

A Few Thoughts for Parents

A special chapter has begun in your family's life. The time of study and preparation to become b'nai mitzvah is a period when so much is happening so quickly. Your child is growing – transforming – into a young adult, and you are undoubtedly becoming aware of the joys, hopes, and worries that go with being the parent of a child in this stage of life.

Many cultures mark the transition from childhood to adolescence with initiation rituals – vision quests, treks into the hills, singing the tribe's ancient and sacred epic song, and so on. As Rabbi Goldie Milgram puts it, young adults are often initiated through a trial or major task that requires focus, skill-building, and discipline. The bar/bat mitzvah experience, which literally means “son/daughter of the commandments,” is Judaism's rite of passage for this remarkable time of life. The skills a young person has traditionally mastered in order to establish him/herself as a young adult in the “tribe” include publicly blessing and chanting from the Torah, leading the community in prayer, studying and sharing insights about what the Torah portion might have to teach us all. Our goal for these young adults at TBI is that they will be able to stand up proudly, with a strong foundation of Jewish texts, values, and practices and be ready to use their inherited skills to celebrate their Jewish identity and enter a lifetime of Jewish living. In a community as diverse as our own, we expect that process and celebration to look unique for each child, but it is also understood to be a major endeavor and one shaped by tradition and community in whatever form it takes. As our community's own “B'nai Mitzvah Bubby” has discovered, “One of the greatest confidence-building aspects of b'nai mitzvah is for young people to discover that through practice and diligence, they can do something really big by breaking it down into small pieces and working on each piece one at a time.”

The b'nai mitzvah journey is a big deal that is worth carving out real space for. If your student tries to squeeze it in around the edges of dozens of other extracurricular activities, then it's likely to be more stress and rush than satisfaction, and more rote performance than transformative process. This is not a time to be missing religious school or tutoring. If your kid tends to overbook on activities, consider cutting back during the year leading up to this big moment. It's worth the investment in the process and will create more joy and sanity in your family.

It is completely normal for the entire family to become swept into the emotional roller coaster that almost always goes along with any major life-cycle event. Weddings, births, and – yes – b'nai mitzvah cause interpersonal dynamics with relatives and friends near and far to be stirred and mixed up. Expect the unexpected and call on your children's classmates' parents for support and camaraderie.

In the midst of all this wonder are the many, many details. This binder is intended to provide as much information about the program and the experience as possible, so please read it through carefully. However, in order to really get a handle on it all, it is particularly helpful to come to b'nai mitzvah parent meetings throughout the year. If you can't find what you need to know in here or on our website, please don't hesitate to contact us with questions.

Kol tuv,
Gretchen H. Lieberman & Rabbi Rabi Sophia Motzkin Rubenstein

Contact Information

Because the b'nai mitzvah process involves many details, it can become confusing for parents to know who to contact about what. Here's how we can help:

<u>Staff Member</u>	<u>Contact Info</u>	<u>Area of Support</u>
Rabbi Ruhi Sophia Motzkin Rubenstein	541-485-7218 rabbiruhi@tbieugene.org	emotional, intellectual, spiritual support with the process and drafting the dvar Torah.
Gretchen Lieberman (Talmud Torah Director)	541-485-1898 x109 gretchen@tbieugene.org	student progress, dates, tutors, overall program experience
Dan Weber (Communications Coordinator/Executive Assistant)	541-485-7218 x 106	scheduling meetings with the rabbi, facility rental, special requests about the service
Joan Bayliss (B'nai Mitzvah Bubbe – Veteran Volunteer, Mentor)	541-344-5052 joanbayliss@yahoo.com	can answer just about anything related to the b'nai mitzvah life cycle process.
Josh Remis (B'nai Mitzvah Parent Volunteer)	541-556-0714 joshremis@gmail.com	parent questions about the process
Jacque Albert (TBI Bookkeeper)	541-485-7218 x 105 jacque@tbieugene.org	billing questions
Shirley Shiffman (Volunteer Coordinator)	541-485-7218 x 101 shirley@tbieugene.org	logistics about onegs
Class Co-Parent Coordinator		mitzvah projects, Kiddush cup decisions, sign up for onegs and greetings, class dinners, activities, etc.
Class Co-Parent Coordinator		

B'nai Mitzvah Mentors (Tutors)

Joan Bayliss	541-344-5052 (h) 541-543-7761 (c) joanbayliss@yahoo.com
Abby Gershenzon	541-870-2045 (c) 541-485-1418 (h) abbyger@gmail.com
Hap Ponedel	541-345-1902 (w) hapsky@rioussa.com
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Section 1

Historical Background of B'nai Mitzvah

Historical Background of B'nai Mitzvah

“Liberal Jews recognize that the process of becoming a bar/bat mitzvah is as crucial as the moment itself. B'ney mitzvah ceremonies are rites of passage that prepare children to lead engaging and thoughtful Jewish lives with a sense of commitment to their Jewish identity.”

© Deborah Waxman and Joshua Lesser, A Guide to Jewish Practice, Volume III edited by David Teutsch.

The meaning and definition of b'nai mitzvah has changed a lot over the years. The events of the 20th century and the distinct experience of American Jews living simultaneously in two civilizations, have both had a significant influence on the ritual and tradition. Young people consider this occasion to be their ceremonial identification with the Jewish People and Judaism. Emotionally, they now “belong.” Some even feel that without this ceremony they are “not Jewish.” Parents seem to feel that this is indeed the major meaning of the ceremony today: it builds and strengthens Jewish identity. From that day on, the youngster has a defined place in the universe. This is no small matter. In fact, it is a major accomplishment in this age of “options,” different life-styles, and changing values.

Historically, in Jewish tradition a boy is considered a “man” at the age of thirteen years and one day, a girl is a “woman” at age twelve years and one day. Obviously, in this respect, b'nai mitzvah ceremonies are clearly rites of passage. What did this coming of age mean, and how was it observed?

The institution celebrating b'nai mitzvah developed over centuries. The Talmud says, “At five years of age a child is ready to study the Torah, at ten the Mishnah, and at thirteen the commandments” (mitzvot). The 13th birthday marked that one was biologically, intellectually and spiritually ready to begin assuming adult responsibilities and was prepared to participate in adult religious life by being counted in the minyan and wearing tallit and tefillin. Traditional responsibilities for one who has become bar mitzvah include praying three times daily, putting on tefillin, fasting on Yom Kippur and other fast days, observing Shabbat and holy days, keeping kosher, and continuing ones' study of Judaism.

Traditionally, the ceremony was simple, the bar mitzvah was called up (aliyah) to the Torah during a service to recite the Torah blessings. Often the individual would chant a section of the week's portion, followed by chanting the Haftarah and would address those gathered to demonstrate understanding of the portions learned for the occasion. It has also been tradition to follow the shabbat service with a modest meal of celebration (seudah).

In order to accomplish this, a certain degree of knowledge, acquired during family religious practice and study was expected. Of course, in a pre-modern Jewish community most customs were learned through observance in the home or shul (synagogue). Becoming a bar mitzvah was never considered the end of Jewish education, but rather a milestone; circumstances permitting, many students went on to pursue years of in-depth study in yeshiva and in other settings.

Many of the practices and areas of study described above in the historical development of b'nai mitzvah pertained to boys alone for centuries. It's worth noting, as a Reconstructionist congregation, our movement's role in the development of the value of gender equality in the area of b'nai mitzvah. The following is an excerpt from an article called “The First American Bat Mitzvah” from a web site called “The Jewish Virtual Library”:

On Saturday morning, March 18, 1922, twelve-year old Judith Kaplan, the daughter of Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan, stepped to the bimah of her father's synagogue, the Society for the Advancement of Judaism. She recited the preliminary blessing, read a portion of the Torah sidra in Hebrew and English and then intoned the closing blessing. "That was enough to shock a lot of people," she later recalled, "including my own grandparents and aunts and uncles."

The shocking event they had just witnessed, according to historian Paula Hyman, was the first bat mitzvah conducted in the United States. Reflecting on her historic moment, Kaplan observed, "No thunder sounded. No lightning struck." Rather, Judith Kaplan and her father, founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, set the model for what has now become a widespread American Jewish practice.

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Today, in a pluralistic, secular, open society, we seek for b'nai mitzvah to initiate a lifelong exploration of Jewish practice and study. Will our students observe the festivals? Will they fast on Yom Kippur? Will their Jewish identity express itself in deepened interest in Jewish affairs, in charity (tzedakah)? Will they continue their Jewish education? Will they develop a connection to Israel? Will they go to Jewish camps in the summer? Will they take a more responsible role in the synagogue and in the larger Jewish community? Will they continue to perform mitzvot throughout their lives? In which ways will they manifest their Judaism?

All those opportunities are deeply encouraged by Temple Beth Israel. Parental guidance and encouragement are essential. Indeed, becoming b'nai mitzvah is a major process created by tradition as a structured way to build Jewish identity. (In other words, Jewish responsibility must be taught/learned in such a manner as to create a milestone in the student's personal as well as communal life.) It is a symbolic expression of willingness to assume increased Jewish responsibility. This embrace of responsibility becomes a marker, which indicates the child's readiness to receive greater freedom and privileges in the family, in the synagogue, and in one's daily life.

Temple Beth Israel will do its part in preparing your child for this event. Your involvement, however, is the essential link that will ensure your child's spiritual growth.

Two articles are enclosed in this handbook that may further illuminate our modern interpretation of the b'nai mitzvah experience. Please see "More than Just a Party" by Judith Kuper Jaffe and "When Bar/Bat Mitzvah Loses Meaning" by Janet Marder in the back of this binder.

Section 2

TBI's Program Overview

- The B'nai Mitzvah Experience At Temple Beth Israel
 - Declaring “Hineini”
 - Selection of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date
 - B'nai Mitzvah Studies Agreement
 - The Role of Family in the Process
 - B'nai Mitzvah Mentors and Tutoring
 - Meetings with the Rabbi
- Attendance Expectations
- Mitzvah Projects
- Website

The B'nai Mitzvah Experience at Temple Beth Israel

Declaring “Hineini!”

It is our goal at TBI that our b'nai mitzvah students will be able to confidently declare “Hineini!” (Here I am!) and understand and demonstrate what it means to them and to the community to be identified as a Jewish adult. Students will be encouraged to focus on one or more of the following pathways to Jewish literacy and identity. The traditional b'nai mitzvah process at TBI focuses primarily on cultivating the first two categories below. In acknowledgement of multiple intelligences, however, we are willing to create learning plans with families who would prefer to experience their initiation through other pathways.



- **(Mind) Torah:** features Torah study and analysis, learning Hebrew, clear understanding of the core stories and themes of our people using art, language, or music to respond to Torah.

- **(Heart) Avodah:** features fluency and comfort with songs and blessings and Hebrew used in services and everyday life, enough that students are able to confidently lead parts of services and be actively Jewish in daily life.



- **(Hands) G'milut Chasadim:** features significant learning about and engagement with Jewish values and ethics. Beyond book learning, students may keep a journal of their tikkun olam efforts, connect with a mitzvah hero mentor they identify in the community, create posters, pamphlets, a website or something to help educate about Jewish ethics and values, or otherwise demonstrate their commitment to Jewish values and ethics.



- **(Body) K'lal Israel:** demonstrates enough acquisition of Jewish cultural literacy to understand what makes Jews “a people.” Students may learn to confidently cook and host a Jewish meal, craft Judaica, create a Jewish cultural event, research and present about Jewish family history or Jewish history in general, make a significant connection with other Jews around the world, travel to Jewish sites and report about it, or get actively and knowledgeably involved with contemporary Jewish issues.



Reaching this level of “hineini,” requires a significant investment of time and energy, usually from the family with support from Talmud Torah. Students will reach this level at different times and in different ways. Some of our students come from homes with a high level of Jewish engagement, others come from homes with minimal connection other than religious school participation. Some of our students start in our Talmud Torah program in kindergarten or first grade, others in sixth. Some students are reluctant, and others put in a tremendous amount of effort. All of these students can reach a level of hineini that merits identifying as a bar or bat mitzvah, but the pathway may be different for them.

In the past Talmud Torah at TBI and most other Jewish supplementary schools have had “requirements” about the number of years students need to be enrolled before becoming b’nai mitzvah or how much Hebrew they need to know. TBI has moved toward an individualized achievement/proficiency model. In the future, we expect that to become b’nai mitzvah at TBI, students should:

- be at least 13
- have earned a minimum of 18 cohort credits
 - These are from the Sunday morning grade-level class.
 - Each year is made up of three trimesters, worth one credit each
 - Students that start with the program after 1st grade, or who miss too much class, or skip terms can make up credits from JEWL classes.
- have earned a minimum of 18 Hebrew and/or JEWL (Jewish Experience, Wisdom, and Lifestyle) credits.
 - Hebrew credits are proficiency-based. Students may take the trimester-long Hebrew classes as few or as many times as needed, but will earn one credit for each level of Hebrew they master (up to 7 possible levels/credits).
 - Each trimester-long JEWL class is worth one credit. These classes will mostly meet once a week and credits will be earned based on participation and attendance. Students who can’t commit to regularly and/or fully attending a particular JEWL class will not receive credit for it and should choose another JEWL option in that term or another term.
 - In addition to official JEWL classes, there will be a wide variety of options available for individualized study and participation that can be used to earn JEWL credits, including enrichment days.

Some of our students will be ready to declare “hineini” and become b’nai mitzvah at 13. Some will be ready at 14 or even older, and that’s ok. Students may continue taking classes until they are ready to do so.

Because many, if not most, families will still anticipate their children to become b’nai mitzvah at 13, we will assess their readiness at the end of 5th/beginning of 6th grade to determine if they are on track to do so by then. During this transition time for our program, it will be especially important to work with families individually to determine the best course of action for the next year or two. **Together, the family, Gretchen, and Rabbi Ruhi Sophia will create a roadmap for each student that identifies the student’s (and family’s) plan for becoming bar/bat mitzvah.**

B’nai Mitzvah Studies Agreement

TBI asks that b’nai mitzvah families agree to meet the requirements of b’nai mitzvah study by signing a brit (agreement). Becoming b’nai mitzvah is a sacred life-cycle process and ritual, and a brit signifies the weight and relevance and makes it clear the responsibilities we are all assuming. There is a standard brit in the back of this binder. Your family may use the one provided or may work with Gretchen and Rabbi Ruhi Sophia to create one that meets the goals stated in this section but is personalized for your student’s needs. A signed agreement is necessary for admittance into the b’nai mitzvah program. Please underscore to your child the solemnity of signing such a document.

Selection of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date

Students will be assigned dates for their b'nai mitzvah services as part of the b'nai mitzvah program registration process as follows:

1. Parent(s) attend introductory b'nai mitzvah parent meeting in the spring of 5th grade, or arrange for a make-up meeting with Gretchen.
2. Students and families submit signed roadmaps and initial agreements for the b'nai mitzvah program by **August 1st**. Families that would like to have personal meetings with Gretchen to assist with that are welcome to do so.
3. Families register for 6th grade, pay tuition, and first payment of life cycle fee by **August 1st**.
4. Families submit **three** most desired dates for b'nai mitzvah by **August 1st**.
5. Dates will be assigned all at one time in late summer/early fall for all the incoming sixth grade students who have completed steps 1-4 above. **Students who haven't completed steps 1-4 will have to wait to be assigned a date until they've done so.**

We will do our best to give families their first choices. The dates must be cleared with the master calendar for TBI and the rabbi to ensure that there are no conflicts. Priority is given to b'nai mitzvah dates that correspond to the child's Hebrew or English birthday. Please see the section on Picking Your Parasha on page 37 to help choose potential portions that would be a good fit.

The Role of Family

At TBI, most b'nai mitzvah ceremonies occur within a context of regular congregational worship on Shabbat morning. While there is definitely room to consider alternative forms of b'nai mitzvah celebrations, this traditional approach is the most common practice.

The Shabbat service offers the ritual opportunity for the student to truly join the congregation as an adult. As a potentially transformative rite of passage for the student and the family, the ceremony takes on the most meaning when parents and student learn together, rather than moving through the process as if it were simply a huge independent assignment to complete.

