



BENEI MITZVAH HANDBOOK

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CONGREGATION BETH SHALOM

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BECOMING BENEI MITZVAH

*"All of Your children are students of God;
great is the peace of Your children."* (Isaiah 54: 13.)

*"Read this not banayikh — 'Your children' — but rather
bonayikh — 'Your builders'."* (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Berakhot* 64a)

DON'T PANIC! If Hebrew is not your thing, there is a glossary in the back!

Becoming a Jewish adult, a *bar mitzvah* (boy) or *bat mitzvah* (girl), is a primary life-cycle event at age 13 that is first and foremost about community. It is about stepping forward in the context of *kehillah*, our sacred congregation, into direct relationship with the essential holy opportunities of our tradition.

Thirteen-year-olds are not yet adults, but they are ready to take on responsibilities and make contributions as educated and active members of the Jewish community at Beth Shalom and beyond. Beth Shalom aspires to engage our youth as leaders, to facilitate their personal growth, and to deepen their Jewish learning and skills.

Bat/bar mitzvah is a time when we celebrate the coming contributions of our youth, whether a teen is counted in a *minyan* (a quorum for prayer services), called to the Torah, leads a Shabbat service, continues Jewish education in high school, is a leader in USY, a *madrikh* (teen assistant) in our Religious School, or takes on any other role of responsibility in the ongoing task of building community, inside the synagogue or outside in the broader world.

Note on inclusion: It is essential to state up front that we are a community that welcomes a diverse population, including people of different ethnic, cultural, religious, and racial backgrounds, and of course in various types of family structures. When we speak of a student's "family," this should be understood as including all of the members of the immediate family regardless of their background or gender. It is our intent to be inclusive in all aspects of the *bat/bar mitzvah* rite of passage, and to welcome all parents/caregivers/siblings etc. into the process.

Although we have endeavored to include all the information you will need, if you are reading this Handbook and do not understand something, even after consulting the Glossary in the back, please call the Rabbi's Assistant and ask, at 412-421-2288 x112. There is no question that is not worth asking.

WHAT DO WE WANT MEMBER FAMILIES TO TAKE AWAY FROM THEIR CONNECTION WITH BETH SHALOM?

We want to strengthen and increase the connection among the congregation and the family. Following are some requirements, some information, some suggestions, some options, and some logistics toward making this journey smoother and more joyful.

I. REQUIREMENTS

Becoming a *bar/bat mitzvah* is most often celebrated in our congregation during the Shabbat morning service. To qualify for a Shabbat morning *bar/bat mitzvah* ceremony, each student and family must satisfy all of the following requirements.

1. **DATE SELECTION:** If this Handbook is in your hand or on your screen, it is likely that you have received a date selection form and a copy of some calendar pages from the Rabbi's Assistant. You will need those pages to select a date to celebrate your student's rite of passage. The date selection should occur three years prior.

By or on the date selected, the student must have achieved the age of 13, either by the Hebrew calendar or by the English calendar. Some consider the length of the Torah reading and the *haftarah* for that date. Others consider time of year or family considerations. You should select six potential date options. We prioritize based on prompt submission, and we take note of any considerations indicated. Rabbi Adelson holds the final say on the date selection.

You are planning a date three years in advance. That does not mean that you are "reserving" it only for your family. Other occasions may arise for which individuals or families will ultimately share the date with you: there may be a couple with a pending wedding who are celebrating an *aufruf* (announcing the couple to the congregation just prior to the wedding); there may be a congregant reciting *Birkat HaGomel* after an illness; there may be a baby naming, the celebration of a significant birthday or observance of a *yahrzeit*.

The addition of these observances is a part of belonging to a community. They will be a part of the same service as your *simhah*, your happy occasion. As you and your student begin to participate with the congregation, you will begin to feel just as strongly about the sense of community.

2. **JEWISH EDUCATION:** The student must be currently enrolled in a Jewish education program approved by the Rabbi. **The student must have completed at least three years of formal Jewish education.** This may include the Joint Jewish Education Program (J-JEP), Jewish Day School program (Community Day School or Hillel Academy), or other option approved by the Rabbi three years in advance or upon any changes.

3. **BENEI MITZVAH WORKSHOP:** In the 18 months or so before the child is called to the Torah as a *bar/bat mitzvah*, the child and at least one parent are expected to participate in the *Benei*

Mitzvah Workshop facilitated by Rabbi Adelson at Congregation Beth Shalom. This will consist of three sessions on Sunday afternoons in the winter/spring, with a light lunch included. These sessions are creative and inspiring for children and adults, and will feature the following topics:

- The true meaning of *Bat/Bar Mitzvah*.
- What does it mean to be Jewish?
- Connecting Jewish values to your *bar/bat mitzvah* journey
- What makes Beth Shalom different from other synagogues?
- How do we understand God?
- Why do I need community?
- Essential synagogue: the insider's guide.

These sessions will also be an opportunity to get to know each other and create connections among the cohort of upcoming *benei mitzvah*, between families, and with Rabbi Adelson.

4. **PRE-BENEI MITZVAH RETREAT:** This family retreat, offered in the spring to families of 5th and 6th graders, is a weekend set aside to build relationships: with each other as individuals, as families, as a cohort of those preparing to become inheritors of our tradition, and as a community. We'll play games, eat meals, pray as a family, learn, and relax together, and there will likely be s'mores as well. We hold this offsite, and all those who participate thoroughly enjoy and benefit from the weekend. Programming is offered for all family members from any religious background; you will receive information when the time comes.

