



B'nai Mitzvah Family Guidebook

as of December 8, 2021; subject to revision

Congregation Bet Haverim
1715 Anderson Rd.
Davis, CA

Dear Bar & Bat Mitzvah Families,

Mazal tov and welcome to a very exciting time in the life of your family!

Preparing for your child's bar or bat mitzvah is a time of learning, growth, and pride as well as an opportunity to find new meaning in the beauty and wisdom of our Jewish traditions. All of us at Congregation Bet Haverim look forward to sharing your upcoming simchah (joyous occasion) and are available to support you.

Families often have many questions about communal expectations, student preparations, and congregational practices. Our guidebook is intended to guide your preparations, answer your questions, and increase the joy of this experience. Please review this guidebook often and ask questions as they arise. We look forward to working in partnership with you to make this significant occasion a cherished memory in the life of your family.

Wishing you many blessings!

Warmly,

Rabbi Greg Wolfe
Congregational Rabbi

Ardyth Sokoler
Director of Education

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The History of Bar & Bat Mitzvah

Our Torah never mentions the age of thirteen as being the age of majority, nor does it ever refer to the terms bar or bat mitzvah. The earliest reference that we do have to the significance of the age of thirteen is in a statement by Rabbi Judah ben Tema, during the second century. According to Avot 5:34, Rabbi Judah ben Tema taught:

“At five years of age, a child is ready to study the Bible; at ten years, the Mishnah; at thirteen years, the commandments.”

The first reference to the term bar mitzvah is found in the Talmud, Baba Metzia 96a, and used to define *“one who is subject to Scriptural commands.”*

The ceremony celebrating a child becoming bar mitzvah is a modern innovation. During the fourteenth century in Europe, boys were not allowed to be called up to the Torah, either to recite the brachot (blessings) or to read from the holy writings. In addition, boys were not permitted to wear a tallit (prayer shawl) or tefillin (small black leather boxes containing parchment with Torah verses) until their thirteenth birthday. On the Shabbat immediately following his thirteenth birthday, a boy would be called up to the Torah to recite the maftir (final reading from the Torah portion) as well as the haftarah (reading from the Prophets).

On this special occasion, in many communities, a se’udat mitzvah (a festive meal) was held in celebration. During this meal, the young man would deliver a d’rashah, a sermon designed to demonstrate his knowledge of Judaism, and would use the opportunity to thank his parents and the guests. Many of these traditions continue today, although they are now integrated into the actual Shabbat service.

Reform Judaism, which began in Germany in 1819, pioneered the inclusion of women in an equal role in religious life. The first bat mitzvah, however, did not take place until 1922 in New York City. Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan invited his daughter Judith to recite the blessings over the Torah and to read her Torah portion from a book. Reform Judaism and Congregation Bet Haverim have proudly made significant progress from that day. We recognize complete equality between women and men in Judaism, equal requirements for Jewish education, and equal responsibilities for Jewish observance. For these reasons, both bar and bat mitzvah are typically celebrated in the identical manner at the age of thirteen.

According to Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin, a well-known Reform rabbi, writer and teacher:

“Bar and bat mitzvah is about ritual maturity. It is about growing up as a Jew. It is about becoming a full-fledged member of the Jewish community. It is about connecting to Torah and to the covenantal traditions of the Jewish people. The bar and bat mitzvah service is sacred and deserves celebration.”

The History of Bar & Bat Mitzvah at Congregation Bet Haverim:

Our known history of bar mitzvah celebration in Davis begins in 1961. The first bar mitzvah was Sammy Kirchner, whose father Julie was the first president of the Jewish Fellowship of Davis. This father and son constructed an ark for the occasion to house the Sefer Torah, on loan from a local Sacramento congregation. The service, conducted by Joe Kalb, a graduate student with an encyclopedic knowledge of Judaism, took place in a schoolroom of the Davis Community Church. It was attended by the entire membership of the Jewish Fellowship of Davis, about ten families at the time, reinforced by the complete Bacteriology Department of the University of California Davis, in which Julie Kirchner was a student.

The service was so inspiring that at its conclusion, one of the participants was moved to plead for immediate measures toward the establishment of a permanent place of worship for the Jewish community. This appeal prompted the initiation of the building fund, which led to the construction of our first synagogue building on Oak Avenue. While times have changed for Congregation Bet Haverim, and we are now a community much larger and diverse than the original ten families, we still believe in the importance of the community joining together to celebrate the bar or bat mitzvah of one of our members.



Guiding Principles:

In order to fully understand the requirements and timeline related to becoming bar or bat mitzvah at Congregation Bet Haverim, it is important to understand the following ideas:

Accepting Responsibility

As a young man or woman matures in our Jewish tradition, it is important that they grow in accepting responsibility. Responsibility involves maturity, independence, and assuming the role of a young adult in the community.

Community Participation

Bar and bat mitzvah are celebrated within the community and represent an important Jewish value of living in community. As Jews, we acknowledge and strive to be in relationship with God, with other Jews, with our families, and in meaningful communities. Bar and bat mitzvah mark the entry of a child as an adult member of the Jewish community. At Congregation Bet Haverim, bar and bat mitzvah celebrations are open to the community and everyone is encouraged to attend.

Lifelong Learning

The meaning of bar and bat mitzvah is enduring only with an understanding of ongoing Jewish learning. The process of becoming a Jewish adult should be perceived as a celebration and continued commitment of discovering, questioning, and affirming Jewish knowledge. Following bar and bat mitzvah, it is expected that our students will continue into our teen offerings including Keshet (eighth and ninth grade class), Confirmation (tenth grade class), DRTY (Davis Reform Temple Youth) youth group, and our Madrichim (teaching assistant) programs.

Torah

Everything that we do as Jews, everything that we believe, and everything that we value is based in Torah. Torah represents the testimony of the Jewish people's encounter with God. While there are many different interpretations and understandings of the teachings from the Torah, the sacredness of mitzvot, prayer, tzedakah, tikkun olam, history, and God continue to provide a foundation for our children, our families, and our community.



