

Dear Families,

Mazel Tov on reaching this incredible milestone! The journey toward becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is one of the most meaningful and joyful experiences in Jewish life. We are honored to be part of this sacred journey with you.

At Temple B'nai Sholom, we believe that a B'nai Mitzvah is not only a profound moment in the life of the B'nai Mitzvah stepping into Jewish adulthood but also a significant moment for the family and our entire congregation. This is a time for family connection, personal growth, and deepening ties within our community. As each individual becomes a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, they strengthen the legacy of Jewish faith, wisdom, and tradition.

This handbook is designed to guide you through the preparation and planning involved in this sacred lifecycle event. It provides information on both the spiritual aspects and the practical steps that will make the day both meaningful and smooth. We encourage you to see this as a roadmap for a journey that deepens understanding, builds confidence, and creates lasting memories.

Thank you for entrusting us with this cherished moment. Together, let's make this a time of learning, celebration, and joy for your entire family and our congregation.

Rabbi PJ Schwartz

## Requirements and Expectations

### Setting the Date

Families are encouraged to consider reserving their child's B'nai Mitzvah date as early as the 5th grade. All families must choose a date no later than 18 months in advance.

Families should understand that if a selection is not made in a timely manner, they jeopardize being able to select a date that is close to the 13th birthday of their child due to other events that may be reserved on the Temple Calendar. Dates are formally reserved upon signature acknowledging the expectations and policies as stated in the B'nai Mitzvah Handbook, and payment of at least the required deposit (see Fees and Members in Good Standing).

**New families:** The Rabbi will work with new families with children of B'nai Mitzvah age to hold a service date that falls as close to their child's 13th birthday as possible once their Temple membership is approved and initial payments are made.

### Fees and Members of Good Standing

The family of the B'nai Mitzvah must be members in good standing at Temple B'nai Sholom, as well as have paid a **one-time B'nai Mitzvah fee of \$600** to offset the costs of security, musical accompaniment, facility cleaning, administrative needs, live streaming, and incidentals. A **\$300 deposit must be placed in order to formally reserve a B'nai Mitzvah date.**

Please keep in mind that finances should never be a barrier to engagement and participation in our congregation and a B'nai Mitzvah. Please speak with the Rabbi if alternative arrangements need to be made.

### Inclusion

It is our goal to make any reasonable effort to ensure that any individual who wants to have a B'nai Mitzvah is able to. We understand that our students may have learning differences and special needs that require us to make adjustments to our requirements and expectations. We strive to make the B'nai Mitzvah process positive for everyone.

### Jewish Education

"Rabbi Tarfon and the elders were once reclining in the upper story of Nithza's house in Lydda, when this question was raised before them: Is study greater, or practice? Rabbi Tarfon answered saying: Practice is greater. Rabbi Akiva answered saying: Study is greater, for it leads to practice. Then they all answered and said: Study is greater because it leads to action" (Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Kiddushin 40b).

Is study greater, or practice? Ultimately, the answer may not matter. We study for the purpose of maintaining a Jewish way of life. For this reason, lifelong Jewish learning is a *mitzvah*, and a core value of Temple B'nai Sholom. Jewish learning leads not only to Jewish literacy but also to ritual competency and commitment to the sacred task of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world).

As Reform Jews, B'nai Mitzvah does not mark the end of Jewish learning, but affirms a commitment to a life of meaningful and relevant Jewish learning and living.

**Current Member Families:** All students must be enrolled in NACHaS (2024-2025)/Kulanu (beginning in 2025) at least three (3) years prior to B'nai Mitzvah with 80% attendance throughout each academic year, and provide a short, written statement indicating their intention to continue their Jewish formal and informal education at least through 10th grade.

**New Member Families:** Families joining less than 3 years prior to B'nai Mitzvah must enroll student in Kulanu (or NACHaS if prior to the 2025 school year) at the time of joining Temple B'nai Sholom in order to be eligible for a B'nai Mitzvah, and provide a written statement indicating their intention to continue their Jewish formal and informal education at least through 10th grade.

## **Worship**

Attendance is required at six (6) Shabbat services at Temple B'nai Sholom beginning 9 months in advance of the B'nai Mitzvah. Attendance at Shabbat services familiarizes the student and the family with the order and rhythm of the service and the prayers. It is important that the student and family become familiar with the music so that you can select melodies for your service with the Rabbi.

While Saturday morning services are atypical at Temple B'nai Sholom, B'nai Mitzvah are also strongly encouraged to attend those Saturday services that take place throughout the year as part of their service attendance requirement. **All B'nai Mitzvah services will take place on Saturday mornings.**

## **Mitzvah Project**

While a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is not an “adult” by any measure today, the onset of the teen years certainly is the beginning of the gradual transition into adulthood. As such, one of the most important lessons that we seek to teach our B’nai Mitzvah as they transition into adulthood is that they have a Jewish responsibility to repair our broken world - *tikkun olam*. Our tradition teaches us that we cannot be bystanders or merely passive passengers through life. We are obligated to be actively engaged in repairing our world. It is for this reason that the Mitzvah Project is an integral part of the B’nai Mitzvah experience.