Since our children learn more from what we do than what we say, it is important that our actions reflect a commitment to Judaism and Jewish education. **We encourage you to attend Shabbat services along with your children on a regular basis, so that you and your child will become both familiar and comfortable with the prayer service and TBI's customs.** We expect students and parents to attend Shabbat morning services regularly (it is a required component of your child's 6th and 7th grade b'nai mitzvah preparations, more on that to follow in this section). Parents who casually drop their children off at services and do not attend with them are communicating to their children an ambivalence that can be confusing and diminishing. It's understood that everyone's lives are pulled in many directions by different priorities and activities – we just want to impress upon parents that the more you can model and support participation in Jewish life with your child, the more powerful and transformative the b'nai mitzvah experience is likely to be for you, your child, and your relationship.

We strongly recommend that parents provide their children with a kippah, tallit, and a copy of the Reconstructionist siddur (prayer book), Kol Hanesama). The first two are typically given as part of the service; the prayerbook is good to have at home throughout the years of preparation and beyond. All are available in our gift shop.

B'nai Mitzvah Mentors and Tutoring

Our b'nai mitzvah mentors (tutors) are key people in the lives of our b'nai mitzvah students. Talmud Torah carefully selects b'nai mitzvah mentors for their knowledge of tefilah & minhag (prayer and customs) at TBI as well as their commitment to the TBI community. The student's mentor should be someone who helps them cross the bridge between life as a child in the TBI community and life as a young adult member of the congregation. The mentors tutor students in Hebrew and trope for their parasha and assist them with the liturgy. They are familiar friendly faces welcoming students to services and encouraging them to try out what they've learned. They also often serve as guides for your family as you go through this process as they've walked this road with many other students.

Mentor Assignments: Parents will have an opportunity in 6th grade to give their input about which mentor(s) might be the best fit for their students. The Talmud Torah director will assign mentors to students based on that input, as well as observations from teachers, and mentors' availability and load. **Please DO NOT make a private arrangement with a mentor on your own.**

Mentoring: Most students begin working with their mentors about about 7-9 months prior to the bar/bat mitzvah date, though some families will desire or be advised by the Talmud Torah office to begin earlier. If your student needs pre-b'nai mitzvah tutoring, the Talmud Torah office has a list of potential tutors for you to contact independently. The student usually meets with the mentor once each week on a set schedule to practice the prayers, blessings and Torah & sometimes Haftarah or other readings. The mentoring fee includes 24 tutoring sessions.

Parasha: Mentors also support students and family in exploring the Torah portion, selecting verses for aliyot, and thinking about ways to reflect on the parasha. For students giving a traditional d'var Torah on the Torah portion, mentors will want to hear them practice the speech to assist with delivery.

Payment: Parents are responsible for paying all the mentor's fees through the TBI office. Scholarships for mentoring fees are available through the Talmud Torah office for families who are in need of extra assistance. Please let the TT director or the TBI executive director know if you need financial aid, or if you are willing to make a donation to help another family cover the costs.

Canceled Appointments: Make sure you have your b'nai mitzvah mentor's name and phone number in a readily accessible place to use whenever needed. Also, make sure both you and your child's mentor have the same session day, time, location and length in mind when you agree on a meeting schedule.

If you ever need to cancel or change an appointment for reasons other than illness, you must contact your child's b'nai mitzvah mentor directly (***NOT the Talmud Torah office***) no later than the evening before the meeting. In case of illness, please contact your mentor as early as possible before the meeting. If you cancel on the same day as the lesson or if you fail to show up for a lesson, this can count as one of the 24 allotted mentoring sessions. In turn, if your mentor ever cancels or changes an appointment without giving you at least one day's notice, fails to show up for a lesson, or does not arrive at the appointed time, call the Talmud Torah office at 541-485-1898.

Meetings with the Rabbi

There is a minimum of 5 meetings with the rabbi built into our program. **It is your responsibility to set up these meetings. Please contact Dan Weber in the TBI office (541-485-1898 x106 or dan@tbieugene.org).** Please don't let this slip!

Meetings with the rabbi are generally as follows:

1. **First family meeting: 6-8 months prior** to bar/bat mitzvah to explore the spiritual meaning of the process, talk about the Torah and Haftarah portion for that specific Shabbat service, and discuss any questions or details about the process.
1. **Rabbi and student D'var Torah meetings: 2 meetings, about 5 months prior** to bar/bat mitzvah, and again a month after that. The student and rabbi will discuss the Torah portion and strategies for developing a d'var Torah. The rabbi will help the student find clarity and may communicate by email feedback on outlines and rough drafts.
2. **Second family meeting: about 6 weeks prior** to bar/bat mitzvah to discuss any remaining questions, concerns, submit the "Honors" form, clarify other details, and to continue to discuss the Torah portion as a family.
3. **Dress rehearsal:** typically on Thursday afternoons prior to the bar/bat mitzvah service.
4. **Challah baking and tzitzit tying (optional):** Rabbi Ruhi Sophia invites bar and bat mitzvah students and their families to bake challah with her on the Fridays preceding their Shabbat services. This can include a tzitzit tying ritual as well.

If more meetings with the rabbi are needed, please contact the main office, and we'll do our best to arrange additional times.

B'nai Mitzvah Attendance Expectations

One of the most important pieces of the b'nai mitzvah preparation process is based on participation through attendance. Students are expected to attend a minimum number of classes, services, and programs in order to prepare themselves as b'nai mitzvah. This aims to achieve the following:

- Give students an opportunity to experience the various prayer and religious services in the TBI community and gain a greater level of comfort with participating in and leading prayer.
- Ensure their Jewish education and enable it to continue beyond b'nai mitzvah.
- Acquaint students with the diverse offerings at TBI and help them understand that people connect with Jewish life at TBI in many different ways.
- To build strong relationships both with their Talmud Torah class cohort as well as with the greater TBI community.

The requirements have been set up so students have some flexibility in the programs they attend, and it will hopefully be a rewarding and meaningful part of the b'nai mitzvah training process. These requirements assume a baseline level of proficiency and familiarity with Judaism and the experiences of worship services at the beginning of the b'nai mitzvah program. Students who don't yet have that may have additional requirements.

- **Cohort class:** Students are expected to participate in at least 75% of their cohort classes throughout 6th and 7th grade, even after they have become bar/bat mitzvah. This means that students who become bar/bat mitzvah early in the school year are still committed to participating with their classmates throughout the school year.
- **Credits:** By the time students become b'nai mitzvah, they should have earned 36 credits. To ensure sufficient participation in 6th and 7th grade, we ask that 12 of those credits be earned during 6th and 7th grade from a combination of cohort, Hebrew, and JEWL classes, with independent study where needed.
- **B'nai Mitzvah Retreats:** Students should attend at least one of the b'nai mitzvah retreats each year in 6th and 7th grade. There are usually two opportunities each year.
- **B'nai Mitzvah Family Programs:** There will be several b'nai mitzvah family programs throughout the year in lieu of (and at the same time as) regular Sunday morning cohort class. It is expected that at least one parent attends most of these family meetings with the student.
- **Worship Services:** Students need to attend a minimum of 16 services in the 18 months before their bar/bat mitzvah (this includes both 6th and 7th grade). This is divided as follows:
 - 6 - **Learners' Services** w/ Rabbi Ruhi on Shabbat mornings (regular Saturday morning services may be substituted for these, but not vice versa)
 - 6 - **Regular Shabbat Morning Services** without b'nai mitzvah celebrations
 - 4 - **Services of your choice**, including Friday evening, shiva minyanim, chag special service, havdalah program, Saturday morning or afternoon service. This can be a day with a bar/bat mitzvah happening. (This does not include erev or morning Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur services.)

- **Other TBI Programs:** Students are expected to attend two community events/programs designed for the larger TBI community. This can include lectures, adult education programs, social events or group volunteer programs. It does not include programs designed specifically for Talmud Torah or TBI youth.

Please consult the Talmud Torah webpage, the main TBI calendar, or the emails for more information regarding services and programs.

Tracking

To keep track of attendance, students should:

- Fill in the electronic form on the website after each service or program they attend. (www.tbieugene.org/page/b-nai-mitzvah) *This helps the Talmud Torah office track your attendance.*
- Record their attendance on their paper B'nai Mitzvah Service & Program Attendance Tracker (available in the back of this binder and as a PDF at www.tbieugene.org/page/b-nai-mitzvah). *This is your reminder of what you've attended.*

The two methods are an attempt to make it easier for students and families to keep track of this information and for us to help support you along the way. The attendance expectations **MUST** be fulfilled honorably. Students who do not meet these expectations **WILL LIKELY HAVE TO POSTPONE THEIR B'NAI MITZVAH DATES**. If there are serious issues that make it difficult to complete the requirements, please inform Gretchen or the rabbi. We will do our best to notify families if we notice that a student does not appear to be attending class and services at a rate that will result in meeting this requirement, but monitoring the fulfillment of this requirement is the family's responsibility, and the school does not promise to keep track of it.

This paper tracking form is in the back of your binder.

B'nai Mitzvah Service & Program Attendance Tracker																					
<p>Please see page 12 in the B'nai-Mitzvah Family Handbook for an explanation of these requirements.</p> <p>Remember, attending 18 services/events is the bare minimum needed for effective preparation. We encourage you to attend more as it will dramatically help students feel more comfortable and confident.</p> <p>In order to effectively monitor students' preparation efforts, we need families to communicate about student service attendance using the online tracker found at http://www.tbieugene.org/page/b-nai-mitzvah. This sheet is for your personal record keeping.</p> <p>Name: _____</p>																					
<p>Shabbat Morning Learner's Services</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>Theme covered</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>1.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>2.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>3.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>4.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>5.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>6.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>		Date	Theme covered	1.		2.		3.		4.		5.		6.							
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<p>Saturday Morning Shabbat Services (w/ no b'nai mitzvah)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>Notes</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>1.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>2.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>3.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>4.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>5.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>6.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>		Date	Notes	1.		2.		3.		4.		5.		6.							
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<p>Service of Your Choice: including Friday evening, shiva minyanim, chag special service, havdalah program, regular Shabbat morning or afternoon service. This can be a day with a bar/bat mitzvah happening. (This does <u>not</u> include mes, or morning Rosh Hashanah (1st day), or Yom Kippur services.)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>Type of Service/Notes</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>1.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>2.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>3.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>4.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>		Date	Type of Service/Notes	1.		2.		3.		4.											
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<p>Other TBI Programs: Students are expected to attend two community events/programs designed for the larger TBI community. This can include lectures, adult education programs, social events or group volunteer programs. It does <u>not</u> include programs designed specifically for Talmud Torah or TBI youth.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>Event/Notes</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>1.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>2.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>		Date	Event/Notes	1.		2.															
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Mitzvah Projects

Over the years, many TBI students have had a tradition of participating in mitzvah projects alongside the b'nai mitzvah preparation. As we move towards a more diverse understanding of b'nai mitzvah, these projects may take on a greater role in some student's preparations. Even if your child's b'nai mitzvah training is a more classic blend of Torah and Avodah than G'milut Chasadim, we would like to encourage students to consider taking on a mitzvah project. Often, their efforts with a mitzvah project can tie in nicely with their exploration of their parasha and an eventual d'var Torah.

It's not always easy at first glance to find volunteer projects that are both meaningful for the students and actually helpful for the community, but there are actually many things they can do that are needed. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

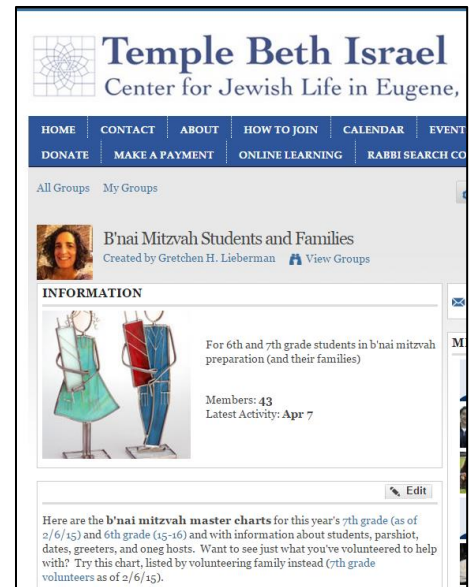
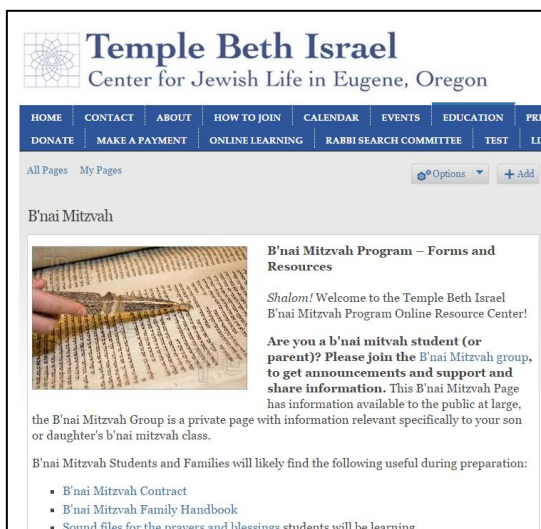
- Regular visits to a senior
- Visiting the sick
- Packing boxes at Food for Lane County
- Helping with kids at First Place Family Shelter or the Relief Nursery
- Making kits for Days for Girls (daysforgirls.org)
- Yard work for families who are going through a difficult time
- Habitat restoration in places like Hendricks Park with community groups (clearing invasive plants, etc.)

TBI Website

Please join and use the B'nai Mitzvah Students and Family Group (<http://www.tbieugene.org/group/b-nai-mitzvah-students-and-families>; see image of the page to the right) to connect and easily communicate with your b'nai mitzvah cohort:

You can post messages to the group page wall, share resources with each other, and get announcements about special services or b'nai mitzvah activities.

This page is private for group members only.



Also see the B'nai Mitzvah Page (<http://www.tbieugene.org/page/b-nai-mitzvah>; image at left) for so many useful links and tips during this process including pdfs of this handbook, sound files for blessings, sample programs, caterer handouts, and so much more. This is where you will find the service attendance tracker.

Section 3

Event Planning

- B'nai Mitzvah Costs
- Temple Beth Israel B'nai Mitzvah Checklist for Parents
- Logistics for the B'nai Mitzvah Event
 - Use of TBI Facility
 - This Week at TBI Announcements
 - Friday Shabbat Oneg
 - Seudat Mitzvah
 - Kashrut and the TBI Kitchen
 - Photographs
 - Flowers
 - Left-over Food and Flowers
 - Children
 - Greeting
 - Kiddush Cups
 - Other Details
- Core Principles of Temple Beth Israel's Ethical Kashrut Commitment: Sustainability, Environmental Health and Justice
- B'nai Mitzvah Event Planning Community Resources and Contacts

B'nai Mitzvah Costs

The b'nai mitzvah process definitely shouldn't bankrupt families, but it's easy to get overwhelmed by the costs. A clear sense of the expenses will help you budget what's best for your family. There are scholarships available for families in need and there are also creative ways to save money on the event. Here's an outline of what you can expect:

Expenses	Set	Additional
Regular Talmud Torah Tuition	\$765/year	
<p>Life Cycle Fee</p> <p>Covers the support for the b'nai mitzvah experience provided by TBI including: logistic details, additional education-related communications, private sessions with the rabbis, all the materials relevant to the course of study, and the gift of a Tanakh.</p> <p>One-third of the life cycle fee is due at the selection of the bar/bat mitzvah date/upon registering for 6th grade, one-third is due nine months before the date, and the final third is due seven months before the event.</p>	\$425	
<p>Pre-B'nai Mitzvah Tutoring</p> <p>Students who aren't on track to be ready for b'nai mitzvah tutoring 9-months prior to their date, will need to have supplementary support. This will be assessed between 12-18 months prior to their date. Parents may find their own tutoring or work with the Talmud Torah office to find a tutor.</p>		depends on student, needs, and tutor. \$0-100s
<p>Mentoring Fee</p> <p>Covers 24 hour-long sessions with a b'nai mitzvah mentor to practice prayers, trope, and the student's Torah portion in addition to general b'nai mitzvah mentoring. Students who need additional tutoring will be charged for it. You will automatically get billed for tutoring at 9, 6, and 3 months prior to the bar/bat mitzvah.</p>	\$575	
<p>Building Use Fee for Service and Afternoon</p> <p>The building use fee for a small kiddush following the b'nai mitzvah is \$50.00. If, as most families do, you choose to have a luncheon at Temple Beth Israel following the b'nai mitzvah, the fee is \$200.00.</p> <p>A \$100.00 cleaning deposit is also required that will be refunded if the kitchen and <i>shul</i> are properly cleaned after the event.</p> <p>See the "Facility Use Form" for more cost details regarding use of the TBI facility. The facility use fee is due two months before the event.</p>	\$50-\$300	
<p>Tzedaka</p> <p>Our congregation is part of an organization called <i>Mazon</i> that works to combat hunger. You are strongly encouraged to donate 3% of the cost of the food for your child's b'nai mitzvah to this worthy cause.</p>		variable
<p>Friday night onegs for classmates</p> <p>Each family will help provide an erev Shabbat oneg for two other b'nai mitzvah students. This relieves the pressure off families when it is their weekend.</p>	variable	

<p>Seudat Mitzvah Meal after the service. Costs vary widely depending on the number of attendees and whether you organize a class potluck or have it catered.</p>	variable	
<p>Live Web Streaming of Service and DVD copies You are not required to purchase this service, but it's available if you're interested.</p>		\$150 for streaming only; \$200 for streaming and DVD.
<p>Kiddush Cup Class Gift It is a TBI tradition to have each b'nai mitzvah class choose a kiddush cup and give a matching one to each student as a gift in lieu of giving individual presents to every classmate. This saves a tremendous amount of money for families and gives the students a meaningful and appropriate reminder of their day.</p>	\$20-\$50, depending on which cup the class chooses	
<p>Class Group Gift Many b'nai mitzvah classes have contributed towards a group gift, often to something for the synagogue, new prayer books, furniture, art, etc.</p>		variable
<p>Additional Expenses Often Incurred Although these are not required costs, they are costs most families face. Consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invitations • Party venue (rental for TBI's social hall from 6pm-12am is \$500) • Food • Photography/Video • Flowers/Decorations • Entertainment • Clothes 		variable

Temple Beth Israel B'nai Mitzvah Checklist for Parents

Please use the following timetable to stay on top of the logistics of b'nai mitzvah planning. Not every item listed will necessarily apply to your family's celebration and the listed times may vary somewhat by each family's needs, but it will give you a good idea. TBI staff (the rabbi, the Talmud Torah director and mentors, and the office staff) will do our best to support you in this process, but b'nai mitzvah students and families are ultimately responsible for making sure these things happen.

