

# מדריך להיות בר/בת מצוה

***Bar/Bat Mitzvah Handbook***

***2015-16***



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**700 Sweet Home Road, Buffalo, NY 14226  
805 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209  
716.836.6565**

## Table of Contents

|                                                                       |       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Message from Rabbis Pokras and Scheldt -----                          | 1     |
| Messages from Cantor Penny S. Myers and Susan G. Schwartz ----        | 2     |
| Meaning and History of <i>Bar/Bat Mitzvah</i> -----                   | 3     |
| What is expected of a Temple Beth Zion <i>Bar/Bat Mitzvah</i> ? ----- | 4-5   |
| Religious School                                                      |       |
| Continuing Education                                                  |       |
| <i>Bar/Bat Mitzvah</i> Projects                                       |       |
| Service Attendance                                                    |       |
| Torah Study with the Rabbis and Tutoring                              |       |
| <i>Bar/Bat Mitzvah</i> Preparation Timeline -----                     | 6-7   |
| Hebrew Assessment                                                     |       |
| Family <i>Shabbatonim</i>                                             |       |
| Beginning study                                                       |       |
| Hebrew and Prayer Competency -----                                    | 8     |
| Outline of Hebrew Liturgy -----                                       | 9     |
| <i>Mitzvah</i> Project -----                                          | 10    |
| Parents' Role -----                                                   | 11-14 |
| Parents' Blessing-----                                                | 15    |
| Frequently Asked Questions -----                                      | 16-18 |
| Temple Beth Zion is Here to Help -----                                | 19    |
| Bar/Bat Mitzvah Contract -----                                        | 20    |

**Mazal Tov!**

Dear Student:

Becoming a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* is a journey of just that: *becoming*. It is not merely a moment in time, something that eventually will already have happened and is finished ... it is a beginning. *Becoming* a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is more than reaching a new stage of life, it is reaching a new state of *being*, and it is always current, always today, always with us. It is the *unfolding* of all it means to be who and where you are, a young man or woman about to become a full-fledged member of the congregation of Israel. It is a new step in your never-ending search for, and exploration of, your relationship with G-d, our people, our traditions and our customs. It is the *creation* of the new and deeper partnership between you and the Eternal to change our world. In other words, it is full entry into the sacred *brit*, the Covenant: the way we live out our Jewish lives every single day.

As your rabbis, we look forward to sharing moments filled with thoughtfulness and humor, searching and holiness, discovery and celebration, as *together* we travel on your road to *becoming*...

L'Shalom,



Rabbi Gary Pokras

and



Rabbi Adam Scheldt

Dear Student:

I am looking forward to welcoming you to the *B'nai Mitzvah* tutoring process at Temple Beth Zion. Throughout the months ahead we will work together as partners, you will prepare for your *bar* or *bat mitzvah*, as well as explore the ways in which you would like to begin living as a Jewish adult. Through our study of the prayers, Torah and Haftarah you will be able to forge meaningful personal connections to Judaism. I will help you to discover how those connections can influence the way you view the world. I look forward to getting to know you and your family, and feel privileged to be part of this momentous year in your life.

להתראות (l'*hitraot* – until next we meet),



Cantor Penny S. Myers

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Dear Student,

The experience of becoming a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* will stay with you for a lifetime. It is unlikely that any of us who have had the experience will ever forget it. One of the many goals of our religious school is to make this experience comfortable and meaningful by providing you with the background and knowledge you need.

Our teachers' efforts and our curriculum design enable students to participate more fully in the process of becoming a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*, and to experience the power of the transition between Jewish childhood and Jewish adulthood. *B'nai Mitzvah* is just the beginning of a lifelong pursuit of Jewish knowledge. Your teachers and I look forward to continuing the journey with you (through our pre-confirmation and Confirmation programs).



Susan Goldberg Schwartz  
Director of Lifelong Learning

## The Meaning and History of Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Translated literally as “son/ daughter of the commandment,” *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is a coming of age – a profoundly important moment in the cycle of life. In Judaism, a life-cycle event is a ceremony which marks a change in a person’s covenantal status. *Brit Milah* and baby naming mark the entry of a new soul into the Jewish covenant. A Jewish wedding marks the beginning of a new Jewish family, and *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is all about being ready to take responsibility for upholding our end of the *brit*, our sacred agreement with G-d.

*Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is not mentioned in the Bible, but in the third century Rabbi Judah ben Tema taught in the *Mishnah*, “A 13 year old is obligated to fulfill [all] the commandments.”<sup>1</sup> Judah ben Tema also said that this readiness came after a child had studied the Bible and the teachings of the rabbis, so that becoming an adult was the culmination of a particular educational process.

Until recent times, young men and women at 13 years of age worked full-time to help support their families. People were often married by age 16, parents at 18 or 19, and many died before their 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was under these circumstances that the *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony evolved. The first historical record of a *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony dates back to the Middle Ages in the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century. By the 1700’s the custom of celebrating a boy’s becoming *Bar Mitzvah* became widely accepted in the Jewish world. At first, all festivities were held in the boy’s home, and a modest meal might be served after the synagogue service. But with the passage of time the festive family meal grew into an elaborate party, and often, lavish banquets were held in the public halls of larger towns. The leaders of the Jewish community in Cracow, Poland, were so aroused at this that in 1595 they placed a tax on such celebrations to keep them from becoming extravaganzas. They feared, as do many of us today, that the religious significance of becoming a *Bar Mitzvah* would be dwarfed in importance by the sumptuous party given after the service.

Since neither the Bible nor the Talmud give any specific rules for the *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony, customs varied from place to place. Each Jewish community adopted practices that made sense to it. In most *Ashkenazi* congregations (especially in Eastern Europe), a Jewish boy wore a *tallit* (prayer shawl) for the first time on the occasion of his becoming a *Bar Mitzvah*. In many *Sephardi* (Mediterranean) communities, however, a man could not put on a *tallit* until he was married. In 17<sup>th</sup> century Germany, the *Bar Mitzvah* vowed to donate a pound of wax for candles to light the synagogue; in Morocco the teacher and not the youngster was given gifts in honor of the occasion. In all instances, however, the highlight of the ceremony occurred when the boy was called to read from the *Torah*.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan (founder of Reconstructionist Judaism) officiated over the first ever *Bat Mitzvah*, who happened to be his daughter. In the years that followed, *Bat Mitzvah* ceremonies for girls became as common as *Bar Mitzvah* ceremonies for boys. Reform Judaism in the United States equalized the ceremonies so that girls and boys are asked to fulfill the same spiritual requirements and to conduct the same portions of the service. It is a beautiful moment in the life of the family and the child, as well as for the community. Indeed, throughout its history, the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* celebration has always been seen as a major community event. Therefore, we are all encouraged to attend every celebration of becoming *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*.

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<sup>1</sup> *Pirkei Avot*, 5:21

### What Is Expected of a Temple Beth Zion Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

No one ever said that *becoming* a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is easy or simple, but the rewards are sweet indeed. Becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is not a right, but a status to be earned. At Temple Beth Zion we are proud of the excellent preparation we provide our students and of the young men and women who engage this process. We hope that every family will choose to celebrate this stage of life, but choosing this path means making a commitment: a personal covenant between the student, the family and the synagogue. All of us must contribute towards this special undertaking in order to guarantee the maturation and spiritual meaning that result from this *becoming*. To safeguard the beauty and meaning of Bar/Bat Mitzvah and to best assure each student's success, Temple Beth Zion has instituted the following religious and educational policies:

#### **Religious School**

Students who wish to become Bar/Bat Mitzvah must complete at least four consecutive years of religious school at Temple Beth Zion *before* the ceremony. If a student's family has not been a member of Temple Beth Zion for those years, evidence of equivalent training at another religious school or an alternative learning program must be presented to the rabbi. **The candidate must be a student in "good standing"** at our religious school and it is hoped that the student will continue formal religious education through confirmation.

A student in "good standing" means:

1. You are registered in the Religious School, and have satisfied all academic and attendance requirements through the year of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
2. You will continue to meet the Shabbat *and* Religious School Worship attendance requirements (as detailed in the Religious School Policy materials – if you do not have a copy please contact Susan Goldberg Schwartz for more information).

