the Temple.

- Rabbi's Discretionary Fund
- Give to any of the *tzedakah* funds
- Sponsor a scholar-in-residence
- Create a new endowment fund

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR S'UDAT MITZVAH/RECEPTION

The religious part of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony occurs in the sanctuary. Choosing to focus on Jewish values during your later celebration will continue to sanctify the day and make it special and memorable. Remember, everything we do with our children teaches them something.

Decide as a family what you are celebrating and what this moment in your life means. This decision will help guide you through the rest of the planning stages. You may find the text *Putting God on the Guest List* by Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin (Jewish Lights Publishing) to be quite helpful. Also *Putting God on the Guest List for Kids* may be interesting.

Consider Jewish Values in Your Decision Making

- *G'milut Chasadim* - Acts of Loving Kindness
- *Tzedakah* - Righteousness/Justice/Sacred Giving
- *Talmud Torah* - Study of the Torah
- *Hidur P'nei Zakein* - Honoring the Elderly
- *Zicharon* - Memory
- *Kavod Shabbat* - Honoring Shabbat

- *Tzar Ba'alei Chayim* - Non-Cruelty to Animals
- *Derech Eretz* - Manners/Courtesy
- *Tikkun Hanefesh* - Repairing the Self
- *Tikkun Olam* - Repairing the World

Theme

Having a theme for your celebration might help you organize your vision for the day as well as serve as an educational tool for your family and friends. The challenge is to find an appropriate, relevant idea that reflects the Jewish values important to you. You might want to focus on a value or mitzvah addressed in your Torah portion. For example:

- *B'reishit*, the first portion in Genesis, is about Creation. Use the theme of *tikkun olam*, “repairing the world,” and incorporate an environmental project into your celebration. Or consider creating or beginning something that will benefit the world in some way.
- The Torah portion *Noach* lends itself to the theme of showing kindness to animals. You can find out about species that are becoming extinct, get information about what we can do to help, and distribute it to your guests. You can ask guests to bring old towels, leashes, food, etc., for an animal shelter and then set a time when everyone can go there to help out. This theme is an easy one to feature throughout your entire celebration.
- There is a portion in Genesis called *Toldot*, which means “Generations.” You might use this occasion to learn about the generations in your family. Make a family tree and use it as table centerpieces. Contribute to organizations that focus on intergenerational activities.
- In the portion *Vayeishev*, Joseph interprets dreams. Use the theme of dreams throughout your celebration. Contribute to organizations that make dreams come true for those in need, such as the *Make a Wish Foundation* or *Myriam's Dream*. Purchase *kippot* made by the elderly in workshops supported by *Myriam's Dream*, a nonprofit organization that helps older people throughout the world.
- The first portion of the Book of Exodus is called *Sh'mot*, meaning “Names.” Be creative. Consider the following: In what ways are names important? What does your name mean? What about other names? What is the meaning of your Jewish name? For whom are you named? Find out the *g'matria*, the numerical equivalent in Hebrew, of your name and its significance. Does it tell you anything about yourself? Contribute to an organization that helps newborn babies - those who are first being named. Contribute to one of the Holocaust museums or organizations - places that keep alive the names of those who were lost but are not forgotten.
- If Moses figures prominently in your portion, consider the theme of leadership. You can learn about other famous leaders. Consider the following: What are the essential characteristics of leadership? From a Jewish point of view, what makes a good leader? If you are having a candle lighting ceremony, ask each person to think of a different leader and the qualities the leader had that he or she would like you to emulate. Contribute to the North American Federation of Temple Youth either in general or to its Leadership Training Programs in particular in order to help our Jewish leaders of tomorrow.

- Your Torah portion might speak about blessings. You may decide to think about the blessings you have in your life and try to insure that others who are less fortunate are blessed in similar ways. For example, food is a blessing.
- Organize a collection of canned goods and spend some time at the food pantry, shelving supplies. Use canned food as the centerpiece for your tables and then donate the food to the hungry. Involve your guests in cooking food for the local soup kitchen. It is possible to use the temple kitchen for this purpose.

Tzedakah

- The invitation sets the tone for the celebration and can let your guests know what is important to you. In lieu of sending an expensive invitation, utilize your desktop publishing skills and make your own. Note on the back of the card that the simplicity of the invitation represents a donation to a *tzedakah* organization that you chose. The thank-you note can also be produced in this way.
- Donate 3% of the total cost of food to Mazon, an organization that helps feed hungry people nationwide. If you contact them ahead of time, they will send you cards to put on your tables, indicating that you have made a contribution.
- In honor of each of your guests, give donations that can make a difference in the lives of others, not party favors that will cost you the same amount and end up in the trash. Purchase a tree in Israel for each guest or each candle lighter. Purchase a “mutual fund,” a share of a cow on Reform Kibbutz Lotan, for each of your guests.
- Check to see if the leftover food can be donated to a soup kitchen. If you are somewhat insistent, many restaurants and caterers will help with this.
- Make either a financial donation to or purchase something specific for the temple, religious school, or temple library in honor of your becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- Flowers purchased to decorate the *Bimah* can be donated to a local hospital or nursing home, not left in the Temple to wither. Let someone else enjoy them.