Timeline:

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| <p>Third Grade:</p> | <p>Continue attending Religious School (Sunday mornings) Begin attending Hebrew School (Wednesday afternoons) Begin or continue attending community bar and bat mitzvah celebrations Begin or continue attending community Shabbat celebrations</p> <p><i>If a student has not been able to attend Hebrew or Religious School during third through sixth grade, private tutoring for bar and bat mitzvah will be required and may extend beyond the child's thirteenth birthday</i></p> |
| <p>Two Years Prior: <i>usually in fifth grade</i></p> | <p>Attend Bar & Bat Mitzvah Parent Orientation Meeting, usually held in spring Work with the Rabbi to select the calendar date for bar and bat mitzvah</p> <p><i>In order to confirm your date, a deposit payment of half of the b'nai mitzvah fee is required. This payment is made in the Office to the Bookkeeper and guarantees the availability of the Rabbi, the CBH Sanctuary and Social Hall, and places the date on the CBH calendar. Payment plans are available.</i></p> |
| <p>One to Two Years Prior:</p> | <p>Hire private Hebrew tutor if extra support is needed Inform family and friends of date Select venue for evening or Sunday reception if not at CBH Research, reserve caterer, DJ, photographer, additional vendors as desired</p> |
| <p>One Year Prior:</p> | <p>Schedule meeting with Rabbi to review expectations and timeline Select tutor, in consultation with Rabbi and Director of Education Contact tutor to discuss tutoring schedule Begin attending Shabbat and Bar/Bat Mitzvah services on regular basis Begin researching and planning mitzvah project Compile guest list; include CBH class, teachers, staff Reserve hotel rooms as needed Send save the date notification if desired</p> |
| <p>Six Months Prior:</p> | <p>Begin working with b'nai mitzvah tutor on weekly basis Read Torah and Haftarah in English for content Continue attending Shabbat and Bar/Bat Mitzvah services on regular basis Begin working on mitzvah project Select song leader for Shabbat services Select gabbai (person to call people to Torah) for Shabbat morning service Finalize all financial obligations with CBH Office Manager including balance of bnai mitzvah fee</p> |
| <p>Three to Six Months Prior:</p> | <p>Parents, grandparents begin to learn, review Torah blessings Determine, review roles for siblings, other family members Invite assign Torah readings, aliyot Finalize guest list Create invitation Purchase tallit (prayer shawl) and kippot (head coverings)</p> |

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| | <p>Plan, create table centerpieces Finalize menu options for all catered meals Review, pay deposits to vendors</p> |
| Two to Three Months Prior: | <p>Begin weekly meetings with Rabbi to review prayers, Torah, Haftarah Begin Dvar Torah (teaching words of Torah) with Rabbi Finalize service format (Gates of Prayer or Traditional) with Rabbi</p> |
| One to Two Months Prior: | <p>Submit introduction, photo, mitzvah project information to Etone Purchase synagogue dress clothing for all family members as needed Finalize parental speech to bar/bat mitzvah Finalize preparations for Kabbalat Shabbat (Friday evening) oneg Plan food for weekend events Mail invitations, generally six to eight weeks prior to event</p> |
| One Month Prior: | <p>Review and finalize D'var Torah Complete plans for mitzvah project Create program, song sheet page; review with Rabbi Submit honors list to Rabbi Confirm all facility arrangements with Office Manager Complete Social Hall set up, tablecloth selection, etc. with Office Manager Finalize details, lists, requirements, payments with all vendors Order, purchase flowers, plants for Sanctuary bimah Delegate last minute errand support</p> |
| Two to Three Weeks Prior: | <p>Review Torah readings, blessings with participants Finalize preparations for rehearsals with participants Create master list, finalize all payments with vendors</p> |
| One Week Prior: | <p>Final practice session with Rabbi Bring kippot, clips, programs, song sheets, plants, flowers, etc. to CBH Pick up key, candy baskets, tablecloths from Office Manager Take family photos</p> <p><i>The final practice session, usually held on the Friday afternoon immediately prior to the bar or bat mitzvah, is an important part of the preparation and supports your child and family in feeling confident. Please discuss the length, timing, and inclusion of family members with the Rabbi as you finalize your planning.</i></p> |
| Kabbalat Shabbat (Friday): | <p>Bar or bat mitzvah family helps to light Shabbat candles and recite blessing Bar or bat mitzvah students helps to lead Shabbat prayers Host Oneg, usually with support of seventh grade class</p> |
| Shabbat Morning (Saturday): | <p>Place program, kippot, clips, song sheet, etc. in Sanctuary lobby Fill baskets with candy Photography session before or following service if desired</p> |

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| Saturday Evening Sunday Morning, Afternoon (if desired): | Host reception or celebration with family and friends |
| One Week After: | Wash and return all CBH tablecloths to the Office Return Social Hall key to CBH Office |
| One Month After: | Write and send thank you notes |
| Ongoing: | Continue attending Religious School or Keshet as well as teen programs Join, participate in DRTY, Keshet, Confirmation, Madrichim programs Continue reading Torah, Haftarah, leading services |

Selecting A Date:

The celebration of a bar or bat mitzvah at Congregation Bet Haverim is traditionally held during our regularly scheduled Shabbat services on a Saturday morning, beginning at 10:00am. Participation in the Friday evening, Kabbalat Shabbat Service, is also part of the bar or bat mitzvah weekend celebration. Certain dates will not be available in order to accommodate congregational programming, clergy schedules, and Jewish holidays.

In the spring of your child's fifth grade year, a B'nai Mitzvah Parent Meeting will be held with all parents, the Rabbi, and the Director of Education. During this meeting, an overview of the process will be provided and there will be an opportunity for questions. Families with previous experience will often have advice to share. Following this meeting, parents are invited to schedule a meeting with the Rabbi to begin selecting their date.

In order to select a date, a payment of half of the B'nai mitzvah fee is required. This deposit should be paid to the Bookkeeper in the CBH Office and guarantees the availability of the Rabbi, reserves the CBH Sanctuary and Social Hall, and places the date on the congregational calendar.

In selecting a date for your special occasion, it is helpful to consider the following:

- a. At Congregation Bet Haverim, it is required for a child to be at least thirteen years of age before their official bar or bat mitzvah ceremony.
- b. Select a Torah portion that is meaningful and interesting for your child and family.
- c. Consider holiday weekends or other times that may make travel easier for family members and friends.
- d. Consider not selecting peak travel times if travel expenses may be prohibitive.
- e. Consider school and camp calendars, ensuring that your child will have adequate time for preparation.

Requirements:

Bar or bat mitzvah marks the maturation of a young man or woman as they enter the Jewish community and accept increased responsibility for their Jewish observance and identity. The young adult is now counted as part of the adult community and assumes the privileges and responsibilities of Jewish life including being counted in a minyan, fasting on Yom Kippur, being called to the Torah for an aliyah, observing Shabbat and other Jewish holidays, and participating in Jewish study whenever possible.