#### **Continuing Education**

We ask each candidate for Bar/Bat Mitzvah to make a personal commitment to continue their religious education through Confirmation (10<sup>th</sup> grade).

#### **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Projects**

In addition to the observance of a few central *mitzvot* during the course of Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation, you will complete a year long community-service project to be determined in consultation with the clergy team and Director of Lifelong Learning Susan Goldberg Schwartz.

## Service Attendance

Attendance at a minimum of ten (10) community Shabbat services at Temple Beth Zion during the 12 months prior to the ceremony is required. This requirement includes evening or daytime *Shabbat* services, but not the High Holy Days or family services. **We strongly urge that service attendance be a family activity and therefore at least one parent or guardian should attend each service with you.**

## Torah Study with the Rabbis and *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Tutoring:

Approximately 10-12 months before the ceremony, you and your parents will meet with Rabbi Pokras for three individual sessions to become acquainted with the process of becoming *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. You will then set up appointments to study the *Torah and Haftarah* portion with one of the rabbis. While the number of sessions varies with each student, at least six to eight sessions may be anticipated. Parents are invited and strongly encouraged to participate fully in these sessions with students. Parents who engage in the process become powerful role models, and are able to provide the support at home necessary for students to succeed. Also, full participation helps the whole family develop a meaningful relationship with the clergy at Temple Beth Zion.

You will also attend one-on-one tutoring sessions with Cantor Penny Myers to learn the liturgy, *Torah* and *Haftarah* portions beginning eight months prior to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. At least one parent is also expected to attend these sessions. You will be contacted by Tina Taylor, the clergy assistant, when it is time to begin tutoring.

## Students with Special Needs

TBZ is dedicated to the inclusion and ritual participation of all congregants. If you have concerns about your child's ability to participate in any parts of the preparation process or service please let us know. We will schedule a meeting with you and our professional team to determine the best ways we can work with you and your child to create a meaningful *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* experience.

## **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Preparation Timeline**

### **Hebrew Assessment**

Approximately 16 months before your date, one of our TBZ educators will meet with you to do an assessment of your Hebrew reading skill. This assessment will allow us to ensure that you receive any additional support or extra tutoring that might be necessary to assure you of a successful and positive *bar/bat mitzvah* experience.

### **Family Shabbatonim**

Before you begin your study, you and your family will be invited to attend a Shabbat gathering with other *b'nai mitzvah* families during your 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade years, building community through learning and prayer. Here you will learn more about the process, speak with the clergy who will be working with you, receive your study materials and have an opportunity to have your questions answered.

### **Beginning your study**

Approximately 11 to 12 months before your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, you will be contacted by Tina, the clergy assistant, to schedule several meetings with Rabbi Pokras to discuss and begin study of your *Torah* and *haftarah* portions. In addition, you will work with the rabbis to prepare a *d'var torah* (mini-sermon) to teach the congregation about your portion on the day of your *simcha* (celebration).

Tutoring sessions with Cantor Penny Myers will begin about three months after your meetings with the rabbi. Please understand that while we will do everything we can to find you a convenient time we cannot always accommodate everyone's schedules. If the assigned time does not fit your schedule, please feel free to contact another family that you may want to switch times with and then notify Tina Taylor of the change. During sessions with Cantor Penny Myers, you will have the opportunity to study and learn the liturgy, *Torah* and *haftarah* portions.

It is your responsibility to keep scheduled appointments with all the educators on your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* preparation team. If you must cancel an appointment, please contact Tina, the clergy assistant, as soon as possible at 836-6565. Please keep in mind that schedules are tight and changes can be difficult. Please make every effort to keep to scheduled appointment times.



