

Planning Your Child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Guidebook for Parents

Temple Israel of Natick
145 Hartford Street
Natick, MA 01760
Phone (508) 650-3521
Facsimile (508) 655-3440

Rabbi Daniel Liben
Cantor Ken Richmond

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page(s)</u>
Introduction.....	2-3
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Requirements	3-4
Family Involvement Prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah	5
The Shabbat Morning Service.....	6-7
Other Types of Family Participation in the Service	7
Shabbat Decorum at Temple Israel of Natick	7-8
Planning Your Celebration	9
Sponsoring a Kiddush or Kiddush Luncheon	10
After Your Celebration	11
Worksheet for Planning Honors Assignments	12-13
Rabbi's Guidelines for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah D'var Torah.....	14
Approved Caterers and Accommodators.....	15
Planning Guide Chart	16

INTRODUCTION

Mazel Tov on reaching this exciting time! We are proud of our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* program here at Temple Israel and we are excited to celebrate this special milestone with you and your family.

This upcoming milestone is a culmination of hard work by both you and your child. A *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is the Jewish community's way of recognizing that an adolescent has learned enough and matured enough, to be granted religious responsibility. The process of preparing for a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* involves the entire family. In the broadest sense, the first steps of a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* began years ago, with the creation of a Jewish atmosphere in your home, with commitment to a Jewish way of life and to Jewish education, and through active affiliation with a synagogue. Now that your child is 12 years old, the process of preparation, both for your child and your family, will intensify.

There are few life cycle events which are remembered for as long a period of time, or celebrated as enthusiastically, as *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. It can be a deeply meaningful and moving occasion, for which families prepare extensively, and for which relatives and friends from across the country go to great lengths to attend. Preparing for such an occasion may sometimes feel overwhelming. We hope that the information in this guidebook will help to minimize your "*Bar/Bat Mitzvah* stress," and enable you to focus on the meaningful aspects of this special time in your family's religious life.

This guidebook is written to help parents understand the basic meaning of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* process, and to assist the family in experiencing this *simcha*, this joyous occasion, as part of a religious community. Basic information is provided; commonly-asked questions are answered; and suggestions are given for involving the family in the overall celebration.

A guidebook of this nature cannot answer all of your questions, or explain every facet of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* experience. We invite you to contact the *Rabbi* or *Cantor* (sometimes referred to as *Hazzan*) for additional information or guidance.

GESHER PROGRAM

Gesher (bridge), Temple Israel's program for 7th graders, is meant to be a bridge between elementary school and *Prozdor* (the high school program of Hebrew College) and/or *Madrachim* (Teen Leadership Program). Through traditional academic learning and informal education, *Gesher* helps to set the tone for the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* year, through special projects, field trips and community service.

MORNING MINYAN

An important component of the *Gesher* year is weekly attendance at *minyan*, (a quorum of ten adult Jews, required for public worship) either on Monday or Thursday morning. This character-building, early-morning bonding time gives parents and their children the opportunity to help make a *minyan*, while gaining proficiency with the rituals of the Torah service, daily prayer, *tallit* and *tefillin* (Phylacteries. Small, leather boxes, containing Biblical texts, which are strapped to the arm and forehead during daily morning prayers to fulfill the Biblical commandment: "bind these words as a sign on your hands and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead.").

FAMILY PARTICIPATION

Sixth grade and *Gesher* families participate in several Sunday programs throughout the year, in order to explore together issues of Jewish identity and responsibility related to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* year. Families with children in Jewish day schools will be invited to all appropriate pre-*Bar/Bat Mitzvah* family programs. These programs will include the Family History Project, the *Tallit* (The traditional prayer shawl worn by Jewish men and many Jewish women at morning services each day of the week. On the four corners of the *tallit* are *tsitsit*, fringes, which remind us of our obligations to follow the commandments of Judaism.) and *Tefillin* Program, an ADL (Anti-Defamation League) program on confronting anti-Semitism and, in some years, a day-long Family *Shabbaton*. A *Shabbaton* is a day of prayer, study, meals, and fun activities, in the spirit of *Shabbat*. Other programs will focus on *Torah*, *Avodah* (serving God through prayer), and *Gemilut Hasadim* (helping improve the world through our *mitzvot*).