Timing and Tasks	Your personalized calendar
<p>Prior to Beginning B'nai Mitzvah Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jewish identity issues within the family must be resolved before beginning the b'nai mitzvah process. If a family has not clearly made identification with the covenant of Judaism as the sole religious source for their child and their home, a preliminary meeting with the rabbi is required. • Student will ideally be proficient at a minimum of level 3 Hebrew (able to decode unknown words and recognize common sight words) before beginning 6th grade. 	
<p>End of 5th Grade Year (or shortly thereafter)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend mandatory incoming b'nai mitzvah parent meeting or individual meeting with Gretchen. • Register for 6th grade. • B'nai mitzvah roadmap and agreement signed and submitted. • Identify three possible dates for bar/bat mitzvah service. • Pay first installment (\$125) of the Life Cycle fee. 	<p>June 5th by Aug 1st</p>
<p>Beginning of 6th grade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TT will confirm dates for b'nai mitzvah services with families who have completed above requirements. • Signed b'nai mitzvah studies agreement submitted. • Make an appointment with Gretchen to meet (student and parent(s)) and receive the parasha booklet. • Student will receive the B'nai Mitzvah Student Prayers and Blessings workbook and a CD or thumb drive of the prayers/blessings and trope. Your support and encouragement as your child prepares for the bar/bat mitzvah is essential for your child's success. • Attend Shabbat services at Temple Beth Israel as often as possible and track attendance online and on the paper form. 	
<p>9 months prior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule family and student meetings with the rabbi by contacting Dan Weber in the TBI office (541-485-7218 x106 or dan@tbieugene.org). • Review goals, expectations, and specifics concerning the student's b'nai mitzvah with rabbi and/or the Talmud Torah director. • Contact Gretchen to have a mentor assigned to your student (and family) to 	

<p>assist with the specific service your child will lead and parasha to be read.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform out of town family and guests and close friends of date. • Begin to make plans concerning the optional post-bar/bat mitzvah celebration, create a guest list, reserve a venue. • Second payment of the Life Cycle fee (\$150) is due. • First of three tutoring payments (\$192) is due. 	
<p>8 months prior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin working with the mentor and get materials specific to your student's Torah portion if you haven't already. • Complete the family read-through activity of the parasha as described in this handbook and begin consulting with mentor about which sections of the parasha might be the most interesting to chant. • Contact a caterer and/or make other kiddush arrangements. • Arrange for hotel/motel reservations for out-of-town guests. • Continue to attend Shabbat services with your student. • Listen to and encourage your child's effort and progress in learning and practicing the Torah portion and the service. 	
<p>7 months prior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final payment of the Life Cycle fee (\$150) is due. 	
<p>6 months prior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second of three tutoring payments (\$192) is due. • First family meeting with the rabbi. 	
<p>4-5 months prior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second and third meetings with the rabbi to discuss d'var Torah • Discuss special inserts or readings to be used with the siddur (prayer book). • Select a tallit and kippah. • Parent(s) (Jewish ones) should brush up on their blessings, including the blessings for the tallit and before and after the Torah readings. • Design and order invitations. • Continue listening to and encouraging your child's effort and progress in learning and chanting the Torah portion and the service. 	
<p>3 months prior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Order flowers, if desired. • Arrange for childcare during service. • Make sure you and your family have appropriate attire for the service. • Arrange your Friday night Shabbat dinner to be held before attending the 7:30 P.M. service on the night before your child becomes a bar/bat mitzvah. • Continue listening to and encouraging your child's effort and progress in learning and chanting the Torah portion and the service. • Third and final of three tutoring payments (\$191) is due. 	

<p>6 weeks prior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fourth meeting with rabbi, where you will finalize the different honors given to family and friends during the bar/bat mitzvah service; please see the enclosed B'nai Mitzvah Honors List Form - and turn in the form to the main office. • Go over any questions with rabbi, mentor, and/or the TT director. • Fill out the "Building Use Form" and turn it to TBI office with the fee and cleaning deposit. • Send invitations. • Ensure that you know the blessing over the Torah for your aliyah and your Torah reading if you will be chanting (for the Jewish parent(s)). • Arrange for photographer or video for dress rehearsal (if desired). • Continue listening to and encouraging your child's effort and progress in learning and chanting the Torah portion and the service. 	
<p>1-2 month prior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final d'var Torah meeting and assessment of student progress with rabbi if needed. • Prepare brief blessing that you will offer to your child during the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony. (Keep it short.) • Student will practice on the bimah with the rabbi or mentor. • Continue listening to and encouraging your child's effort and progress in learning and chanting the Torah portion and the service. • Arrange for childcare during Saturday morning service (and if necessary Friday night as well). 	
<p>One week prior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in with rabbi, TT director, and TBI office as needed. • Dress rehearsal is typically scheduled on the Thursday before the Saturday ceremony at 3:30 pm. • Review all logistics, and check in with appropriate providers: caterer, florist, childcare provider(s), etc. • If using a caterer, give them "Caterer's Handout" for working in TBI kitchen (found in the back of this binder). 	
<p>One day after</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congratulate your child (again) and yourself for reaching this most important and meaningful milestone. • With your family, say a <i>shehechenu</i> for all we are, all we have, and for all people everywhere as we reach this season. 	
<p>Ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your child still has part of the 7th grade year left, remind him/her that students are expected to complete the year with their class. • Register your child for the 8th grade programming at TBI and continue to encourage his/her Jewish education and involvement. Remind him/her that becoming b'nai mitzvah is the entrance door, not the exit door. 	

Logistics for the B'nai Mitzvah Event

Use of TBI Facility

The "Facility Use Form" in the back of this handbook has details concerning the use of the synagogue after the b'nai mitzvah ceremony. **Please send in this form to the main office a minimum of two months before the b'nai mitzvah.** Information about planning the reception and use of the TBI kitchen is below.

Numbers and Seating

The sanctuary (as normally set up) fits approximately 175 people. If you anticipate more people at the service when your child becomes bar/bat mitzvah, you may want to talk to the main office about opening up the side to fit an additional 140. In the social hall, we have 21 round and 20+ rectangular tables and 168 chairs, anything over that will require special planning and extra coordination with the office.

This Week at TBI E-Bulletin

Families are invited to put a short announcement and photo in "This Week at TBI," announcing their son or daughter's upcoming bar/bat mitzvah. It needs to be fewer than 60 words and submitted to Dan Weber (dan@tbieugene.org) no later than noon on the Tuesday prior to the service. By sending in an announcement you are allowing TBI to include it in "This Week at TBI" which is emailed to hundreds of TBI members and friends.

Erev Shabbat (Friday Night) Oneg

It is TBI custom for b'nai mitzvah class parents to help each other prepare the onegs at the Shabbat evening services before b'nai mitzvah. It's a mitzvah to help each other, and this TBI tradition relieves the pressure on the b'nai mitzvah family during a weekend with many other details to manage. Each bar/bat mitzvah family will volunteer for two onegs for fellow classmates, and will in turn have two families hosting on their weekend. TBI will ensure that parents of other bar and bat mitzvah students are in touch with you regarding this mitzvah.

Here's what the volunteering families need to know:

- The necessary ritual items - kiddush cup, challah cover and tray, knife, saltshaker, and the hand washing pitcher and bowl - are in the kitchen cupboard labeled "Shabbat." You are free to use these items or bring your own.
- Friday night kiddush requires the blessing over the wine/grape juice and challah. TBI will provide the sweet kosher wine and grape juice for Friday night's Kiddush ritual. It will be in the kitchen.
- TBI gets challah from Barry's for Shabbat. **You will need to pick up four loaves from them. (Two will be set out Friday night** and the other two will be saved for kiddush Saturday morning.)
- You and the other family volunteering are responsible for the rest of the food and drink at the oneg. Please see the section below on *Kashrut and the TBI Kitchen*.

Seudat Mitzvah [Reception following the B'nai Mitzvah]

Customarily, bar/bat mitzvah family host a kiddush luncheon at the synagogue following services. We strongly encourage you to do so. This offers the opportunity to build an inclusive community

and to honor Shabbat with the celebration of this important rite of passage. Should finances present difficulties with sponsoring the seudat mitzvah, please speak with the rabbi or Gretchen or Nina.

We encourage you to host your luncheon at TBI to continue the Jewish connection for all those attending the morning service. However, *if you should choose to hold it elsewhere, please make sure to provide a simple Kiddush for those who remain behind.* Wine/grape juice and challah are required. **Two loaves of challah will be there** (the supporting oneg families having picked them up from Barry's on Friday). If you think there will be a larger crowd, please bring additional challah. **You need to supply the sweet kosher wine and grape juice.**

It is up to your family to decide upon the type of kiddush and/or reception to create. Many families find that a well-organized potluck can best bring the community together (and help hold costs down). Indeed, potlucks have been remembered as some of the best b'nai mitzvah gatherings; we encourage families to consider this option. *Again, please remember that everyone attending the service is invited to the kiddush.*

The "Building Use Form" details the requirements for using the TBI facility. It is in the back of this binder

Kashrut (Dietary Laws) and the TBI Kitchen

Kashrut, the set of laws relating to kosher food, is observed in the TBI kitchen. We ask that you exercise care in the preparation and purchase of foods to be brought into our kitchen or that is served at the synagogue.

Cooking/Reheating: Food may not be cooked at TBI during Shabbat (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset) or Yamim Tovim (festival days), except as permitted by the rabbis or by the tefilah u'minhag committee. Food *may* be reheated (or of course served cold or at room temperature during this time). Use of electricity at these times may only be for turning on lights, warming (not cooking) foods, and boiling water for coffee or tea.

Avoiding "treif" foods and keeping things separate: Treif foods are those that are not kosher. Only parve (foods with neither dairy nor meat, such as grains, fruits, vegetables, kosher fish, eggs, etc.) or dairy foods may be brought into and used in the kitchen and synagogue premises. Individuals and caterers must check to make sure that shortening with animal fat (other than butter) is not used. Gelatins in Jell-O, marshmallows, sour cream, yogurt etc., must be vegetarian. Fish can be brought into the synagogue only if it is of the type of fish that possesses both scales and fins -- shellfish is not kosher and is not permissible on our premises.

The rabbi is the final authority on all questions of kashrut and its observance at TBI.

Catering and Linens: The synagogue does not have enough matching linens for a full luncheon/reception. Caterers will often supply linens as part of their service; check if you need this. This is often an expensive element in the whole event. You may want to brainstorm with other families as to how you might save money in this area. Make sure you give the Caterer Handout in the back of this handbook to your caterer to help them use our kitchen properly and comfortably.

Photographs

Photographs may not be taken in or on the grounds of our synagogue during Shabbat and b'nai mitzvah ceremonies. Arrangements can be made to have photographs taken of family and friends during the dress rehearsal. Contact the main office to arrange a photography time with the rabbi.

Flowers

Flowers can be delivered on the Friday before the bar/bat mitzvah. The office closes early on Fridays, so please make sure that they are delivered no later than 12:30 PM. Because many of our congregants have a strong reaction to fragrant lilies, we ask that these not be in your floral arrangements.

Left-over Food and Flowers

Please make arrangements ahead of time to handle leftover food and flowers. Food is very welcome at the First Place Family Center (541-342-7728) at 1995 Amazon or at Food for Lane County (541-343-2822) at 770 Bailey Hill Rd or at WomenSpace (541-485-8232). Flowers may remain in the sanctuary for the community to enjoy, taken with you, or donated as you see fit.

Children

Please note that the Family Room of the sanctuary is not intended as a free play room for roaming kids but a place for adults caring for kids to still feel connected to the service. If you suspect that there will be a large number of young children attending the service (Friday night or Saturday), it would be excellent to provide child care.

Volunteer Greeters

Each b'nai mitzvah family supports the other families in the class by serving as a greeter at two other b'nai mitzvah services. Your responsibilities on those mornings include greeting people as they enter the sanctuary and setting up kiddush.

Greeting: Greeters are the face of TBI to the people who walk through our door, so it is of great importance that you convey a warm welcome and de-mystify the complexities of a Jewish service and house of worship for newcomers. The following are suggestions for effective greeting:

- Wear a name tag.
- Say “Welcome” in English, and ask if they have been here before.
 - If they say they have, then wish them Shabbat Shalom, hand them the two books (red *siddur* (prayer book) and blue *chumash* (Torah book)) and offer head coverings.
 - If they say they have not been here before:
 - Say, “Shabbat shalom,” give them the books, explaining the difference between them, and offer head coverings, saying something like, “here’s a kippa/yarmulke if you’d like to wear one.” (They don’t have to wear one.)
 - You might point out the coat closet and other features of our building (such as the family room if they have young children) that would be helpful.
 - Let them know they may sit anywhere, but ask them to wait to find their seats if the congregation is standing in prayer at the time.

- It is useful to prepare a stack of books - in pairs - on top of the book cabinet, rather than reach for a single book each time a new person comes in. Often there is quite a crush at one time, and this saves stress and allows entry to flow smoothly.
- It is ideal to have 2 people doing the greeting, from about 9:15 until the beginning of the Amidah, at which point it is fine to leave remaining books stacked in pairs on the cabinet and hope late-comers (who are usually our members) can help themselves.

Preparing kiddush for after the service: Near the end of the morning service:

- Assess approximately how many people are in the service so you know what's needed.
- Pour grape juice and wine in the small portion wine cups and put on labeled trays.
 - On a Shabbat morning with a bar/bat mitzvah, the juice and sweet wine are provided by the family of the bar/bat mitzvah.
 - On a Shabbat morning with no b'nai mitzvah, the juice and sweet wine are provided by TBI.
- Put out the challah on a platter, covered and with a salt shaker. There should be two challahs remaining from Friday night service. (The volunteers who provided the oneg on Friday night picked up four donated challahs from Barry's. Two are used on Friday night and two on Saturday morning.) Sometimes a b'nai mitzvah family will anticipate a larger crowd and will provide more challah to put out. If so, they should tell you.
- Set up the hand-washing station. This includes a basin/large bowl, the two-handled cup, a pitcher of additional water, and a hand towel.