### **B'nei Mitzvah Timeline**

This timeline is a *guideline* and it begins approximately 12 months prior to B'nei Mitzvah date unless there is a block of time (greater than 2 consecutive weeks) when child will be unavailable for lessons i.e. summer camp, vacation, etc..

| <b>WHEN (prior)</b> | <b>WHAT</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11-12 Months        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* 3 Orientation appts w/ Rabbi Pokras</li><li>* Begin attending required Shabbat services</li></ul>                                                                                          |
| 10 Months           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Meet w/ Rabbis 6-8 sessions to comprehend Torah portion</li><li>* Meet with Susan Schwartz (3X) for Mitzvah Project</li></ul>                                                              |
| 8 Months            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Begin weekly tutoring w/ a member of clergy team to <i>review</i> prayers/blessings</li></ul>                                                                                              |
| 6-7 Months          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Meet with rabbi (2X) to study Haftarah portion</li></ul>                                                                                                                                   |
| 4-6 Months          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Completion of prayers/ Begin chanting Torah portion</li></ul>                                                                                                                              |
| 2-4 Months          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Torah without vowels/Begin chanting Haftarah portion</li><li>* Clergy review of progress</li></ul>                                                                                         |
| 1-2 Months          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Transition to using siddur (prayer book)</li><li>* Assign readings/chatimot</li><li>* Work on bima presence</li><li>* Completed B'nei Mitzvah Info sheet returned to Tina Taylor</li></ul> |
| 1 Month             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* (3) rehearsals at our DELAWARE building w/both parents</li></ul>                                                                                                                           |

*\*Please note this is only a guideline, certain adjustments will be made in an effort to accommodate the needs of your child\**

**MAZAL TOV !  
from your Temple Beth Zion family**

Have questions? Please contact Tina Taylor at **716.836.6565 ext. 132** or **tina@tbz.org**

## **Hebrew and Prayer Competency**

At Temple Beth Zion, we work hard to help *every* child feel comfortable and competent with the *siddur* (prayerbook) and with Jewish prayer. We have carefully tailored our educational program by combining different approaches to learning in order to meet this goal. In addition to formal Hebrew instruction, our students also encounter prayer through an informal liturgical music program, special worship services held during religious school hours, and Religious School classes' participation in Shabbat services. As a result, our students are able to learn and ultimately experience the richness of our tradition as it has been passed from generation to generation.

Building on the Hebrew and prayer basics taught in the younger grades, our students begin reading Hebrew in grade three. Each year, new layers are added, and students' abilities flourish. It is our goal to give our students the tools and knowledge needed to achieve an acceptable level of fluency by the **end of sixth grade**.

## **How will I be involved in leading the community in Prayer?**

Leading the congregation as you become a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* is not a performance, nor an opportunity to show off your Hebrew and text skills, but rather an opportunity for a profound spiritual encounter. As a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* candidate at Temple Beth Zion, you will not only benefit from learning about the mechanics of prayer, but will also explore the personal connections you can develop *through* prayer. Together with your teachers, your educational experience will include delving into the text and its meanings, conscious intellectual grappling, and questioning and answering in a give and take of purposeful exchange. As a result, we hope you will begin to realize and strengthen your personal spiritual connections to your tradition, community, innermost self and G-d on new and exciting levels. There is a lot of work to do, not only learning how to read and chant the liturgy but also how to wrap yourself in its meaning. When the day comes to lead, you will be able to share your own understanding of what our sages have passed on to us, and thereby be a blessing to all who are fortunate enough to share in your *simcha* (celebration).

**Outline of the Hebrew Liturgy You Will Lead in**  
**Mishkan T'fillah**

*Morning Service*

| <b>Page</b> | <b>Prayer</b>                                                                                |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5           | Shabbat Evening <i>Kiddush</i>                                                               |
| 72          | Blessing for <i>Tallit</i> (for those who will don a <i>Tallit</i> on their Bar/Bat Mitzvah) |
| 80          | Daily Miracles                                                                               |
| 86          | Blessing for the study of <i>Torah</i>                                                       |
| 110         | <i>Yotzeir</i> -Creation (optional)                                                          |
| 114-6       | <i>Shema</i> and <i>V'ahavta</i>                                                             |
| 126         | <i>Avot v'Imahot</i>                                                                         |
| 128         | <i>Gevurot</i>                                                                               |
| 137         | <i>R'tzei</i> (optional)                                                                     |
| 250         | Blessing, before and after reading of <i>Torah</i>                                           |
| 254         | Blessing, before and after reading of <i>Haftarah</i>                                        |
| 300-01      | Shabbat Morning <i>Kiddush</i>                                                               |

Please note that you will learn additional prayers during your study sessions, to enable you to participate comfortably in those parts of the service that you will not lead, and you may have the opportunity to lead additional prayers.