THE MITZVAH OF INCLUSION

An important goal of the *Gesher* year is to strengthen our children's understanding of the value of community. A student's sense of belonging to the group will lay the foundation for his/her successful transition to *Prozdor*, as well as for future USY (United Synagogue Youth) and Temple involvement. We rely on your help in achieving this goal by adhering to the Temple policy that every student in the *Gesher* class (including Day School students) receive an invitation to be present *Shabbat* morning for your child's *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* service. Sharing these special experiences with each other is an important part of the *Gesher* year, and incorporates the Jewish value of "love your neighbor as yourself." (Lev. 19:18)

BAR/BAT MITZVAH REQUIREMENTS

Traditionally, a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* publicly demonstrates a child's readiness and willingness to take on adult religious responsibility, by taking part in the worship service, and being called for his/her first public *aliyah* to the *Torah*. The term *aliyah* means "going up", and refers to the act of "going up" to the *Torah* to recite a blessing

At Temple Israel, a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is usually able to do the following:

-Chant the *maftir aliyah* from the *Torah*. The term *maftir* is related to the word *haftarah*, meaning "end" or "conclusion." It refers to the last few verses of the *Torah* portion which are repeated at the end of the reading, this *aliyah* is usually reserved for the person who is going to recite the *haftarah*.

-Chant the *Haftarah* and accompanying blessings. The *haftarah* is a passage from one of the Biblical books of the Prophets, chanted after the *Torah* reading on *Shabbat* and holidays. Literally, "*Haftarah*" means "end" or "conclusion" and is thematically connected to the day's *Torah* reading.

-Lead the *kiddush* on Friday evening and *Shabbat* morning. The *kiddush* is a prayer recited over wine on *Shabbat*, holidays and other occasions of joy and celebration. The term comes from the word "*kadosh*," meaning holy.

-Prepare a *D'var Torah*. Literally, "a word of *Torah*." The *D'var Torah* is a brief explanation or lesson based on the words of a particular *Torah* text. (See page 14 for guidelines.)

B'nai Mizvah who have mastered these skills in a timely manner are encouraged to learn additional *Torah* readings, and to lead other sections of the service. Although studying to meet these requirements is the obligation of the student, parental support and encouragement are essential.

During the Fall of the sixth grade year, Religious School students begin taking a weekly class with the *Cantor*, in which they learn the *trope* (the system of symbols that indicate both the grammar and the manner of musical chanting of Biblical texts) and blessings for chanting *Torah* and *Haftarah*. (Day School students usually attend this class as well). Students will have the opportunity to chant *Torah* at Youth Services, in the sanctuary on *Shavuot*, at weekday *minyan*, and at *Shabbat* and holiday services. Individual *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* lessons with the *Cantor* begin at least six months prior to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, with more time allotted if there is an intervening summer. Students will be expected to practice about 30 minutes every night, and parents will be expected to check up on their progress. It should be understood that *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* lessons are scheduled in addition to, and not in place of, regular Religious School classes.

Approximately two to three months before their *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, students will begin meeting with the *Rabbi*, who will work with them on preparing their *D'var Torah* (introduction to the *Haftarah*).

ATTENDING SERVICES TOGETHER

Attending *Shabbat* and weekday services will help to prepare your family for the experience of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Familiarity with the pace and content of the service will make your own special *Shabbat* a more meaningful day for all of you. More importantly, the habit of synagogue attendance is an indispensable tool for Jewish life, which only you can provide. If it has not been your practice to be at *Shabbat* services, we encourage you to develop a regular attendance pattern now. **Students are required to attend a minimum of thirteen *Shabbat* services during the twelve months prior to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, including at least eight *Shabbat* morning services in our sanctuary, and at least three Friday evening services.**

