

BAR/BAT MITZVAH ORIENTATION

PART 1: THE JOURNEY BEGINS



Additional Information:

<http://www.bethrishon.org/youtheducation/bneimitzvahfamilies.html>

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The Journey Begins...

As your child begins Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparations, we encourage you to think of this process as a journey instead of a destination. It began for your child years ago with learning to read Hebrew; it will pass as a milestone when they stand before their family and community to chant their Haftaret; and hopefully, it will continue as a foundation for their Jewish connection for the rest of their lives.

This journey can impact the entire family as much as the student. The preparations to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Beth Rishon are designed to enable you, as well as your child, to fully appreciate the spiritual significance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah day. Our hope is that as a result of this process, you and your family will have a stronger connection to Judaism and to the Beth Rishon community as a whole.

As you go through this process, we encourage you take part in your child's preparations by accompanying them to their lessons and joining them at Saturday morning services. You will be amazed how much significance these simple acts will bring to your entire family on the day your child becomes a Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

Here at Beth Rishon, a support team is in place to help you at every step along the way. Assistance is given by Rabbi Emert, Cantor Mamber, Judy Ackerman, Gonen Arad (TBR Religious School Director), our Cantorial and Rabbinic Interns as well as your child's teachers. You can also contact Susan Yacavone, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Liaison from the TBR Ritual Committee, at any time if you have questions (susan@yacavone.net or 973-942-1576).

This packet contains information you need to begin this journey. Please read it through carefully and keep it for future reference. A second packet will be distributed to you further along in the process and additional information is available for download on our website at the address below.

Reading Recommendation:

We highly recommend the book, **Putting God on the Guest List**, by Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin as a resource for reclaiming the spiritual meaning of your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

**All Bar/Bat Mitzvah Resources can be found
by going to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Families tab which is
under the Education tab at www.bethrishon.org or go directly to:**

<http://www.bethrishon.org/youtheducation/bneimitzvahfamilies.html>

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

Religious School: To be eligible for Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Temple Beth Rishon, your child must successfully complete five years of Religious School (3rd grade - 7th grade), or its equivalent, as determined by Rabbi Emert, Cantor Mamber, and Gonen Arad, TBR Religious School Director.

*** Please note that families are required to register for, have their child participate in, and pay for the 7th grade of Religious School regardless of where in the school year the student's Bar/Bat Mitzvah falls.**

Shabbat Service Attendance: It is very important that all 6th and 7th grade students and their families are familiar, and comfortable with, both the Friday evening and Saturday morning services. Both Friday evening and Shabbat morning services should be attended as often as possible and are especially encouraged in the months leading up to the student's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. **It is especially important to attend services during the winter and summer months when there are no Bar/Bat Mitzvah services and the students get an opportunity to participate in the service and practice their prayers.**

Each child should dress in appropriate clothing for attendance at services and conduct themselves in a respectful manner. **Use of cell phones, gaming devices or texting is expressly prohibited.** Parents are encouraged to attend these services with their child whenever possible.

Assignments: Your child is required to complete all assignments specified by the Rabbi, Cantor and Judy Ackerman during their private sessions with your child and they are expected to spend whatever time necessary to study in between lessons.

Tzedek (Social Justice) Project: It is required for your child to complete a Tzedek Project specifically chosen in honor of his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah. It could be anything that has meaning for them or opens them up to service and tikkun olam (repair of the world) on any level. If needed, the Rabbinic Intern can provide your child with guidance to find a Tzedek Project that uses his/her talents and interests to touch the lives of others. It is suggested that your child begin work on their project approximately 6-8 months before their Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Speeches: Each student will prepare two (2) short speeches to be given at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The first one summarizes their Haftarah and Torah portions and makes a meaningful connection between them. The second one is a personal statement reflecting on the meaning of the student's Bar/Bat Mitzvah to them, includes mention of their particular Tzedek Project and also offers thanks to the people who helped them. Your child will have two separate meetings with the Rabbinic Intern: The first meeting will be held approximately 12 months before their Bar/Bat Mitzvah to discuss the themes of their Haftarah and Torah portions. The second one will be held approximately 3-4 months prior to their Bar/Bat Mitzvah to begin the writing process for both speeches. **It is expected that a parent will attend both of these meetings with their child.**

THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH PREPARATION TEAM

Your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah Preparation Team is anchored by Rabbi Emert, Cantor Mamber, and Judy Ackerman. Their roles are as follows:

RABBI EMERT'S ROLE

email: kae9999@aol.com

Individual Appointments: Rabbi Emert is responsible for teaching your student prayers for the Shabbat morning and Friday evening services. Your child will meet privately with him, or a student tutor, by appointment approximately 6-8 months prior to their Bar/Bat Mitzvah and continue right up to the final week. You will be contacted by the Temple Office as to when these appointments begin.