5. **COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY AND ATTENDANCE AT SERVICES AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONS:** *Bar/bat mitzvah* is about becoming a responsible, participating member of our community. Another goal is to help students feel comfortable with Congregation Beth Shalom as a "second home." This commitment should be modelled by the family as part of the *benei mitzvah* process. We ask that at a minimum families demonstrate this through the following:

- **At least three years of membership prior** to the *bar/bat mitzvah* date at Congregation Beth Shalom or another synagogue approved by our Rabbi.
- Many families commit to attending Shabbat morning services with their student every week for a year prior to the planned date, even those who have not previously attended services in general. Students together with at least one parent are expected to **attend at least eight Shabbat morning services** including at least two *benei mitzvah* services; two Friday night services; and two weekday services at Beth Shalom during the student's sixth grade year. There may be special programs, dinners and celebrations for *pre-benei mitzvah* families offered through the year in conjunction with services.
- Families celebrating this lifecycle event at Beth Shalom commit to **remain active members of Congregation Beth Shalom following the bar/bat mitzvah celebration**, including the student's ongoing participation in Jewish life and learning.
- The family must be **current with all fiscal responsibilities** to Congregation Beth Shalom at the time of the celebration.

- Students are expected to **learn a skill** that will allow them to lead some portion of the service in the years following their becoming a *bar/bat mitzvah*. The synagogue will reach out to students to engage them in skills such as Torah reading, *haftarah* reading, leading *Shaharit*, leading *Musaf*, leading the Torah Service, giving a *devar Torah*, serving as a *gabbai*, etc.

6. DATES AND READINESS: *Bat/bar mitzvah* dates are assigned as early as three years prior to the event, in discussion with Rabbi Adelson if necessary.

In Spring of the child's fourth-grade year, there will be an orientation for all the parents who have children either at J-JEP, CDS or Hillel. At this meeting all the expectations and procedures will be explained and discussed. This is designed to avoid any conflicts or misunderstandings at a later date. Families are encouraged to meet with the Rabbi if the *bar/bat mitzvah* candidate is unable to satisfy any of the aforementioned requirements.

7. WORKING WITH A TUTOR

Students preparing to become *benei mitzvah* typically start working with a tutor to begin preparation approximately 8-12 months prior to the *simhah* (joyous event). These meetings usually last for approximately thirty minutes. A list of approved tutors is included in the Appendix; parents should contact them directly to arrange meetings and fees.

Parents and educators will decide if additional time is required and arrangements will be made. The tutor is responsible for teaching the basic skills required for the student to participate in the congregational service.

Parents may propose another tutor, including a parent, and discuss with the Rabbi for approval before starting the tutoring process.

Families may arrange with their tutor one or more rehearsals in the Sanctuary during the weeks before the *bar/bat mitzvah* date. Rehearsals should be arranged through the Rabbi's Assistant, 412-421-2288 x112.

If the hiring of a tutor is cost-prohibitive to the family due to extraordinary financial hardship, parents should discuss this with Rabbi Adelson.

8. DEVAR TORAH

The *devar Torah* (literally, "a word of Torah") is an essential piece of the *bar/bat mitzvah* experience. Writing and delivering a *devar Torah* connects the *bat/bar mitzvah* with Jewish tradition in a way that brings together our ancient Jewish stories with who we are and how we live today.

Rabbi Adelson will meet with the student beginning about three months in advance of her/his date, and the student will be expected to read the entire *parashah* (weekly Torah reading for that Shabbat) in English. When the student has settled on a topic, Rabbi Adelson will help guide the composition of the *devar Torah* by pointing the student to appropriate commentary and sources, and providing a rough outline. The guidelines for a *devar Torah* are as follows:

- No more than 600 words.
- Not a summary of the *parashah*, but a commentary on it which shows that the student has thought about what it means to her/him.
- Should be narrowly-focused on one specific topic within the *parashah*.
- Written by the student, in his/her own words.
- May include traditional rabbinic commentaries where useful.
- Brief, simple thanks at the end (e.g., "Thank you to my family and my teachers for all their help, love, and guidance.").

This will usually require about 3-4 meetings with Rabbi Adelson, when the student has arrived at an acceptable final draft, she/he will practice reading it in the *bar/bat mitzvah* venue (i.e., the Sanctuary, the Helfant Chapel, etc.).

9. JEWISH STATUS

All children who are to be called to the Torah as *benei mitzvah* must be halakhically Jewish, that is, Jewish according to Jewish law ("halakhah") as understood by the Conservative movement. This means that the candidate is either the child of a Jewish mother or has been converted to Judaism by a *beit din* (a panel of three rabbis). If you have any questions or concerns about this, please contact Rabbi Adelson as soon as possible.

10. ONGOING EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION - JEWISH LIFE AFTER *BAT/BAR MITZVAH*

The highest *mitzvah* of Jewish life is learning, and that learning should go on throughout our lives.

The extraordinary efforts that each student undertakes in preparing to celebrate becoming a *bat/bar mitzvah* are also intended to grow the student's involvement in the congregation and Jewish communal life. That means not only ongoing Jewish learning, but also a continued commitment to synagogue participation.

Students will be asked to continue their involvement by using the skills they have learned to read Torah and lead services. Students are encouraged to attend J-Line and Confirmation classes in our synagogue, participate in the USY program, online learning and other informal educational and communal activities, e.g., Jewish youth groups, camps, tutoring of younger children, and social action projects. Our congregational family hopes our students will see this celebration as a significant milestone in increasing their commitment to their Jewish identity and community.

II. THE SERVICE

Celebrating the transition marked by *bat/bar mitzvah* is an essential life-cycle event, which we want all of our students to experience. All families meet with the Rabbi to discuss creating a service that allows your child to work to his or her full potential, and that will be tailored to the needs of your child. What follows is a basic overview of the various roles – mandatory and optional – for the *bar/bat mitzvah* in our congregational services.

1. MINIMUM REQUIREMENT FOR SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE: *Aliyah* to the Torah (*bat/bar mitzvah* is called up to say the *berakhot* / blessings)

2. BASIC SHABBAT MORNING EXPECTATIONS:

Students are strongly encouraged to master one or more of the following:

(taught by a tutor beginning 8-12 months prior to *bar/bat mitzvah* date)

- *Maftir* Torah Reading (the repeat of the last section of the Torah reading)
- *Haftarah* & Blessings (the prophetic selection of the day)
- Additional Torah reading
- Torah Service (leading the prayers and blessings before and after the Torah reading)
- *Pesukei DeZimra* (introductory Psalms, the first part of the Shabbat morning service)
- *Shaharit* (the central part of the morning service, directly after *Pesukei DeZimra*)
- *Musaf* (the additional service, after the Torah service)

Students who wish to lead part of the Shabbat morning service (*Pesukei DeZimra*, *Shaharit*, Torah Service or *Musaf*) must demonstrate proficiency in the service to the satisfaction of the tutor and the Rabbi.

3. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS DURING SHABBAT MINHAH/MA'ARIV/HAVDALAH: While we strongly encourage families to celebrate *bat/bar mitzvah* in the context of the Shabbat morning service, the Shabbat afternoon/evening service is also an option. The afternoon service is "*Minhah*" and is followed by the Saturday evening "*Ma'ariv*" service and *Havdalah*, the separation of Shabbat from the rest of the week. Participation by your child and family in the afternoon/evening service is flexible, allowing for a little or a lot of involvement.

Unless attendance at your *simhah* is over 150 people, the afternoon/evening service will be held in the Helfant Chapel. Since the Shabbat afternoon service is a regular communal service at Congregation Beth Shalom, one *Aliyah* is reserved to accommodate community needs as outlined under "*Aliyot* and Other Honors" in the next section. This leaves two *aliyot*, one for the student and one for the family. This service does not include a *haftarah*.

4. **BASIC SKILLS** (taught by a tutor beginning 8-12 months prior to the date):
- *Aliyah* to the Torah
 - Torah Reading
 - *Ashrei* (you will get to know this bit of liturgy when you attend Shabbat services)
 - *Aleinu*

5. **ADDITIONAL OPTIONS:** The *bat/bar mitzvah* may lead these parts of the afternoon/evening service only after the child has mastered the minimum requirement and basic skills for the morning service:

- *Minhah* service
- *Ma'ariv* service
- *Havdalah* (can be given to a family member/friend/clergy)

For students with special needs, please discuss with Rabbi Adelson in advance.

6. **ALTERNATIVE DAYS FOR A BAR/BAT MITZVAH:** One can also be called to the Torah as a *bat/bar mitzvah* on any morning when the Torah is read, excluding major Jewish festivals. *Rosh Hodesh* (the first day of each Jewish month), Mondays and Thursdays, and all the days of *Hanukkah* are all suitable times when Torah is read in the morning. Families interested in these alternative times should speak to our Rabbi about specific service requirements.

7. **SPECIAL DAYS FOR A BAR/BAT MITZVAH:** *Benei mitzvah* celebrations held on federal holidays, e.g., Thanksgiving, Labor Day, etc., incur additional costs to the synagogue to provide the custodial and catering staffing needed, and therefore will entail an additional fee.

8. **TALLIT AND TEFILLIN:** As is consistent with Beth Shalom religious policy, boys who are *bar mitzvah* and men are required to wear a *tallit* (prayer shawl) during morning services and when called to the Torah in the afternoon.

Girls who are *bat mitzvah* and women are strongly urged to consider taking this *mitzvah* upon themselves.

While *tefillin* ("phylacteries," although who on Earth knows what that means?) are not worn on Shabbat and holidays, they are worn every weekday of the Jewish year, traditionally by men; this is also a *mitzvah* that women may take upon themselves.

Parents are urged to purchase both *tallit* and *tefillin* for their *bar/bat mitzvah* candidate. Rabbi Adelson is happy to assist anybody who wants to learn how to apply *tefillin* properly.

III. **BAT/BAR MITZVAH AND COMMUNITY**

1. **A CELEBRATION WITH THE COMMUNITY:** Becoming a *bat/bar mitzvah* is a celebration of transition in the context of community. Shabbat Services are the main gathering time for our community. Unlike some other congregations, there is not a special service held for *benei*

mitzvah celebrations; at Congregation Beth Shalom, the family and congregation celebrate together during the community's regular gathering. To preserve the sense of community and belonging, the participation of *benei mitzvah* and their families in the Shabbat service is balanced to allow for other members to take part.

On Shabbat morning, your child will be called to the Torah during the service. The congregation allocates to your family certain honors, including three *aliyot* and the *maftir aliyah* (see item 2 below), during the Shabbat morning service for your friends and family. (There is an Honors Sheet in the back of this book with suggestions.) While the opportunity of assigning those honors for the service is available to the family, assigning honors is not a requirement. Unassigned honors will be given to members of our congregation.

Honors which are not listed on the sheet are not available for family distribution without the express permission of Rabbi Adelson at least six weeks in advance.

Four to six months before the date, the Rabbi's Assistant will schedule a meeting with Rabbi Adelson for at least one parent to check in on the process and review honors and other logistical questions. **Please take a look at the Honors Sheet in preparation for this meeting.**

2. ALIYOT AND OTHER HONORS: All *benei mitzvah* families are allotted the same number of honors. On Shabbat morning, **four aliyot (three for the family** plus one for the student who will be called for the final, "*maftir*" *aliyah*), as well as the remaining honors (ark opening and closing, carrying the Torah, etc.), will be available to the family to designate. For a Shabbat afternoon/evening service, **only two aliyot** are reserved for the *bat/bar mitzvah* child and family.

The remaining *aliyot* are meant to include and meet the needs of the rest of the congregational community. They may include congregants reciting *Birkat HaGomel* (the prayer after illness), the celebration of an *aufruf* for an upcoming wedding, a significant birthday, marking the *yahrzeit* (death anniversary) of a loved one, the celebration of a significant anniversary or the naming of a baby. These *aliyot* enrich the entire service and demonstrate how much we are a community sharing in each other's milestone events. There may be more than one such addition to the service on the same day, and we consider ourselves fortunate to have such a large congregation.

As the congregation grows, we may have times when more than one student will be assigned the same date. That, too, would be a happy occurrence.

We encourage participation of family members and friends in leading prayer services and Torah reading. All people receiving honors involving the Torah must be Jewish. Non-Jewish family members and friends may be honored in equal but different ways – by reading the English Prayer for Our Country or the Prayer for Peace, for instance, or opening or closing the

ark. Serving as "Gabbai Sheni" for the Torah reading is an honor often afforded to the tutor so that s/he may be near the bat/bar mitzvah during the reading. Please note that the "Calling Gabbai" must be appointed by the Congregation, as it requires special training.