THIRTEEN MITZVOT PROGRAM

Through the Thirteen *Mitzvot* project, your child will have the opportunity to choose thirteen ways to help further their Jewish identity, make their *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* process more meaningful, and improve the world through the *mitzvot* they choose. They will select *mitzvot* in a variety of categories, as outlined in the Thirteen *Mitzvot* packet (also found on the Temple Israel website www.tiofnatick.org, on the [Bar/Bat Mitzvah page](#) under "Lifecycles"). Some *mitzvot* may be one-time ones, others ongoing; some may be new and others familiar. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* child will write a short paragraph about each *mitzvah* experience, explaining what was learned and detailing the connection to a particular *mitzvah* from the *Torah*. You can help your child by participating in this process with him/her, from the initial brainstorming about which projects to choose, though the budgeting of time and finding resources to complete the projects. Upon completion of the *mitzvot* and the write-ups, each student will receive a special certificate. We hope that many of these *mitzvot* will remain important to your family for many years to come.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT PRIOR TO THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH

There are many things you can do together as a family, in the months preceding *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, to help make the process more meaningful. Here are some suggestions:

LEARN ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S TORAH AND HAFTARAH PORTION

Read the *Torah* and *Haftarah* portions in English, so that you can help your child understand them, their relationship to each another, and how they connect to your lives. *Etz Hayim, Torah and Commentary*, edited by the Jewish Publication Society, *The Torah*, edited by Gunther Plaut, and *The Oxford Jewish Study Bible* are all available at the Temple. These books present an excellent modern English translation and commentaries.

LEARN TO READ TORAH

In recent years, many parents have used the occasion of a child's *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* as an opportunity to learn, or to sharpen, their own *Torah*-reading skills. Taking on this challenge reinforces, for your child, the message that you value the process that he/she is undergoing. We are very happy to see parents, siblings and other relatives/friends read as well. That being said, we require all readers both to be proficient in the pronunciation of the Hebrew words and to be able to chant according to the correct *Torah trope*. *Torah* reading which is halting, or marred by mistakes, is inappropriate to the holiness of this occasion and is also embarrassing for the reader and uncomfortable for the congregation. Cantor Ken is happy to provide assistance to family members who wish to hone their skills, and is available to listen to guest *Torah* readers practice in person or by telephone. Please note: **Anyone who is not a regular *Torah* reader at Temple Israel must go over the reading with the Cantor at least ten days before the Bar or Bat Mitzvah.** Should you, or any guest you may have selected to read *Torah*, not check in with the Cantor ahead of time, or not show sufficient proficiency, the Cantor will assign a replacement *Torah* reader for the morning of your *simcha*.

DECIDE IN ADVANCE HOW MUCH AND TO WHOM YOUR CHILD WILL GIVE TZEDAKAH

A *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* represents more than ritual obligation. Your child is old enough now to begin to accept responsibility for the world in which he/she lives. Explore together some of the various options for *tzedakah*, acts of charity. *MAZON*, for example, suggests that each of us donate 3% of the total cost of our celebration, in order to benefit food pantries and distribution programs throughout the world. Some children have asked on their invitations that contributions be made to a charity organization that the child has specifically chosen. Help your child become a *tzedakah* hero!

CREATE A PERSONALIZED BOOKLET

Many families prepare special flyers or booklets for *Shabbat* morning, in order to personalize the service for their family and friends. Such flyers may highlight the meaning of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, explain some of the traditions of the synagogue, or list which family members will be honored on the bimah that morning. Contact the Temple office if you would like to see samples of flyers that have been used in the past.

All written materials must be approved in advance by the Rabbi.

THE SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE

The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is a moment of joy and celebration, not only for your family, but for the community as well. It therefore takes place when the *Torah* is read publicly, usually on *Shabbat* morning. Because the context of your celebration is communal, rather than private, there may be other life-cycle events celebrated that morning, such as the naming of a baby, or an *aufruf* (a Yiddish word meaning “call up”, referring to a couple being called up to the *Torah* for an *aliyah* prior to their wedding.). Such events reinforce the lesson for your child that he/she is being embraced and welcomed by an entire community. Certain honors, however, are reserved specifically for the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* family. You may assign these honors to any member of the Jewish faith over the age of thirteen. Speak to the *Rabbi* or the *Cantor* about ways to include close, non-Jewish relatives in the morning service.

