



## *Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planning Guide*

### *The Practicalities and FAQ*

Mazal Tov! Your child is nearing the age of bar/bat mitzvah. This time is filled with many questions and even potential anxieties. We hope this planning guide will be helpful in beginning to answer your many questions. Our clergy and religious school are committed to guiding you and your child through these next exciting months. Please feel free to contact any of us with questions and know that Rabbi Moritt's door is open for concerns or sensitivities you would like to discuss privately.

The year or two before your child becomes bar/bat mitzvah is filled with many opportunities to deepen your and their personal connections to our tradition and make the experience more meaningful for the entire family. The community of Beth-El is delighted to accompany your family on this journey.

#### **Q: How will my child be assigned a date?**

A: The practice is for children to celebrate Bar/Bat Mitzvah on or after their thirteenth birthday. This is the same for both boys and girls. Rabbi Moritt will hold a parent meeting for parents of children turning 13 within 2 years during which she will outline Beth-El's practices and policies. Parents will be given a form at or after that time on which they may request their top 3 preferred dates after their child's 13<sup>th</sup> birthday. Parents may also list dates that should be avoided due to family conflicts on that form. We will do our best to accommodate requests, however families must understand that those preferences may conflict with the Jewish, congregational, rabbinic or cantorial calendars as well as requests of other families. Rabbi Moritt assigns all dates and parents will receive a letter with the assigned date.

#### **Q: When will my child begin tutoring for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah?**

A: Most students begin seven months before the service. The goal is to provide twenty weekly half-hour lessons with the cantor and 45-minute meetings with the rabbi. In the month leading up to your bar/bat Mitzvah, there will be four one-hour final meetings and longer rehearsals. Parents will attend the final 2-hour rehearsal during the week of your bar/bat mitzvah. Some students begin earlier based on individual needs. Timing also takes into account vacation weeks during school year and summer. Tutoring is available some weeks during the summer for those students who are available.

**Q: Who does the tutoring and where?**

Currently Rabbi Moritt tutors all students individually on their devar Torah and the prayers at the temple during after-school hours on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays. Our Cantor tutors the children on their Torah and Haftarah portions, according to her schedule but is often available on Sundays. Many of the prayers are available for downloading and practicing from our website and children are strongly encouraged to avail themselves of this tool. They can be found at <https://betheljc.org/bar-bat-service-helpers/>. For some students, tutoring by Skype or Facetime may be possible after the first several lessons if transportation to tutoring is an issue. As our congregation grows, we anticipate engaging bar/bat mitzvah tutors to work with our children on their Torah and Haftarah chanting.

**Q: How much time will my child need to practice each week?**

A: This varies from student to student, but a good rule of thumb is one to two hours each week, spread over several days. Please keep in mind that your child may also have Religious School assignments, since all bar/bat mitzvah candidates are required to complete 7th grade in our Religious School, which often continues after your child's bar/bat mitzvah.

**Q: How much is the Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee and what does it cover?**

A: The fee for ceremonies held in FY 2020-2021 is \$1250. Your fee includes tutoring, one set of study materials for your child's Torah/Haftarah portion, the cost of the accompanist (usually Ben Rauch), and the challah/juice we will offer at kiddush. The balance of the fee offsets some of the temple's expenses for the bar/bat mitzvah, and accounts for our (student) cantor and rabbi's time and involvement. As with any professional appointment, missed sessions interfere with our staff and clergy's ability to plan and function properly. We budget for 20 tutoring sessions per child. Please note that sessions that are missed or cancelled without 24-hour notice may incur additional tutoring charges, based on the individual progress of your child. It is customary for families to donate the flowers or alternative decorations for the bimah and sponsor the oneg Shabbat on Friday. If you would like the temple to arrange for the flowers, we will do so for an additional \$100. Please speak to Ardella in the office about the Friday oneg and/or Saturday kiddush arrangements and flowers.

**Q: When is the Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee due?**

A: One half (1/2) of the fee is due when tutoring begins. The other half is due two (2) months before the scheduled service. You are welcome to pay it in installments as long as it is completed by that time. If there is financial hardship, contact Rabbi Moritt privately to discuss. This fee is separate from Religious School tuition and Terumah, which must also be current within two months of your bar/bat mitzvah.

**Q: What time does the service begin and what time is customary to put on invitations?**

A: The service begins at 10:30 am on Shabbat morning, as it is a regular Shabbat service of Temple Beth-El that the student is co-leading with the rabbi and student cantor for the congregation and guests. Many families choose to list the start time as 10:15 so that their families will be present from the beginning of the service. The service normally concludes between 12 noon and 12:15 pm. We do not have afternoon or Havdalah Bar/Bat Mitzvah services.

**Q: Will our family members be able to participate in the service?**

A: There are many honors for family members, both Jewish and non-Jewish. The list will be given to the family at start of tutoring and then assignments will be made in consultation with the rabbi about a month before the service date. As a community event, congregants will also participate in the Torah service. Please speak to Rabbi Moritt to acknowledge your family's special relationships within the community.