Your first step in the process of becoming an adult in the community is to take responsibility for keeping up with the work and asking for help when you need it.

### **It's a Mitzvah (Project)!**

The structure of Judaism's relationship with G-d is based on *mitzvot* (commandments). Taken as a whole, the entire structure of *mitzvot* is about living a life of righteousness. The Hebrew word for righteous acts is *tzedakah*.

Two of the greatest Jewish values of *tzedakah* are *rahmanut* (compassionate deeds) and *gemilut hasadim* (bestowing loving kindness).

During the course of the year as you prepare to become Bar or Bat Mitzvah, you will fulfill a *mitzvah* (community service) project. The project is expected to entail an average of two or more hours a month of volunteering. Director of Lifelong Learning Susan Goldberg Schwartz will offer you a list of suggestions from which you may choose or you may create one of your own. The hope is that you will find a meaningful project and build a relationship with one place.

We hope that through this experience and those yet to come, you will cultivate doing *mitzvot* as a habit. As you become an adult in the Jewish community and the community at large, this experience will guide you towards a righteous and compassionate way of living.

### **For Parents: What's My Role in All of This?**

Who said becoming a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* is all about the kid? A Jewish life-cycle event is a powerful milestone for your entire family and ultimately for our larger community. Therefore, we look to you, the parents, to participate actively every step of the way with your child during the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* process.

1. **A Personal Letter to your Child.** A beautiful gift you can give your child is to write a letter to him or her before the process begins, filled with your thoughts, hopes and dreams about this sacred transition towards adulthood. Seal the envelope and give it to Rabbi Pokras to hold. After the *simcha* we will return the letter to you (unopened) to read as a family.
2. **Worship Services.** Jewish worship helps build bridges between all of us and G-d. It is important for your family to become familiar and comfortable with both the Friday night and Saturday morning community *Shabbat* services at Temple Beth Zion. You will increase your understanding of the service, and have opportunities to make new friends in our community. *Families are expected to attend at least one community service a month during the 10 months before the simcha for a total of 10 services.*
3. **Scheduling Tutorial Sessions.** The office will notify you when it is time to schedule your study sessions. Both parents are invited and encouraged to attend all sessions with Rabbi Pokras and at least one parent is expected to attend every tutoring session.
4. **Tutoring at Temple and Practicing at Home.** Once the preparation begins with the clergy, it is your responsibility to ensure all appointments are kept on time. If during the course of studying together your child falls behind, you will be asked to encourage your child to spend a minimum of 30 minutes a day learning and practicing and, if necessary, to engage a private tutor for additional support at your own expense. **Preparation practice and integration are key to the success of not only every Bar/Bat Mitzvah, but also to our meetings and learning sessions. You, our students and families, are responsible for making practice at home a priority. Based on every student's progress, we may modify their participation. We will not provide additional tutoring to those who come unprepared, however for those who wish to have extra help we can provide you with names of excellent tutors.**
5. **Rehearsals.** Students and parents must attend three rehearsals in our sanctuary within the last month before the service.
6. ***Bar/Bat Mitzvah* families must be members in good standing of the synagogue** (meaning **your financial obligations to the synagogue must be up to date**) at each stage of the process. This means that a family's obligations must be current at the time a date is assigned, at the time the tutoring process begins, and on the assigned date of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. If you have questions regarding your financial arrangements, please contact our Executive Director, Mark Criden.