DISTRIBUTION OF TORAH HONORS

The weekly *Torah* portion is divided into seven sections, or *aliyot*. Your child’s *aliyah*, called the *maftir*, is an additional, eighth *aliyah*, which is always reserved for the person who chants the *Haftarah*. You are invited to assign four of the seven *aliyot* to family members or friends. At Temple Israel, we follow the *teshuvah* (ruling) of the Conservative Movement’s Committee on Law and Jewish Standards, which restricts the assigning of *aliyot* only to individuals, rather than to pairs or groups. This *teshuvah* notes that, in congregations where it is a long-standing custom, married couples may share one *aliyah*. This is Temple Israel’s *minhag* (tradition). Married gay and lesbian couples, may share an *aliyah*, as long as both partners are Jewish.

Having an *aliyah* does not mean that one has to read from the *Torah*; it simply means reciting the blessings before and after a section of *Torah* is read. Cards with the *aliyah* blessings, in Hebrew and transliterated into English, are available from the *Rabbi*. This card should be given to those of your honorees who will want to review the blessings. A recording of the blessings is included on the CD your child will receive from the *Cantor*, and is also available at the Temple Israel website (www.tiofnatick.org), at [Torah chanting](#), under the Music.

If you do not have a *Kohen* (first *aliyah*) or a *Levi* (second *aliyah*) in your family, members of the congregation will take those *aliyot*, and your family will be given four from the third through seventh *aliyah*. Most often, one or both parents take the seventh *aliyah*, in order to be present on the *bimah* when their child is called to the *Torah*.

You may also assign the following eight non-speaking *Torah* honors:

- ⇒ opening the ark, which houses the *Torah* scrolls, at the beginning of the *Torah* service (two people);
- ⇒ removing the *Torah* from the ark;
- ⇒ *hagbah*, the act of raising the *Torah* and displaying it to the congregation after the reading;
- ⇒ *gellilah*, the act of rolling the *Torah* closed and dressing it after the reading;
- ⇒ opening the ark at the conclusion of the *Torah* service (two people)
- ⇒ returning the *Torah* to the ark

You may also assign the “Prayer for Our Country” and the “Prayer for the State of Israel” in English (copies may be found on the Temple Israel website on the [Bar/Bat Mitzvah page](#)). Please note that the “Prayer for our

Country” and the “Prayer for the State of Israel” are not recited on *Shabbat* mornings when the new month (*Rosh Hodesh*) is announced. Psalm 145, *Ashrei*, which is chanted in Hebrew, is usually led by a young person in the congregation. You may choose to assign *Ashrei* to one or more of your child’s friends from the *Gesher* class, or to a younger sibling. Please be sure to confirm the participation of any classmates, so that no one is caught unprepared that morning.

A worksheet is provided (pages 12-13), to help you plan the assignment of these honors. Be sure to make an appointment to meet with the *Rabbi*, at least two weeks prior to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, in order to review your list of honorees. You should be prepared to provide the complete Hebrew name of each person whom you are honoring with a *Torah aliyah*, including the Hebrew names of their father and mother (i.e. Shmuel ben Yankl v’Tova or Feige Chava bat David Meir haLevi v’Sarah).

The final honors list must be submitted to the *Rabbi* for review at least two weeks before the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

OTHER TYPES OF FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN THE SERVICE

*She’heche-yanu** – After your child’s *aliyah* to the Torah, the *Rabbi* will lead both parents and child in saying the *She’heche-yanu*, the blessing in which we thank God for having reached a special occasion. Additional parental blessings may be found on the Temple website on the [Bar/Bat Mitzvah page](#).

Throwing Candy – Following the *She’heche-yanu* blessing, if you choose, candy may be thrown at the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* child by members of the congregation, as a way of wishing sweetness and blessing throughout life. The Ritual Committee will provide an approved quantity and type of candy for this purpose. Families are asked not to provide their own candy. You may assign one or two younger children the task of distributing the candy to the congregation.

You may wish to involve your family in other ways during the service, as well. Parents and family members who would like roles in the service, other than those described above, should make an appointment with the *Rabbi* or *Cantor* well before the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, to discuss available options

Shabbat Decorum At Temple Israel Of Natick

In order to create and preserve the special atmosphere of religious celebration on *Shabbat*, certain rules should be followed. These rules are endorsed by the Temple’s Ritual Committee, and are in keeping with time-honored traditions shared by many Jewish communities. For your convenience, the Temple can provide a card, which may be enclosed in your invitations, giving your guests a summary of our rules and traditions. (A facsimile of this card appears on the next page.)