The family celebrating their bar/bat mitzvah on the next bar/bat mitzvah date after your child will act as the ushers during the morning of your child's bar/bat mitzvah. Your family has the responsibility of ushering during the bar/bat mitzvah immediately preceding your child's. Rabbi Moritt will explain what that entails when you meet and will give you your specific ushering assignment date.

**Q: Who else participates in the service?**

A: Aside from the Rabbi, (Student) Cantor and accompanist, the first Aliya and Torah reading will be offered by members of the congregation. Beth-El is proud to welcome your child into Jewish maturity in the context of the Shabbat morning service our community conducts every week. This will be ritualized in the "passing of the yad" to our newest member (your child), just before (s)he reads from the Torah.

**Q: What will the student learn for the service?**

A: The students normally lead most or all of the Torah Service as well as the closing prayers at the end of the service. Each student normally chants 9-11 verses of Torah (from the Torah scroll) plus several verses of Haftarah (selection from Prophets.) Each student works with the rabbi to prepare his or her talk applying a lesson of the Torah portion to everyday life. All elements of leading the service can be adjusted for students with special needs. Additional verses of Torah are available for students or family members who would like to chant additional verses.

**Q: How else will my child prepare?**

A: Your child is required to attend services 12 times during the 12 months prior to becoming bar/bat mitzvah. At least 7 of these must be Shabbat morning services. Check the congregational calendar to schedule those mornings during which there will be a Torah reading, since those are the best to familiarize all with the service.

**Q: May we throw candy?**

A: Spreading the sweetness of the occasion is a time-honored tradition that we support. At the same time, the safety of our members and guests is our primary concern. If you choose to bring candy to throw, we require that it must be limited to soft jelly candies (i.e. Sunkist Fruit Gems)

**Q: What should I plan for Friday night before the Saturday morning service?**

A: The Friday evening service is at 8:00 pm except the first Friday of the month when the time is 7:30 pm. Please arrive fifteen minutes before the service. Near the start of the service, your family will be invited to lead English readings before the candle-lighting and the wine blessing. There is an Oneg Shabbat after the service each week, and many families like to sponsor the food that Friday evening in honor of the occasion. You can register to do this at <http://betheljc.org/monthly-calendar/sponsor-1>. You can choose to donate \$75 and the congregation will bring the refreshments. Alternatively, you may choose to provide the refreshments yourself, either purchased or home-made. Please talk to Kay about quantities.

**Q: May I hold a family dinner on the Friday night in the Social Hall before the service to make it easier for my out of town family?**

A: Please contact Kay to discuss. We can almost always accommodate such a request with enough notice. If it is the first Friday of the month, we already hold a potluck Shabbat dinner at 6:30 pm and it is easy for families to bring additional food for their guests.

**Q: I would like to hold a Kiddush luncheon or afternoon party in the Social Hall. What do I need to know?**

A: You may rent the Social Hall for such events. We request that you make this request three months in advance. The member's rate is \$400 for each event and gives you a total of five hours This includes setup and cleanup time. Our experience has shown that 100 people is a sustainable capacity for the room. If you would like to invite a larger party, or need more hours, please contact Kay well in advance. Temple Beth-El staff will put up and later put away your tables and chairs in accordance with your arrangement diagram. We will provide a room layout drawing for your use.

We are happy to work with you, your caterers and any entertainers you may bring. Please note that, at the present time, we have no reheating or cooking facilities in the kitchen except a microwave.

In the interest of sustainability, we ask that you use as little plastic as possible. Paper cups and plates and compostable utensils are appreciated. With three weeks notice, we can order these for you.

Cleaning of the room after the event is the renter's responsibility, as is putting away all decorations, food and serving items in the social hall and kitchen. We require a \$200 cleaning deposit. The college students who are part of our maintenance team may be available to work events, setting and decorating tables, helping with the serving and cleanup. This can be arranged through Kay. For a large party, be sure to enlist some volunteers or staff to help your family leave the kitchen and social hall in order at the end.

**Q: May I hold an evening party that night in the Social Hall?**

A: We are happy to rent the Social Hall for such events, dependent again on the total number of guests. Please contact Kay for details. This is a good place to mention that proper attire is required for anyone called to the bimah for an honor, i.e.; no sloppy sneakers, shoulders should be covered, hemlines for dresses/skirts/appropriate shorts should be no shorter than 1"-2" above the knee for all genders. Please choose your synagogue attire accordingly.

**Q: I may hold my post-service celebration somewhere else. Should I still provide a Kiddush (challah and juice) for the attendees, particularly the ones who will not attend the party?**

A: At the close of the service, TBE staff will have 6-8 sliced challahs and cups of white grape juice available for the final ritual of Kiddush and Motzi at the bimah unless the family prefers to offer it as part of a Kiddush by the family at lunch.

**Q: May we take photos or video during the service?**

A: While there are no photos allowed during the service, we encourage families to pose for photos on the bimah either before or after the service. Photos before the service should be completed by 10:00 am. The family of the bar / bat mitzvah may record the service on video from the Bentley Avenue side balcony, providing enough battery power as we cannot guarantee extension cords and electric outlets. The single video camera must remain stationary during the service. The camera operator may remain with the camera during the service, but should be unobtrusive.