Kiddush Cup Gifts

It is a TBI tradition, for each family of the b'nai mitzvah class to purchase a kiddush cup. This cup is then "presented" as a gift to a b'nai mitzvah student during his/her service. During the students' 6th grade year, the class parent (or co-parents) will contact the families with several kiddush cup options. The families agree on a price and choose a kiddush cup together. The cup is typically ordered through the gift shop for convenience. Each family is responsible for purchasing only one cup. Each student will present one cup to a b'nai mitzvah student at his/her service. Typically the most recent student to be bar/bat mitzvah is the one to present the cup to the new bar/bat mitzvah in the service. Even though your family is only purchasing one kiddush cup, this is considered in lieu of gift-giving for all of the students. With this cup, the students all receive a special ritual object to which they share as a class, and it relieves the pressure to compete or match with gift-giving.

Digital Streaming

TBI is able to provide DVDs and live streaming of our services. Please contact Dan Weber in the office for details and pricing.

Other Details

- Smoking is not permitted in the synagogue or on the grounds at any time.
- Cell phones and pagers need to be turned off inside the synagogue on Saturdays.
- Please remind guests that the *siddurim* (prayer books) and Pentateuch are sacred texts and should not be placed on the floor.
- Guests should also be reminded to arrive promptly at the start of the service.
- Please remind those who will be called to the Torah that it is our custom at TBI for all Jews coming up for an aliyah to wear a tallit, and for all honorees to wear a head-covering.

**CORE PRINCIPLES of TEMPLE BETH ISRAEL'S
ETHICAL KASHRUT COMMITMENT:
SUSTAINABILITY, ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND JUSTICE**

Temple Beth Israel community's ethic for environmental stewardship and justice are derived from both traditional and contemporary Jewish principles:

Tikkun Olam - Stewardship: The diversity of life is sacred and should be protected because of its intrinsic value and the inter-connectivity of nature and humans. Humankind's unique place in the natural order is to safeguard ecological systems so that the diversity of life can thrive. In this way we are working to repair the world.

Tzedek S'vivati - Environmental Justice: All people have the right to live, work, study, and play in environments free of dangerous air, water, or land pollution.

Bal Tashchit - Responsibility to Future Generations: Humankind has a solemn obligation to future generations to live within the ecological limits of the earth and not to waste our resources.

Tza'ar Ba'alei Chayyim - Prevention of Harm: Our actions should cautiously and prudently err in favor of protecting the life and health of humans and animals.

Tovat H'Klal - The Common Good: TBI has an obligation both to make decisions in the interest of the common good, and take the worth of the common good into account when doing economic analysis of policies and decisions.

Mitzvot - Moral Leadership: As environmental issues are ethical matters of personal and community responsibility TBI should take a leadership role in protecting the local environment and all creation. "Justice, Justice you shall pursue."

"When the Holy One created the first human beings, God led them around the Garden of Eden and said; "Look at my works! See how beautiful they are, how excellent! For your sake I created them all. See to it that you do not spoil or destroy My world – for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you."

Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:13

In keeping with our principles of Ethical Kashrut, we make a commitment to environmental stewardship through our actions. As a congregation, we strive to achieve excellent maintenance of the TBI synagogue facility and promote everyone's right to a healthy, quality environment now and for future generations. TBI will adopt Ethical Kashrut guidelines for our community and encourage all individuals, households and organizations to adopt personal and community values that preserve and conserve the environment.

Through our direct actions, TBI will:

- **Conserve Resources:** Maximize our opportunities to reuse, recycle and compost.
- **Sustainable Purchasing:** Prioritize purchasing products that are repairable, reusable and long lasting.
- **Reduce Toxicity Exposure:** Purchase products with ingredients that are known or suspected carcinogens, neurological toxicants or endocrine disruptors.
- **Achieve Energy Independence:** Adopt policies which reduce reliance on fossil fuels.
- **Buy Local and Regional:** When possible, support local and regional farmers, artists, businesses and manufacturing.
- **Sustainable Landscaping:** Promote sustainable landscaping practices.

Special areas of attention for celebrations

TBI is committed to our goal of conserving resources and reducing waste that goes into the landfill.

We seek to maximize our opportunities to reuse, recycle and compost.

- **Compost:**
 - When preparing food or cleaning up, compost all vegetables, fruit, napkins, and other non-dairy food products in the compost bin.
 - Use the green bio-degradable bags in a trash can to gather the compost.
 - Deposit the bagged compost into the Sanipac gray “yard waste” bin.
- **Waste and Recycling:**
 - Recycle PAPER, ALUM, GLASS, METAL in recycling receptacles
 - No STYROFOAM
- **Food Purchasing:** Whenever possible . . .
 - Buy Organic
 - Buy Fair Trade
 - Buy Local
- **Dishes**
 - It is the intention of the community to use TBI dishes and flatware. Please avoid the use of paper plates and plastic ware. Make sure you instruct your kitchen team how to use the dish sanitizer - it is easy and fast!
 - If paper goods must be used, please purchase compostable, and/or post-consumer 100% recycled. Compostable plates, napkins and cups can be purchased - make sure you instruct your kitchen team to compost these items in the Sanipac gray “yard waste” bin and do not put them into the trash.

B'nai Mitzvah Event Planning **Community Resources and Contacts**

These businesses and individuals that are starred (*) contribute to Temple Beth Israel by advertising in our publications, making donations to the auction and other fundraisers, participating as members or supporting special events and programs. Please consider using one of these "friends of TBI" for your special event.

Invitations

- *InstaPrint 541-343-2679
- Kinkos 541-344-3555
- Paper Plus 541-345-3223

Photographers:

- *Peter Chapman 541-343-5273
- *Northwest Exposure 541-654-1921

Accommodations

(Tip: Check with the Chamber of Commerce for big city events that may be occurring on the same weekend as your bar/bat mitzvah. This may affect availability of hotel rooms and party venues. Remember the b'nai mitzvah "season" occurs during peak time for graduations, weddings and major sporting events.)

Hotels/Motels

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|--|
| • Hilton | 541-342-2000 | 66 East 6 th Avenue, Eugene |
| • Valley River Inn | 541-687-0123 | 1000 Valley River Way, Eugene |
| • La Quinta | 541-344-8335 | 155 Day Island Road, Eugene |
| • Phoenix Inn | 541-344-0001 | 850 Franklin Blvd., Eugene |
| • Best Western GreenTree Inn | 541-485-2727 | 1759 Franklin Blvd., Eugene |
| • Marriott Residence Inn | 541-726-2121 | 15 Beltline, Springfield |
| • Best Western New Oregon | 541-683-3669 | 1655 Franklin Blvd., Eugene |
| • Shilo Inn | 800-222-2244 | 3350 Gateway Blvd., Springfield |

Bed & Breakfast Inns

- | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| • The Oval Door | 541-683-3160 | 988 Lawrence, Eugene |
| • The Campbell House | 541-343-1119 | 252 Pearl St., Eugene |
| • Secret Garden | 541-484-6755 | 1910 University St., Eugene |
| • Excelsior Inn Ristorante | 541-342-6963 | 754 East 13 th St., Eugene |

Party Venues

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| • Temple Beth Israel | 541-485-7218 | • Hilyard Community Center | 541-682-5311 |
| • Downtown Athletic Club | 541-484-4011 | • Studio One at the Hult Center | 541-344-5777 |
| • Hilton Hotel | 541-342-2000 | • Laurelwood Golf Course | 541-687-5321 |
| • Valley River Inn | 541-687-0123 | • Dorris Ranch | 541-736-4544 |
| • The Campbell House | 541-343-1119 | • Petersen Barn Community Ctr. | 541-682-5521 |
| • Campbell Community Center | 541-343-1119 | • Willamalane Activity Center | 541-736-4444 |
| • Amazon Community Center | 541-682-5373 | | |

Caterers

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|
| • Oakway Catering | 541-343-7432 | • Marche | 541-342-3612 |
| • *Ann Schar | 541-343-0553 | • *Bagel Sphere | 541-341-1335 |
| • Cravings | 541-343-7933 | • Brindiamo Catering | 541-342-6963 |
| • *Holy Cow Vegetarian Foods | 541-953-5649 | | |
| • Oregon Electric Station | 541-342-1932 | | |
| • Ambrosia Catering | 541-342-4141 | | |

Entertainment

- Rob Tobias
- The Klezmonauts

Flowers

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------|
| • *Rhythm and Blooms | 541-485-0985 |
| • *Dandelions | 541-485-1261 |
| • Passion Flower | 541-344-3857 |
| • *Jewel Nelson | 541-344-0913 |

Linens

- Parties to Go 541-485-5587 (You can get full-service party rental)

Section 4

D'var Torah

- Picking Your Parasha
- Selecting Aliyot
- Exploring Your Torah Portion
 - Other Resources
- Responding to the Parasha
 - Preparing the D'var Torah
 - Alternatives to the D'var Torah
- Torah Portions Highlights

Picking Your Parasha

A big part of choosing dates for b'nai mitzvah is about connecting with the Torah portion. One can make a good argument that there's no such thing as a bad parasha; there's something to be explored in each of them, but some portions are inherently more or less appealing, especially to adolescent students. So, when you are requesting b'nai mitzvah dates, consider what parshiot correspond to the calendar.

A good resource for this task is www.hebcal.com. Click on "Torah Readings," and then click on the Hebrew year for the diaspora. The website shows you what Torah portions correspond with the common calendar. (Hint: Have trouble remembering the Hebrew year? The last digit corresponds nicely with the last digit in the common calendar from January 1st through Rosh Hashanah. For example, June 2016 and 5776. From Rosh Hashanah until secular New Year, the Jewish calendar is one digit higher: October 2016=5777.)

You can also work backwards, thinking about themes and then choosing dates that correspond to the parshiot. Just remember that priority will go by birthdays. Use the Torah Portions Highlights at the back of this section to explore parshiot.

Please note: B'nai mitzvah at TBI typically happen as part of the regular Shacharit (Saturday morning) service. Occasionally a family decides to have one as part of a special afternoon service instead, in which case the Torah portion is the one for **the following week, not** the one shown on the calendar for that Shabbat.

Students will be assigned dates for b'nai mitzvah as part of the b'nai mitzvah track registration process as described on page 8 in the Program Expectations section.

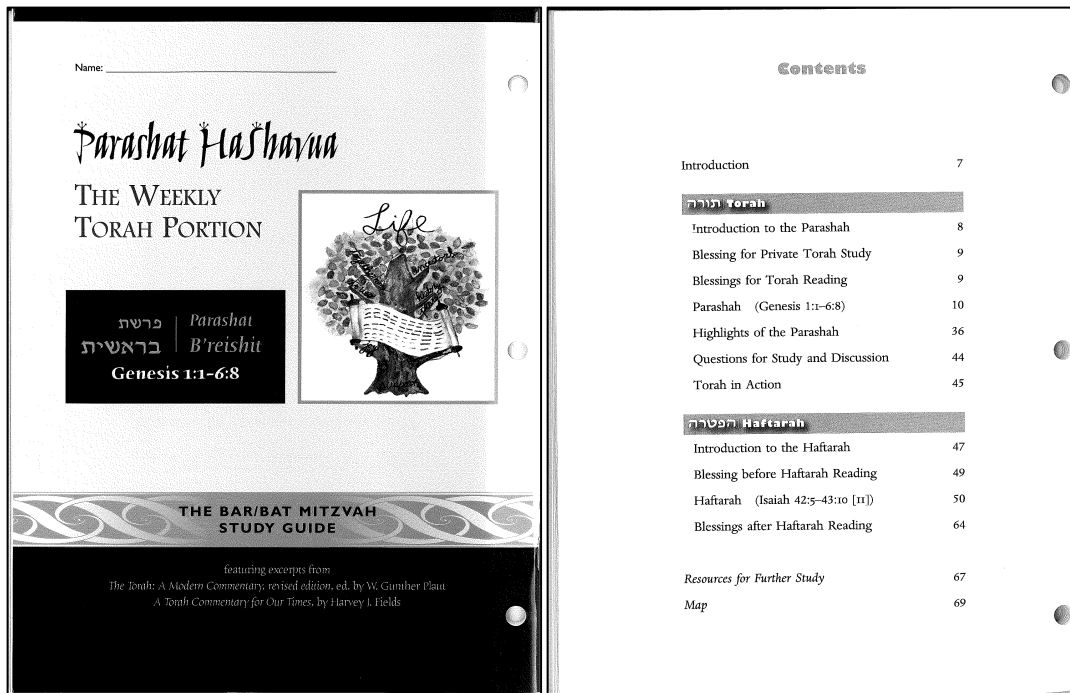
Selecting Aliyot

Though many people are accustomed to the terms Cohen, Levi, Israel, and Maftir to distinguish the different aliyot of the parasha, that is not Reconstructionist or TBI practice. We encourage the student and family to work with the mentor and rabbi to find their connection to the text when identifying aliyot.

Exploring Your Torah Portion

Your Workbook

Once you know your parasha, you'll want to get very familiar with it. Talmud Torah will provide you with a booklet for exploring your portion. We encourage you to make an appointment to come in (parent(s) and child) and pick it up from Gretchen as soon as you are ready. It will be yours to keep. You are responsible for it. It's for learning, and so, you may write in it and personalize it, but we also ask that you also remember that it's a piece of Torah and so therefore a sacred object. It needs to be handled respectfully. Don't lose it, don't throw it in the sports practice bag, don't let it ride around on the bottom of the car, etc. It looks like this:



Consider setting aside 4 family study sessions to explore the portion. Here are some recommended strategies:

- **1st study session:** As a family, sit down together and read **the entire portion** aloud in English. (Please note, the entire portion in the sample parasha workbook above is Genesis 1:1-6:8, not just the first readings within the parasha.) Allow yourself plenty of time for this activity. It can take at least a half-hour. Keep the following in mind:
 - Don't worry about the commentary to the right of the translation during your first read.
 - Be patient. If you don't understand something, or if you hit a list of "begats," keep reading all the way through.
 - Same advice applies if you hit a piece of text that contains something that seems disturbing to you or your student at first glance. Be prepared for some very morally complex and at times adult topics of discussion. Remember, among the Torah's many stories, ideas, laws, and poems, there are included instances of violence, sex, discussions of bodily functions, and war. Be prepared to offer parental guidance if these topics appear in your student's Torah portion.
 - It's important that you all read through the entire portion at least once, so you know its terrain. Discuss your initial reaction to the piece. What stuck out to you? What questions came up? What insights?
 - Help your student keep a notebook with questions and insights to bring to the first meeting with one of the TBI rabbis. You may want to make sure that your student has all of their materials well organized, if keeping papers is a challenge for them.
 - Expect to discover something exciting. Go into this with a sense of awe for the sacredness of this ancient and mysterious text which has provided endless insight to so many generations. Go in expecting to have some light bulbs flash for you personally, and model that attitude for your student. Exploring the Torah is an adventure, and you never know what will grab hold of your imagination and set you thinking about some aspect of life in a new way as you encounter its nooks and crannies.
 - Don't be easily discouraged or overwhelmed. A first reading only needs to acquaint you all with what's in the Torah portion and generate some initial questions. Your student

will get to discuss the text with Rabbi Ruhi Sophia. Also, don't worry if you're not a Torah scholar. While there's certainly a wonderful depth of insight that comes with years of Torah study, there's also a freshness of perspective that comes with looking at the text from the place in which you stand in all your uniqueness. You and your student aren't looking for "the right answer" or idea – you're looking to engage the text and help your student think about what the text may have to teach all of us today.

- **2nd study session:** Come back together and explore the 'Highlights' and "Questions for Study and Discussion" as a family. Add insight and questions to your notebook.
- **3rd study session:** Reread the translation of the text again, this time stopping along the way to read and discuss the accompanying commentary. Add insight and questions to your notebook.
- **4th study session:** Read the English translation of the Haftarah together and discuss how you think it relates to the Torah portion. Add insight and questions to your notebook.

Other Resources

In addition to the Weekly Torah Portion booklet you will receive, there are many other resources to help you explore your parasha. TBI recommends looking to myjewishlearning.com. Hover over "Texts" in the menu bar at the top and then click on "Weekly Torah Portion." You can also find excellent, insightful resources on the Jewish Reconstructionist website. They have d'verei Torah organized by parasha at jewishrecon.org/divrei-torah as well as many other resources if you dig around on the website.

As with any other kind of research, if your student is inspired by the words and thoughts of others, credit needs to be given to the original sources.