7. *Oneg/Kiddush.*

- a. Temple Beth Zion is pleased to provide an *oneg* following *Erev Shabbat* (Friday night) Services. Temple does not provide an *oneg* following Kabbalat Shabbat Services which begin at 6 pm, but your caterer may provide one.
  - b. Temple Beth Zion is pleased to provide *challah*, juice and wine for the *Kiddush* following the Saturday morning service. You may, however, prefer to sponsor a Congregational *Kiddush*, open to the entire congregation or you may have a private luncheon. We encourage you to sponsor a *Kiddush* open to the entire congregation.
  - c. For full information on fees associated with sponsoring an *oneg*, *Kiddush* or private luncheon, please see our Administrative Information for *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* or call Ann Marie Randall in the office.
8. For delivery purposes, please contact the **office before 2 pm Fridays**. For full information on all matters associated with florists and decorating, please see our Administrative Information for *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* or call Ann Marie Randall in the office

9. **Photography and Videography.**

- a. **During the service.** Still *photography is not permitted during the service. Also, please inform your guests not to take photographs during services.* The clergy team will not be available for photographs during Shabbat
- b. **Other times.** Still photographs may be taken before or after services. If you choose to take photos before the service please make sure to finish no **later than 30 minutes before the service begins**. You may schedule other photo time through the Synagogue office.
- c. Videotaping of the service is allowed. Video cameras must be set up on a tripod in the balcony and the tripod cannot be moved during services. If your videographer wishes to record sound, there is a plug on lectern or you may place a microphone on lectern. Under no circumstances can you access our sound system for recording or otherwise.
- d. **Temple Beth Zion's Torah scrolls may only be taken from the ark and used in photographs while a member of the clergy or their designated representative is present.**

**10. Invitations and Service Time.** Please indicate on your invitations that services are called for 10:15 am on *Shabbat* morning (we will start promptly at 10:30).

**11. Honors for Family and Friends.** At the Friday *Shabbat* Service preceding the *Bar/ Bat Mitzvah*, we invite the family to lead the congregation in the *Shabbat* candle lighting. (Please practice the blessing on page 2 in your prayer book *Mishkan T'filah*, before that night).

During the service on Saturday morning, family members and friends, both Jewish and non-Jewish, may be honored in many ways. These include:

- One *Aliyah* for the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* plus up to two additional *aliyot* for family members. This honor is reserved for Jewish participants only, although non-Jewish parents are encouraged to stand with their spouse on the *bimah* for their *aliyah*.
- Opening and closing readings in English
- Ark openers
- *Hagbah* and *Gelilah* (raising and dressing the Torah). These honors are reserved for Jewish participants. *Hagbah* requires lifting the Torah over one's head by the handles while the Torah is open. **This honor is physically demanding and requires significant hand and arm strength and balance.** Please keep these demands in mind when considering whom to ask.
- Parents' blessings
- Grandparents' and great grandparents' participation in passing the Torah
- Presentation of *tallit* to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*

Please note: The above list of honors is comprehensive. All other honors during the service are reserved for members or special guests of the congregation who are not connected to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* family.

**All family members and/or friends who are being honored and have a part in the service must meet with a member of the clergy 30 minutes before the start of the service.**

**13. Shabbat Greeters.** It is the custom at Temple Beth Zion for families with a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* to usher at services. This allows for enriching community participation in worship and ensures a comfortable, spiritual experience for our guests. We ask each *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* family to usher for another classmate's family.

When it is your turn to be a greeter:

- Arrive 30 minutes before the service begins
- Greet the family so they know that you are there
- Plan to stay through services, which generally end around 12:15 – 12:30
- Welcome guests and offer them a *siddur*, *kippah*, Torah Commentary, and program
- Inform the guests when the service is about to begin
- Be aware and respond to disturbances outside and inside the sanctuary. Discreetly approach parents if a child needs time out of the sanctuary and direct them to the library.
- Direct late-comers to open seating
- Please remain near the entrance to the sanctuary, so that you can control traffic in and out of the sanctuary

**A list of *B'nai Mitzvah* dates will be circulated amongst the *B'nai Mitzvah* families.**

We thank you for helping us make the *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* community worship service a warm and inclusive experience.



## A Blessing on Your Head (*Mazal Tov, Mazal Tov*)!

Temple Beth Zion offers each *Bar & Bat Mitzvah* family the wonderful opportunity to offer a blessing to your child on the *bimah* before friends and family during *Shabbat* morning worship. This is a sacred moment filled with love and *Torah*.