If you want friends and/or family members to lead parts of the service, **arrangements must be made at least six weeks in advance** with Rabbi Adelson to ensure those leading prayer services or reading Torah meet the standards of Congregation Beth Shalom.

3. THE PARENTAL PRAYER: Parents of the *bar/bat mitzvah* are encouraged to share with their children a special blessing before the congregation, if they so desire. Parents will be called upon following their child's *devar Torah*. Our Rabbi will provide a selection of prayers.

This is not a time for a lecture, for embarrassing childhood stories, for thanking people. The student is becoming a member of the congregation; the congregation is not becoming a member of your family. This is to be purely a parental prayer, and we do have many samples that you may peruse.

Parents are strongly urged to wait until the congregational *kiddush* or lunch or their family party to share personal remarks and more extensive blessings. Please let us know ahead of the day, and we will have a microphone ready and waiting for you at the *kiddush*.

4. BENEI MITZVAH TIKKUN OLAM PROJECTS: We are taught that "The world stands on three things: on *Torah*, on *avodah* (work/service/prayer), and on *gemilut hasadim* (acts of loving-kindness)." (*Pirkei Avot* 1:2.)

In that spirit, *benei mitzvah* students prepare in each of these areas. *Torah* implies additional learning; *avodah* suggests deepening one's prayer and spiritual life; and *gemilut hasadim* points to actions of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), through both direct service and volunteerism and through commitments to political and social change. Parents, educators and clergy are all expected to help shape a student's preparation in these three important areas. The *bat/bar mitzvah* is especially encouraged to undertake a *tikkun olam* project. **The Rabbi will provide guidance as needed.**

This is an opportunity for our children to consider how they can make an impact, and to help them explore their interests, skills, and strengths and connect this to Jewish teachings. Incorporating a *tikkun olam* project into the preparation process can be a very powerful way for them to see themselves transitioning from being children to being adults who not only have responsibility but opportunities to effect change.

5. CLASSMATES: In addition to your student's general friends and family, Beth Shalom strongly encourages the *bat/bar mitzvah* family to invite all of the candidate's J-JEP or Jewish day school classmates to the service and the congregational *kiddush* immediately following services.

6. SENSITIVITY TO COMMUNAL NORMS OF JEWISH PRACTICE: We recognize that not all families are equally observant of *kashrut*, Shabbat and holiday traditions, practices and restrictions, and other Jewish matters. As a community, though, we strive to ensure that all are included and comfortable.

Families are asked not to put others in the position of choosing between their observance and participation in the event by scheduling a party *or bar/bat mitzvah*-related event at a time and place that would require driving or other activities traditionally not allowed on Shabbat or *Yom Tov* (festival days). Families are also asked to be sensitive to those who observe *kashrut* when planning their celebrations. For these reasons, as well as for logistical concerns at the synagogue, no *benei mitzvah* dates will be scheduled on a Shabbat that falls on or adjacent to holidays and festivals including Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret / Simḥat Torah, Purim, Passover, Shavuot and Tish'ah BeAv.

7. DECORUM: Appropriate and respectful behavior for our congregants as well as our guests is requested in order to maintain decorum in the praying spaces as well as in all other parts of the building.

8. BAR/BAT MITZVAH FAMILY AND GUEST GUIDELINES (according to Conservative tradition): Wearing a *tallit* (a prayer shawl) on Shabbat morning is a positive, time-bound *mitzvah* (commandment) during morning services, and is also a visible symbol of accepting the obligation of *mitzvot*, both the obligations we have as an individual and our obligations to the community. Wearing a *kippah* (head covering) is a fundamental sign of respect.

- Please respect the sanctity of our worship space. The use of electronic devices such as cell phones and cameras is **NOT PERMITTED throughout the building on Shabbat and Yom Tov days**, as it is contrary to our religious observance and may offend others.
- All men from all faiths must have their heads covered while in all areas of the synagogue. Women may also choose to wear a *kippah*, hat or head covering.
- The *bar mitzvah* boy and all Jewish post-*bar mitzvah* men must wear a *tallit* during the service. The *bat mitzvah* girl is encouraged to do so as well. Non-Jewish guests should not wear a *tallit*.
- Post-*bat mitzvah* Jewish women may choose to wear a *tallit* during the service.
- According to the Jewish principle of *tseni'ut* (modesty), and out of respect for others, appropriate dress is required for men and women everywhere in the Synagogue. Sleeveless clothing, sandals, shorts, and very short dresses are discouraged. Sneakers not medically required should be left at home. Bare backs, thighs, and décolletage are inappropriate for standing before the Almighty and before the congregation.

IV. SERVICE LOGISTICS

1. TIME OF SERVICES: Services on Shabbat morning when a *bat/bar mitzvah* celebration is held begin at **9:15 AM** and end at approximately 12:00 PM. The *bar/bat mitzvah* family should be in the sanctuary at the start of the service.

Saturday afternoon (*minhah*) services will begin approximately one hour before *Havdalah* time, which is when three stars are visible and Shabbat is officially over.

2. MICROPHONES: We use microphones at our lecterns. Your student, though, should practice speaking as if to be heard by someone a couple doors down the street. When using a microphone, one should still project as if the microphone were not there. This is a skill that will serve for a lifetime.

3. GIFTS AND PRESENTATIONS: The *bat/bar mitzvah* will be presented with a certificate and a gift of either candlesticks or a *kiddush* cup from the Congregation's Sisterhood and Men's Club. Other presentations to the *bar/bat mitzvah* **may include** a certificate acknowledging participation in the Holocaust Center's twinning program (if the child participates), a certificate acknowledging participation in the Israel Bonding Program (see information below), a Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh Israel Scholarship (\$1,750 value), a gift from Beth Shalom's chapter of USY, and/or other items. All additional presentations must be approved and coordinated through the Rabbi at least two weeks prior to the date.

