



B'nei Mitzvah Student Handbook

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A Welcome from Temple Beth Or's Religious Practices Committee

Dear B'nei Mitzvah Student

The bar/bat mitzvah is much more than an event, it is a *process*. Take the time during this period of learning and discovery to enjoy and grow from it. We know that you will have a great journey to remember.

Your bat/bar mitzvah celebration is an important part of your life, and we make every effort to make it meaningful and personal. As part of our desire to support you, the Religious Practices Committee (RPC) has selected one of our members to be the B'nei Mitzvah Coordinator (BMC). The BMC will provide oversight, support, encouragement, and answers to questions that come up along the way. Have a great bar/bat mitzvah and enjoy this once in a lifetime celebration.

The Religious Practices Committee

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Pre-B'nei Mitzvah Requirements

If you are a pre-b'nei mitzvah student (students in the formal Hebrew program) and are approximately one year from entering the B'nei Mitzvah program, you need to **attend at least 10 documented Shabbat services per year including at least 4 Saturday morning services** and learn to read prayer book Hebrew. You also need to learn the following prayers:

Friday night Shabbat *kiddush*
Barchu
Shema
V'ahavtah
Tefilah including *Avot and G'vurot*
Torah blessings

B'nei Mitzvah Program Requirements

Here is what you have to do to prepare for your bar/bat mitzvah. The Religious Practices Committee will make sure you have the time you need to have a great bar/bat mitzvah celebration. You will have a lot of assistance from your family, your b'nei mitzvah class teacher and a tutor. With their help, your job is to:

1. Attend B'nei Mitzvah class with consistent attendance.
2. Attend at least 15 documented Shabbat services in addition to services already attended as a pre-b'nei mitzvah student. This includes at least 8 documented Saturday morning services, attending as many bar/bat mitzvah services as possible.
3. Complete the 13 *Mitzvah* Projects.
4. Keep a journal.
6. Write a D'var Torah and Introductions to the Torah and Haftarah portions
7. In addition to having mastered the pre-b'nei mitzvah requirements above, you will have an opportunity lead those prayers and the following prayers from the *Mishkan Tefilah* during their bar/bat mitzvah.

Prayer for putting on *tallit*
Morning Blessings
Prayer for the study of Torah
Reader's/*Chatzi Kaddish*
K'dushah

Prayers during the Torah Service:

Ein Kamocho
Ki Mitziyon
Baruch Shenatan
Shema
Echad Eloheinu
Gadlu

Blessings before and after reading Torah
Blessings before and after reading Haftarah
Aleinu

8. Master your individual assigned Torah and Haftarah portions.

The B'nei Mitzvah Process

Entering the Program and Setting a Date

What you need to do to enter the B'nei Mitzvah Program is first demonstrate your ability to sight read Hebrew and recite the prayers to be learned by pre-b'nei mitzvah students (see page 4). Your Hebrew teacher will notify the school principal when the teacher feels you are ready and a qualified individual will be assigned to meet with you and see how you are doing.

Meetings with the Rabbi or RPC Representative

Once you successfully complete the assessment, and other requirements for your admission have been met, you, your family and the Rabbi (or Religious Practices Committee member if a Rabbi is unavailable at the time), will meet to set the b'nei mitzvah date which is normally 12-18 months in the future. The *parasha* (portion) for that date will be identified so that you and the family can read and discuss it at home.

In follow-up meetings you will discuss what specific verses in the parasha you will chant and the guidelines for writing a D'var Torah will be discussed. You will also be shown the verses in the Haftarah that you will chant.

Parasha Study Guide

Your family will order a Parasha Study Guide to help you prepare for your bar/bat mitzvah. Each guide contains the key components for studying your Torah and Haftarah portions as well as help for writing the D'var Torah.

Meeting with the B'nei Mitzvah Coordinator (BMC)

Once you have a b'nei mitzvah date, the BMC will meet with you and your family to review the Handbook and address questions you or your family may have.