Entertainment

- Include Israeli dancing, not just the hora. Perhaps think about hiring someone to teach Israeli dancing. Consider featuring klezmer music as part of the party entertainment. There is also a Jewish story-tellers network in New York City that can provide you with the names of local people who might add some very magical moments to your celebration.
- It is possible to do a mitzvah project in place of or in addition to some form of entertainment. Why not rent a local school gym and sponsor a mitzvah basketball game. Ask friends to support one of the teams and pledge any amount of money for each point scored. Cook for the soup kitchen with your friends. Be creative!
- The party should reflect the initial values on which the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony is based. Don't be afraid to be different.

Candle Lighting

Make the candle lighting ceremony meaningful and Jewish: use your own theme and be creative. If your theme is Jewish heroes/heroines, ask each candle lighter to think of a specific characteristic of a great Jewish hero/heroine whom they would like you to aspire to as you grow up. Or if your theme is dreams, ask each candle lighter to think of a dream that he or she hopes the bar/bar mitzvah child will fulfill. Requesting your family and friends to prepare for this honor ahead of time includes them in the celebration in a meaningful way. Their words for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah may become one of the most treasured aspects of the celebration.

Centerpieces

Choose something simple. Cut flowers can be beautiful and elegant on any table and can be donated to a local nursing home after the party. If you want, choose something that goes with your theme if you have one. For example, if your theme is Famous Jewish Sports Figures and you decide to use sports equipment as part of your centerpiece, research which organizations can use that sports equipment and donate the centerpiece items to them after the party. Put a card on your table to let your guests know that even the sports equipment is going to be used in a Jewishly meaningful way. If your theme is Israel, you can purchase trees from the Jewish National Fund and make centerpieces that incorporate the certificates the JNF sends you. Make your own centerpieces. Use canned/non-perishable food or other items that can be donated after the celebration to people in need, and have place cards that state this. Do you dry flowers? Are you handy with woodworking? Incorporate something personal into your decorations.

Keep it Jewish

Begin the meal with *Kiddush* and *Motzi* and end it with the singing of *Birkat HaMazon*. Consider ending the celebration with *Havdalah* if the party will end late Saturday afternoon. Begin with *Havdalah* before a Saturday evening event.

Table Mitzvah Projects

Take every opportunity to provide guests with a way to be involved in a mitzvah. Simple table projects can work well and teach Jewish values in very simple ways. For example, if your theme is Blessings, research organizations that bring blessings to others, and put information about them on the table. Indicate that you will be donating some of your gift money to these groups in honor of the guests at your celebration. Ask each table of guests to discuss the organizations and indicate on a provided card which one they would like you to support. This will not only get people talking and learning but will undoubtedly raise even more money for some worthy groups that you have selected to support. If your theme is Learning, Reading, Books, etc., you can purchase books from the temple book fair (which you are planning to donate to a children's hospital ward or homeless shelter) to use as table centerpieces. Guests can also be asked to bring children's books to donate. And finally, you can set up a reading station where guests will have the opportunity to make a tape of the storybook he or she brought so that hospitalized children can either use it alone or listen to it

while looking at the book.

Celebration Variations

It is most common to have a celebration of some kind at a catering hall or restaurant directly after services. Other models that deserve your consideration include:

- Using the temple social hall for a luncheon for guests or a Kiddush for the entire congregation;
- Having a luncheon at home;
- Providing a luncheon for adult guests immediately after services and then having a more informal party for the children later that evening or the next day;
- Inviting everyone to a mystery location and then involving them in a mitzvah project;
- Taking a family trip to Israel;
- Taking a family trip to the town in Europe (or any place in the world) from which your ancestors came and explore your Jewish roots together;
- Any combination of the above.

Closing Thoughts

Everything you do to make your Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration personal, filled with your values, and meaningful will enhance the experience for all. Every celebration need not look as if it's been shaped by the same cookie cutter. Success is not determined by how much you spend. Have your celebration reflect who you are and what you believe as an individual and as a family. Make Jewish choices, and don't be afraid to be different. It's worth it! The memories of how you worked together and your incredibly meaningful celebration will last a lifetime. Put God on the guest list for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

SO YOU STILL HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS

You will no doubt have additional questions as you progress through this process. The Rabbi and the B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator are your direct links to make this a most memorable experience and should be able to answer your questions or direct you to the correct place.