Our respect for Torah study, performance of mitzvot, and the obligation of communal prayer is reflected in the preparatory process and requirements of the bar and bat mitzvah process. At Congregation Bet Haverim, these requirements have been carefully designed to help each young adult arrive at this lifecycle event with a high level of skill, confidence, and comfort. These requirements also support a sense of community within the Hebrew and Religious School class, both for the students and parents, as the class shares this rite of passage. The Rabbi and Director of Education are available for answering any questions and will support you in finding your way through the process and making the experience meaningful and unique.

Eligibility

The celebration of a bar or bat mitzvah at Congregation Bet Haverim is a privilege accorded to our partners. Each child must be at least thirteen years old and currently enrolled in our Religious School or Keshet Class at the time of the bar or bat mitzvah. Each student must complete at least four consecutive years of both Hebrew and Religious School and successfully meet all school requirements. If a child has not been able to attend Hebrew School, an alternative plan for their Hebrew and Religious School education must be approved by the Rabbi and Director of Education.

Financial Obligations

Partners' financial obligations to the congregation must be in good standing and partners are required to be financially current at least three months prior to the bar or bat mitzvah ceremony. The B'nai Mitzvah Fee, due to rising costs related to the COVID19 pandemic, will be \$1,400.00 per bar or bat mitzvah student as of January 1, 2022. A deposit of half of this B'nai mitzvah fee must be paid when the calendar date is selected. This deposit guarantees the availability of the Rabbi, reserves the CBH Sanctuary and Social Hall, and places the date on the congregational calendar. The remainder of the B'nai mitzvah fee is required six months prior to the date, when the student begins working with the private tutor. Any questions about financial obligations should be addressed with the Executive Director or the Bookkeeper.

Shabbat Service Attendance

Congregation Bet Haverim expects that all bar and bat mitzvah students, accompanied by at least one parent, regularly attend Shabbat services. The attendance requirement supports both students and families in becoming familiar and comfortable with the required prayers and rituals. In addition, becoming bar or bat mitzvah is a celebration for the entire community, one supported by the participation of each of us. During the year preceding the bar or bat mitzvah, students and families are required to attend a minimum of at least twelve Shabbat services. At least six of these services should be on Shabbat morning and families are encouraged to attend both traditional and Gates of Prayer services in order to gain familiarity with their options. It is the responsibility of the student to create a record of Shabbat services attended including the date and location, if not at CBH.

Please find the Shabbat Service Attendance Chart on page 27.

Tutoring

The official period of formal preparation for bar or bat mitzvah begins approximately six months before the scheduled date. During this time, the student will meet with the tutor on a weekly basis. Beginning three months before the date, the student will also meet with the Rabbi. Regular and prompt attendance at all lessons is expected. In addition, daily practice of the prayers, Torah reading, Haftarah, and work on the D'var Torah is expected. If for any reason you need to reschedule a lesson, please do so in advance so that calendars can be adjusted and timelines maintained.

Mitzvah Project

Students will create and complete a mitzvah project under the supervision of the Rabbi. This project will help the students to demonstrate their dedication to tzedakah (righteous giving) and tikkun olam (repairing the world). The Rabbi and Director of Education are available to support families in selecting a project that is meaningful, accessible, and valuable.

Please find the Mitzvah Project Planning Sheet on page 30.

Parent Participation

The process of becoming bar or bat mitzvah requires active parental involvement and participation. Congregation Bet Haverim expects all bar and bat mitzvah students to regularly attend Shabbat services accompanied by at least one parent. Parents are expected to maintain regular communication with both the tutor and Rabbi during their child's preparations. In addition, it is important that parents of the b'nai mitzvah class communicate with each other throughout the year in order to share the joy of these celebratory events and to create a support system.

Continued Education

It is a congregational expectation that students continue their Jewish education with ongoing enrollment in our Religious School, Keshet, and Confirmation classes. Many teens also enjoying active participation in our DRTY youth group as well as our Madrichim (teaching assistant) program.

Shabbat Services Etiquette & Expectations:

At Congregation Bet Haverim, we want all members and guests to feel comfortable and warmly welcomed. It may be helpful to share information with your guests in advance of your celebration.

- a. It is important that you invite all members of your child's class, both the student and their family, to your bar or bat mitzvah service.
- b. Some families invite families of siblings as well as families of children from the grade above or below. As a small congregation, many of our students know each other and enjoy sharing these special occasions.
- c. It is our tradition to include dates of all bar and bat mitzvah services on the Hebrew & Religious School calendar as well as our Teen Calendar. The Rabbi and Director of Education will announce these dates in the weeks preceding your special event.
- d. Appropriate modest attire for a house of worship should be worn.
- e. Cell phones and other electronics should be silenced or turned off before entering the Sanctuary. Cell phones should not be used as recording devices.
- f. At CBH, it is customary for all males to wear a head covering as a sign of respect for the holiness of the Sanctuary. Kippot or yarmulke are provided near the entrance to the sanctuary; many families purchase kippot for their guests. Many women and girls also cover their head.
- g. At CBH, Jewish men and women, over the age of thirteen, are invited to wear a tallit (prayer shawl). Non-Jewish guests should not wear a tallit.
- h. During the service, we will use a Siddur (prayer book) as well as a Chumash (Torah, Five Books of Moses). These books are considered holy and are treated with great respect. They are never to be placed on the floor. Jewish reverence for these holy books is reflected in the tradition of kissing a Siddur or Chumash that has fallen on the floor.
- i. During some parts of the service, worshippers are required to stand. All participants, Jewish and non-Jewish, are expected to stand if they are physically able.
- j. When the Ark is open, while a Torah passage is being read, or during the recitation of the Amidah, as a sign of respect, please do not leave or enter the Sanctuary.

- k. Bowing is done at certain points of the service. Non-Jewish visitors are not expected to participate in the bowing.
- l. Applause is not appropriate at any point during the service.
- m. Photography and attended videography are not permitted during services.
- n. Smoking is not allowed in the Sanctuary or on the CBH campus

Shabbat Morning Service (Saturday):

The Shabbat service celebrating a bar or bat mitzvah is a regular congregational gathering. People will be in attendance not only to honor your family, but also potentially remembering a yahrtzeit (an anniversary of the death of a loved one), mourning a recent loss, or simply enjoying Shabbat. You may also have the opportunity to share the joy of another celebration such as a baby naming or the blessing for an upcoming wedding.