- ⇒ All male guests are required to cover their heads with a *kippah*. A *kippah* is a head covering worn by Jewish males and some Jewish women during prayer and study, also known in Yiddish as a *yarmulke*.
- ⇒ All Jewish male guests above the age of thirteen are expected to wear a *tallit*. Jewish women above the age of thirteen are encouraged to do so, as well.
- ⇒ All attendees are expected to wear modest clothing in the sanctuary. Women called to the *bimah* for an *aliyah* must have their shoulders covered; low necklines and very short skirts are not appropriate.

- ⇒ Since this is a service of worship, your child's guests should be encouraged to behave appropriately while they are in the Temple building.
- ⇒ Smoking and cell phone use during *Shabbat* are forbidden anywhere on the Temple grounds. All cell phones and pagers should be turned off, or placed in silent mode.
- ⇒ No photography or video recording are permitted anywhere on the Temple grounds during *Shabbat*. In order to ensure that you have memorable photographs of your celebration, you may come to the Temple on a weeknight, before or after the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, dressed as you would for the service, to take pictures. **Please schedule this photography session at least two weeks in advance, through the Temple office.** If you wish to have the *Rabbi* and/or the *Cantor* included in your photos, please contact them directly to ensure their availability. Your child may be photographed holding a *Torah* scroll only if the *Rabbi* or *Cantor* is present.
- ⇒ No recorded, or instrumental music, is allowed as part of the celebration in the Temple on *Shabbat*.
- ⇒ If you choose to host an evening event at the Temple, the party can begin only after *Shabbat* has ended. (You may check with the main office to find out what time *Shabbat* ends.)

SUGGESTED WORDING FOR AN INVITATION INSERT CARD

Welcome to Temple Israel of Natick

We look forward to celebrating the Sabbath with you and hope this card includes useful information about our synagogue's customs and traditions.

We encourage our worshippers to consider traditional standards of modesty in dress, as a way of showing honor to the Sabbath. All males (Jewish and non-Jewish) are asked to cover their heads as a sign of respect. Head coverings (*kipot*) will be available as you enter our Sanctuary. Jewish males over the age of thirteen years should wear a prayer shawl (*tallit*). Jewish women who have adopted the custom of wearing a *tallit* are also encouraged and welcome to do so. *Tallitot* are available on a rack, as you enter the Sanctuary.

In observance of the Sabbath, please refrain from using cameras/cell phones while in or around the synagogue. (If you are on call, please remember to put your cell phone or pager on vibrate/etiquette mode.)

Hearing assistance devices and large-print prayer books are available (please ask an usher).

Temple Israel maintains a smoke-free environment.

We welcome children of all ages in our Sanctuary. Baskets of children's books to occupy our youngest guests are available in the rear of the Sanctuary. Youth services (in our synagogue chapel and upstairs in the school wing) and babysitting (lower level of school wing) may also be available. Please feel free to use any of these options but, for their safety, please do not let your children wander the building unattended.

For more information, please visit our website (www.tiofnatick.org). We look forward to your visit. Shabbat Shalom!

PLANNING YOUR CELEBRATION

SHABBAT MORNING BABYSITTING

Temple Israel can arrange for professional babysitters to be available on the morning of your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, between 10:00 AM and noon, to provide care for the children of your guests and those of Temple Israel congregants. Please consider sponsoring *Shabbat* babysitting on the morning of your *simcha*, especially if you are expecting many pre-schoolers as your guests. You may contact the Temple main office (508-650-3521, ext. 100) to make these arrangements.