4. THE STATE OF ISRAEL BONDING PROGRAM: The State of Israel Bonding Program is made available to all of our *bat/bar mitzvah* students through the generosity of our members, Sarita and Milton Eisner. *Bar/bat mitzvah* families agree to purchase a State of Israel Bond in the amount of at least \$100.00. The Eisner Family matches the first \$100.00 of that bond in honor of the child. In addition to the Israel Bond, each child receives a certificate of participation in the bonding program, recognizing his or her devotion to the ideals of Judaism and the State of Israel. This program is an opportunity to both support Israel and enhance the student's connection to the land and people of Israel. For more information or to participate in this program, please contact the Israel Bond Office at 412-362-5154.

5. KIPPOT (head coverings): Families may choose to commemorate their child's *bat/bar mitzvah* by purchasing *kippot* for use during services. They will be distributed by synagogue ushers to your guests and congregants as they arrive for services. A variety of *kippot* are available in the Sisterhood Judaica Shop. ***Kippot* must be delivered to the synagogue office by the Thursday before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah by 12:00 p.m.**

6. CANDY: Families may choose to celebrate the sweetness of their child becoming a *bat/bar mitzvah* by gently showering their child with candy. This is a recent and modern practice, and in the past was generally only a custom at the *aufruf* preceding a wedding. **Only Sunkist**

Fruit Gems are acceptable for this purpose. Candy is distributed to the congregation by family members and gently tossed at the conclusion of services after *kiddush* and *motzi* (blessings recited over wine and *hallah*). **Candy must be delivered to the synagogue office by the Thursday before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah by 12:00 p.m.**

7. PROGRAMS: All written material prepared by the family, such as *bar/bat mitzvah* programs intended for distribution during the service, **must be approved at least three weeks in advance** by our Rabbi before they are printed and distributed to the congregation. They will be distributed by synagogue ushers to your guests and congregants as they arrive for services. **Printed programs must be delivered to the synagogue office by the Thursday before the *bar/bat mitzvah* by 12:00 p.m.**

8. SPEAKERS: Some families wish to have speakers say a few words at the end of the service, from a charity organization with which the student has been working, from CDS if the student attends school there, etc. **There may be only one such speaker at the service.**

V. OTHER INFORMATION

1. FRIDAY NIGHT SERVICE: *Bat/bar mitzvah* families are invited to join our congregational Friday night service the weekend of their celebration. Opportunities are also available for the *bar/bat mitzvah* to participate in the Friday night service; consult with your tutor and Rabbi Adelson.

2. SHABBAT PRIOR: On the Shabbat immediately preceding and immediately following your child's *bar/bat mitzvah* celebration, we invite him or her to join us to participate in the service. This participation can take on different forms depending on what else is happening in the service. Please discuss this with Rabbi Adelson. If your child cannot attend services the Shabbat preceding or following the *bat/bar mitzvah* date and you would still like your child to have this opportunity, please contact the Rabbi for an alternate date.

VI. ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

1. FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS: All fees stated in this handbook are subject to change. Prices are set at the beginning of each fiscal year and incorporated into our budget, which is approved at our Annual Congregational Meeting. (We encourage you, as members, to attend.)

2. DUES: Members must be current with all dues and fees in order to reserve the synagogue for an event. All dues must be kept current prior to your *bar/bat mitzvah* Shabbat. In addition, Religious School tuition, where applicable, and the *bat/bar mitzvah* fee (see Appendix) must be paid prior to the event. All rental fees and catering fees must be paid in full 30 days prior to the event date.

3. KIDDUSH AND/OR LUNCHEON: The *bat/bar mitzvah* family celebrating on a Shabbat morning is financially responsible for sponsoring the *kiddush* following the service. In addition

to the basic *kiddush*, we have alternate choices that can enhance your event. For a listing of current catering fees, see the Appendix. Please consult Michelle Vines, the Event Coordinator, for more information and ideas at 412-421-2288.

If a family is not able to afford dues and fees related to the *bar/bat mitzvah* celebration due to financial hardship, they should discuss the matter with the Executive Director.

A Shabbat luncheon in The Samuel and Minnie Hyman Ballroom is a wonderful way to honor your child and to make this date memorable for your family and guests, and is a powerful statement of connection to the Beth Shalom community. Families are **strongly encouraged to welcome the entire congregation** in celebrating their *simhah*, and to consider the luncheon or *kiddush* as an essential part of the synagogue's communal celebration of your child.

If a family plans a private luncheon at the synagogue following the Shabbat morning service, it may not begin until thirty minutes after the beginning of the Congregational Kiddush. Separate room rental and other fees will apply.

A Friday night Shabbat dinner is an excellent way to start the weekend you are planning. A traditional Friday night Shabbat dinner can also be arranged at the synagogue. There is a fee for the room rental for any private luncheons or dinners. Please consult with Michelle Vines in the Catering Department for additional information and suggestions.

4. BIMAH DECORATIONS: The celebrating family customarily provides the decorations for the *bimah*, the pulpit area. If you choose to decorate the *bimah* with fresh or dried floral arrangements, only one vase is to be placed on each side of the *bimah*; the height of the flowers is not to exceed 42 inches maximum including the permanent vase; and the width should not exceed 36 inches. You may use any florist you desire. Please provide the florist's contact information to Michelle Vines.

Flowers must be delivered on Friday by 12:00 p.m. Flowers may be moved to the Samuel and Minnie Hyman Ballroom for *kiddush* and/or luncheon. They may not, however, be removed from the building until after sundown.

Instead of flowers, you may choose to decorate the *bimah* with a food basket from The Squirrel Hill Community Food Pantry. For more information, please contact The Squirrel Hill Community Food Pantry at 412-421-2708. Families may also create other *bimah* decorations that tie into their child's *tikkun olam* project. All alternative *bimah* decorations will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be approved by our Executive Director.