At the beginning of the preparations, families will select to use either the Siddur Hadash or Gates of Prayer Siddur. Either the Rabbi or Director of Education can provide more information and support you in making this decision. With Rabbinic approval, the family may add or modify English readings. Prayers are generally recited in either English or Hebrew, but not both. In addition, with Rabbinic approval, families are encouraged to prepare a booklet welcoming your guests, including explanations of the service, providing transliterations as needed, and potentially adding songs as well as English readings. Sample booklets are available through the CBH Office.

There are four areas of participation for a bar or bat mitzvah during a Shabbat morning service. These include serving as a Shaliach Tzibur (leading the prayers), chanting from the Torah, chanting from the Haftarah, and offering a Dvar Torah (words of teaching based on the weekly portion).

Shaliach Tzibur:

One of the oldest and most prestigious roles in the synagogue is to be the Shaliach Tzibur and to lead the worship. At Congregation Bet Haverim, each bar or bat mitzvah student joins with the Rabbi in this sacred role. Most of the Hebrew prayers for the service are taught during Hebrew School. The basic Hebrew prayers expected of a bar or bat mitzvah include the following:

- Reader's Kaddish
- Barchu
- Yotzer Or
- Shema & V'ahavta
- Mi Chamocha

- Amidah
 - Avot & Imahot
 - G'vurot
 - Kedushah
- V'shamru
- Aleinu
- Adon Olam
- Blessing for putting on a tallit
- Aliyot before and after Torah reading
- Blessings before and after Haftarah reading

K'riat HaTorah (Torah Reading)

Each bar or bat mitzvah assumes the role of a Ba'al/Ba'alat Koreh, a Torah reader. Congregation Bet Haverim maintains the tradition of reading seven aliyot, sections of the Torah reading, during the Shabbat morning service. Aliyot vary in length depending on their content, with three verses being the minimum length for each reading. The bar or bat mitzvah student will learn and chant the Maftir (final) reading and may have the opportunity to prepare additional Torah sections. In addition to the Torah chanting, the bar or bat mitzvah student will also chant the blessings before and after the final aliyah.

Haftarah (Chanting from the Prophets)

Following the chanting of the Torah, the bar or bat mitzvah student will chant from the Haftarah, a selection from the prophetic books of the Bible. The Haftarah is chanted according to a specific set of notes and melodies, related to, but different from the trope used to chant from the Torah. The number of verses to be chanted will be determined by the Tutor, in consultation with the Rabbi. In addition to this reading, the bar or bat mitzvah will chant the blessings before and after the Haftarah.

D'var Torah (Teaching Words of Torah)

After the chanting of the Torah and Haftarah, the bar or bat mitzvah will deliver a summary of the week's Torah portion along with a reflection of its meaning and lessons. This speech is written by the student based on discussions with the Rabbi about the meaning and significance of the text. Many students also share information about their mitzvah project and lessons learned from their volunteer work.



Kabbalat Shabbat Service (Friday Evening):

It is expected that the bar or bat mitzvah student and family attend the Friday evening Kabbalat Shabbat Service. At Congregation Bet Haverim, there are a variety of offerings for Friday night services; more information is available on the CBH calendar or from the Rabbi. The family is generally honored by leading the lighting and blessing of the Shabbat candles during Kabbalat Shabbat. The bar or bat mitzvah will help to lead Hatzi Kaddish, Shema, Va'ahavta, and Amidah; they may also help to lead other prayers if desired. The family is expected to provide an Oneg (refreshments) following the service. Often, families within the B'nai Mitzvah class share responsibilities and coordinate providing the Oneg for each other. The Oneg takes place in the Social Hall and consists of desserts such as cookies, brownies, cupcakes as well as fruit and cheese & crackers. Wine, grape juice, challah, coffee, hot water, and limited tea selections are provided by CBH. Please plan on providing light refreshments for your guests as well as approximately fifteen to twenty other congregants.

Honors & Participation Opportunities:

Participation in the Shabbat service is considered an honor and is an important part of our Jewish worship. A variety of opportunities exist for you to honor your family and friends. Each honor is equally important and requires special preparation. The Rabbi and your tutor will work with each family to answer questions, determine the best options, and prepare honored family and friends. The people receiving honors needs to be well-informed and well-prepared, for their own comfort and to maintain a smooth flow to the service.

As part of your preparations, each family will complete an Honor's Page with all necessary information to ensure a successful service. This sheet should be submitted to the Rabbi at least two weeks prior to the bar or bat mitzvah date. Honors include the following:

Aliyot:

An aliyah (aliyot, plural) is the act of being called up to the Torah to recite the blessings in Hebrew before and after a portion of the Torah is read. Each Shabbat morning service traditionally has seven aliyot, plus the Maftir. The Maftir, a repetition of the seventh aliyah, is reserved for the bar or bat mitzvah. The seventh aliyah is traditionally reserved for the parents, who will then remain standing beside their child for the Maftir aliyah. The first aliyah is reserved for a congregant, often one who has a special occasion to celebrate. The second through sixth aliyot are for family and friends in attendance. Anyone who is Jewish and called for an aliyah is expected to wear a tallit. Men are required to wear a kippah and women are encouraged to wear a kippah or other head covering.

At Congregation Bet Haverim, those honored with an aliyah should be Jewish and post bar or bat mitzvah age. Non-Jewish spouses or partners are welcome to accompany their Jewish partner in these honors on the bimah (prayer stand). Members of the B'nai mitzvah class may be called as a group and all students may recite the blessings.

Torah Reading:

The family is given the honor and opportunity to invite friends and family members to chant from the Torah. Often a parent, grandparent, older sibling, tutor, the Rabbi, the Director of Education or community members are available and delighted to support the bar or bat mitzvah in this manner. All Torah readers must be over the age of thirteen and must read directly from the Torah scroll. The tutor, Rabbi, and Director of Education are all available to help guests prepare Torah readings as well as to find additional Torah chanters if needed. Tutors can make recordings of the Torah readings if requested.

Leading a Song, Prayer, or Reading

Speaking honors can also be given to family and friends in the form of sharing a prayer, poem, or reading. Both Jewish and non-Jewish family and friends may lead these readings, however the Hebrew selections should be reserved for Jewish participants. Sample readings, prayers, and song selections that have been used in the past, are available for your family to review. Please consult with the Rabbi for appropriateness of any alternative selections.

Gabbai

Congregation Bet Haverim is blessed to have community members who serve as a Gabbai (caller to the Torah) on Shabbat morning. This person calls people to the bimah for aliyot and ensures that everything runs smoothly for the Torah Service. Ken Firestein serves as our regular gabbai, though others may be invited to have this honor. Please discuss this honor with the Rabbi, especially if you have any special requests.