The Mitzvah Project must be:

**Hands-on:** Do a project where you perform tasks that assist those in need. Raising money, babysitting, and volunteering at the Temple do not qualify.

**Designed to bring direct benefit to an agency or recipient:** Whenever possible, have contact with the people you want to help. Visiting shut-ins, serving food to homeless people, preparing meals for someone who is ill, are all examples of direct benefit. If there is a cause that is deeply important to you, for which it is not possible to do direct work, you may contact their volunteer services and find a way to do some volunteer work that will ultimately benefit its clients.

**Designed in a realistic manner to be carried out and completed no later than the conclusion of the academic year of their ceremony:** Pick something where you can really be helpful within the time frame of your other life commitments. Even a short-term, concrete project can have a greater impact than you realize.

**Time invested is sufficient to make a difference:** Temple B’nai Sholom expects that B’nai Mitzvah students will engage in one specific volunteer project for no less than 13 hours.

**Where to find a project:** Projects are best designed by students (sometimes with a little help from parents) around their own personal concerns and talents. The project can be with an agency or with individuals. Be aware that many animal shelters and other organizations have a minimum age of 16 to volunteer.

**Where to get more information:** Suggestions and ideas can be found towards the end of this handbook. Please ask the Rabbi for further resources to guide your B’nai Mitzvah’s decision making.

## **Tutoring**

B'nai Mitzvah students are encouraged to begin B'nai Mitzvah specific Hebrew tutoring sessions approximately **24 WEEKS** prior to their B'nai Mitzvah service. We are happy to recommend tutors, or you can engage one of your own. Please have the tutor contact the Rabbi in advance of your first meeting to ensure they are understanding of the process and expectations. During tutoring sessions, the student will review prayers and learn the Torah portion.

## **Meetings with the Rabbi**

The Rabbi will meet with each family approximately **EIGHT MONTHS** before the Bar or Bat Mitzvah date to discuss the B'nai Mitzvah process, the ceremony itself, and address questions and concerns. Families will be expected to have read, with the B'nai Mitzvah, the entire Torah portion. The Rabbi will provide a translation of the B'nai Mitzvah's Torah portion a month prior to the meeting with some guiding questions. The Rabbi will assist in determining the Torah verses chanted based on the B'nai Mitzvah's interests, and then provide the Hebrew associated with those verses for the B'nai Mitzvah to practice.

Following that meeting, the Rabbi will meet for 30-45 minutes with the B'nai Mitzvah **every other week (2x/month)**. At **TWO MONTHS** prior to the ceremony, the Rabbi will meet with the B'nai Mitzvah **weekly** for the same amount of time. Typically these sessions are spent discussing the Torah portion, preparing a speech or introduction to the congregation, determining a Mitzvah Project, or practicing prayers and Torah.

The Rabbi will meet with the family again **ONE MONTH** before the ceremony to review the service order and finalize honors.

## **Rehearsals**

**One month** before the ceremony, the Rabbi will hold three formal rehearsals in preparation for the service. The first two rehearsals will be with the Rabbi and student only. These rehearsals will focus on getting them comfortable with the space, the microphones, and speaking slowly and loudly. The Rabbi will explain and rehearse the service with your child, practicing the Hebrew and English prayers, Torah portion, their d'var Torah, and the prayer they will lead during the Friday evening service.

The final rehearsal before the B'nai Mitzvah service will be with the B'nai Mitzvah and their parents/guardians. We ask you to be there so that you can also feel comfortable in the space and practice your parts, i.e. Torah blessings, removing the Torah from and returning it to the Ark, passing the Torah, and running through the choreography of the service. **The final rehearsal will take place on the Friday morning prior to the service itself.**

## **Friday Evening**

Temple B'nai Sholom's main congregational service occurs on Friday evenings are led by our Rabbi, and may include our choir, accompanist, or a songleader, the determination of which is the sole discretion of the Rabbi and are scheduled in advance. The B'nai Mitzvah **will** be able to request specific melodies associated with our prayers. Those requests must be made **SIX (6) WEEKS** in advance of the B'nai Mitzvah date.

Services begin promptly at 7:00pm on Friday evenings, and will end approximately 90 minutes later, no later than 8:30pm. While Saturday morning is dedicated to the the B'nai Mitzvah, it is our expectation that the B'nai Mitzvah will participate in the Friday night service and has the option to lead **one or two** prayers of their choice (V'ahavta, Mi Chamocha, or Avot v'Imahot/Gevurot).