VII. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. PUBLICITY: Beth Shalom arranges for announcements of *bat/bar mitzvah* celebrations to appear in the following places: Beth Shalom's seasonal newsletter, *Mishpachtenu*, the weekly Shabbat Bulletin and *The Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle*. We ask that you complete the publicity

form and return it to Congregation Beth Shalom and also provide a brief bio along with a picture of your child **no later than 4 months prior to the bat/bar mitzvah date**. (Both photo and bio should be kid-approved.) Your cooperation will help us to ensure that your event is a happy one and that your family, friends and acquaintances are aware as well.

If you do not want your child's photo and/or bio published in any of these places, or if you do not want your child's name on our exterior sign during the week prior to the *bar/bat mitzvah* date, please let the Rabbi's Assistant know, at 412-421-2288 x112.

Following is a sample photo and bio.



Audrey Glickman is the daughter of Eugene and Rosalie Glickman, sister of Scott Glickman, granddaughter of Harry and the late Sadie Levite, and the late Nettie and Adolph Glickman.

In the eighth grade at Allderdice, she plays oboe, sketches, and writes light verse. A member of Young Judea, she advocates for the Save Soviet Jewry cause. Audrey will celebrate becoming a bat mitzvah on January 2, 1970.

2. OUTSIDE CLERGY: The participation of an outside rabbi or other clergy in any capacity must have the approval of our Rabbi.

3. PHOTOGRAPHY: Please make appropriate arrangements with your tutor and the synagogue office for the ark to be opened and the Torah removed for pictures **during normal business hours**. An appropriate congregational representative must be present to remove the Torah from the ark for pictures or for practice.

As a reminder, no pictures or video recordings are permitted during any religious service on Shabbat or festivals, and the use of electronic devices, such as cell phones and cameras, is not permitted throughout the building on Shabbat and festivals.

4. SMOKING: Congregation Beth Shalom is a non-smoking facility.

VIII. NON-TRADITIONAL FAMILIES

Congregation Beth Shalom welcomes all. When we talk about a student's "family," we include any parent, close caregiver, siblings, and others, whether they are Jewish or not. We mean to be inclusive and want all family members to ask questions and be comfortable in this rite of passage.

Family members of any religious background are welcome and encouraged to attend, to participate, and to be proud.

As a reminder: if you are reading this Handbook and do not understand something, even after consulting the Glossary in the back, please call the Rabbi's Assistant and ask, at 412-421-2288 x112. There is no question that is not worth asking.

BAT/BAR MITZVAH TIMELINE

3 YEARS PRIOR (4th grade year)

Spring Orientation Meeting with all the 4th grade families. Agenda items to be discussed:

- The holistic *bat/bar mitzvah*: what your family will take away from the experience.
- Selection of a date. Consider birth date, *parashah* length, time of year, time of Shabbat (review form that must be completed to reserve date).
- Brief overview of service structure and key terms including *parashah*, Torah, *haftarah*, *maftir*, *aliyot*, etc.
- The tutoring process.
- Roles your child and family can play on the day of *bat/bar mitzvah*
- Financial obligations.
- Catering options over the course of the weekend.

2 YEARS PRIOR (5th grade year)

- Attend the Pre-*Benei Mitzvah* Family Retreat in the spring, generally for families of fifth- and sixth-graders.

1 YEAR PRIOR (6th grade year)

- Family Retreat.
- Three *Benei Mitzvah* Family Workshops (held in the winter/spring), generally for sixth-graders and at least one parent.
- Fill out values questionnaire (in the first *Benei Mitzvah* Workshop session).
- Arrange tutoring.
- Honors: review of honor sheet and what role the *bat/bar mitzvah* and his/her family have in the congregation during the event.

8-12 MONTHS PRIOR

- Tutoring begins.
- Meet with representative from catering to begin conversation about your *bat/bar mitzvah* celebration.
- Choose and start a *tikkun olam* project.
- Student and parent begin appearing at Shabbat services.

4-6 MONTHS PRIOR

- One parent meets with Rabbi Adelson to check in and discuss honors and logistics.

4 MONTHS PRIOR

- *Bat/bar mitzvah* student meets with Rabbi Adelson to work on the *devar Torah*, three to four half-hour sessions
- Submit publicity information to Rabbi's Assistant: kid-approved photo and bio, along with the publicity form on page [19].

6 WEEKS BEFORE

- Submit Honors List to Rabbi Adelson.

1 MONTH BEFORE

- Schedule rehearsal and photo session (if desired) with your tutor and coordinate with the synagogue calendar coordinator through the Rabbi's Assistant.
- Submit program information and parental prayer to Rabbi Adelson for approval.
- Submit completed honors form to Rabbi's assistant.

1-2 WEEKS BEFORE

- Hold rehearsal with tutor and photo session with photographer (if desired). (Don't forget to record your student for posterity.)
- Deliver candy, *kippot*, programs, and flowers or food baskets to synagogue office by 12:00 p.m. Thursday; flowers by 12 p.m. Friday.
- Family meeting with the Rabbi.

1 WEEK AFTER (and the rest of your life!)

Come back to synagogue! What a wonderful way to demonstrate that your *bat/bar mitzvah* was not the culmination of your Jewish studies, but a step in your lifelong Jewish journey. Repeat your Torah Reading and/or *Haftarah* every year (when possible). Get on the regular schedule of readers. Come to youth activities! JLine! etc.

GLOSSARY

(Terms are Hebrew unless otherwise noted.)

Aleinu – The prayer found on page 205 in *Siddur Lev Shalem*, written in the 12th or 13th century, occurring near the end of the service.

Aliyah (plural *aliyot*) – Literally “going up,” being called to witness the Torah reading, reciting blessings before and after. (Also refers to immigration to Israel.)

Amidah – Literally “standing,” this is one of the silent prayers at the center of each service which is, in the presence of a *minyan* (a quorum of ten), repeated aloud.

Amud – Lectern, usually on the pulpit of the praying space.

Ashrei – From Psalm 145, found on page 181 in *Siddur Lev Shalem*, customarily chanted responsively.

Aufruf – (Yiddish) When a couple is called for an *aliyah* to announce their imminent wedding.

Avodah – Work/service/prayer.