Tallit Presentation

It is traditional to present a tallit (prayer shawl) to the bar or bat mitzvah on this special day, the first day that he or she is permitted to wear one. It is appropriate for a family member or close family friend to present the tallit and to share a few brief words. The bar or bat mitzvah will recite the blessing then put on the tallit. Jewish gift stores are available at Mosaic Law Congregation as well as Congregation B'nai Israel in Sacramento; Afikomen in Berkeley is also popular.

Yad Presentation

Some families also present their child with a yad (a special pointer used to guide the Torah reading). This presentation may be similar to that of the tallit and is sometimes given by a sibling.

Generation Passing of the Torah Scroll

When the Torah is removed from the Aron HaKodesh (the holy ark), the family gathers to pass the scroll from generation to generation, symbolizing the transmission of Judaism, its practices and values, from one generation to the next. Non-Jewish parents are invited to pass the Torah to the bar or bat mitzvah in recognition of the important role they play in passing the love of Judaism onto their children.

Hagba'ah & Gelilah (Raising, Dressing the Torah Scroll)

The Magbiah, the person honored with Hagba'ah, will lift the Torah overhead following the last Torah reading. The Gollel/Gollelet, the person honored with Gelilah, will help to put the cover back on the Torah after it is raised.

Opening & Closing of the Torah Ark

The holy ark, housing the Torah, is opened twice during the service and this honor may be assigned to two different groups of people. The first opening occurs at the beginning of the Torah Service with the second opportunity at the conclusion of the service.

Parental Blessings

Towards the end of the service, parents are invited to share brief words of blessing and wisdom with their child.

Please find The Parents' Blessing: A Sacred Opportunity from the Ritual Committee on page 31.

Candy Distributors

Following the reading of the Haftarah, soft, wrapped, non-chocolate candies may be gently showered on the bar or bat mitzvah. This tradition symbolizes our blessings for continued sweetness in their Jewish journey. Many families use Sunkist fruit gels for this tradition.

Participation of Siblings & Children

Siblings and other young children should be given age-appropriate honors such as passing out candy, helping an adult to dress the Torah, or helping an adult to open the Ark. Older siblings are encouraged to participate by reading a Torah portion or reciting an aliyah. If you have any questions about options for honors of siblings and children, please consult with the Rabbi before making assignments.

Participation of Non-Jewish Family & Friends

Congregation Bet Haverim welcomes the participation of your non-Jewish family and friends and will work to honor and celebrate the unique nature of each family. While there are many opportunities for meaningful participation, there are some limitations to their participation in the Shabbat service. Non-Jews may participate in any of the above honors except those rituals involved in the Torah chanting, or reading prayers that are unique expressions of the Jewish faith. In the instance of an interfaith marriage, while both parents are called to the bimah (prayer stand) for an aliyah, only the Jewish parent recites the blessing. An alternative English reading is available for the non-Jewish parent. The non-Jewish grandparents are welcome to stand behind the bar or bat mitzvah during the passing of the Torah, demonstrating their love and support. The Rabbi will work closely with each family to find appropriate and meaningful honors for all family members.

Tzedakah:

Tzedakah, defined as righteous giving, is an important part of Jewish traditions and communal celebrations. Many families decide to make a charitable contribution and encourage guests to do the same in order to honor the bar or bat mitzvah. Families are encouraged to consider a variety of local, national, Jewish and Israel based organizations. Often a suggested tzedakah contribution is related to the mitzvah project. Some suggestions include:

- a. Donate a percentage of food costs to an appropriate organization that supports food supply. One Jewish opportunity is to support MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger.
- b. Make a contribution to Congregation Bet Haverim, directed to a specific area of interest.
- c. Donate a portion or percentage of the bar or bat mitzvah's received gifts to tzedakah. Involving the teen in this decision will acknowledge the responsibility of making tzedakah a priority in their life.
- d. Families may also wish to share their bar or bat mitzvah with a child in the former Soviet Union, Israel, or a child who died in the Holocaust through a twinning program.

Kashrut Dietary Laws:

Any food brought, prepared, or served at Congregation Bet Haverim, including meals prepared by a non-kosher caterer, must be vegetarian, vegan or dairy. Kosher fish, with both fins and scales, such as salmon, tuna and halibut are acceptable. Meat including chicken, beef, shellfish, and fish lacking either scales or fins are not acceptable. It is also important to avoid baked goods or other foods that may contain lard, chicken broth, or beef

fat. Selecting products with kosher packaging labels is an effective way to follow the dietary guidelines required by CBH.

Only kosher wines should be used for ritual purposes, but other wine may be served for refreshment. Please discuss questions concerning the kashrut dietary laws with the Rabbi or Director of Education.

Photography & Videography:

Many families hire a professional photographer to help preserve this special occasion. A photo session may take place the week of the bar or bat mitzvah or on Saturday following the conclusion of the Shabbat service.

Arrangements may be made through the CBH Office for a video recording of the Shabbat morning service. The only audiovisual recording that is permitted during worship is a preset, unattended video camera focused on the bimah. Active video recording or photography is not permitted as it is distracting to the bar or bat mitzvah and disruptive to the spirit of Shabbat. Please inform your guests of this policy.

Decorations; Flowers and Plants in the Sanctuary & Social Hall:

Many families enhance the beauty of Shabbat and the bar or bat mitzvah by purchasing flowers or plants to decorate the bimah in the Sanctuary or to use as centerpieces in the Social Hall. Flowers and plants should be delivered on Friday afternoon. Local florists can easily make arrangements; Costco and Trader Joes may provide additional affordable options. Some families create table decorations that reflect the mitzvah project, such as food baskets or book donations.

Music; Song Leader & Cantorial Resources:

Many families enhance the bar or bat mitzvah celebration by inviting approved individuals to lead or supplement musical parts of the service. Dan Tennebaum and Bob Smith are regular song leaders at Congregation Bet Haverim and may be available. It is customary to pay an additional fee or provide an honorarium for musical services. Contact information is available through the Rabbi or Director of Education. Please work with the Rabbi to coordinate musical participation.

Selecting A B'nai Mitzvah Tutor:

Congregation Bet Haverim has several outstanding approved bar and bat mitzvah tutors including Carrie Shepard, Chani Oppenheim, and Karen Goldstein. Additional tutors may be available; please check with the Rabbi or Director of Education. The B'nai mitzvah fee includes six months of weekly tutoring sessions for thirty minutes each. Some tutors may require additional fees for lessons. Contact information and additional information about tutor fees is available from the Rabbi and Director of Education.

