

Obligations of B'nai Mitzvah Families
Temple Beth Israel

The purpose of this document is to advise you of the special responsibilities you will have regarding the exciting Bar or Bat Mitzvah event coming up in your family, and to establish an agreement to complete them. It has been devised with the intent of providing the most meaningful service to your family and to the congregation.

- 1) MITZVAH PROJECT:** As part of becoming a son or daughter of the commandments (literally what Bar/Bat Mitzvah means) your child will be expected to complete 36-72 hours of community service/mitzvah work. Ideally this should be completed before his/her ceremony.
- 2) RELIGIOUS SERVICES REQUIREMENT:** Your child must attend Friday night **and** Saturday morning services every time the Rabbi is in town during the twelve months prior to their Bat/Bar Mitzvah. She/he will be encouraged to lead a prayer or so during these services. They should also try to attend as many lay services as possible. She/he should also attend the Bat/Bar Mitzvah ceremonies of classmates.
- 3) BET SEFER REQUIREMENT:** Your son or daughter must attend Bet Sefer for at least two years leading up to their Bar/Bat Mitzvah, and complete the religious school year, even if his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah falls earlier in the year.
- 4) MATERIALS NEEDED:** It is very helpful if you purchase a copy of the Reform prayer book, Mishkan T'Filah, as well as a copy of a Hebrew/English Torah (Chumash, Pentateuch, Five Books of Moses) with commentary.
Your child may find the following website helpful in learning the prayers. They will need to set up a user name and password: <http://www.behrmanhouse.com/family/welcome.shtml>
- 5) TUTORS:** There is a lot to learn to prepare for a Bat/Bar Mitzvah. Most families find it helpful to hire a tutor to help their child prepare. Geri Copitch (396-2505) and Harvey Spector (245-0883) are two in our community who are very familiar with our Bat/Bar Mitzvah requirements. You are of course welcome to seek out someone else, or tutor your child yourself.
- 6) THE CEREMONY:** Your child will be expected to lead services both on the Friday night just prior to their ceremony, as well as the Saturday morning service when they will be called to the Torah. It is up to you whether to invite friends and family to both, or just the Saturday service.
Parents are asked to provide the oneg which follows the Friday service, as well as the kiddush luncheon after the ceremony. This does not have to be a bank breaker, but should be more than cake, cookies and juice. Please keep in mind that we keep a kosher dairy + fish kitchen (i.e. no meat or poultry please.) It is a nice touch if you provide flowers for the bima as well.
Any photography or videography needs to be cleared with the rabbi prior to the ceremony. Generally, photographs are to be taken before and after, not during the ceremony. An unobtrusive video camera may be set up in a fixed location.

7) ALIYOT/HONORS:

- **Readers (From the Torah):** During the Torah service there is an opportunity for as many as seven readings from the Torah, each consisting of at least 3 lines of text. The minimum requirement for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony is 3 aliyot (meaning 'coming up'). The bat/bar mitzvah must read at least one of these - preferably three; though she/he may read more. The other readings may be done by family members, teachers, or others the family wishes to honor. The last aliyah is always given to the bat/bar mitzvah. Please understand that Torah reading honors may only be given to those who are Jewish, either by birth or conversion. There are other opportunities to honor non-Jewish family members and friends, such as opening/closing the Ark, lifting or tying the Torah, reading a special prayer, and candle lighting.
- **Torah blessing honors:** aliyot (singular=aliyah) In addition to each aliyah being read, someone else is honored with the recitation of the blessings before and after a reading. Often more than one honored person is called up at a time. In Reform synagogues, at least one of those persons called up must be Jewish, the other does not have to be.
Important Note: For each Jewish person called up, you will need to get their Hebrew name, including their parents' Hebrew names (for example: Golda bat Menachem v'Hannah, or Yishuah ben Pinkus v'Golda.) It can take time for people to track down this information, so please allow for this. Give these names to the Rabbi and/or your child's tutor, at least two weeks prior to the ceremony.

(Blessing before the reading)

Barchu et Adonai Ham-vorach

(congregation) Baruch Adonai Ham-vorach l'olam va-ed

Baruch Adonai Ham-vorach l'olam va-ed

Barukh ata Adonai, Elohaynu Melach olam, asher bak-har banu mi kol ha-amim v'natan-lanu et Torah-toe,

Baruch ata Adonai, notain ha-Torah.

(Blessing after the reading)

Baruch ata Adonai, Elohaynu Melach ha-olam

Asher natan lanu torat emet

V'chay-ay olam nata b'tochaynu,

Baruch ata Adonai, notain ha-Torah.

- 8) **TALLIT RITUAL:** You will be responsible for presenting your child with his/her tallit. Usually the parents or a grandparent or two does this. A short 1-2 minute talk is appropriate at this point. You may wish to discuss the significance of the tallit, or about how proud you are of your child. Following this your child will say the tallit blessing and the congregation will join you in reciting the Shehekianu.

Baruch ata Adonai Elohaynu melekh ha olam, shehekianu, v'kiy'manu, v'higianu, lazman ha zeh.

- 9) **PARENT SPEECH & RELEASE RITUAL:** After your child gives their d'vara Torah (teaching on their Torah portion), you will have the opportunity to speak to your child and the congregation about the journey they have undergone, how hard they've worked, how much they've grown, etc. This should last no more than five minutes and it is best if you avoid any stories that your child might find embarrassing.

You will also have the option of reciting the release blessing, signifying that your child, not you, is now responsible for their Jewish behavior. This may be done in Hebrew and/or English.

***Baruch shepatrani may onsha shel-zoh.
Blessed is the One who has released me from my obligation to this child.***

10) INVITATION IN THE NEWSLETTER: It is our community’s custom (minhag) to invite the members of TBI to your ceremony and to the oneg/luncheon directly following the ceremony. (This is not necessary for the afternoon or evening party if you have one.) To facilitate this, you should email an invitation (in word processing form) to the newsletter editor, Art Tilles, by the 15th of the month prior your child’s ceremony. NOTE - in addition, it is the custom of TBI members to send individual invitations to members as well. A list of member addresses can be obtained from Geri Copitch.

11) KIPPOT: It is also customary, though not necessary, to provide kippot for those attending the service. There are many options available online to assist you with this.

12) THE PARTY: Some families choose to have a party after the kiddush luncheon. You are not expected to invite the whole TBI community to this. If you are looking for a DJ, a member of our community, Lynn Currie, is very good at planning and leading these events. Once again, you are free to hire a person of your choosing.

13) RABBI COMPENSATION: Helping to prepare your child for Bar/Bat Mitzvah requires a lot of additional time and communication. It is customary to pay the Rabbi an honorarium between \$180-\$360. You need to look at your family’s finances to determine what you feel is appropriate.

Please keep in mind, if you choose to have your child’s ceremony on a weekend for which the rabbi is not already contracted, you will also need to pay the rabbi for their time, travel and other expenses.

If you have additional questions, you can address them to members of our ritual affairs committee: Roberta Kelly, Art Tilles, Barbara Zlotowski, Harvey Spector, or Geri Copitch. Or, of course you can contact the rabbi.

I have read the list of “Special Obligations for B’nai Mitzvah Families” contained in this document, and agree to follow them to the best of my ability.

----- B’nai Mitzvah student

----- Parent

----- Parent

DATE -----

Life is a journey, and a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a milestone on that trek. B’Shalom.