Bar Mitzvah – Literally, a boy who has inherited the obligation of *mitzvot* as a Jewish adult at age 13. Does not mean “son of the commandment.”

Bat Mitzvah – Literally, a girl who has inherited the obligation of *mitzvot* as a Jewish adult at age 13. Does not mean “daughter of the commandment.”

Benei Mitzvah – Plural of *bar/bat mitzvah*. “*Benot mitzvah*” refers to a group of young women.

Bimah – The pulpit, the (usually) raised area in front of the Ark.

Birkat HaGomel – Prayer after recovering from an illness, usually recited after a Torah reading.

Devar Torah – Literally, “word of Torah,” a commentary on the Torah. In the case of *benei mitzvah*, this is the presentation by the bar/bat mitzvah on Torah, written by him/herself, following the reading of the haftarah, on a relevant matter, usually connected to the Torah reading.

Gabbai – An individual who performs one or more of several tasks during a service, including distributing service honors and assisting the Torah reading.

- Floor *Gabbai* – The member of the congregation who distributes honors, directs honorees to the right place at the right time, and otherwise takes care of service logistics. This person is designated by Beth Shalom.

- Calling *Gabbai* – Also referred to as *Gabbai Rishon*, this person assists with the Torah reading, including calling (by Hebrew name with appropriate verbiage) those honored for aliyot. This person is designated by Beth Shalom.
- *Gabbai Sheni* – Literally “Second *Gabbai*,” this person assists with the Torah reading, including covering and uncovering the *Sefer Torah*, and gently correcting reading mistakes when they happen. Usually, the bar/bat mitzvah family assigns this honor to the student’s tutor.

Gelilah – Tying, wrapping, and dressing the Torah after completing the reading.

Gemilut Hasadim – Acts of loving-kindness.

Haftarah – Literally, “conclusion.” The “dessert” after a Torah reading. Each week is assigned an additional reading from one of the Prophets to top off the day’s scriptural readings, chanted after the Torah reading by the individual who was honored with the *Maftir Aliyah*. (**Note:** this word is not related to the word “Torah.”)

Hagbahah – Ceremonially lifting and displaying the Torah after completing the reading.

Hallah – Specially braided bread for Shabbat.

Havdalah – Literally, “separation.” The ceremony ending the rest and peace of Shabbat and launching us into the work week.

Humash – The book containing the Torah, *haftarot* for each *parashah* or week, and commentary. We generally use the *Etz Hayyim* version. Derived from the Hebrew word *hamesh* (“five”), referring to the Five Books of Moses (*i.e.*, the Torah).

Kashrut – The fitness for consumption of food and drink under traditional Jewish law.

Kehillah – Congregation, the family of our synagogue and the broader Jewish community.

Kiddush – A blessing over wine, dedicating Shabbat and festivals. Also, often refers to a meal associated with that blessing after services.

Kippah (plural *Kippot*) – A skullcap, worn during prayer and study as a sign of respect. Also known in Yiddish as a *yarmulke*.

Kohen – Literally, “priest.” A direct, male-line descendant of Aaron, the first High Priest. In some congregations, though not at Beth Shalom, the first *aliyah* to the Torah may be allocated to a *Kohen*.

Levi – A direct male-line descendant of the tribe of Levi, who traditionally performed ancillary services in the ancient Temple. In some congregations, though not at Beth Shalom, the second *aliyah* to the Torah may be allocated to a Levi.

Ma'ariv – The evening service.

Maftir – The last individual honored with an *aliyah* to the Torah, who then is honored to chant the *haftarah* for that week. On a *bat/bar mitzvah* day, this honor is always reserved for the *bat/bar mitzvah*.

Minḥah – The afternoon service. On Shabbat and on fast days it includes a Torah reading.

Minyan – A quorum of ten Jewish adults for purposes of prayer. At Beth Shalom we count both men and women age 13 or over toward a *minyan*.

Mishpachtenu – Literally, “our family.” Congregation Beth Shalom’s seasonal magazine.

Mitzvah (pl. *Mitzvot*) – A precept or commandment mandated by *halakhah*, Jewish Law. Rabbi Adelson likes to refer to *mitzvot* as “holy opportunities.”

Musaf – The “additional” service following the Torah service on Shabbat, festivals, and other specific days. Follows the Torah service and the sermon.

Pesukei DeZimra – Recitation of psalms that serve as a meditative warmup to the essential parts of the service.

Pirkei Avot – Chapters of the Fathers (sometimes called Ethics of the Fathers or Chapters of Fundamental Principles), a part of the Mishnah, the 2nd-century rabbinic commentary dealing with ethics, interpersonal relationships, and studying Jewish text.

Rosh Ḥodesh – The first day (or sometimes two days) of the new Hebrew month, carrying with it certain obligations which may differ from those of other days.

Shabbat – The seventh day of the week, on which God rested after Creation and on which Jews also now rest.

Shaharit – The morning service, just after *Pesukei DeZimra*, which includes the *Shema* and the *Amidah*, the central pieces of the morning liturgy.

Shulḥan – a large lectern, usually placed in the center of the praying space, often used for Torah reading.

Siddur – Literally, “order.” The prayer book used to follow the order of praying. We generally use the *Siddur Lev Shalem* for *Shabbat* services.

Simḥah – A happy occasion, such as a wedding, *berit millah* (circumcision), baby naming, *aufruf*, *bat* or *bar mitzvah*, etc.

Tallit – A prayer shawl, each corner of which contains special fringes known as *tzitzit*.

Tefillin – Leather boxes containing biblical passages, with straps for binding around the head and hand. They are used every morning, but not on *Shabbat* or festivals.

Tikkun Olam – Repairing the world, *i.e.*, doing good works.

Torah – The Five Books of Moses, the first five books of the Bible. They are inscribed on a *sefer* Torah, a Torah scroll, which is handwritten on parchment from a kosher animal. “Torah” can also refer to all the commentary and interpretation that comes from the Five Books of Moses.

Yom Tov – A festival or holiday. We have three festivals in the calendar (*Pesah*, *Shavu’ot*, and *Sukkot*), and also the High Holidays (*Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*).