**Content:** In Genesis 12:12. G-d tells Abraham, “I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing.” Generations of Jews have enjoyed the *mitzvah* of blessing their children on this sacred day. Your child will speak to the congregation about the meaning of his/her *Torah* portion and how it affects the way he/she will live. Your blessing should briefly relate your hopes and dreams for your child, particularly in relation to being called to the Torah. It is an opportunity to articulate the meaning of the moment. This blessing is not to be confused with the speeches that may take place at the celebration following the service. This is a unique opportunity – in the presence of our community as well as friends and family – to ask G-d’s blessings for your daughter or son. The gesture should be addressed to your child, not the congregation. Moreover, it should be directed toward the future. Where do you hope this moment will lead your child? What do you hope he or she will take from here? Rabbi Pokras will be available to assist you. When you are finished, please feel free to hug and kiss your child. Crying is permitted.

**Length and manner of presentation:** In order to maintain and preserve the sacred moment, we request that the parent’s blessing (whether delivered by one parent or two) be limited to two minutes. Nothing (like props or memorabilia of any sort) should distract from the sacred moment.

PARENT BLESSINGS MUST FOLLOW THIS GUIDE FORMAT AND BE SUBMITTED FOR REVIEW/ APPROVAL TO RABBI POKRAS AT LEAST TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO YOUR CHILD’S BAR/BAT MITZVAH.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Question: **IS THERE A SHABBAT "ETIQUETTE" WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?**

Answer: **Yes.** No smoking is permitted inside or outside of the synagogue. Photography during the service is prohibited. We request that all attendees dress modestly (shoulders covered, skirts below the knee) in the sanctuary. When the Ark is open, the Rabbi or Bar/ Bat Mitzvah is delivering a sermon, or the congregation is standing, please do not enter or exit the sanctuary. Young children who become disruptive should be taken out of the sanctuary until they are ready to return.

Question: **DO WE NEED TO ORDER KIPPOT?**

Answer: Because we encourage our congregants and their guests to wear *kippot*, please feel free to either purchase them or use the ones provided by the temple.

Question: **HOW CAN WE ARRANGE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY AT THE TEMPLE?**

Answer: During the service: Still *photography is not permitted during the service. Also, please inform your guests not to take photographs during services.* The clergy team will not be available for photographs during Shabbat. Videotaping of the service is allowed. Video cameras must be set up on a tripod in the balcony and the tripod cannot be moved during services. Lights may not be used. Should your videographer wish to record sound, there is a spot to plug in a small microphone on the lectern or your videographer may place a portable/wireless microphone on the lectern. Under no circumstance can the videographer access/use/adjust our sound system for any reason.

Other times: Still photographs may be taken before or after services. If you choose to take photos before the service please make sure to finish **no later than 30 minutes before the service begins.** You may schedule other photo time through the Synagogue office. Please bear in mind that **Temple Beth Zion's torah scrolls may only be taken from the ark and used in photographs while a member of the clergy or their designated representative is present.**

**Question: ARE WE EXPECTED TO “GIVE SOMETHING” TO THE CLERGY OR THE TEMPLE?**

**Answer:** Clergy at Temple Beth Zion do not accept fees for the performance of life cycle, pastoral or personal services for members of the congregation. Throughout our history, however, Jews have expressed thanksgiving for happy events by appropriate contributions in support of the synagogue. The Rabbi's, Cantor's and Educator's Discretionary Funds and the Gross *B'nai Mitzvah* Fund help those in need and support causes that Reform Judaism has always valued. Our Torah Commentary and Prayer Book Funds allow us to purchase the books we need to function as a religious community. If you wish, we suggest that you contribute to one of these funds, or another synagogue fund of your choice at Temple Beth Zion. Through your *simcha* and by virtue of your generosity, others may be blessed by your blessings.

Personal gifts to clergy are discouraged.

**Question: ARE WE EXPECTED TO INVITE THE CLERGY TO OUR CELEBRATION?**

**Answer:** You are not required or expected to invite the rabbis, cantor or your teacher to your celebration although if you feel you would like to include them you may certainly feel free to do so. If you do invite the clergy, it is appropriate to include spouses in your invitation.