Responding to the Parasha

There are many possible ways that students could demonstrate their familiarity with and insight about their Torah portion. The most common approach is to give a d'var Torah during the service, but it is not the only approach. See some alternative ideas at the end of this section.

Preparing the D'var Torah

The following concepts and organizational strategies were created by Rabbi Richard J. Israel, and found in his book, *The Kosher Pig and Other Curiosities of Modern Jewish Life* and modified for our use. Students are encouraged to consider their Torah portion through one of these lenses:

The Microscope: The student builds a d'var Torah around one small detail within the Torah portion – a single verse, character, event or idea. This can be helpful if they have a portion that has many different laws or many different narrative bits that aren't so easily connected. They might ask the rabbi to provide them with some midrash or rabbinic commentary, or some contemporary commentary. The student will typically formulate some questions, and connect this one small item to a present-day situation or a personal experience.

The Airplane: This is the opposite of the microscope. The student focuses on the broad overview of what goes on in your Torah portion, and identifies a theme that is present in most or the entire Torah portion. A theme can be an idea, like "moral courage," or a character trait, like "loss of

faith.” A theme can also be an action, like “wandering” or “miscommunicating.” Students may receive help identifying themes, but it’s important that they choose the theme they want to focus on. Rabbi Ruhi Sophia can help provide further questions and related resources to help the student expand on the theme.

The Diving Board: The student begins with something in the Torah portion and bounces off of it like a diving board into a connected issue of deep interest to him or her. One bat mitzvah took a single verse from her Torah portion – commanding the Israelites to farm the land for 6 years but let it lie fallow every 7th year – and bounced off of it like a diving board into a 10 minute talk on environmental concerns. It’s especially good to tie the end of the talk back into the Torah portion.

The Biblical Personality: If the Torah portion has an interesting or famous character in it, the student can build their d’var torah around a discussion of what that person did in the Torah narrative in general, how ancient or modern commentators have understood this person’s impact, and what the student’s own take is on the higher meaning we can learn from studying the life of this person. This can also work for less famous characters. Rabbi Ruhi Sophia can seek out midrash or other commentaries from the tradition on the character to provide the student with material. As with the other formats, we’ll want to hear the student’s take on what we can learn from studying this character today.

It is most common to arrange the d’var Torah beginning with a summary of the portion, moving into thoughts and comments on specific sections or ideas (see above), with commentaries and quotes to help make a point or answer questions. It is very important not to just say what others have already said, but to also mix in each student’s own thoughts and experiences. Remember, people want to hear the student’s viewpoints and hear about why what they learned matters to them. Personal stories and vignettes can add to the power of the d’var.

Students should feel free to be creative in writing their d’var, both in substance and style. For example, while many people start with a summary, beginning with a story from the student’s own life can be a powerful way to get the listener’s attention. Bringing in poems, readings, or even asking questions of the congregation can also be options. Make the d’var yours!

Alternatives to the D’var Torah

Not every student finds words to be the best way to express him or herself. While we believe that the bar/bat mitzvah experience is a rite of passage that by definition is supposed to challenge adolescents, we also want to give students an opportunity to shine in a way that is uniquely them. Instead of writing a d’var Torah, we may have students who write a song or poetry related to the Torah portion, create and share a relevant work of art, facilitate a group experience that helps congregants explore the portion, or some other alternative idea. Please talk to Rabbi Ruhi Sophia if you would like to take an alternative approach. It doesn’t mean less work, just a better way to show how you personally connect to the parasha.

Torah Portions Highlights

with summary drawn from Harvey J. Fields book, *A Torah Commentary for Our Times*, and other sources

Bereshit - Genesis	
The world is created. The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are introduced. Jacob and his sons travel to Egypt where Jacob blesses his sons before his death.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parashat Bereshit (1:1-6:8): The world is created in six days. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ God's creation is a blessing ○ Humanity is responsible for the world ○ Adam's and Eve's expulsion from Eden ○ Human beings are responsible for one another ● Parashat Noach (6:9-11:32): A flood destroys the world but God's rainbow promises that the world will never again be destroyed in its entirety. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One righteous person can save the world ○ Ingredients for destroying a world ○ Sources of human unhappiness and confusion ● Parashat Lekh-Lekha (12:1-17:27): Abraham leaves Mesopotamia for the Promised Land. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Defining "leadership" ○ The importance of honesty ○ How to settle disagreements ○ The mitzvah of rescuing captives ○ Circumcision in Jewish tradition ● Parashat Vayera (18:1-22:24): Abraham welcomes three angels into his tent and learns that his wife Sarah will give birth to a son. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The art of hospitality ○ Consequences of injustice ○ "Loyalty" to God ● Parashat Chayei Sarah (23:1-25:18): Abraham's servant finds a suitable wife, Rebecca, for Abraham's son Isaac. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jewish mourning practices ○ Purchasing at the full price ○ Defining "beauty" ○ The meaning of "love" ● Parashat Toledot (25:19-28:9): Esau and Jacob are born. Isaac blesses Jacob. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jealousy between siblings ○ Stereotypes and prejudices ○ Favoritism by parents ○ Inter-marriage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vayetze (28:10-32:3): God appears to Jacob in a dream. Jacob works fourteen years and marries Leah and Rachel. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The role of angels in the Torah ○ Proper and improper prayer ○ Dealing with dishonest people ● Parashat Vayishlach (32:4-36:43): Jacob and Esau reunite after twenty years. Rachel dies and is buried in Bethlehem. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Confronting "power" ○ Wrestling with ourselves ○ Responding to rape ● Parashat Vayeshev (37:1-40:23): Joseph's brothers strip him of his coat of many colors and throw him into a pit. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hostility between siblings ○ Delivering what is promised ○ Embarrassing others ○ Measuring loyalty and success ● Parashat Miktetz (41:1-44:17): Joseph successfully interprets Pharaoh's dreams and is appointed viceroy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interpreting dreams ○ Choosing between revenge and caring ○ Choosing between death and survival ● Parashat Vayigash (44:18-47:27): Joseph reveals himself to his brothers who are dumbfounded. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Speaking out for justice ○ Achieving reconciliation between enemies ○ Fearing the stranger ○ Economic planning and justice ● Parashat Vayechei (47:28-50:26): Jacob blesses his sons and Joseph dies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jewish burial practices ○ Making "honest" evaluations ○ Defining "leadership" ○ Lying in the cause of peace

<p>Shemot - Exodus : The enslaved Israelites are freed from Egypt by Moses who receives the Ten Commandments. The Israelites build the tabernacle.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parashat Shemot (1:1-6:1): Moses is saved by Pharaoh's daughter. God appears to Moses at the burning bush. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pharaoh's war against the Jews ○ When is civil disobedience justified? ○ Moses: fear, courage, self-doubt, or humility? ● Parashat Va'era (6:2-9:35) God brings plagues upon the Egyptians but Pharaoh's heart hardens and he refuses to let the Israelites go. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why are there so many names for one God? ○ The "hardening" of Pharaoh's heart ● Parashat Bo (10:1-13:16): Egyptian firstborn children are slain by God. The Israelites hastily leave Egypt and bake matzah from unleavened dough. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Were the Israelites justified in taking gold and silver from the Egyptians? ○ Origins of Pesach celebration ● Parashat Beshalach (13:17-17:16): The waters of the Red Sea divide to make a path for the Israelites. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Was Israel's escape from Egypt a "miracle"? ○ Why are there so many complaints against Moses and God? ○ Amalek's attack upon the Israelites ● Parashat Yitro (18:1-20:23): Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, advises him to appoint judges to ease his burden. Moses receives the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The burden of leadership ○ What happened at Mount Sinai? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parashat Mishpatim (21:1-24:18): Moses instructs the Israelites in the Law. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ethical and ritual mitzvot ○ Caring for the stranger ● Parashat Terumah (25:1-27:19): The tabernacle is constructed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The sanctuary in the Jewish tradition ○ "Exactly as I show you...so shall you make it?" ● Parashat Tetzaveh (27:20-30:10): Aaron and his sons are put in charge of the menorah. The priestly garments are described in great detail. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is the ner tamid (eternal light)? ○ Priestly clothing: fashionable style or significant symbol? ● Parashat Ki Tissa (30:11-34:35): The Israelites build a golden calf and when Moses sees it he shatters the tablets containing the Ten Commandments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why did the Israelites build a golden calf? ○ Moses protests on behalf of his people ● * Parashat Vayakhel - Pekudei (35:1-40:38): The people bring an array of gifts for the tabernacle until they are told to stop. The cloud of glory covers the completed tabernacle as the Israelites stand in the distance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Sabbath is for celebration and rest, not for work! ○ The obligation of giving charity, tzedakkah ○ Accountability of public officials

<p>Vayikra - Leviticus The priestly code; the rules pertaining to sacrifices, diet, and morality; the Land of Israel; and festivals are discussed.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parashat Vayikra (1:1-5:26): God reveals the sacrificial laws. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The meaning fo sacrifice and prayer ○ Defining "sin" in Jewish tradition ● Parashat Tzav (6:1-8:36): Moses anoints Aaron and his sons as priests. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Finding meaning in obsolete traditions ○ The holiness of blood ● Parashat Shemini (9:1-11:47): Laws describing kosher and nonkosher animals are given. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What did Nadab and Abihu do wrong? ○ Different views on kashrut ● * Parashat Tazria - Metzora (12:1-15:33): Cleanliness and uncleanness are defined in relation to childbirth and leprosy. The laws for the purification of the leper after he has healed are discussed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Biblical medicine, ritual, and ethics ○ The sin of slandering others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● * Parashat Aharei Mot - Kedoshim (16:1-20:27): Aaron's sons die and he chooses a goat and a scapegoat. More laws are set forth, including, "Love your neighbor as yourself." <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Seeking meaning for the strange ritual of scapegoat ○ Defining "holiness" in Jewish tradition ○ Can we love others as ourselves? ● Parashat Emor (21:1-24:23): Festival seasons are described in detail. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Jewish festivals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pesach ▪ Shavuot ▪ Sukkot ○ Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth: about Lex Talionis ● Parashat B'har - B'hukotai (25:1-27:34): The sabbatical and jubilee years are discussed as well as the punishment for rejecting God's covenant. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lessons from the sabbatical and Jubilee years ○ The Mitzvah for caring for the poor ○ Rewards and punishments: the consequences of our choices

Bamidbar - Numbers

The census and more statutes and laws are discussed. The Hebrews continue their journey to Canaan through the desert.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Parashat B'midbar (1:1-4:20): The Israelites' encampments during their journeys through the desert are described.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Jewish history and the desert○ Counting the Israelites● Parashat Naso (4:21-7:89): Regulations concerning Nazirites and the threefold priestly benediction.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The suspected adulterous○ The Nazirite: abstention and holiness● Parashat Beha'alotecha (8:1-12:16): The <i>menorah</i> is kindled and seventy elders are delegated to serve under Moses.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Murmuring and complaints○ The protest against Moses by Miriam and Aaron● Parashat Shelach (13:1-15:4): Twelve spies are dispatched to survey the land of Canaan and two of the spies return with a positive report.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The sin of the spies○ The meaning of wearing tzitzit, "fringes"● Parashat Korah (16:1-18:32): Korah refuses to accept the leadership of Moses and Aaron so he and his assembly are killed by an earthquake.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Korah's rebellion: a deadly dispute○ Magic and miracles in Jewish tradition | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Parashat Chukat (19:1-22:1): The laws regarding the red heifer are enumerated. Moses strikes the rock and water gushes forth.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The parah adumah: the ritual and its meaning○ The sin and the punishment of Moses and Aaron● Parashat Balak (22:2-25:9): Balak, king of Moab, sends Bilaam to curse the Israelites, but Bilaam gives his blessing to them instead.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Bilaam's strange book○ Decoding Bilaam's poetry and blessings● Parashat Pinhas (25:10-30:1): the daughters of Zelophehad are given their father's inheritance and Moses chooses Joshua as his successor.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Pinhas: dangerous fanatic or hero of faith○ Women's rights: what does the Torah say?● Parashat Matot - Mas'ey (30:2-36:13): Moses informs the tribal heads regarding the laws of vowing. There is a detailed account of the various way stations on the Israelites' route to the Promised Land. References are made to the cities of refuge.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Understanding the request of the Reubenites and Gadites○ Cities of refuge: justice for unintentional homicide |
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Devarim - Deuteronomy

Moses addresses the children of Israel and presents them with a recapitulation of the laws and some warnings.

- **Parashat Devarim** (1:1-3:22): Moses explains and interprets the law to the people.
 - Decide justly in all cases
 - The spies: another view
- **Parashat Va'etchanan** (3:23-7:11): The Ten Commandments are repeated with slight variations. The cities of refuge are mentioned again. The first section of the Shema is begun with, "You shall love the Lord your God."
 - The meaning of the Shema
 - Is it possible to love God?
- **Parashat Ekev** (7:12-11:25): The Shema continues with the second paragraph, which deals with the theme of reward and punishment.
 - The dangers of arrogance
 - Cutting away thickness about her heart
- **Parashat Re'eh** (11:26-16:17): Moses continues his address, telling the people that obedience will bring them blessing, whereas disobedience will bring them curses.
 - Regulations for slaughtering animals and eating meat
 - Israel's role as a "treasured people"
- **Parashat Shoftim** (16:18-21:9): Moses warns the people against idolatry and reminds them of the importance of pursuing justice.
 - "Justice, justice shall you pursue"
 - Caring for the environment
- **Parashat Ki Tetze** (21:10-25:19): Moses reviews a variety of laws intended to strengthen family life and human decency in Israel. Those laws refer to lost property, the educational responsibility of parents to their children, and kindness to animals, among other things.
 - You shall not remain indifferent
 - Marriage and divorce
- **Parashat Ki Tavo** (26:1-29:8): The laws of tithing and first fruits are discussed.
 - The drama and the meaning of reliving history
 - Blessings and curses
- ***Parashat Nitzavim - Vayelech** (29:9-31:30): Moses continues his farewell speech and God tells the people to choose life. Joshua is appointed successor to Moses who completes the writing of the Torah.
 - The meaning of teshuvah, "repentance"
 - Passing on leadership
- **Parashat Ha'azinu** (32:1-52): Moses' farewell song—a beautiful poem in which he calls upon heaven and earth to witness God's dependability.
 - If God's ways are just, what about evil?
 - The importance of history
- **Parashat Vezot Ha'berachah**
 - The significance of the Torah
 - Moses: prophet and leader

* This is one of the several designated Torah portions that, depending upon the numbers of Shabbats in the year, is either read as two separate portions or combined to assure the reading of the entire Torah.

Torah Portions for 2017-2018

Please remember, that just because the date is listed here, doesn't mean it will be an option.

October 2017

14 Bereshit
21 Noach
28 Lech-Lecha

November 2017

4 Vayera
11 Chayei Sara
18 Toldot
25 Vayetzei

December 2017

2 Vayishlach
9 Vayeshev
16 Miketz
23 Vayigash
30 Vayechi

January 2018

6 Shemot
13 Vaera
20 Bo
27 Beshalach

February 2018

3 Yitro
10 Mishpatim
17 Terumah
24 Tetzaveh

March 2018

3 Ki Tisa
10 Vayakhel-Pekudei
17 Vayikra
24 Tzav
31 - *Passover*-

April 2018

7 -*Passover*-
14 Shmini
21 Tazria-Metzora
28 Achrei Mot-Kedoshim

May 2018

5 Emor
12 Behar-Bechukotai
19 Bamidbar
26 Nasso

June 2018

2 Beha'alotcha
9 Sh'lach
16 Korach
23 Chukat
30 Balak

July 2018

7 Pinchas
14 Matot-Masei
21 Devarim
28 Vaetchanan

August 2018

4 Eikev
11 Re'eh
18 Shoftim
25 Ki Teitzei

September 2018

1 Ki Tavo
8 Nitzavim
15 Vayeilech
22 Ha'Azinu (*Rosh Hashana*)

September 2018

29 -*Sukkot*--

October 2018

6 Bereshit
13 Noach
20 Lech-Lecha
27 Vayera

November 2018

3 Chayei Sara
10 Toldot
17 Vayetzei
24 Vayishlach

December 2018

1 Vayeshev
8 Miketz
15 Vayigash
22 Vayechi
29 Shemot

Section 5

Tefilah & Minhag

(Prayers and Customs)

- Prayers and Blessings
- Distribution of Honors
 - Jewish and Non-Jewish Honorees
 - Presentation of the Tallit
 - Passing Down the Torah
 - Aliyot
 - Parents Blessing
 - Hagbah and Gelilah
 - Opening and Closing the Ark
 - Special Readings and Prayers

Prayers and Blessings

In the fall of 6th grade, b'nai mitzvah students will receive a student prayer book and a CD of the prayers and blessings for practicing. Additionally, you can always access both the visual blessings and the sound files at www.tbieugene.org/page/b-nai-mitzvah. We recommend carrying a CD in the car with you and/or putting the sound files on an iPod.