Parent Outreach: At approximately 1-4 months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date, Rabbi Emert will schedule an individual appointment with parents in order to develop a personal relationship with each family and to address specific questions and personal concerns.

CANTOR MAMBER'S ROLE

email: cantor@bethrishon.org

The First Appointment:

Lessons will begin with the Cantor approximately twelve months prior to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. *** At the first meeting with the Cantor, the student will be expected to chant the Torah and Haftarah blessings.** These blessings are taught in Religious School but depending on when in the year your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah falls, they might need to learn them on their own. If so, mp3 files can be found on our website, www.bethrishon.org, under TBR Tunes, if needed. When successfully completed, the Cantor will give the student a recording and print-out of their Haftarah so the student may begin learning it. *** If the student doesn't know the blessings at this time, he/she will not receive their Haftarah until the Cantor is informed by Judy Ackerman that the skills have been acquired.**

During this initial meeting, the student will also receive an orientation of the coming expectations and assignments. **Parents are encouraged to attend this first session with the Cantor along with all subsequent sessions to become aware of the expectations and progress, and be a part of the process.**

JUDY ACKERMAN'S ROLE

email: powhatan_35@yahoo.com

After the students have received their materials from Cantor Mamber, Mrs. Ackerman will explain the trope (the musical symbols that depict the tune). She will color code the printed Haftarah so that the students are able to see the patterns and repetitions in the chant. Subsequent lessons will include reviewing and polishing what has been learned as well as learning new verses. The same procedure will be followed for the Maftir (this is the last segment of the Torah reading of the week which the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student usually chants) and any other Torah portions. Occasionally a student requires additional help. In these instances Mrs. Ackerman can provide further instruction at an hourly rate, or the family can work with a tutor of their choosing.

ADDITIONAL TEACHERS

TBR Religious School Director, Gonen Arad, the TBR Cantorial and Rabbinic Interns and other student instructors, are available to provide additional tutoring, assistance with prayer classes and help for your child to understand their Torah and Haftarah portions.

LEARNING THE HAFTARAH AND TORAH PORTIONS

Cantor Mamber will give the students their initial instructions in the chanting of their Haftarah and Torah portions whereas subsequent tutoring sessions will take place with Judy Ackerman. Appointments with the Cantor will be scheduled throughout the process to review the student's progress.

Each child will begin their training by studying the Haftarah, which can take up to three months to master. After successfully completing the Haftarah, the student will be assigned their Maftir portion, which usually takes about a month to learn completely. When those have been learned and successfully completed, the student may receive other short Torah readings from his/her weekly Torah portion. By completing the Haftarah and Maftir, the student earns the privilege of chanting additional Torah readings. Your student, or members of the family, are encouraged to learn as many of these readings as time permits.

Lessons with the Cantor and Judy:

During the first few months, lessons with the Cantor and Judy are spaced further apart and as the date approaches, lessons are more frequent and longer. Each child will receive a variety of materials during the Bar/Bat Mitzvah training process, which should be brought to each and every lesson. These include the Hebrew text and recordings of their Haftarah and Maftir and weekly progress report forms to update each person on the preparation team. Most students prefer to transfer these materials to a loose-leaf notebook for easy reference.

Bima Sessions:

Approximately 2-3 months prior to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah date, they begin bima sessions with the Cantor and Judy. Usually 6 bima sessions are scheduled - 4 with the Cantor and 2 with Judy. Judy's 2 bima sessions are about an hour long, and they encompass reviewing and working on the Torah service. Bima sessions with the Cantor are full rehearsals which include going over the entire Shabbat Evening and Morning services as well as the full Torah service and can last as long as 90 minutes. At one of these bima sessions during the final weeks of preparation, the practice will be recorded onto a DVD which the student is expected to review and evaluate with the parents in order to benefit their presentation skills.