FINDING MEANING AS A FAMILY THROUGH BAR/BAT MITZVAH

You may want to consider these questions as you prepare as a family for celebrating a *bar/bat mitzvah*.

1. What does it mean to be Jewish today?
2. What makes involvement in Jewish life meaningful to you, as an individual and as a family?
3. What does it mean to become *bat/bar mitzvah*?
4. What are the Jewish values that are most important to your family?
5. Who is important to you as a part of this experience, beyond your immediate family? Why? What do you want them to experience?
6. How does the *bar/bat mitzvah* experience fit with the larger Jewish community?

APPENDIX

APPROVED TUTORS

Dana Kunzman	Levinedana@hotmail.com	412-897-5932
Rabbi Howard Stein	rabbi.howie.stein@gmail.com	513-600-5535
Leah Ackner	leah.ackner@gmail.com	412-725-3574
Carol Beth Yoffee	cbydesigns@me.com	412-897-1427
Hal Grinberg	hal.grin@verizon.net	412-242-6335

FEES

Benei Mitzvah Fee	\$300
Basic Shabbat Morning Kiddush for 120 persons (Please see administration for additional pricing.)	\$750

Honors Sheet for Shabbat Morning

**All honors must be approved by Rabbi Adelson.
Honors not listed on this sheet must be discussed
at least three months ahead.
This sheet is due one month prior to the event.**

**(Page numbers refer to pages in
Siddur Lev Shalem.)**

Date: _____

Torah Portion: _____

English Name of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*: _____

Hebrew Name of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*: _____

→Format: (Child's Hebrew name) **ben/bat** (father's Hebrew name) **ve-**(mother's Hebrew name) (*Hakohen/Halevi* if applicable)

Parent #1 Name: _____

Phone: _____

Parent #2 Name: _____

Phone: _____

Please provide names of individuals for this section:

Open Ark (page 168): _____

Remove Torah from Ark (page 171): _____

(Remove 2nd Torah from Ark - only on days when this applies- please consult Rabbi Adelson or the Rabbi's assistant): _____

Carry Torah from Ark (page 171): _____

(Carry 2nd Torah from Ark): _____

Close Ark (page 171): _____

Honorary *Gabbai*: _____

(Stands next to Torah as it is read and listens for accurate Torah reading)

Aliyot (People who are honored by reciting *berakhot* (blessings) as the Torah is being read. You may call multiples, couples, etc.) **No more than three, please.**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Maftir Aliyah is always reserved for the *bat/bar mitzvah*.

Hagbahah: _____
(Ceremonially lifting the Torah- preferably someone who has done so before)

(*Hagbahah 2*): _____

Gelilah (binding Torah): _____

English Prayer for our Country (page 177): _____

Hebrew Prayer for Israel (page 178): _____

Ashrei (page 181): _____

Open Ark (page 183): _____

Carry Torah/Return to Ark: _____

Close Ark (page 184): _____

Ein Kelohenu (page 204): _____

Aleinu (page 205): _____

Adon Olam (page 211): _____

NOTE: For *Adon Olam*, the honorees may be joined by members of the Beth Shalom Mini Minyan.

Kiddush/Handwashing/Motzi (page 77): _____

Other honors, including leading parts of services, calling *gabbai*, etc., must be discussed with Rabbi Adelson at least 2 months in advance.

Honors Sheet for Minhah

Date: _____ Torah Portion: _____

English Name of *Bat/Bar Mitzvah*: _____

Hebrew Name of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*: _____

→Format: (Child's Hebrew name) *ben/bat* (father's Hebrew name) *ve*-(mother's Hebrew name)
(*Hakohen/Halevi* if applicable)

Parent #1 Name: _____ Phone: _____

Parent #2 Name: _____ Phone: _____

Please provide names of individuals for this section:

Open Ark (page 218): _____

Remove Torah from Ark (page 218): _____

Carry Torah from Ark: _____

Close Ark: _____

Honorary *Gabbai*: _____

(stands next to Torah as it is read and listens for accurate Torah reading)

Aliyot (people who are honored by reciting *berakhot*/blessings as the Torah is being read. Multiples / couples may be called. One *aliyah* of the three is reserved for the congregation, and the third is for the *bat/bar mitzvah*.)

1. _____

Third *Aliyah* (*shelishi*) is reserved for *bar/bat mitzvah*.

Hagbahah: _____

(Ceremonially lifting the Torah- preferably someone who has done so before)

Gelilah (binding Torah): _____

Carry Torah/Return to Ark: _____

Open Ark (page 221): _____

Close Ark (page 222): _____

Other honors, including leading parts of services, calling *gabbai*, etc., must be discussed with Rabbi Adelson at least 3 months in advance.



Publicity Form

Return form along with a jpeg picture of your child
no later than four months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.

Bat/Bar Mitzvah Date _____

Name _____ Hebrew Name _____

Birth Date _____ Hebrew Date _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Parents' Names _____

Brothers and Sisters:

Name _____ Age _____ Name _____ Age _____

Name _____ Age _____ Name _____ Age _____

Grandparents' Names: (both living and deceased)

Living Great-Grandparents' Names:

Tikkun Olam Project:

The above information is for the Beth Shalom Shabbat bulletin, Beth Shalom website, and *Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle*. Please give names exactly as you want them to appear. Please return this form as soon as possible to Rabbi Adelson's assistant, Audrey Glickman.

Additional information about the Bat/Bar Mitzvah candidate:

School (and grade) now attending _____

Special Interests _____

My daughter/son would prefer (please check one):

CANDLESTICKS

KIDDUSH CUP

BENEI MITZVAH AGREEMENT

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, agree to the provisions contained in the Benei Mitzvah Handbook as presented to us, and intend to comply to the best of our ability.

PARENT: _____
Name (printed) _____

PARENT: _____
Name (printed) _____

FUTURE *BAR/BAT MITZVAH*: _____
Name (printed) _____

DATE: _____

RABBI:

Rabbi Seth Adelson

DATE: _____