THE SEUDAT MITZVAH

Sharing our *simchas* in synagogue gives us the opportunity to feel the warm embrace of the Temple community. The meal is considered a *Seudat Mitzvah*, an integral religious expression of the celebration. Temple Israel encourages you to celebrate your *simcha* in our social hall, with the Temple community. *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* families will have first preference for use of the social hall on the Saturday of their *simcha*. Each family is required, at minimum, to sponsor a *Shabbat* morning *kiddush*, in honor of their child's *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. All members of the congregation who are present on *Shabbat* morning are invited to this *kiddush*, which follows the service. In addition, you may decide to host luncheons or evening parties in the Temple social hall. The information that follows is intended to help you in planning a *kiddush*, luncheon or evening party. Please keep in mind that the Temple kitchen is strictly *kosher*, and any food served from the kitchen must be *kosher*, which keeps with Judaism's strict dietary laws regarding the separation of milk and meat, and the unique requirements of the slaughter and preparation of meat. If you have any questions regarding the rules of *kashrut*, please contact the *rabbi*.

TERMS RELATED TO KOSHER MEALS/EVENTS

Va'ad HaRabonim – This is the Board of *Rabbis*, which certifies that food items are *kosher* and that the dietary laws are kept in restaurants, bakeries and butcher shops in this area. You will find their symbol on many packaged items in the grocery store. In addition, the *Va'ad HaRabonim* of Massachusetts supervises *kosher* caterers who provide services to synagogues.

Caterer – *Kosher* caterers prepare food in their own commissaries, under the supervision of the *Va'ad*, or other Rabbinical authority. A list of approved caterers appears on page 15 of this guidebook.

Accommodator – Accommodators do not have their own commissaries. They use the Temple's equipment, and may provide services at Temple Israel functions only if they are approved by either the *Va'ad HaRabonim*, or by the Temple Israel Ritual Committee. A list of approved accommodators appears on page 15.

SPONSORING A KIDDUSH OR KIDDUSH LUNCHEON

Kiddush: The *Shabbat* morning *kiddush* is part of the communal religious service and is a communal event, open to everyone. It is the responsibility of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* family to sponsor this part of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* celebration. You have several options in planning this part of your celebration:

- ⇒ **The Congregational Luncheon** (for the entire congregation, approximately 125 people, plus your guests) It has become customary for *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* families to invite the entire congregation to join their guests for a sit-down luncheon, making it possible for the community to celebrate together. Congregational luncheons are usually facilitated by a caterer or accommodator. **If the entire congregation is invited to your luncheon, there is no fee for the use of the social hall.**
- ⇒ **The Stand-up Kiddush** (for the entire congregation, approximately 125 people, plus your guests) Should you choose not to host a congregational luncheon, a minimal *kiddush* would include *challah* (for the *bimah*), wine (for the congregational blessing), pastries, vegetables, hummus, breads, soft drinks and coffee/tea. Temple Israel's Sisterhood can accommodate this *kiddush* for you, or you or a caterer can handle the arrangements. You also have the option of enhancing the stand-up *kiddush*, by adding bagels, cream cheese, herring, gefilte fish, etc. **There is no fee for the use of the social hall if you are hosting only a stand-up *kiddush*.**
- ⇒ **The Private Luncheon** (for your invited guests, only) You may choose to rent the social hall for a private meal for your guests only. If you select this option, you are required also to sponsor a stand-up *kiddush*, as described above, for the rest of the congregation. This congregational *kiddush* will take place in the rear of the social hall, separated by room dividers, from your private luncheon.

Catering Options: The Temple offers several alternatives for arranging a *kiddush* or luncheon:

- ⇒ You may hire a caterer approved by the *Va'ad HaRabonim* (current list appears on page 15). Your caterer is responsible for making sure that the Temple (kitchen, social hall) and grounds are clean and left in good condition after your function.
- ⇒ You may hire an accommodator approved by the Temple's Ritual Committee (current list appears on page 15). Your accommodator is responsible for making sure that the Temple (kitchen, social hall) and grounds are clean and left in good condition after your function.
- ⇒ You may hire the Sisterhood of Temple Israel to prepare the "stand-up *kiddush*." The Temple office can provide you with the name of the Sisterhood volunteer who will coordinate this for you.
- ⇒ You may prepare a dairy or *pareve kiddush* (food that contains neither dairy or meat products) or luncheon yourself, with the help of family and Temple members, under the following conditions:
 - All cooking must be done on the premises and completed by Friday morning.
 - All food products must be approved by the *Rabbi* in advance.
 - All cooking utensils used must be Temple-owned, or brought in brand-new and not previously used, i.e. in original packaging.
 - All paper products must be brought into the Temple by Friday morning, prior to *Shabbat*.
 - All preparation time in the Temple must be scheduled with the Temple Director in advance.