Please have students treat their student prayer book as a sacred object, just like their parasha workbook. They are invited to write on it and personalize it, but need to keep track of it and treat it with the same significance they would our regular siddurim.

Distribution of Honors

Shabbat morning services offer opportunities for participation in many ways, including presenting the tallit, opening the ark, passing the Torah, being called to the Torah, lifting (hagbah) and dressing (gelillah) and returning the Torah to the ark, as well as readings and blessings. Such participation is considered an honor the b'nai mitzvah family enjoys the privilege of selecting most of the honorees for these acts. There is a B'nai Mitzvah Honors form in the back of this binder to assist you in your planning. You can also talk to the rabbi or mentor with questions during your family meetings.

Jewish and Non-Jewish Honorees

TBI strives to create a balance between the tribal and the universal dimensions of Judaism in its ritual practices during religious services. Our intention is to honor and deeply appreciate the commitment of all members of our community, Jewish and non-Jewish, and to honor the unique gifts and blessings that all parents bring to the b'nai mitzvah process. We desire to have an inclusive community that welcomes and affirms differences within and among our member households, while at the same time honors and preserves certain ritual or theological commitments that distinguish the Jewish path from other faith traditions. Ritual distinctions sometimes create points of difference in the roles people take on in a religious service based on the religious identity each individual is affirming at the time of the service. (This is not unlike the way in which a non-Catholic might be asked to refrain from taking Communion at a Mass, even though s/he might play other deeply meaningful roles in a service being held in a Catholic church.) As a result, some ritual honors are open to Jews and non-Jews, and certain honors are only open to Jews. The following pages can help explain some of the distinctions, and please don't hesitate to ask the rabbi questions about TBI practices.

Presentation of the Tallit

Near the beginning of the service, the tallit (prayer shawl) is presented to the bar/bat mitzvah. It is common to have a grandparent do this, although any family member or friend can have this honor. The presenter may offer a few words or a blessing at this time (**no more than a minute**). The bar/bat mitzvah will say the blessing for putting on the tallit.

Passing Down the Torah

After the Torah is taken out of the ark, it is physically handed down through the generations to the bar/bat mitzvah. This ritual passing down of the Jewish tradition, is usually done with the student's family, beginning with the grandparents and then the parents and finally the bar/bat mitzvah, but could be done with other significant people who have "passed down" Judaism to the young person. The

Torah is only held by the Jewish participants, although non-Jews can stand closely behind, and touching their family members, symbolically supporting the process. After the passing down of the Torah, the parents read a blessing to their child. The blessing is provided below, although parents are invited to offer one of their own after consulting with the rabbi.

Blessing for Passing Down the Torah

“AND ALL YOUR CHILDREN SHALL BE TAUGHT ABOUT GOD, AND GREAT SHALL BE THE PEACE OF YOUR CHILDREN.”

Humbly do we give thanks for this day, and for the years of growth and learning that have preceded it. Now as our child steps forward to affirm her/his commitment to the ideals and mitzvot of Judaism our/my soul is joyful, our/my mind is at peace.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׁהַחַיְנוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעְנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha olam, shehecheyanu v'kimanu, v'higianu la z'man ha zeh.

Blessed is the Eternal One, our God, ruler of the Universe, for giving us life, for sustaining us and for enabling us to reach this great day.

We pray that this day's service and experience may long remain and resonate in our child's memory. May it engrave on the tablet of her/his heart the understanding that this day initiates an entrance into full adult participation in the Jewish community, and with it a life more committed to mitzvot, to deeds of justice and kindness, to faithful membership in the household of Israel and the greater human family.

O God, make each of us a worthy example to our children. Let nothing estrange us from them and from You, the Source of all goodness and compassion. Help us, again and again to renew our attachment to the Covenant of Israel, to walk hand in hand with our child in the ways of righteousness and truth. Amen.

Aliyot/Being Called to the Torah

“Aliyah” means “going up” and is the Hebrew word used to refer to the honor a person receives when s/he is called up to the Torah. Someone going “up for an aliyah” will recite the blessings in Hebrew before and after the Torah reader leyns in Hebrew (see the next section). We have some specific practices regarding Jewish and non-Jewish participants with regards to aliyot (plural of aliyah). Briefly, this is our practice:

- All persons formally called to the Torah for an aliyah must be Jews who are familiar with the Torah blessings. Non-Jewish family members may accompany a Jewish relative who is being honored with an aliyah. The rabbi will explain the logistics of how this works, and are happy to answer questions about it.
- All Jewish recipients of an aliyah must wear a head covering and a tallit – please inform them of this expectation. Non-Jews who accompany Jewish honorees during an aliyah must wear a head covering, but not a tallit.
- Our custom at TBI is that both non-Jewish and Jewish parents stand next to the Torah scroll during one aliyah (one chanted reading from the Torah). At TBI our custom is that only Jewish parents chant these Torah blessings for reasons of ritual practice that have to do with the specific covenantal relationship expressed by Jewish faith and identity.

The text of the Torah blessings is included here as well as the student prayer book and CD. Every Jewish parent must be familiar with the Torah blessings to be able to participate in an aliyah with dignity. They're not hard to learn, and a little practice and attending services makes perfect!

Torah Blessings

These are the blessings recited by those receiving an aliyah to the Torah.

Before the Torah reading:

Reader: בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יְהוָה הַמְּבָרָךְ:
Barchu et Adonai hamvorach
(Blessed is THE INFINITE, the blessed One!)

Congregation: בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה הַמְּבָרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:
Baruch Adonai hamvorach l'olam va'ed.
(Blessed is THE INFINITE, the blessed One, now and forever!)

Reader: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר ...
Baruch ata Adonai Eloheynu Melech ha'olam, asher
(Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, ...)

..* בָּחַר-בָּנוּ מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים
bachar banu mikol ha-amim
(...who has chosen from all peoples...)

...** בָּחַר-בָּנוּ עִם כָּל-הָעַמִּים
bachar banu im kol ha-amim
(...who has chosen us along with all peoples...)

...*** קִרְבָּנוּ לְעִבּוּדְתוֹ
ker banu la'avodato
(...who has drawn us to your service...)

וְנָתַן-לָנוּ אֶת-תּוֹרָתוֹ: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה:
v'natan lanu et Torato. Baruch ata Adonai, notain ha-Torah.
(and has given us your Torah. Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, who gives the Torah.)

* *This is the historic version.*

** *This is the form of the blessing said by many at TBI.*

*** *This is the Reconstructionist blessing found in Kol Haneshama.*

After the Torah reading:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר נָתַן-לָנוּ
תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת וְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם נִטְעַ בְּתוֹכָנוּ: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה
נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה:

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheynu Melech ha'olam, asher natan lanu torat emet v'chayei olam
nota b'tocheinu. Baruch ata Adonai, notain ha-Torah.*

(Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who has given us the Torah of truth, and planted in our midst eternal life. Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, who gives the Torah.)

Parents' Blessing

Parents have an opportunity to give a special blessing to their child on the bima during the bar/bat mitzvah service. Take some time to write out a blessing that is succinct, meaningful, and personal. This is not a time for a lengthy speech remembering all the joys and challenges of parenting the bar/bat mitzvah. Parents are encouraged to do such things at post-service receptions. Given that the parent blessing is in the context of the whole community's regular Shabbat service, **it should take no more than about 2 minutes**. Here's a good sample speech:

Parent's Blessing at a Bar / Bat Mitzvah

By David Zarzycki

Today as you start your journey into the next phase of your life, we would like to send you on your way with a few blessings and wishes:

May you be blessed with good health and long life. May you be full of energy well into your old age and may your strength endure long after the belly-button revealing fashions of today have mercifully passed into oblivion. May you see a hundred fragrant springs, and may you sip your tea over the fires of a hundred cozy winters.

I know that you already have a mind of your own, my dear. I love that you stand up for what you think is right, even if, on the extremely infrequent occasion, who you are standing up to is me. May you be blessed with the wisdom to know what is important and what is not.

May you be blessed with courage: the courage to do what is right even when it is scary, difficult, inconvenient, or painful. May you bear defeat, disappointment and discouragement without losing heart, for those things will come in your life. And that may well be your greatest test of courage.

May you be blessed with compassion. May your heart go out to those who are in need. May your hands be gentle. May you be slow to anger, and quick to forgive. But may you also be uncompromising and fierce in your search for justice.

May you be blessed with a sense of humor. May you crack up and even be a little hyper on a regular basis and may laughter follow your footsteps along any path you tread, be it bitter or sweet.

May you always be aware of the wonder and the bounty that surround you, and may a sense of gratitude be your constant companion.

Finally, if you are really lucky, may you someday be blessed, as I am today ... with a daughter / son like you.

Hagbah and Gelillah

Two additional honors are hagbah and gelillah, raising and dressing the Torah. After the aliyot and the Torah readings, a final blessing is said and then the Torah is unrolled and lifted up in the air. The person lifting the Torah sits down, and the coverings are put on the Torah. After the Torah is fully “dressed” the Torah is temporarily put on the bimah in the Torah holder.

The person designated to lift the Torah should be strong enough to lift the heavy scroll (and depending on the time of year, one side will be heavier than the other). The person doing hagbah should have done it before to be familiar and comfortable with what can be an awkward, nervous-making responsibility. If not, training and practice is available at TBI if they can be at the rehearsal. If you don’t have someone comfortable doing hagbah, TBI can suggest a competent honoree. The person designated to perform gelillah (dressing the Torah) need not have any strength qualifications.

Both of these honors should be given to people who identify as Jewish. The rabbi and/or gabbayim will guide the participants through the “choreography” of this part of the service.

Opening and Closing the Ark

The ark which holds the Torah is open and closed at two times during the service-before and after the Torah readings. This honor is often a good one for younger siblings or cousins, or an older family member or friend.

Special Readings or Prayers

Additional guests can be given honors by offering readings or prayers. A prayer for peace, or the Prayer for Social Justice are common ones, although others can be chosen as long as they fit the theme of the day. Please check any readings with the rabbi before assigning them to guests. There are three possible choices from our siddur included here.

TEFILAH LAMEMSHALAH / PRAYER FOR THE COUNTRY

Sovereign of the universe, mercifully receive our prayer for our land and its government. Let your blessing pour out on this land and on all officials of this country who are occupied, in good faith, with the public needs. Instruct them from your Torah’s laws, enable them to understand your principles of justice, so that peace and tranquility, happiness and freedom, might never turn away from our land. Please, WISE ONE, God of the lifebreath of all flesh, waken your spirit within all inhabitants of our land, and plant among the peoples of different nationalities and faiths who dwell here, love and brotherhood, peace and friendship. Uproot from their hearts all hatred and enmity, all jealousy and vying for supremacy. Fulfill the yearning of all the people of our country to speak proudly in its honor. Fulfill their desire to see it become a light to all nations. Therefore, may it be your will, that our land should be a blessing to all inhabitants of the globe. Cause to dwell among all peoples friendship and freedom. And soon fulfill the vision of your prophet: “Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Let them learn no longer ways of war.” And let us say: Amen.

SOCIAL ACTION

We cannot merely pray to God to end war;
For the world was made in such a way
That we must find our own path of peace
Within ourselves and with our neighbor.

We cannot merely pray to God to root out prejudice;
For we already have eyes
With which to see the good in all people
If we would only use them rightly.

We cannot merely pray to God to end starvation;
For we already have the resources
With which to feed the entire world
If we would only use them wisely.

We cannot merely pray to God to end despair;
For we already have the power
To clear away slums and to give hope
If we would only use our power justly.

We cannot merely pray to God to end disease:
For we already have great minds
With which to search out cures and healings
If we would only use them constructively.

Therefore we pray instead
For strength, determination, and will power,
To *do* instead of merely to pray
To *become* instead of merely to wish;
That our world may be safe,
And that our lives may be blessed.

-Jack Riemer (adapted)
From p. 772 of our Shabbat siddur, *Kol Haneshemah*

Belief in God

We cannot actually picture goodness. It is not a being; it is a force, like electricity. Nobody ever actually saw electricity. We know that it exists. We can see and feel what electricity does. If we have an electric heater and connect it, we get heat. If we have an electric motor and attach it to a vehicle, we get the vehicle to move. In other words, we get to know what electricity is by what it does. In the same way, we get to know what God is by what God makes us do: when people are, so to speak, connected with God, they do good things. We call such people godly and their acts godly. Whenever this force is active, we say that God has exercised influence and power.

Belief in God, therefore, has to do...with human nature, with the way individual men and women act, with their attitudes, their ideas of what is good and what is bad, with their ideals. Belief in God has to do with our attitude toward life itself. Do we find life good? Is life worthwhile? If we believe that life is worthwhile, that it is good, that in spite of sickness and accidents, in spite of poverty and war, in spite of all the sad and difficult conditions in the world, the world is a wonderful place to live in and can be made a still better place, then we believe in God. When we believe in God, we cannot be discouraged because we believe that all the misery in the world is due, not to the fact that misery must be there, that it is a necessary part of life, but to the fact that we have not yet discovered how to do away with that misery.

-Ira Eisenstein (adapted)
From p. 773 of our Shabbat siddur, *Kol Haneshemah*

Section 6

Additional Resources

- Glossary of Hebrew B'nai Mitzvah Terms
- More Than Just a Party: Creating Meaningful *B'nai Mitzvah* by Judith Kuper Jaffe
- When Bar/Bat Mitzvah Loses Meaning by Janet Marder
- Recommended Reading: Bar/Bat Mitzvah Books for Parents and Students

Glossary of Hebrew B'nai Mitzvah Terms

Aliyah	“Ascending” to the Torah; being called up to the bimah. (Plural = <i>aliyot</i>)
Amidah	The prayer of 18 benedictions that includes these themes (among others): praise for Adonai and gratitude for all Adonai has given us.
Bar mitzvah	Literally, “son of the commandments.” Traditionally at age 13 boys become responsible for carrying out the mitzvot (commandments) of Jewish practice.
Bat mitzvah	Literally, “daughter of the commandments.” A newer tradition for girls age 12 or older (13 at TBI) with the same focus as the bar mitzvah.
Bimah	The raised platform at the front of the sanctuary from which the service is led.
B'nai mitzvah	Plural for bar or bat mitzvah.
Challah	The braided egg bread served on Shabbat.
Davvening	Praying with focus and intention.
D'var Torah	Literally “a word of Torah.” The sermon or teaching on the Torah portion. B'nai mitzvah students often prepare a talk of about 10 minutes, sharing what happens in the Torah portion and his/her take on what we can learn from it. This comes after extended study of the parasha, discussion with the rabbi, investigation of how rabbis of long ago interpreted the text and how contemporary thinkers understand it. (Plural = <i>divrei Torah</i>)
Erev Shabbat	Sabbath (Friday night) service.
Gabai	The layperson responsible for keeping things in ritual order in the synagogue and during the service. (Feminine = <i>gabbayit</i> , plural = <i>gabbayim</i>)
Haftarah	Note: This is not ‘Half-a- Torah.’ Rather, it is the weekly excerpt selected by the ancient rabbis to augment the weekly parasha. There is generally a thematic link between the Haftarah reading and the Torah reading, though occasionally the Haftarah is more connected to a particular time of year in the Jewish calendar than to the Torah portion it accompanies. Students do not need to refer to the Haftarah in writing their d'var Torah, but if they want to they can!
Hatzi Kaddish	Literally, this means “half” or “short” kaddish. It’s an Aramaic prayer of praise used to separate segments of the service from each other.
Kaddish Titkabal	The Aramaic prayer of praise that ends the Amidah.
Kedushah	The passionate section at the center of the Amidah extolling the holiness of God and Shabbat.