Invitations:

There are many options for creating your invitations including online services such as Zazzle. Some families have professional invitations designed while others prefer electronic invites. Some online invitation sites allow you to track attendance and send reminders.

Please invite the entire b'nai mitvah group, the students in the current Religious School Class, in order to support a sense of community. The invitation should be addressed to both the student and the family. Please be sure to include the Rabbi, Director of Education, Bar/Bat Mitzvah Tutor, and Song Leader (if appropriate) in your invitation list. All guests who attend the Shabbat morning service are invited to the luncheon. If you will be having a separate celebratory gathering later in the weekend, you may wish to send a separate invitation. Again, all students from the current Religious School or Keshet Class should be included.

Glossary of Terms:

Aliyah: literally an ascent. During the Torah service, an aliyah is the call to recite the blessings before and after a Torah reading. During an aliyah, the person being honored is called by his or her Hebrew name as well as the number of the respective aliyah.

example: Sh'lomo ben David Shlishi = Salomon, son of David, [for] the third [aliyah]

Aron HaKodesh: literally the Holy Ark; the cabinet at the front of the sanctuary containing the Torah scrolls.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah: a boy (ben) or girl (bat) who has reached the age of religious responsibility; this term is commonly used in reference to the service and festivities celebrating this occasion; the term B'nai mitzvah refers to two or more children, while the term b'not mitzvah refers specifically to two or more girls

Bimah: a raised platform supporting the desk from which the Torah is read or prayer services are led.

Brachah, Brachot (singular, plural): blessing, blessings.

Challah: braided egg bread, blessed and enjoyed on Shabbat and holidays.

Chumash: the five books of Moses or the Torah, in book form.

Davener: someone praying (davening).

D'var Torah: a brief discussion or sermon of the content and meaning of the week's Torah portion. The D'var Torah given by a bar or bat mitzvah often also includes reflections on the Haftarah and the mitzvah project, thoughts on becoming a bar or bat Mitzvah, and thanks/gratitude to teachers, family, etc.

Gollel, Gollelet (male, female): the person called after the Torah reading to roll and dress the Torah scroll.

Haftarah: a reading from the Prophets, chanted after the weekly Shabbat (or festival) Torah reading and having some thematic relation to the preceding Torah reading.

Kashrut: adherence to ritual dietary laws.

Kiddush: a prayer of sanctification, recited over wine in celebration of Shabbat and festivals.

Maftir: the concluding aliyah of the Torah reading. The Torah reading for the maftir is either a repetition of the seventh aliyah or its last few verses. On festivals or special Shabbatot, the Maftir may be a separate and relevant Torah reading. The person reciting the Maftir aliyah customarily also chants the Haftarah with its blessings.

Magbiah: the person who is called after the Torah reading to raise the Torah scroll from the desk and hold it while it is being rolled up and dressed by the Gollel, Gollelet before it is returned to the ark.

Minyan: ten adult Jews; the required quorum for a complete public worship service.

Mishnah: the part of the Talmud comprising originally oral scriptural interpretations by the rabbis and divided into tractates; examples include Avot, Baba Metzia.

Mitzvah, Mitzvot (singular, plural): religious obligations or commandments.

Oneg Shabbat: literally means Sabbath delight. A social gathering with refreshments after the Shabbat services. Providing the oneg means supplying and arranging food and drink for the reception following services.

Pareve: term referring to kosher foods that are neither dairy nor meat.

Pentateuch: see definition for Chumash.

Rosh Chodesh: the first day of each new Hebrew month.

Sefer: literally means book; the Sefer Torah means the book of Torah and is commonly used to refer to the Torah scroll, written by a Sofer on parchment.

Se'udat mitzvah, Se'udah shel mitzvah: a festive meal in celebration of a religious act such as a bar or bat mitzvah observance.

Siddur: the Jewish prayer book used for daily, Shabbat, and holiday services; during the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, a special prayer book called a Machzor is used.

Simchah: joy or a joyous occasion.

Tallit: prayer shawl, worn during morning worship by men or women of bar or bat mitzvah age or older; also worn by those leading the prayer service at any time.

Talmud: compilation of rabbinic scriptural interpretations, commentaries, and writings; the authoritative source of instruction on traditional observant Jewish living.

Tefillin: phylacteries; two small cubical boxes attached to leather straps and containing scriptural passages on parchment scrolls. During weekday morning prayers, one is placed on the left upper arm, the other on the forehead in literal compliance with the cryptic directions included in the Shema:

“And you shall bind them for a sign on your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes.”

Torah: the five books of Moses, commonly used synonymously with the term Sefer Torah.

Tzedakah: literally righteous giving, commonly used to reference charitable contributions.

Mentor Program:

The Education & Youth Committee is delighted to support families as they prepare by providing a mentor. This may be as simple as a one-time meeting or ongoing support to both the parent and child throughout the process. For more information, or to request a mentor, please contact the Director of Education & Youth.

Vendors & Venues:

Catering Vendors

As with many joyous events, food enhances the celebration. The bar or bat mitzvah family typically provides a dessert Oneg for Kabbalat Shabbat on Friday evening as well as a Kiddush Luncheon on Saturday afternoon. Please plan on including both your invited guests as well as members of the Congregation Bet Haverim community in both your Friday evening Oneg and Saturday afternoon Kiddush Luncheon.

For the Kabbalat Shabbat Oneg, members of the B'nai mitzvah class will often share the responsibility of bringing food. The Oneg takes place in the Social Hall and consists of desserts such as cookies, brownies, cupcakes as well as fruit and cheese & crackers. Wine, grape juice, challah, coffee, hot water, and limited tea selections are provided by CBH.

For the Kiddush Luncheon on Shabbat afternoon, there are several different options. Some families prefer to prepare the food themselves which can be cost effective, but creates additional planning, preparations, and responsibilities. From Costco, for example, you can purchase bagels, lox, cream cheese, salads, hummus, drinks, and cookies.

If you are interested in working with a caterer, you can hire a full-service caterer, a company that will prepare the food, provide service during the event, and clean the kitchen and Social Hall at the end. Another option is purchasing prepared food, from either a caterer or local restaurant, and hiring the Jew Crew to provide service and clean up responsibilities. With any caterer, it is helpful to have a sense of how many people will attend and potential food options. Any professional caterer will have some standard menus that have worked well for bar and bat mitzvah events.

