



haberkorn
RELIGIOUS SCHOOL
Congregation Beth Israel

**CELEBRATING YOUR CHILD'S BAR/BAT MITZVAH
GUIDELINES**

Updated– Elul 5777/August 2017

Congregation Beth Israel
10460 N. 56th Street
Scottsdale, AZ 85253

Mazel Tov!

You are embarking on a remarkable journey. This booklet is intended to familiarize you with details concerning your child's upcoming simcha. It sets out some of the guidelines and traditions for becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah at Congregation Beth Israel and is intended to answer many of your questions.

This is an important occasion in your son's or daughter's life and for your family, and our synagogue staff wants to ensure that the process of learning, preparing, and celebrating is positive and meaningful for all involved.

Preparation & Eligibility

To be eligible for Bar or Bat Mitzvah at Congregation Beth Israel, each student must be enrolled in our Religious/Hebrew School program (unless the student is matriculating from another congregation's program) from 4th - 7th grade prior to becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Hiring a "private" tutor for outside instruction is the family's prerogative; however, individualized instruction does not exempt any student from being enrolled in our program. While enrolled in our Religious School program, students with excessive absences from both Sunday morning Religious School and Thursday afternoon Hebrew may not qualify for becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah at the discretion of the clergy. Students currently enrolled at Pardes Jewish Day School are exempt from this requirement until the 6th grade. Beginning in their 7th grade year (or in some cases earlier) day school students are required to join our Thursday afternoon B'nei Mitzvah class which meets during the school year from **4:30 – 6:30 PM** and during the summer from **4:00 – 5:00 PM** (summer classes are not required but highly recommended).

Becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah at Congregation Beth Israel means assuming full Jewish spiritual responsibility and includes a commitment to continue in the Religious School program through the high school *Ma'ayan* program (8th – 12th grades).

During the sixth grade Religious School year, at least one parent and their child will attend two family education sessions with Rabbi Stephen Kahn. The first session will be held in the Ballroom from **11:00 AM - Noon on Sunday, December 10, 2017** is titled "*What's God Got to Do With This?*" The second session will be held on **Sunday, March 25, 2018 from 11:00 AM – Noon** and is titled, "*Mitzvah Shmitzvah – Where's the Party?*"

Families should be members in good standing of Congregation Beth Israel prior to the ceremony. This means that all membership contributions and fees must be paid in full at least sixty days prior to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah date. Please contact Iris Cohn in the office (480) 951-0323 ext. 110 if you have any concerns about the status of your membership.

Throughout the year preceding Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the clergy and the Religious School teachers work closely with your child as they learn what it means to assume responsibility as an adult member of the community and to fulfill the religious and moral commandments of our faith. The goal of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah program is to strengthen your relationship and your child's relationship with the synagogue and with the teachings of Judaism.

Commitment to Attend Shabbat Services and Torah Study

In the months preceding the ceremony, the Bar or Bat Mitzvah and his/her parents must regularly attend Shabbat Services at Beth Israel (Friday evening and Saturday morning) as well as participate in *Chevrah* Torah - Shabbat morning Torah Study.

These experiences will give families an opportunity to become familiar with the traditions at Congregation Beth Israel as well as shape the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student's relationship to our congregation and our cultural heritage.

Beginning in the fourth grade, each student will receive "credit" for service attendance. We will keep a binder with stickers and the names of each student listed. At the end of each Friday evening and Saturday morning Service the child will ask the presiding clergy (or Religious School Director) to place a sticker next to their name to show that they attended. If our records show that a student is not keeping current during the year with the service requirement we will notify you. Furthermore, service attendance outside of Congregation Beth Israel will not count toward fulfillment of this service requirement. However, attendance at a Jewish summer camp such as Camp Daisy and Harry Stein will fulfill part of this requirement.

Please note that the period for fulfilling requirements for grades 4-7 runs concurrent with each year's Religious School calendar (September through May). Stickers received in the summer months may be applied to either the past year's deficit or as "credit" toward the next year.

REQUIREMENTS | by Grade Year

- 4 Fourth Grade** | 4th Grade students and at least one parent must attend a minimum of **six** Shabbat evening and/or morning services during the year.
- 5 Fifth Grade** | 5th Grade students and at least one parent must attend a minimum of **seven** Shabbat evening and/or morning services during the year.
- 6 Sixth Grade** | 6th Grade students and at least one parent must attend a minimum of **eight** Shabbat evening and/or morning services during the year. Requirements also apply to 6th grade PARDES students.
- 7 Seventh Grade** | 7th Grade students (or before if applicable) and families, are asked to utilize the many Shabbat experiences at Beth Israel. To this end we will require the following:
- At least **two sessions of Torah Study** (Saturday mornings, 8:45-9:45am, year-round)
 - At least **four Friday night** services.
 - At least **four Saturday morning** services.