Ketuvim	This is the third section of the Tanach (Jewish Bible), called “The Writings,” It contains the books of Proverbs, Psalms, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Ezra, Esther, Chronicles, etc.
Kiddush	Blessing over the wine to sanctify Shabbat or festivals.
Kippah	A religious head covering customarily worn to show Jewish identity and respect for God. Also called Yarmulka and “skull-cap.”
Leyn	To read from the Torah scroll.
Ma’ariv	Evening service
Maftir	The final portion of the weekly Torah parasha. It is often read by the b’nai mitzvah student on Shabbat.
Midrash	Rabbinic literature that offers insights about people and events that can add new dimensions to the stories and laws in the Tanach. The Bible brings up many questions and has many mysterious gaps in information. Midrashim (plural of midrash) fill in the blanks and offer background to flesh out some of the stories. Students may look to midrash to help understand their Torah portions. Rabbi Ruhi Sophia can assist with this.
Mincha	Afternoon service
Minhag	The custom. Congregations share certain customs, and many minhagim (pl) may be specific to that particular community.
Mitzvah	Good deed, commandment of righteous behavior (Plural = mitzvot).
Nevi’im	This is the second section of the Tanach (Jewish Bible), and it means “the prophets.” It includes such books as Joshua, Judges, Isaiah, Jonah, and Hosea, etc.
Parasha	The weekly Torah portion. (plural = parshiot)
Rabbi/Rav/Rebbe	Teacher and synagogue leader.
The Rabbis	The expression “the Rabbis” is often used to refer to the many generations of rabbis over the past two thousand years who shared interpretations and commentaries on the Torah and other sacred texts. “Commentary” is a term used to refer to their interpretations and gleanings on the text.
Shabbat	The Sabbath. Shabbat begins sundown on Friday evening and ends Saturday evening when three stars can be seen in the sky.
Shacharit	Morning Service
Shehecheyanu	Hebrew prayer that thanks God for giving us life, sustaining us, and allowing us to reach this moment. It is said on the first day of a yearly holiday, for the first fruits of

the season, upon seeing someone for the first time in 30 days, and at special rites and occasions.

Sh'ma	Central Hebrew prayer acknowledging the oneness of God.
Siddur	The Hebrew prayer book with a specific sequence of prayers.
Tallit	A prayer shawl with tzitzit (fringes) worn by Jews during Shacharit.
Tannach	The combined texts of the Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim.
Tefillin	Small, black leather, cube-shaped cases containing Torah texts written on parchment, which according to Torah and tradition are worn as reminders of God and one's obligations to do mitzvot during daily life.
T'fillah	Prayer
Tikkun	To fix or repair. With "Olam" it refers to "repairing the world" in reference to improving access to justice and our world's ecology.
Torah	The main sacred text of the Jewish people, containing the 5 books (or the Pentateuch), including Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. It is the basis for laws and ethics, and represents the core of Judaism. Every week, we study and recite from one Torah portion (<i>parasha</i>). The Torah is NOT the entire Jewish Bible (<i>Tanach</i>); it makes up only the first of the three sections.
Trope	Cantillation marks used for chanting the Torah and Haftarah.
Tzedakah	The righteous act of giving, usually money, to improve the world; charity.
Yarmulke	Yiddish for "kippah."

Recommended Reading

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Books for Parents and Students

Spiritual Texts:

Whose Bar/Bat Mitzvah Is This, Anyway? The Guide for Parents through a Family Rite of Passage by Judith Davis. An excellent book on the emotional challenges and issues that arise as part of the bar/bat Mitzvah year.

Putting G-d on the Guest List by Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin (Jewish Lights, 1996) Excellent introduction to the meaning of b'nai mitzvah, how to deal with questions about G-d and religion, making a meaningful reception celebration, and also a good synopsis of the Shabbat service prayers. There is a fine section on families with parents of different backgrounds.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Basics: A Practical Family Guide to Coming of Age Together by Helen Leneman (Jewish Lights, 1996) A practical guide that gives parents and teens the "how-to" information they need to navigate the bar/bat mitzvah process and grow as a family through this experience. Rabbis, cantors and Jewish educators from the Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist movements, parents, and even teens speak from their own experience.

Planning/How To Books:

The Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah Easy Planner by Linda Sage (St. Martin's Press, 1991). Self-described as "an indispensable, money saving workbook for organizing every aspect of the event - from temple service to the reception. Filled with expert advice on choosing caterers, musicians, invitations, clothing and more."

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planbook by Jane Lewit and Ellen Epstein (Scarborough House, 1996) A pragmatic approach to preparing for the b'nai mitzvah ceremony and celebration. Full of timelines, lists, and worksheets.

Books for the Students and Parents:

Bar Mitzvah, A Jewish Boy's Coming of Age by Eric Kimmel (Puffin/Penguin, 1995)
Bat Mitzvah, A Jewish Girl's Coming of Age by Barbara Golden (Viking/Penguin, 1995)
Introduction to and history of the b'nai mitzvah ceremony in an easy to read format.

A Spiritual Journey: The Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah Handbook, ed. Rabbi Cutter (Behrman House, 1993) A guide to both the practical issues of becoming a bar or bat mitzvah and the milestone's spiritual and emotional significance.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Memory Book by Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin and Nina Salkin (Jewish Lights, 2001)
The perfect gift to help a bar or bat mitzvah preserve the spiritual memories of this sacred event. This hands-on album is designed to help everyone involved better participate in creating the spiritual meaning of this joyful rite of passage.

MORE THAN JUST A PARTY

CREATING MEANINGFUL B'NAI MITZVAH

by JUDITH KUPER JAFFE

Four and a half years ago, on receiving her *bat mitzvah* date, my younger daughter began to plan for the event, putting her imagination in high gear. She liked what her older sister had done, choosing *Lag B'Omer* as the theme of her reception and using both her *D'var Torah* and a garden party “motif” to teach guests something about the holiday. She had also arranged to contribute leftover party food to a local food shelter. After much consideration, her younger sister decided that the theme of *Tu B'Shevat* would suit her February *bat mitzvah*.

Once again, the chosen theme was conveyed both through the *D'var Torah* and the decorations, as guests learned more about *Tu B'Shevat* and how to “fit” an ancient concept into 20th century suburbia. But there was more, and, looking back, Sheryl is especially proud of what she accomplished.

On the day of her *simcha*, during her *D'var Torah*, Sheryl noted that the centerpieces to be placed on each table during the party that evening would contain a “rare breed of flowers called socks and gloves.” Following the party, she said, the “flowers” would be transformed back to their original state (literally socks and gloves), washed, and donated to Jewish families who had recently immigrated and settled in our community.

For six months prior to her *bat mitzvah*, she had enhanced her formal *bat mitzvah* preparation with the secondary task of sock rolling and flower arranging. Following the reception, at the Jewish Community Center of Paramus, New Jersey, Sheryl invited her friends to unroll the socks and gloves, then launder and deliver them to the newly arrived families to help see them through a difficult winter in the Northeast.

Ours is only one family among a growing number striving to deepen the meaning of the *bar* and *bat mitzvah* celebration. Today, many people are asking some important questions: What will remain after the lavish party? Will anyone have gained—other than the band and the caterer? How has this gala celebration helped transform the *bar/bat mitzvah* child into a *mensch*?

Allison Freilich of B'nai Emet in Minneapolis happily recalls her *bat mitzvah*, in which her whole family participated. While several family members chanted from the Torah, Allison and her uncle, a *hazzan*, sang several duets during the service. The centerpieces at the reception were food items that were later donated to a local food shelf, but that was “pretty common that year,” according to Freilich, who credits this phenomenon to former Rabbi Howard Siegel, who strongly promoted the concept.

“I was a flower lover,” says Freilich, “but after hearing what the rabbi said, I decided it was a waste of money when this could really be used for the good of the community.”

But Allison went even further. She invited approximately 40 friends to “A Magical Mystery Tour” on a Saturday night. After dinner and entertainment, the guests were transported to a large supermarket for a “scavenger hunt.” As she recalls, they were clearly confused.

In fact, the Freilichs had planted clues throughout the store during the previous week. The children hunted for specific foods only to have Allison’s family purchase the food and donate it to the local food bank. According to Allison’s mother, this—rather than the dinner and entertainment—turned out to be the highlight of her daughter’s *bat mitzvah* celebration.

Later this year, Allison’s brothers Daniel and Ryan will be celebrating their *b'nai mitzvah*. They are planning to use toy centerpieces at their reception, which they will later contribute to the local Jewish Family Service and new Crisis Nursery, which holds children for 72 hours in an emergency family situation.

The idea of using centerpieces as items of *tzedakah* is clearly catching on. Education Director Jane Myers of Temple Emanuel in Providence, RI, explains that in her congregation, centerpieces at synagogue

events routinely consist of books, food and toys to be donated later to appropriate charities. In a variation of this concept, Temple B'nai Israel in Millburn, NJ, uses food baskets in lieu of *bimah* flowers.

Sherry Rutman of Minneapolis wanted to make her daughter Leah's *simcha* "a real *mitzvah*." In the beginning, Leah wasn't too excited about the idea, fearing that friends would think "it was dorky." Now, after seeing their reactions, she feels differently. Leah placed plants on the tables at her reception and subsequently took her friends to the local Ronald McDonald House, where they planted the flowers and learned more about the facility. A few years later, a sign there still bears her name.

Last year, a group of sixth grade parents, including Rutman and Temple B'nai Emet Education Director Missy Lavintman, came together to find ways in which their children, from a variety of communities, could bond in religious school. They hit upon the idea of a "hands-on" *mitzvah* project.

Students held a "bowl-a-thon" to raise money, then decided to contribute the proceeds to a local homeless shelter. After purchasing such items as coloring books and crayons for the children residing there, they held an ice cream social that brought together families from the shelter and families from the synagogue. Nineteen of the 22 *b'nai mitzvah* candidates shared in this experience and created a scrapbook to commemorate it. Lavintman's daughter, Donielle, recalls that when she entered the shelter, she felt "very lucky to have a home and a family." She plans to incorporate her experience into her *bat mitzvah D'var Torah*.

Hey students in the B'nai Emet religious school also participate in a *Tzedakah* Coop, each contributing \$100 and then researching and investigating different organizations before allocating the money. Families of the *b'nai mitzvah* are strongly encouraged to contribute to organizations such as Mazon.

Family Programmer Diane Lasken of Temple Emunah in Lexington, Massachusetts, recalls the recent *Hol Ha Moed Sukkot bat mitzvah* of Hannah Kreiger-Bensen. The service included special prayers for *Sukkot*, including *Hallel* and *Hoshanot*. The family encouraged their guests to bring *lulavim* and *etrogim* and then purchased an additional 18 sets so that everyone would have an opportunity to fulfill the *mitzvah*.

Following the service, a luncheon was held in the synagogue. During the meal, Hannah's friends were invited upstairs to complete a social action project. Markers, paper, crayons, and other art materials had been provided by the *bat mitzvah* family. The guests, supervised by both parents and the synagogue USY leaders, decorated gift bags and contributed them later to children at two food pantries.

Judy and Jules Gutin of Teaneck, New Jersey, celebrated their daughter Ariella's *bat mitzvah* last year. Enclosed in the announcement was a letter explaining that the invitation was not a request for a gift. Rather, the family asked that a contribution be made to one of the organizations Ariella suggested, and noted that ten percent of all monetary gifts would be donated to these groups. Ariella also asked each guest to bring one new wrapped toy to be distributed to needy children.

Today, many synagogues are launching *tzedakah* curricula for *b'nai mitzvah*, while other congregations have enthusiastically embraced the concept of community service. In addition, an increasing number of individual families are working to energize this traditional life-cycle event, highlighting specifically Jewish concepts and hands-on experiences in *tikkun olam*. Clearly it takes only a few families to make a difference. Once planted, the "*mitzvah* seed" can blossom and grow in every community.

The author resides in River Edge, New Jersey, and is a member of the Jewish Community Center of Paramus. She is a frequent contributor to Jewish publications.

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WHEN Bar/Bat Mitzvah LOSES MEANING

By Janet Marder

Can a custom that, in some communities, has been hijacked by the forces of materialism return to its simple and dignified religious origins?

She is a professional party planner in a large city. "I do maybe 75 bar or bat mitzvahs a year," she says. After 13 years in the business, she has seen everything. "People are spending between \$100 and \$200 per person for the reception—anywhere from 10 to 50 thousand dollars, though last January I did one for \$90,000. Everyone has a theme: Broadway, outer space, 'barn mitzvah' (a barbecue hoedown).

"We've had all kinds of entertainment, from stagecoach rides and fire

eaters to candymakers who do caramel sculptures. We have belly dancers, break dancers, and celebrity look-alikes. And, of course, there's Robbie the Robot, who's programmed for witty repartee with the guests ('Aunt Bertha—how are things in Miami? And how's Uncle Ed?').

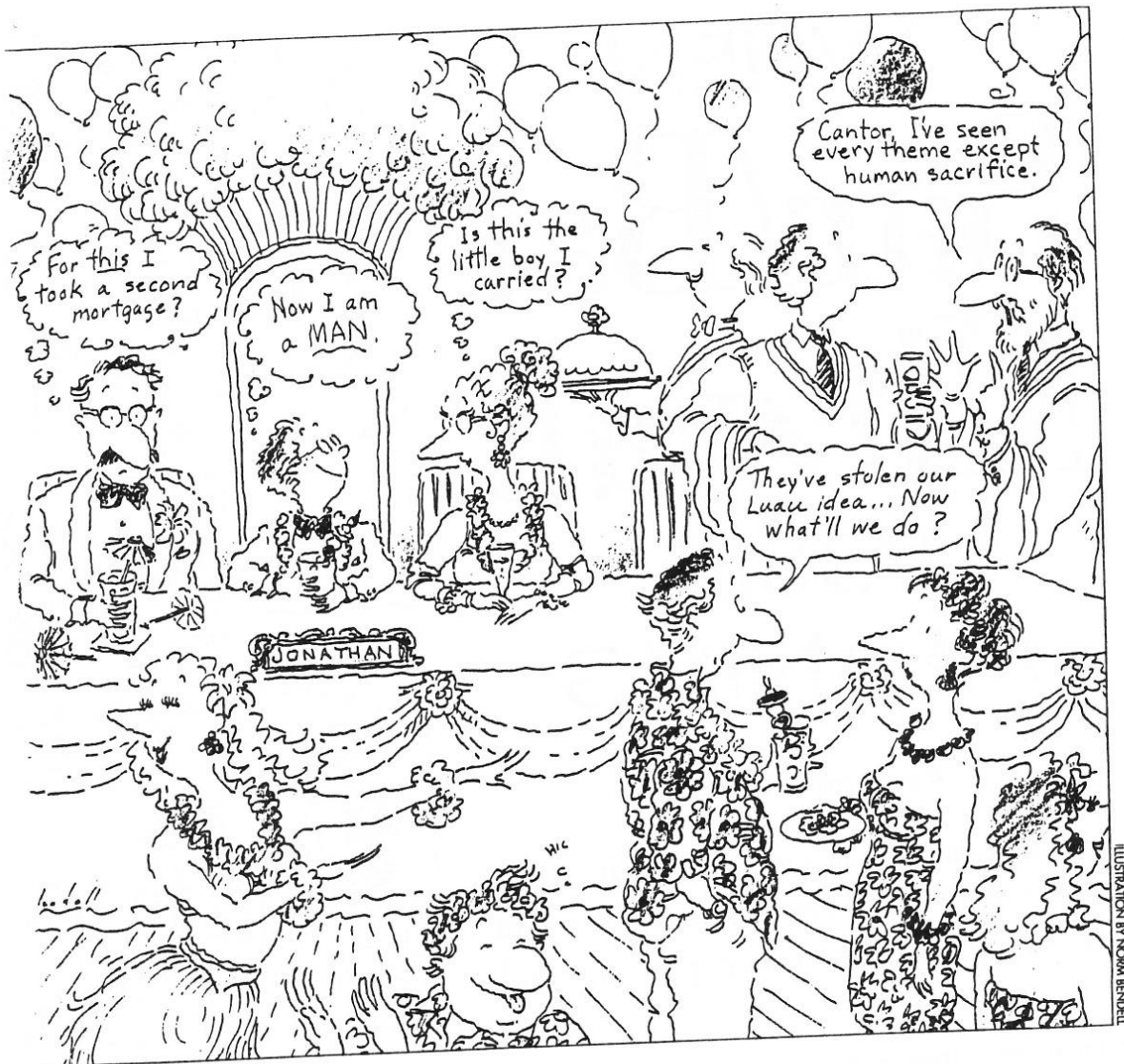
"Let's face it, it's a production. I'm in the *simchah* business."