The following caterers have been used in the past, either by CBH families or for F3 Shabbat dinners. While none of these vendors are officially sanctioned, we encourage you to learn more about potential options from families with recent celebrations.

Aharon Catering, Arla Hesterman
Albert Einstein Residence Center, Catering Service
Jenni Brewster, Caterer & Pastry Chef
Chickpeas Kitchen: A Mediterranean Restaurant
Stones Catering
Asante Catering
Sellands Market Catering
Chipolte Catering
Dos Coyotes Catering

The Jew Crew

The Jew Crew is a group of Congregation Bet Haverim teens, who are not officially employed by CBH, but are available for hire to families for special events. The Jew Crew will act as greeters, distribute wine and challah, place tablecloths and centerpieces, set up the buffet, replenish the buffet, and clean the kitchen following the event. Many families hire the Jew Crew with either three or four members for approximately four hours. The Jew Crew works for minimum wage, appreciates tips, and is paid directly by the family. Some families also hire the Jew Crew to help serve at a Shabbat dinner or Sunday brunch at your home. You may contact the Jew Crew at davisjewcrew@gmail.com.

Social Hall Additional Information

When making preparations for food, it is worthwhile to become familiar with the expectations and available resources in the Social Hall. The Office Manager can provide you with a tour, help with your Room Reservation & Set Up Request, and issue a Social Hall key for the weekend of your event. Tablecloths, in a limited range of colors, are available through the Office and must be reserved. Tablecloths must be laundered and returned within the week. Some families purchase disposable table cloths, often available at Party City or Dollar Tree.

There are various items available when using the Social Hall, but it is advisable to check ahead of time so ensure that everything is where you expect it to be. Supplies in the Social Hall include the following:

- Round tables, rectangular tables, chairs
- Tablecloths; limited color selection available
- Plates, both 10" and 8"
- Forks, spoons, and knives
- Serving platters, serving utensils
- Vases in a variety of shapes and quantities

Everything in the Social Hall must be returned as it was found. There is a dishwasher that may be used, but only if you have been given prior permission and instruction. You are welcome to bring food items on Thursday or Friday and leave them in the Social Hall refrigerator. Please clearly label any food items with your family name.

Photography Vendors

Some families hire a professional photographer to help preserve this special occasion. A photo session may take place the week of the bar or bat mitzvah or on Saturday following the conclusion of the Shabbat service.

Arrangements may be made through the CBH Office for a video recording of the Shabbat morning service. The only audiovisual recording that is permitted during worship is a preset, unattended video camera focused on the bimah. Active video recording or photography is not permitted as it is distracting to the bar or bat mitzvah and disruptive to the spirit of Shabbat. Please inform your guests of this policy.

The following photographers have been used in the past by CBH families. While none of these vendors are officially sanctioned, we encourage you to learn more about potential options from families with recent celebrations.

Artistic Focus Photography, Kimberly Olker
Vis A Vis Photography, Julia Aue
Avalos Photography, Dawn & Greg Avalos

Music Vendors

Some families hire a music vendor to enhance either the luncheon celebration, a Saturday evening event, or a Sunday event. There are a variety of options and price ranges including pre-recorded music, a DJ, or a live band. When working with a DJ, you will usually be asked if you want dancing or additional activities including a photo booth, a flip book station, games, and prizes. Many of these things will include an additional cost. If your DJ is leading games, it is worthwhile to clarify if you need to purchase the prizes or if they will be provided. Oriental Trading Company is a good source for inexpensive prizes.

The following musicians have been used in the past by CBH families. While none of these vendors are officially sanctioned, we encourage you to learn more about potential options from families with recent celebrations.

JD the DJ Productions
Buzzardball DJ Entertainment
Steve Schon Function 45
Alan Waltz Entertainment

Celebration Venues

Many families choose to have an additional celebration as part of the bar or bat mitzvah weekend. The Social Hall at CBH may be an option and more information about the cost of rental is available through the Office. If the Social Hall does not meet your needs, there are other options. Because there are limited local options, it is highly recommended that you reserve your venue at least one year in advance. CBH parents offer the following list of considerations:

- How many people will be in attendance? What is the maximum capacity for the space?
- Do you want space for dancing?
- Will your celebration include a havdalah ceremony?
- Do they have a required caterer? What are the catering requirements?
- Is alcohol allowed? If so, may you bring your own or must you purchase it from their distributor?
- Do you need or want to hire a bartender?
- Is a projector and screen available for a slide show?
- Is the location easily accessible to local and out of town guests?
- What time will you be able to arrive to finalize preparations?
- How late will you be allowed to remain at the venue?
- Are there are noise restrictions?
- Are you allowed to light candles, either as decorations or a candle lighting ceremony?
- Is there ample parking?
- Do you need to hire a security guard?
- Who will help to manage the flow of your event?

The following venues have been used in the past by CBH families. While none of these vendors are officially sanctioned, we encourage you to learn more about potential options from families with recent celebrations.

Venues with Inside Facilities:

Congregation Bet Haverim Social Hall
The Odd Fellows Hall

UC Davis; visit their website for information about public rental capacities



Venues with Inside & Outside Facilities:

- Congregation Bet Haverim Social Hall & Redwood Grove
- The Veteran’s Memorial Center
- Putah Creek Lodge
- Buehler Alumni Center
- Stonegate Country Club
- El Macero Country Club

Venues with Outside Facilities:

- Congregation Bet Haverim Redwood Grove
- Putah Creek Winery

Local Lodging Information

There are many places available in Davis to provide lodging for your guests. Most hotels will set aside a block of rooms at a discounted rate if you give them enough notice. Some of the local accommodations include:

- Best Western University Lodge
- Best Western Palm Court
- Aggie Inn
- Hallmark Inn
- Hilton Garden Inn
- Holiday Inn Express & Suites
- Hyatt Place
- LaQuinta Inn & Suites
- Residence Inn
- University Park Inn and Suites

Miscellaneous Advice

The parents of Congregation Bet Haverim are delighted to offer you a few more tidbits of advice as you plan your special occasion. We invite you to add your words of wisdom following your event to continue supporting our families.

- Some families provide a greeting book at the luncheon for guests to sign in and provide a congratulatory message.
- Some families provide a decorated box or basket at the luncheon for guests to place envelopes for the bar or bat mitzvah. It is wise to have this area located well inside the doorway of the Social Hall. If you would like a gift table, be sure to include this on your Social Hall Reservation & Set Up Form.
- It may be helpful to provide seating assignments and cards, especially for a more formal evening or Sunday event.