You, or your caterer/accommodator, must provide a social hall room set-up diagram (found in the administrative packet) to the main office, at least two weeks before the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

AFTER YOUR CELEBRATION

Often parents look for a way to acknowledge those people who helped in preparing the family for *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, or those who added to the service in a special way. You may choose to thank the *Rabbi* and *Cantor* by contributing to their respective discretionary funds. It is appropriate to honor others who have enriched your *simcha* with donations to a Temple fund or to another charity.

The *Torah* commands us to feed the hungry. Please consider donating any food left over from your celebration to those in need. This is a wonderful way of giving thanks for your *simcha*. Please inform the Temple office before, or immediately after, the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, so that arrangements can be made to have a pick-up at the Temple of any food you would care to donate.

Please remember that *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is the beginning of a growing process for your child and your family, not a conclusion! Enroll your child in *Prozdor* and *USY*, and make it a point to attend services and take part in Temple activities together, during the year. The example that you set as a learning and growing Jew, and as a committed and joyful member of the Temple family, will bear rich fruit in the years to come. *Mazal Tov!*

WORKSHEET FOR PLANNING HONORS ASSIGNMENTS

HONOR

NAME

Open curtain _____

Close curtain _____

Remove the Torah _____

ALIYOT

You may honor four people with speaking *aliyot* to the *Torah*, in addition to your child, who will have the *Maftir Aliyah*. Please provide Hebrew names for these four honorees. **Three of the following seven spaces should be left blank.**

Kohen (if applicable):

English Name _____

Hebrew Name _____ *ben/bat* _____

Levi (if applicable):

English Name _____

Hebrew Name _____ *ben/bat* _____

Aliyah #3

English Name _____

Hebrew Name _____ *ben/bat* _____

Aliyah #4

English Name _____

Hebrew Name _____ *ben/bat* _____

Aliyah #5

English Name _____

Hebrew Name _____ *ben/bat* _____

Aliyah #6

English Name _____

Hebrew Name _____ *ben/bat* _____

Aliyah #7 (most often parents take this aliyah)

English Name(s) _____

Hebrew Name(s) _____ *ben/bat* _____

Maftir Aliyah (your child)

English Name _____

Hebrew Name _____ *ben/bat* _____

WORKSHEET FOR PLANNING HONORS ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)

Hagba _____

Gelila _____

Hagba 2 (when 2 Torahs are read) _____

Gelila 2 (when 2 Torahs are read) _____

Prayer for Our Country _____
(omitted on *Shabbat* before *Rosh Hodesh*)

Prayer for the State of Israel, English _____
(omitted on *Shabbat* before *Rosh Hodesh*)

Ashrei _____

Open curtain _____

Close curtain _____

Replace the *Torah* _____

RABBI'S GUIDELINES FOR THE BAR|BAT MITZVAH D'VAR TORAH

Immediately before chanting his/her *Haftarah*, your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* child will be invited to present a short introduction to the *Haftarah* from the *bima*. The *D'var Torah* should be no longer than three to four typed pages, double-spaced. The *D'var Torah* serves two purposes:

- a) It explains what the *Haftarah* is about, and its thematic connections to that particular *Shabbat*.
- b) It gives the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* an opportunity to demonstrate that he/she can analyze Biblical texts in English, and relate to them in a personal way.

On a typical week, the Rabbis designated a chapter from one of the Prophets as the *haftarah*, because they saw a thematic connection between it and that week's *Torah* portion. Your child's "detective assignment" is to read both the *Torah* portion and the *Haftarah* in English, and try to figure out what that connection might be. There is not always a single, clear answer to that question, and it is interesting to see what students, and parents, come up with.

Here is a simple outline that will help your child structure the *D'var Torah*:

1. In one or two paragraphs, summarize the *Haftarah*.
2. Discuss the connection between the *Haftarah* and the *Torah* portion.
3. Reflect personally on an aspect of one or both of these texts that seem particularly interesting, or challenging. For example, how do the themes mentioned in these texts relate to what your child may have experienced in his/her own life, at school or at home? Or, how do the lessons in these texts apply to your child, as he/she takes on the responsibility of becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*?
4. Add a brief thank you to parents and teachers.