These requirements also apply to 6th and 7th grade students who are currently enrolled at Pardes.

B'nei Mitzvot Outside of Congregation Beth Israel

Occasionally, our students become *B'nei Mitzvah* in Israel or at another venue outside of CBI's facilities. Many of these families want their child/ren prepared for their *simcha* within the CBI Religious School program. As with all students, these children begin their B'nei Mitzvah preparation course six months prior to the *simcha*. Please note that commitments regarding Religious School attendance, Shabbat Services and Hineini are the same for all students, regardless of the location of their B'nei Mitzvah Service.

Seventh Grade Religious School Information

Seventh graders are expected to attend the entire year of the program, regardless of when their Bar or Bat Mitzvah occurs. Our seventh grade program is comprised of two components: The *Gesher* Class, which is an ongoing program that runs throughout the entire school year, takes place on Thursdays from 4:30 – 6:30 pm. The topics are modular, allowing for students to switch easily between the *Gesher* Class and the B'nei Mitzvah Preparation class.

Seven months prior to their Bar/Bat Mitzvah (which may occur during the sixth grade), our 7th graders will receive a letter informing them to report to the ballroom on Thursdays for B'nei Mitzvah Preparation class. This class is taught by our Hebrew faculty and provides small group and individualized instruction to prepare students for their Bar/ Bat Mitzvah. In January of each school year, we will begin offering a special class at Ma'ayan for our post B'nei Mitzvah 7th graders from **6:30 p.m. – 7:50 p.m. on Thursdays**, which is included in your seventh grade fees (dinner is always included).

JrBITY/NFTY78 (Formerly "Hineini")

All seventh graders will also be required to participate in at least three events through our Jr BITY/NFTY78 program. These events will have a community service component along with a social aspect. All information for these events, dates and times can be found on the CBI website calendar or in the weekly "Youth" email newsletter. Attendance at these events will be marked in the service sticker book.

Pre-Bar & Bat Mitzvah Year *Mitzvah Project*

Becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah means taking on the adult responsibility of living according to the *mitzvot*. Part of the learning process at Beth Israel includes a commitment to a family *mitzvah* project. A *mitzvah* project should include *mitzvot* of *Gimilut Chasadim* (Acts of Loving-Kindness) such as an on-going volunteer effort over several months which supports someone in need, as well as observance of *mitzvot* that include rituals, study and observance. By making the project a family commitment our children learn that living by the *mitzvot* is an important family value.

A few examples of projects completed by our families are: visiting patients in a nursing home regularly, raising money for a particular charity, collecting food or goods for a charity, and tutoring a special needs student.

In the appendix of this manual is a Mitzvah Project proposal form which should be submitted at least three months prior to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah (Seventh Graders can return this form to our Religious School Director as soon as possible).

The Ceremony

Typically, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child participates in the Erev Shabbat Service on the Friday evening prior to their Bar/Bat Mitzvah service by chanting the *V'ahavtah*. Parents have the honor of lighting the Shabbat candles. Times for services vary from time-to-time so please confirm the time of Friday evening services by calling the office or checking on our website.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah service is a community celebration, not a private event. There may also be a baby naming ceremony, pre nuptial blessing or special honor given to members of our Congregation in addition to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah during Friday evenings and/or Shabbat morning Services.

During the Shabbat morning Service your Bar/Bat Mitzvah student will participate by leading the congregation in the reading of prayers, chanting the *Torah* and *Haftarah* blessings, chanting passages from the *Torah* portion of the week, chanting the *Haftarah* in Hebrew, and delivering a personal message to the congregation.

The clergy and staff will work with families that have special circumstances to ensure that the ceremony is performed properly and memorably.

During the service parents or designated relatives are invited to sit with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student and/or participate in the service. Following are some of the honors in which family and friends may participate:

Alliyot | The word "*Aliyah*" literally means "going up" referring to a person who goes up to the *Torah*.

Traditionally, at Beth Israel the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family has four *Alliyot*:

- The Bar/Bat Mitzvah has his or her own *Aliyah*,
- The parents usually have an *Aliyah* and,
- The other *Alliyot* may be offered to other close relatives or family friends.
- In addition other *Alliyot* may be reserved for congregants who are attending the Shabbat services or can be arranged for additional members of the family.

Participants should have sufficient knowledge of Hebrew to read the blessings with some fluency. There will be an English transliteration available on the pulpit for those that need it.