The B'nei Mitzvah Class

You will attend the B'nei Mitzvah class where the service pieces required to lead the congregation in prayer will be learned and discussed.

The 13 Mitzvot Activities

Mitzvot are obligations (commandments) found in our Torah. The Jewish People are taught to repair and perfect the world through personal action. To increase your awareness of mitzvot, you are asked to perform 13 mitzvot and list them in a journal sheet. Your family will work with you in some of these activities. For instance, building a *sukkah* could be a family project in which you take charge of the *sukkah* design and organize the activity.

The Four Areas of Mitzvah Activities

The focus of the 13 *mitzvot* activities is not the amount of time you spend on each mitzvah, but rather how you feel doing them. Helping others and doing the right thing for your friends and family feels good. We would like you to complete a balanced set of mitzvah activities, taking at least one from each of the four areas described below.

The four areas are based on the teachings from the *Pirke Avot*, The Teachings of Our Ancestors, which says:

"Al shlosha devarim haolom omed: al hatorah, ve al ha'avodah, ve al gemilut chasadim."

"Upon three things the world stands, upon Torah, upon Divine service, and upon righteous deeds."

The four areas are: 1) *Torah*-study, 2) *Avodah*-ritual observance, 3) *G'milut Chasadim* and *Tzedakah* – acts of loving kindness and creating justice, and 4) *Brit K'hilah* – service to the Jewish community. The example activities listed below are just intended as a guide; you are not limited to these specific activities.

Area of Torah (Study)

1. Read a book relating to Judaism and present a written or oral report to an appropriate audience such as your B'nei Mitzvah team.
2. Research a topic relating to Judaism and present a written or oral report.
3. Attend a Jewish summer camp. Keep a journal of the experience.
4. Devote 5 hours to study of Judaism beyond your class requirements.
5. Trace your family tree and prepare a report about your ancestors and their experiences relating to Jewish life.
6. Learn a prayer not currently used in services.

Area of Avodah (Ritual Observance)

1. Help build a *sukkah*.
2. Fast on Yom Kippur.
3. Put up a *mezuzah*. Learn the *mezuzah* blessing and significance of putting up a *mezuzah*.
4. Say the *Shema* at bedtime throughout the year or Modeh Ani when you wake up.
5. Light your own *Hanukkah* and say the blessings.
6. Lead the Shabbat blessings at your family's Shabbat celebration.
7. Learn how to blow a *shofar*.
8. Eat no *chametz*, or leaven during Passover.
9. Cook or bake a traditional Jewish dish for a holiday or Shabbat.
10. Help conduct a seder.

Area of G'milut Chasadim and Tzedakah (Acts of Loving Kindness and Creating Justice)

1. Tutor another student for 5 hours.
2. Work for a worthy cause in the general community for 5 hours.
3. In one month do five things that you wouldn't ordinarily do that would be helpful to another family member.
4. Once each month call, write, or visit with one of your grandparents or other relatives.
5. Write an elected representative to help a cause of the Jewish people or a cause that reflects your Jewish values.
6. Donate to Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger.

Area of Brit K'hilah (Service to the Jewish Community)

Assist the school or a congregational committee.

The *Tikkun Olam* Project

Tikkun olam means "to heal or repair the world." This is your opportunity to help make the world a better place. Your *tikkun olam* project can be related to social, educational, or environmental issues, or any other cause that you feel is important. This could be a cause that you might be interested to continue beyond your bar/bat mitzvah. **The Religious Practices Committee review team must approve this project in advance.** You need to complete and submit the *Tikkun Olam* Project Worksheet (it is found in your parent's B'nei Mitzvah Parent's Manual) to the RPC review team at the 9-month review for discussion and approval. Members of your family will help you complete this worksheet.

The Religious Practices Committee Review Team

You will be assigned a two-person review team chosen from among the members of the Religious Practices Committee. You will meet with the RPC review team four times. The meetings are held at 9 months, 6 months, 4 months, and 2 months prior to your bar/bat mitzvah celebration. The meetings are intended to help and support you in your study and in planning your *tikkun olam* project.