When considering how to respond to these points, your child should feel free to discuss his/her *Haftarah* and *Torah* portion with Rabbi Liben, the Cantor, his/her parents or anyone else. This isn't a test! Bouncing ideas off other people, and hearing the perspectives of others, is helpful.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

On a number of weeks during the year, the Rabbis chose not to select a *Haftarah* on the basis of its connection to the weekly *parsha*. Instead, they chose a text because of its relevance to the Holiday calendar.

These exceptions occur:

1. When *Shabbat* coincides with any holiday, including *Rosh Hodesh*.
2. When *Shabbat* is the day before *Rosh Hodesh*.
3. On five special *Shabbatot* in the weeks before Passover: *Shabbat Zachor*, *Shabbat Shekalim*, *Shabbat Parah*, *Shabbat HaChodesh* and *Shabbat HaGadol*
4. On the Six Sabbaths of Consolation, which mark the weeks between *Tisha B'Av* and *Rosh Hashanah*.

If any of the above applies to your child's *Bar/Bar Mitzvah Shabbat*, the structure of the *D'var Torah* is slightly modified. Section II (above) would discuss how the *Haftarah* is connected thematically to the holiday, or season. Sections I, III and IV remain the same as above.

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PLANNING GUIDE

2-3 Years Before B'nai Mitzvah

- Bar/bat mitzvah date is assigned – tell family & friends to save the date!

1-2 Years Before

- Attend Family Bar-Bat Mitzvah Programs
- Bar-Bat Mitzvah student begins to study trope and blessings with 6th grade religious school class. Day school students encouraged to attend.
- Begin the process of planning the party portion of the simcha - venue, caterer, entertainment, etc.

1 Year Before

- Initial meeting with the b'nai mitzvah liaison to discuss all aspects of the service including prayers, preparation, honors, tutoring, etc.
- Consider attending the service in which correlates to the Torah and haftarah portions your child will chant for their Bar-Bat Mitzvah.
- Attend Family Bar/Bat Mitzvah programs (for children & parents).
- Contact Temple Administrator, Michelle Weiner Taylor, to confirm that you are in good standing with regard to your financial obligations to the Temple.
- Meet with caterer, musicians, florist, photographer, etc. as necessary. A list of approved caterers/accommodators and preferred vendors can be confirmed by contacting the Temple office.

9-12 Months Before

- Attend Shabbat services regularly
- Choose the Mitzvah project, and work on the 13 Mitzvot.

7 to 8 Months Before

- Private lessons begin with Cantor Ken.
- Reserve hotel rooms for out-of-town guests
- Pick out tallit.

6 Months Before

- First Family meeting with the Rabbi. Set up meeting with Carole in the front office.
- Finalize guest list

4 Months Before

- Order invitations
- Order kippot (optional)

2-3 Months before

- Begin filling out honors form, including Hebrew names
- Send out invitations
- Arrange for Flowers for front of Amud (reading table). Rental of Silk flowers can be discussed with Carole Lechan, Temple Office Manager.
- Meet with the Rabbi to discuss d'var Torah
- Make sure all vendors have submitted an insurance certificate & vendor agreement
- Shop for Apparel (suit, dress, shoes, etc.)

1 Month Before

- Finalize menus with Caterers, confirm details with vendors.
- Submit draft of d'var Torah to the Rabbi
- Schedule time for Photos the week of B'nei Mitzvah

2 Weeks Before

- Submit list of honors, parent blessing, and program wording to Rabbi Liben.
- Submit final setup for Social Hall to office
- Meet with Cantor Ken for an informal run-through
- For boys, final suit fitting.

Week Of:

- Dress rehearsal & photographs (usually Thursday before b'nai mitzvah)
- All supplies dropped off before noon on Friday

Day Before/Day Of:

- Gather together items needed Saturday morning: List of honors; parent blessing; child's binder of blessings/haftarah/ Torah/d'var Torah materials.
- Relax, take a deep breath, and enjoy the moment.
Mazal tov!