Parents and siblings are encouraged to attend the bima sessions, since their roles and responsibilities during the services will be reviewed and practiced as well. When other family members are honored with Torah readings, they can get assistance from Judy if needed.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT AND FAMILY

STUDENT'S ROLE

Studying: The student is expected to devote a considerable amount of time to studying between lessons.

Attendance at Off-Season Services: Students are expected to attend as many off-season Shabbat services as possible. During these winter and summer services, since no Bar/Bat Mitzvah is scheduled, students are called upon to lead parts of the service. These are ideal opportunities for your student to practice.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service:

According to their ability, and at the discretion of the Rabbi and Cantor, each student may be responsible for the following during their Bar/Bat Mitzvah service:

- Participation in the Friday evening Shabbat service while sitting on the bima
- Leading the worship service for the Saturday morning Shabbat service
- Explanation of their Haftarah reading addressed to the congregation
- Blessings before and after the Torah reading
- Chanting from one to eight Torah readings
- Blessings before and after the Haftarah
- Chanting the Haftarah portion
- Personal Reflection directed to the congregation

FAMILY'S ROLE

The entire family is part of the preparation process.

Parents are responsible for the following:

- Ushering for at least one (1) Shabbat morning service
- Attending a minimum of four (4) Shabbat morning services with your child

Parent Ushering:

Being an usher for at least one (1) Shabbat morning service is required of ALL parents of Bar/Bat Mitzvah students. You will be contacted by the TBR Ritual Committee via email with your assigned dates and will also be provided with instructions. Not only will ushering enable you to observe details of the service from a different perspective, but both your fellow Bar/Bat Mitzvah families and TBR rely on your assistance. Please plan to arrive at the synagogue at 9:45 AM and remain until the end of services.

Your ushering assignment will take place approximately 6 weeks - 1 month prior to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.

Attending Services: Attending services together enables students and parents to become familiar and comfortable with the service, and creates a bond that makes a profound difference in how you all experience your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah day. If a parent would like assistance with learning prayers or brushing up on their Hebrew, please call the Temple office or the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Liaison.

Family Participation: Siblings will be asked to join the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student on the bima during the Shema and V'ahavtah prayers for the Saturday morning Shabbat service. In addition, parents, family members and friends are encouraged to read a portion of Torah at their child's service if they have the ability to do so. The Cantor will provide recordings and print-outs of each portion, and will need to hear a recitation before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date to assess readiness.

RESCHEDULING LESSONS

You can help to assure your child's success by encouraging them to study the assignments. Please arrive at lessons promptly and be prepared. If you must miss a lesson with the Rabbi, the Cantor or Judy, please call the Temple office early so that another child can fill the spot and your child can be rescheduled. Our preparation team is tightly scheduled and rescheduling a lesson is usually necessary to cover the content. If your child misses a lesson or you cancel too late to reschedule, there may be a charge for additional lessons, if needed, beyond those originally scheduled. The Rabbi will judge your child's readiness. If for some reason your child is not prepared to succeed, then a postponement of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date may be necessary to provide additional time.

Students who do not show up to scheduled lessons without prior notification will be charged \$65 per missed lesson.

PRACTICAL MATTERS

Building Rental:

We encourage our members to have their simcha in our building. This not only ties the celebration to the ceremony, but it also supports our community. Should you be interested in having your celebration at the Temple, please contact the office for a building rental packet and further information, and we thank you.

Finances:

All fees, dues and building fund moneys must be fully paid three (3) months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. If you have any questions about your status, please feel free to call our Treasurer.

Your Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee of \$1,500 includes:

- Bar/Bat Mitzvah lessons with the Rabbi, Cantor, and Judy Ackerman.
- DVD recording of the Bar Mitzvah Service.
- Standard Friday night Oneg Shabbat and Saturday morning Kiddush.

Please Note: In addition, families are required to register for, have their child participate in, and pay for the 7th grade of Religious School regardless of where in the school year the student's Bar/Bat Mitzvah falls.