Blessing Before Torah Reading (Aliyah)

*Ascend to lectern and stand on the Torah reader's right side.
Touch Torah with tallit, kiss tallit, and recite blessing.*

Bar'chu et Adonai ham'vo-rach.

בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יְיָ הַמְּבָרֵךְ.

Congregation responds then you continue.

Baruch Adonai ham'vo-rach l'o-lam va'ed.

בָּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבָרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha-olam,
Asher ba-char ba-nu me-kol ha-ameem

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים

V'na-tan la-nu et Tor-a-to

וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ.

Baruch Atah Adonai No-tayn Ha-Torah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

Praise the One to whom our praise is due.

Praised be the One to whom our praise is due, now and for ever.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe: You have called us to Your service by giving us the Torah. We praise You, O God, Giver of the Torah.

Blessing After Torah Reading

Upon completion of reading, touch Torah text with tallit, kiss, and recite blessing.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha-olam,

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

Asher na-tan la-nu Tor-at eh-met

אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת,

V'Cha-yei o-lam na-ta b'to-chei-nu

וַחַיֵּי עוֹלָם נָטַע בְּתוֹכֵנוּ.

Baruch Atah Adonai no-tayn Ha-Torah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, You have given us a Torah of truth, implanting within us eternal life. We praise You, O God, Giver of the Torah.

Move to other side of the lectern; remain during the next aliyah and Torah reading.



Shabbat Morning Honors List

During the Shabbat morning service, you will have the opportunity to honor family members and friends by having them participate in the service. As part of the preparations, you will need to assign the following participation honors and gather the following information.

Gabbai: The Gabbai calls people to the Torah to recite the blessings. Ken Firestein is the regular Gabbai at Congregation Bet Haverim and may be contacted at kenfirestein@gmail.com. You are also welcome to make arrangements for a different Gabbai for your special occasion.

Aliyot: An aliyah is when someone is called to the Torah to recite the blessings before and after the reading. The first aliyah is saved for a member of the congregation. In order to call someone for an aliyah, you will need the following information: English name, Hebrew name, their father's and mother's Hebrew names.

Torah Readings: There will be eight readings from the Torah and the Maftir (final reading) will be chanted by the bar or bat mitzvah. All Torah readings must be chanted from the actual Torah. Parents, siblings who have already become bar or bat mitzvah, friends and family members are all welcome to learn a Torah reading. The Rabbi, Director of Education and your B'nai Mitzvah tutor may be available to read from the Torah.

| | English Name | Hebrew Name | Relationship | Torah Reader |
|---|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| First Aliyah <i>saved for congregant</i> | | | | |
| Second Aliyah | | | | |
| Third Aliyah | | | | |
| Fourth Aliyah | | | | |
| Fifth Aliyah | | | | |
| Sixth Aliyah | | | | |
| Seventh Aliyah <i>saved for parents</i> | | | | |
| Maftir Aliyah <i>saved for bar bat mitzvah</i> | | | | |
| Hagba'ah <i>raising the Torah scroll</i> | | | | |
| Gelilah <i>dressing the Torah scroll</i> | | | | |
| Ark Opening <i>taking Torah out</i> | | | | |
| Ark Opening <i>returning Torah</i> | | | | |
| English Readings | | | | |



Mitzvah Project Worksheet & Report

As part of your preparations for becoming a bar or bat mitzvah, each student will complete a Mitzvah Project. This project will help you demonstrate your dedication to tzedakah (righteous giving) and tikkun olam (repairing the world). There are many possible options and the Rabbi and Director of Education are available to help you and your family in selecting a project that is meaningful, accessible, and valuable.

The following questions will help guide your decisions, reflections, and impact:

What are two or three goals that you would like to accomplish through your mitzvah project?

Why is this work important to you?

What potential resources such as organizations or people may be available to support your project?

Please describe your mitzvah project. What will you be doing? Who will benefit? How much time will it take to do this work? Will others be involved in your project?

Will there be a fundraising element related to your mitzvah project? If so, how much money will need to be raised? How will you generate this income?

Please describe your experience of working on your mitzvah project. What did you learn? What was one of the challenges? What did you most enjoy? What surprised you about your work?

Ideally your mitzvah project will be completed before the date of your bar or bat mitzvah celebration, however many students and families are inspired to continue with this work. Please sign and return this completion contract and return to the Rabbi.

Bar, Bat Mitzvah Name _____

Bar, Bat Mitzvah Signature _____

Date of Completion _____



The Parents' Blessing: A Sacred Opportunity

We are delighted to share this advice and information from the CBH Ritual Committee in support of your preparation of your Parents' Blessing.

As parents, we know that our words have great power. Early on, we name, shape and create our children's world through the words we use to describe life around them. Once again, with the Parents' Blessing, you have the sacred opportunity to illuminate a path, share cherished values and offer words of wisdom that will help guide your children into their future Jewish lives.

The parents' prayer is intended to be a brief powerful blessing to your children as they enter the adult Jewish community with a new sense of responsibility and potential. As such, it should deal with sacred and eternal themes that relate to ethics, spirituality, and Judaism. Here are some guidelines to help you raise up this holy moment of transition and transformation:

- Speak directly to your children. Your remarks are meant for them, to inspire and bless them. We, the congregation, are privileged to be able to listen in, if you choose to share them out loud. You may speak just to your child while standing at the bimah. But don't forget that the community is also in attendance. Please keep your words of blessing concise, limiting your remarks to 250 words per adult. That's one side of a page, typed, double-spaced.
- Speak in the moment. It is not so important what you remember about the past, particularly about when your children were born, or about some moment in their childhood. They are being asked to assume adult responsibilities; speak to who they are now, and who they might yet become. Your hope for their lives as Jews is an excellent subject.
- Remember that this is a blessing, not a speech. Reach for your own sense of what it means to be a Jew, what inspires you, and transform that into a blessing, a hope, a wish for your child.

You may want to choose one of rich areas or topics to explore and frame your blessing:

- What do you want your child to remember of this day?
- Which of your child's spiritual and/or moral qualities do you want to reinforce and affirm?
- What do you hope for your child's Jewish future?
- In your child's Torah or haftarah portion, what verse or teaching speaks to you?
- What are the sacred traditions in your own family?
- For whom was your child named? What special qualities did that person have?
- What is important in your family's Jewish story or background?

In the end, remember that this is a beautiful and powerful moment to share the Torah of your family's life with your children; words that you hope they will keep in their hearts for many years to come.