At the 9-month review, your progress will be discussed. Remember to bring your Parasha Study Guide and the *Tikkun Olam* Project Worksheet to the meeting and discuss your plans for this important project.

At the 6-month review, you will be asked to do some of the songs and prayers you are learning to lead during the Shabbat Services and read your assigned Torah portion. The review team will discuss your progress and review the 13 *mitzvot* and your attendance record sheets. Please remember to bring them with you to the meeting.

At the 4-month review, you will be asked to chant your Torah verses, sight read your Haftarah portion and read a draft of your D'var Torah and the written introductions to the Torah and Haftarah. You will be asked to show the 13 *mitzvot* and service attendance sheets as well discuss your progress on the *Tikkun Olam* Project.

At the 2-month review, you will recite all the parts of the service that you have been required to learn from the bimah (the English introductions, the prayers, chant the Torah and Haftarah portions and read your D'var Torah). Make sure you have written a "thank you" that will be read to the congregation. Your completed 13 *mitzvot* and attendance records will be looked at now.

Final Practice

Approximately one month prior to the b'nei mitzvah date you will have a final rehearsal using the final outline of the service. This is arranged by the officiant who will be conducting the Shabbat Morning Service (Temple Beth Or Rabbi, guest Rabbi, Cantor or lay leader.)

The Journal

We ask you to record Shabbat service attendance, mastery of prayers, progress on the 13 *mitzvah* activities (including the *tikkun olam* project), and your thoughts about the process. We have provided a form that can be used for recordkeeping (it is found in your parent's B'nei Mitzvah Parent's Manual). The form is added to your journal. **Turn the journal in to the BMC two weeks prior to your bar/bat mitzvah.**

B'nei Mitzvah Brit

The process of becoming bar/bat mitzvah celebrates student, family, and community participation. We each commit to make the process meaningful.

As a student and a family, we hereby dedicate ourselves to do our part in fulfilling the specific responsibilities listed in this Handbook.

We understand that the candidate's Religious School education and growth as a Jew does not begin or end with bar/bat mitzvah and that this is a milestone along the path toward becoming a full member of the Jewish community and a Jewish adult.

Student _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) _____

Date: _____

Helpful Forms and Worksheets

Student Progress Form (service prayers, writing English pieces and attendance.)

Prayers to be Learned by all Students

Name	Date Mastered
Prayer for putting on <i>tallit</i> (page 190)	
Morning Blessings (pages 198-202)	
Prayer for the study of Torah (page 204)	
Reader's / <i>Chatzi Kaddish</i> (page 224)	
<i>K'dusha</i> (page 248)	
Torah Service Prayers (page 366) <i>Ein Kamocha</i> <i>Ki Mitziyon</i> <i>Baruch Shenatan</i> <i>Shema</i> <i>Echad Eloheinu</i> <i>Gadlu</i>	
Blessings before and after reading Torah (page 368)	
Blessings before and after reading Haftarah (page 372)	
<i>Aleinu</i> (page 586)	

Additional Prayers I Wish to Lead

Name	Date Mastered
<i>Baruch she-amar</i> (page 212)	
<i>Yotzeir Or</i> (page 228)	
<i>Ahavah Rabah</i> (page 230)	
Others?	

Torah and Haftarah Portions and Written Materials

Name	Date Mastered
Torah <i>Parashah</i>	
Haftarah <i>Parashah</i>	
Written Torah Introduction	
Written Haftarah Introduction	
D'var Torah	

Mitzvah Activities Worksheet

describe each of your mitzvah activities below.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

13. ***Tikkun Olam* project** (describe your project and your progress)

B'nei Mitzvah Year Service Attendance and Participation

Student Name:				
	Date	Service AM/PM	Service Leader	Did You Help Lead The Service? Prayer or Part You Led
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				