Last May the UAHC Board of Trustees decided the "simchah business" had gone too far. In a resolution written by Rabbi Herbert Bronstein of

North Shore Congregation Israel, Glencoe, IL the board declared that, "due to excessive and inappropriate celebration, bar/ bat mitzvah has become an occasion for idolatry and the relentless commercial colonization of our sacred events."

Adopted unanimously, the resolution decries "excesses of wasteful consumption...glitzy theme events, sophisticated entertainment...and expensive party favors." It calls on the UAHC to promote bar/bat mitzvah celebrations characterized by "family





cohesion, authentic friendship, acts of *tzedakah* and parties suitable for children." Committing the UAHC to publish a Reform guide to bar/bat mitzvah celebrations, the resolution also encourages congregations to set their own guidelines.

The resolution has struck a responsive chord among rabbis, particularly in large urban congregations, where the problem seems most acute. Rabbis of these synagogues speak with embarrassment and anger about overblown celebrations that may cost

\$100,000 or more, and each has a horror story to cite, such as the bat mitzvah with table centerpieces showing photos of the girl with shopping bags from expensive boutiques. "I've seen every theme except human sacrifice," comments one rabbi. Says another, "What's wrong with the real theme of bar mitzvah: Jewish commitment?"

The issue is not new in the Jewish community. In 1964, the Central Conference of American Rabbis passed a similar resolution, and both statements are in the tradition of "sumptuary laws"

by which medieval rabbis tried to limit the extent of communal celebrations.

The Reform attitude toward bar/bat mitzvah was addressed by the CCAR Responsa Committee in 1979. It stated, in part: "Every effort should be exerted to maintain the family festivities in the religious mood at the bar/bat mitzvah. Some of the efforts of early Reform in favor of confirmation against bar mitzvah were prompted by the extravagant celebration of bar mitzvah, which had removed its primary religious significance. We vigorously oppose such ex-

cesses, as they destroy the meaning of bar/bat mitzvah."

Rabbi Lawrence Kushner of Congregation Beth El, Sudbury, MA sees powerful forces at work in these opulent celebrations. "Nowadays people in our culture marry and have children later than they used to. So when their kids reach bar/bat mitzvah age the grandparents are older, closer to death. Also, the parents are richer. The parties are by invitation only; they're planned many months in advance. Many of the guests have arrived at the party by airplane at enormous expense. Thus, all the circumstances that once prevailed at weddings now prevail at bar/bat mitzvah time. The desire for a major celebration is very strong and deeply rooted. We can't stop people from feeling this way; we just have to find a way to channel the feelings constructively."

Some Reform Jews wonder what the fuss is all about. Says one parent, "They can pass any resolutions they want. The truth is that he's our only child and the only grandchild in the family, and we wanted to have a big party."

One mother, who says the bar mitzvah receptions for her two sons were "exceptionally elaborate—more so than for our daughter, because we won't be making a wedding for our sons"—has mixed feelings about the UAHC resolution. "On the one hand, I think I feel in my gut that these receptions have gotten out of hand. On the other hand, I don't think they should be passing a resolution about this; it seems a little out of bounds. How you celebrate a bar or bat mitzvah seems pretty much a matter of individual taste."

UAHC Resources

"Guidelines: Lesson Plans for the Intermediate Years," a revised edition of the UAHC William and Frances Schuster Curriculum, is a curriculum development resource for the pre-bar/bat mitzvah years of religious school. Edited by Gail Teicher Fellus, RJE, "Guidelines" contains a dozen complete lessons devoted to the topics of brit and mitzvah. To order, send \$25.00 + \$2.50 shipping/handling to: UAHC Press, 838 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10021.



Bar/bat mitzvah t-shirts reportedly have become the latest fad.

Others reply that the issue is not just the cost of the celebration. "Spending a lot of money doesn't necessarily make for a vulgar affair," says Rabbi John Moscovitz of Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto, "and having a luncheon for 300 people is not the same as hiring a baseball player or a stripper to perform."

Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin of Central Synagogue, Rockville Centre, NY comments, "It's not what you spend—it's what you give. A \$25,000 bar mitzvah that includes a substantial donation to a charitable organization is morally and Jewishly preferable to a more modest affair where no *tzedakah* is given." Salkin, author of *Putting God on the Guest List: How To Reclaim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah*, suggests that the question is not whether cele-

brations are done "in good taste" but whether they reflect Jewish values. "We have to distinguish aesthetics from the ethical issues."

What, then, are some of the ethical issues to consider? A recent statement of the Toronto Board of Rabbis asserts that, while Jewish tradition mandates joyful celebrations for weddings and bar mitzvahs, it condemns "excesses of gluttony." Moreover, the "exorbitant expenditure of funds... encourages [those] who cannot afford it to try to emulate their... neighbors, with disaster the inevitable result." Though such cases are clearly the exception rather than the rule, rabbis around the country confirm that they occur. "I've had congregants in my office literally crying because they'd taken out a second mortgage in order to afford a big bar mitzvah bash," says

one. "They say, 'Of course, rabbi, this is not what we wanted, but we can't embarrass our child in front of his friends.'"

In addition to the financial strain caused by "keeping up with the Kohnses," some Jewish leaders worry that children are psychologically harmed by the intense social pressures they face. "Kids live in dread of having a party that's boring," says Rabbi Elizabeth Singer of Westchester Reform Temple, Scarsdale, NY. "They feel a strong need to do something unique—and that gets harder and harder if there's a bar/bat mitzvah every week." One child echoed this concern: "I knew I couldn't give a party like everyone else; we couldn't afford it. I was afraid people would make fun of my party and say it was a bomb. You know how kids are."

Many children expect a big celebration party. Says one boy, "After you do the ceremony you've worked so hard for, it's nice to get rewarded with a really great party."

Disruptive Behavior

Rabbis and laypeople alike also complain of the rude and disruptive behavior that sometimes accompanies elaborate b'nai mitzvah receptions. "At receptions in our temple building we've had vandalism, usually by kids

not affiliated with our congregation," says Rabbi Ben Kamin of The Temple-Tifereth Israel, Cleveland, OH. "In their minds there's no separation between the holy and the profane; it really breaks my heart."

Carrie Parks, a member of North Shore Congregation Israel in Glencoe, IL, sent out letters to 100 kids after disruptive behavior turned her carefully planned bat mitzvah reception into a nightmare. "I know my rabbi thinks that big parties are a problem, but I have to disagree. I don't think the parties are the problem. When I was growing up, I went to fabulous bar mitzvahs at fancy hotels, just as we have today. But we were well-behaved then. We would never think of running through hotel lobbies on a rampage. The real problem is that too many kids aren't learning to respect the religious nature of the celebration."

A related problem is alcohol abuse among minors at such *simchahs*, says Fern Barishman, director of the Alcohol Drug Action Program of Jewish Family Service in Los Angeles. "So often when I talk to clients about when they started drinking, they tell me it all began at their bar mitzvah or that of a friend. Kids think bar/bat mitzvah is about becoming a man or a woman and that makes drinking okay. When adults are out on the dance floor, I see kids drinking what's left in their glasses, pouring liquor into soda bottles. Why not make b'nai mitzvah alcohol-safe events? Maybe families could have a bar where people pay for their drinks, rather than an open bar, and they could then donate the money to Mothers Against Drunk Driving."

Who Owns the Service?

Many rabbis speak regretfully of the "privatization" of bar/bat mitzvah, noting that almost all of those attending a Shabbat morning service when a bar or bat mitzvah takes place are guests invited by the family. When congregants not invited by the family do show up at such services, they often express discomfort, feeling that they are not welcome in the synagogue without an invitation. Some b'nai mitzvah families object to the scheduling of congregational events such as baby namings during "their" service. "I have to remind them," says one rabbi, "that it's not their service—it's God's."

Some rabbis are convinced that allowing families to create personalized bar/bat mitzvah liturgies and having the child conduct the entire service subverts

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MODEL BAR/BAT MITZVAH PROGRAMS

What are synagogues doing to lower their dropout rate? Some have worked diligently to develop outstanding high school programs. Beth Israel of San Diego, CA offers a two-year post-bar/bat mitzvah program to train religious school teachers. Others, such as Temple B'nai Jeshurun of Des Moines, IA, retain 80% of their b'nai mitzvah by working with Federation to offer incentives such as community-subsidized trips to Israel and Washington, D.C.

A number of congregational programs have shifted the focus of b'nai mitzvah from a one-time "performance" to a process of growing into life-long Jewish commitment. Several synagogues, such as Shir HaMa'alot in Newport Beach, CA and Beth Israel Congregation in Jackson, MS, require all b'nai mitzvah to take on a tzedakah project. At Sinai Temple in Springfield, MA, bar/bat mitzvah students must complete two projects—one for the synagogue and one for the community. B'nai mitzvah in these congregations often ask their guests to make charitable donations in lieu of gifts.

In an effort to involve parents as well as children, Temple Beth Am of Miami has established a bar/bat mitzvah tzedakah collective—a fund supported by all b'nai mitzvah families, who decide together where to donate the money. And Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple in Beachwood, OH encourages parents to set up a tzedakah fund in honor of their child's bar or bat mitzvah; the child distributes the annual interest to the charity of his/her choice.

While serving Congregation Shir Chadash in Los Gatos, CA, Rabbi Nahum Ward developed the Family Torah Study program to involve parents and children preparing for bar/bat mitzvah in ongoing Jewish learning. Participants and the rabbi meet as a havurah (prayer or study group) every three weeks for a potluck dinner and inter-generational discussion of each Torah portion, led by the child studying that portion. The strong sense of fellowship that develops among the families has helped ensure that very few students drop out before confirmation.

Especially notable are the comprehensive "mitzvah programs" such as the one developed at Larchmont Temple in Larchmont, NY; Central Synagogue in Rockville Centre, NY; and Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple in Cleveland, OH. All are organized on the "merit badge" system, by which bar/bat mitzvah students are required to perform tasks in certain categories and thus to learn by doing. Rabbi Jeffrey Sirkman of Larchmont Temple, for instance, organized his "Bemitzvotav" program around the themes of Torah (Jewish learning), Avodah (Jewish living), and Gemilut Hasadim (Jewish doing).

At Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple the program is patterned after the famous Mishnah which begins: "These are the obligations without measure, whose reward, too, is without measure" and lists 10 categories of mitzvot (Honor your mother and father; Attend the synagogue regularly; Welcome the stranger; etc.), including 5-20 ways a child can perform each one.

Similarly, Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin's "10 to Get Ready" program at Central Synagogue in Rockville Center, NY includes mitzvah categories such as memory, the sanctity of speech, and kindness to animals. Salkin explains that he originally developed the program for children with learning disabilities "in order to put the emphasis back on mitzvah rather than Torah-reading performance."

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When Bar/Bat Mitzvah Loses Meaning

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the very meaning of the event by turning the worshipers into onlookers at one family's private pageant. "I think the proper way for a child to become bar or bat mitzvah is in the embrace of the congregation, and that can happen only in a congregational service," says Rabbi Dov Taylor of Temple Solel, Highland Park, IL. A Southern California rabbi puts it this way: "The real issue is who owns the service? The ceremony is about welcoming a child into the congregation—not having a child take over the congregation for a day."

That message is conveyed at Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto, Canada, where b'nai mitzvah do not deliver speeches but simply read from the Torah and Haftarah, and at Beth El in Sudbury, MA, where two *aliyot* are always reserved for congregants not invited by the bar/bat mitzvah family.

Other rabbis are not disturbed by the unabashedly private nature of most bar/bat mitzvah services. Rabbi Ben

Kamin of The Temple-Tifereth Israel in Cleveland says, "Our services are very personalized and extremely meaningful to families." He and others encourage b'nai mitzvah to conduct as much of the service as possible, believing that the ability to lead prayer is an essential skill for young Jews to master.

Most rabbis wrestle uneasily with the dilemma of how to make bar/bat mitzvah services meaningful to families without undermining the public nature of Shabbat worship. Many have tried to resolve the tension between private and public needs by developing alternate *minyanim* and/or Torah study groups that meet every Shabbat morning.

The "Drop-Out" Phenomenon

Reform leaders have long viewed bar mitzvah with some ambivalence, primarily because it so often has resulted in a child's premature graduation from Jewish education. This concern, among oth-

ers, led to the creation of the confirmation ceremony, which by the middle of the 20th century had superseded bar mitzvah in many Reform congregations. Nevertheless, the "drop-out" phenomenon continues to trouble rabbis in congregations of all sizes; today about half of all Jewish children end their religious education after bar/bat mitzvah.

The cessation of learning at this age is particularly disturbing because

bar/bat mitzvah is not, contrary to popular opinion, the age of maturity but the age of religious commitment. Writes Herbert Bronstein: "At the time when one is celebrating this observance, whose meaning is 'I take on the responsibilities of being a Jew,' central to which...is the study of Torah, for parents to allow their children simply to...walk away from their religious education makes a mockery of bar/bat mitzvah...no matter how effusively it is celebrated."

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**"I was afraid
people would
make fun of my
party and say it
was a bomb.
You know how
kids are."**

When Bar/Bat Mitzvah Loses Meaning

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Bar/bat mitzvah is now celebrated in some 96% of Reform congregations. Clearly, the notion of a child's coming of age at 13 has a powerful hold on the Jewish psyche. But can a custom that, in some communities, has been hijacked by the forces of materialism return to its simple and dignified religious origins? Can a service too often focused on showing off a child's Hebrew performance before an "audience" of invited guests recapture the sense of congregational worship and communal embrace? And can a day that for half of our children represents their farewell to Jewish study be transformed instead into a moment that genuinely initiates them into a lifetime of *mitzvot*?

The UAHC Board of Trustees resolution on bar/bat mitzvah, while only a beginning, is a gesture of hope that such change is possible. "It's easy for the board to pass resolutions," says its chairman, Mel Merians. "The real question is what impact this resolution will have—and

that depends on how seriously and sensitively we undertake the responsibility of educating our people."

To implement the resolution, the Commission on Religious Living has appointed a special subcommittee chaired by Rabbi Alan Bregman, which is in the process of developing suggested guidelines and procedures for conducting bar and bat mitzvah celebrations with dignity and sensitivity. In 1990, the CCAR published "Divrei Benei Mitzvah," a guideline for rabbis working with bar/bat mitzvah families.

Even rabbis serving communities they describe as "centers of wretched excess" believe the resolution will be warmly welcomed by many congregants. While the recession has had a significant impact on the scale of celebrations, there has also been, says one Long Island rabbi, "a quiet revolution against glitz. More people are turning away in disgust from the excesses of the '80s."

Rabbi Jerome Davidson of Temple Beth El, Great Neck, NY, who has spoken extensively on this issue, believes "the time is ripe for change. Our people are waiting for their leaders to stand up for Jewish values. It

remains to be seen whether temple leaders will change the way they celebrate, for, after all, they set the tone." Beth El already imposes limits on the kind of music, decorations, and entertainment permitted for bar/bat mitzvah receptions held in the synagogue.

Other synagogues, fearing loss of income, may hesitate to impose guidelines that will encourage members to hold their celebrations elsewhere. "The great danger," says one rabbi, "is that we're simply going to be perceived as prudes and killjoys who want to take the fun out of bar/bat mitzvah."

Some argue, however, that the true joy of bar/bat mitzvah does not inhere in the merchandising gimmicks that now sully the occasion. One can have a genuine *simchah*, they maintain, without turning it into a business. Authentic bar/bat mitzvah celebrations, says Rabbi Herbert Bronstein, "are gatherings which will be remembered not by a show of abundance but for the abundance of good feeling the celebrants have for one another." □

Rabbi Janet Marder is associate regional director of the UAHC Pacific Southwest Council in Los Angeles, CA.

6

Section 7

Forms/Handouts

This section is for your:

- parsha booklet (to be picked up in 6th grade)
- research on your d'var
- handouts to be received in b'nai mitzvah family meetings
- any other important b'nai mitzvah related stuff you acquire

(items found in the back pocket)

- Friday Oneg Shabbat Procedures
- Caterer's Handout
- B'nai Mitzvah Honors List
- B'nai Mitzvah Building Use Form
- Service Attendance Tracker
- B'nai Mitzvah Studies Agreement
- B'nai Mitzvah Roadmap