It is helpful to send copies of the prayers or special readings to those guests being honored so that they can review them. The clergy are available by appointment to review the blessings with anyone who needs help. Those called to the *Torah* for an *Aliyah* must be above the age of thirteen and Jewish. A non-Jewish biological parent may accompany an honoree to the *bima* but is not permitted to recite the blessing.

Please make sure that those given the honor of reciting the blessing, practice well in advance of the Service so as not to embarrass themselves or your child.

Parent Speeches | There are three options available to parents who wish to address their child from the bima on the day of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah:

- i. *CBI Parent Prayer* - utilizing one of the eight prayer options available on our website.
- ii. *Open Ark Blessing* – a sacred moment in front of the open ark for a private and personal family prayer
- iii. *Parent Speech* – traditional speech from the bima, no more than 350 words, submitted to the officiating Rabbi no later than the Wednesday prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Any speech submitted after the deadline cannot be delivered from the bima. Please note that the topic of the speech should be connected to the week's Torah portion and should focus on Jewish themes throughout. Please feel free to contact the clergy for further questions, clarifications, or for a sample speech.

Tallit Presentation | Many families choose to present the Bar or Bat Mitzvah with a *tallit* at the beginning of the service or in the rabbi's study before the service. On some occasions it is a *tallit* that was passed down from previous generations and on other occasions a new one is purchased. Please note, if presenting the *tallit* at the beginning of the service, any short speech given at that time should be no more than one hundred words and must be submitted to the officiating Rabbi for approval no later than the Wednesday prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Opening & Closing the Holy Ark Doors | This honor involves opening and closing the Ark. There is no age or religious restrictions for Ark Assistants. Often, younger siblings or relatives are assigned this task.

G'lila (Binding/Dressing) Torah Assistants | The "Dressing of the *Torah*," occurs at the end of the *Torah* service. Typically this honor is performed by a younger sibling, cousin, or friend.

Torah Passing Ceremony (*L'dor va' dor*—from generation to generation) | An important part of the *Torah* service at Beth Israel is the *Torah* passing ceremony, when the *Torah* is literally passed from one generation to the next generation within the family and finally to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Participants are biological Jewish great grandparents, grandparents and parents. This is followed by a *Torah* procession around the sanctuary.

Jewish and Non-Jewish Family and Friends | At Beth Israel we welcome the participation of non-Jewish family members and friends. Although we do not pass the *Torah* through their arms, they stand with their family as we honor their commitment to raise a Jewish child. For certain ritual parts of the ceremony, such as the *Torah* passing, lighting of *Shabbat* candles and being called to the *Torah* for an *Aliyah* the participants must be Jewish. We do have a special blessing to be recited before the *Torah* reading for non-Jewish parents only.

Printed Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program | A printed Bar/Bat Mitzvah program will be provided by Congregation Beth Israel on the morning of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. The program will include: explanations of various rituals, the day's Torah reading, and personalized family information. Please submit all information for the program to Linda Szlamkowicz no later than the Wednesday prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Samples are available upon request.

Schedule Prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Two Years Prior to the Child's 13th Birthday Year | Two years before the year in which your child will turn 13 parents will receive a date reservation form from Rabbi Stephen Kahn. The calendar is often filled with Jewish festivals, general holidays, and a very busy schedule of congregational activities; therefore you will be given the opportunity to pick three dates one of which will be assigned to your child.

Any Shabbat after the 13th birthday is appropriate. The ceremony takes place during Shabbat morning services (Saturday morning) at 10:00 A.M. In the event that there are two requests for the same date, we may schedule two services for that morning, the first at 9:00 A.M. and the second at 11:00 A.M. We do not schedule B'nei Mitzvah during July or August.

As Soon as the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date is Set | If you wish to use the Ballroom for your reception, please contact Kathy Brewer to reserve the facility. Check the staff page near the end of this document for phone numbers and extensions. Please note that the Ballroom is reserved on the basis of "first to book," and is no longer guaranteed to the "late" Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service family.

Seven Months Prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date | At least six months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student begins a group class on Thursday afternoons (4:30 p.m.– 6:30 p.m.) as part of Religious School.

Six Months Prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date | You will receive a letter inviting your student to a “Binder Ceremony” in Stacy Rosenthal’s office. At this meeting, Stacy will share key components of the program including: Thursday B’nei Mitzvah Preparation Classes, Ma’ayan post B’nei Mitzvah program, Mentor program and the B’nei Mitzvah Honors Program. Parents and students will gain a better understanding of the road ahead and the preparations needed for your simcha.

Four Months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date | Individual training sessions with the clergy or Beth Israel tutor begin. 20 one-half hour sessions are included with your B’nei Mitzvah fees. Coleen Fisher will contact you to set up these appointments.