**Question: HOW CAN FAMILY MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN THE SERVICE?**

**Answer:** See page 12.

**Question: DO YOU PROVIDE BABYSITTING?**

**Answer:** We do not currently offer regular babysitting during Saturday morning Shabbat services.

Question: **NOT EVERYONE IN MY FAMILY IS JEWISH; IN WHAT WAY CAN THEY PARTICIPATE IN THE SERVICE?**

Answer: We respect the profound commitments that non-Jewish family members have made to help transmit a Jewish identity to a child whose parents are not both Jewish. All of the honors listed above can be given to a family member from a different faith tradition with the exception of an *aliyah* or *hagbah/gelilah*.

Question: **WHAT PREPARATION IS NECESSARY FOR AN ALIYAH?**

Answer: It is important that you know the procedures and blessings involved in being called to the *Torah*. Please send copies of the blessings at least one month prior to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Service to everyone you wish to honor with an *aliyah*. Recordings of the blessings can be found on the student's CD. The clergy are available to assist as necessary.

Question: **WHAT TIME SHOULD WE ARRIVE AT THE TEMPLE?**

Answer: All participants in the service are expected to arrive at the synagogue 40 minutes before the service begins. Your family and all participants will meet with one of the clergy in the rabbi's study 30 minutes before the service begins.

Question: **DO WE NEED TO WEAR ANYTHING SPECIAL WHEN WE ARE ON THE BIMAH?**

Answer: Men are expected to wear a coat and tie, and women are asked to dress modestly (with shoulders covered). This dress code applies regardless of whether a participant is actually sitting on the *bimah*. We encourage but do not require adults to wear *tallitot*, and all participants to wear *kippot*.

Question: **MAY WE SIT ON THE BIMAH?**

Answer: We encourage the immediate family to sit on the *bimah* if they wish.

Question: **ARE THERE ANY ADDITIONAL FEES FOR A BAR/BAT MITZVAH?**

Answer: *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* educational fees are included in the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade religious school tuition. If your child will become *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* before reaching the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade, additional fees will apply. Please see our Administrative Information for Bar/Bat Mitzvah or call Ann Marie Randall in the office for information about these and all other fees (such as costs for parties, etc.).

## **TEMPLE BETH ZION IS HERE TO HELP**

Members of the synagogue staff are here to help make the experience of your *Bat/Bar Mitzvah* beautiful and meaningful. It is our pleasure to assist you and provide advice and support throughout the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* process. Please feel free to approach any of us if you have questions or need help. We recognize that your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony is a sacred and powerful moment in the life of your family, and we feel privileged to share in your joy.

Telephone (716) 836-6565

|                                                           |          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Senior Rabbi Gary Pokras                                  | ext. 138 |
| Assistant Rabbi Adam Scheldt                              | ext. 137 |
| Cantor Penny S. Myers                                     | ext. 130 |
| Susan Goldberg Schwartz,<br>Director of Lifelong Learning | ext. 131 |
| Mark Criden, Executive Director                           | ext. 135 |
| Tina Taylor, Clergy Assistant                             | ext. 132 |
| Ann Marie Randall,<br>Administrative Assistant            | ext. 111 |
| Kara Kane, Education Assistant                            | ext. 112 |

**Bar/Bat Mitzvah Covenant**

We have read the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Handbook and are ready to observe the mitzvah of becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* at Temple Beth Zion. We understand the responsibilities pertaining to student(s), parent(s) and Temple. We understand and accept the requirements, as stated within, including but not limited to:

1. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* candidate will be enrolled in Temple Beth Zion's Religious School through the year of Bar/Bat Mitzvah and will meet all attendance and other requirements of the school.
2. The candidate will fulfill the required Shabbat service attendance as noted in the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* handbook prior to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date.
3. ***All*** Temple financial obligations and agreements will remain current from at least twelve months before the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Shabbat until the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date. Parents should contact the Executive Director regarding any financial questions.
4. The candidate and parents will attend all scheduled sessions with cantor and rabbis or make changes as necessary and with appropriate notice.
5. Temple Beth Zion will provide student with all required materials, tutoring and support necessary to prepare for *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Clergy and staff will be available as appropriate for guidance, lessons and support as detailed in the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* handbook.

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Signature of Candidate

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Signature of Parent/Guardian

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Signature of Parent/ Guardian

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Signature of Rabbi