Four-Six Weeks Prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date | Your child will meet with the officiating clergy at least one time so that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student will have the chance to study his/her *Torah* portion, examine major themes and concepts, as well as discuss ideas for the student’s *D’var Torah*. Parents must attend these sessions. Students will also be in touch with their “Mentor” - an adult member of the congregation who will work with them in the final weeks before their Service. Mentors help students rehearse, “polish” their prayers, Torah /Haftarah readings and speeches while encouraging them and giving them extra confidence.

Also, our office will contact you at this time to obtain a photograph and brief statement from your child for publication in the monthly bulletin.

Two Weeks Prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah | At this time you will complete the information form with details of service participants for the Shabbat Service. Please be prepared with the Hebrew names of participants in the service.

Ten Days Prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah | Two final rehearsals with the clergy or tutor are held.

Operational Services Provided by Our Synagogue

Flowers | Flowers for the *kiddush* and/or reception area, if desired, can be provided by a florist at additional cost. If you would like to sponsor bima flowers for Shabbat morning services, please inform Kathy Brewer in the office.

Personnel | One member of the administrative staff will be present on the day of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to help assure the smooth functioning of all details for the event. Custodians are on hand to assist you with any last minute needs. Family greeters are always welcome to assist in handing out prayer books and helping people to their seats when necessary.

Security | If you would like security for your luncheon or dinner, please contact Ann Blackman to make arrangements at an additional cost.

Event and Facility Manager | Kathy Brewer is available to help you before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. If you are interested in hosting your reception in the Ballroom, it is best to inquire immediately. She is knowledgeable in all aspects of event planning and can also provide a list of caterers, photographers, florists, bands, and DJs and can offer suggestions regardless of your event location.

Oneg/Kiddush | It is traditional at Beth Israel for the family to sponsor an *Oneg/Kiddush* on the Friday evening prior to your child’s Bar or Bat Mitzvah and/or on the Saturday morning following the ceremony, in honor of this special celebration. There are menu options that the Synagogue would be happy to arrange for you. If you choose to sponsor an *Oneg/Kiddush* please notify Kathy Brewer.

Beth Israel Customs

Dress | The Bar or Bat Mitzvah is encouraged to participate with *kippah* and *tallit*. These may be borrowed from the Synagogue or purchased online or from a Judaica source. Also, please note that appropriate Shabbat attire is requested.

Candy | At CBI we do not permit candy to be thrown during B'nei Mitzvah Services.

Photos | Photographers are welcome to take pictures from a stationary place in the rear of the Sanctuary or Chapel. However, flash pictures may not be taken during the service as such activity disturbs the religious spirit of *Shabbat* and detracts from the worship experience. Please arrange for photos to be taken before the service, and inform the staff when you plan to arrive. Posed photos, with flash, may be taken at this time.

Videography | Video taping of the ceremony is permitted from the rear of the Sanctuary or Chapel. It is vital that the individuals doing the taping be thoroughly briefed by Ann Blackman so that there will be no problem with the lighting, or electrical outlets. If your videographer is not familiar with our Synagogue, they are required to call Ann to arrange for a time to familiarize themselves with the Synagogue and the lighting.

Live Streaming | Live streaming of your simcha is available for the nominal fee of \$360 which covers the technicians, live streaming broadcast and a digital copy of the Service on a USB thumb drive. This will allow friends and family who couldn't be with you to still share in your event by viewing it live from the CBI webpage. Please contact Coleen Fisher to make arrangements and discuss fees and reservations.

Tree of Honor Plaque | It is traditional at Congregation Beth Israel to remember this once in a lifetime event by purchasing a plaque in honor of your child becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah to be installed on the Tree of Life Wall in our Rotunda. Plaques are available for a donation of \$300. Iris Cohn can facilitate this for you.

Resources

Congregational Staff

Rabbi Stephen Kahn	(480) 951-0323
Ian Schulder, Executive Director	(480) 951-0323
Stacy Rosenthal, Religious School Director	(480) 951-0323
Kathy Brewer, Synagogue Administrator	(480) 951-0323, ext.111
Coleen Fisher, Clergy Assistant -Bar/Bat Mitzvah Scheduling	(480) 951-0323, ext. 141

Reference Books

Putting God on the Guest list, How to Reclaim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah, by Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin, Jewish Lights Publishing, 1996

The Mitzvah Project Book: Making Mitzvah Part of Your Bar/Bat Mitzvah ... and Your Life, Diane Heiman and Liz Sunebly, Jewish Lights Publishing, 2011

Mitzvah Chic, Gail Anthony Greenberg, Self-published, 2003

Surviving Your Bar/Bat Mitzvah: The Ultimate Insider's Guide Paperback, Cantor Matt Axelrod, Jason Aronson Publishing, August 16, 2012