## **Saturday Morning**

The B'nai Mitzvah service takes place on Shabbat (Saturday) morning and will always include music from our accompanist. The B'nai Mitzvah **will** be able to request specific melodies associated with our prayers and will be discussed **TWO (2) MONTHS** prior to their service.

Services begin promptly at 10:30am on Saturday mornings, and will conclude approximately 2 and one half hours later, but no later than 1:00PM. Families are allowed to have a photography session prior to the service, but all sessions need to be completed no later than 10:00am.

At 10:00am, the Rabbi will meet with the family to review any final logistics and questions that can be addressed. A member of the board will also join your family and the Rabbi to sign a B'nai Mitzvah certificate.

## **Ritual Honors**

- We welcome the participation of family and friends at our services, and are eager to include non-Jewish persons in most instances. Ritual Honors include:
  - Opening and Closing the Ark for Aleinu on Friday Evening
  - Opening and Closing the Ark for Torah Service on Saturday Morning
  - Leading one or two English readings in the Saturday morning service (Reading options from our prayer book can be found at the end of the handbook, as “Optional Ritual Honor”).
    - ***If families choose not to offer this honor to someone, the B’nai Mitzvah will lead these readings.***
  - Undressing Torah for Torah Reading
  - Participating in Chain of Tradition (Grandparents, Parents, B’nai Mitzvah)
  - \*Chanting Blessings Before and After Torah Reading (Aliyot)
    - First Aliyah: Grandparents
    - Second Aliyah: Parents
    - Third Aliyah: B’nai Mitzvah
  - Lifting the Torah at the conclusion of the Torah reading
  - Dressing the Torah at the conclusion of the Torah reading

\*If neither grandparent is Jewish, they will be invited to read an alternative English reading in lieu of reciting the Torah blessings. If one grandparent or parent is Jewish, and the other is not, they can chant the blessings together. An alternative English reading can also be read in addition to the Torah blessings in Hebrew.

\*\*Any non-Jewish family member can participate in Passing the Torah in the Chain of Tradition (Grandparents, Parents).

\*\*\*Please also note that a non-Jewish adult, or someone who has not taken on the obligation of the mitzvot (Jewish commandments) such as a child, should not wear a Tallit and cannot be called alone to an aliyah (blessing of the Torah).

Please refer to the B’nai Mitzvah Honors form for further details. The rabbi will need the Hebrew names of all those individuals who have an aliyah during the Torah reading, lift the Torah, and dress the Torah.

## **Parent Remarks**

During the Tallit Presentation, parents have an opportunity to give a short blessing or to share their hopes and dreams for their child on this special occasion. These thoughts are directed to the child, not the congregation. This is a time to share your pride and love and to express your desire for your child to become a responsible Jewish adult. You might emphasize some of the essential values you want to pass on to the next generation and to give an example of how your child has demonstrated an understanding of these values. Or, you might want to consider what positive message your child needs to hear at this time to support his/her continued growth and development, particularly in the context of the Jewish community. **The speech should be short, two or three minutes (1 page max, double-spaced, approximately 250 words).** For those families with twins, parents may follow this guideline for both children.

## **Suggested Outline**

- The significance to you of your child becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah This can be especially poignant from a non-Jewish parent.
- The values you want to transmit to your child/children for their future.
- Your pride in your child and the joy they bring to you and others.
- Write it down. Even the most eloquent parents can forget what they want to say at this emotional time. Type it double spaced, 14 point type or larger, so you can read it through the tears.
- Remember the context. This is a religious service to celebrate your child's new status as a Jewish adult. Praising all of his or her talents and accomplishments is tempting, but dwelling on unrelated subjects, e.g. sports or music, will detract from the religious nature and significance of the event.
- Remember the congregation. This is not just a gathering of your family and friends, but of the community, and some things are better said in private. Thirteen-year-olds are notoriously sensitive to embarrassment. Funny stories about their early childhood can be perceived as cruel when retold in public. You can and should tell your child how proud you are at other times. You do not need to explain all the details in this setting. No more than 1 page double-spaced.
- Keep it short.
- Don't focus on your child's "accomplishments". By focusing on the student's accomplishments we inadvertently give them the message that they are loved for what they do, not who they are. This message sneaks in when you least expect it.
- If what you wish to say does not fit these guidelines, then perhaps the service is not the right place for your words. Perhaps a toast at your oneg or reception is more appropriate. Take advantage of that opportunity!
- **If you are concerned as to whether or not your words are appropriate, feel free to share your written comments with the Rabbi at least four days before the ceremony. The Rabbi will be happy to review your remarks to**



ensure that they are fitting for the occasion and reflect what you want to share with your child/children.

## **Congregational Presentations**

Members of our Brotherhood and Sisterhood will present the B'nai Mitzvah gifts on behalf of their auxiliary organization; typically candle sticks or a kiddush cup. **They will have the opportunity to share brief words of congratulations to the B'nai Mitzvah.**

In addition, B'nai Mitzvah will be presented with a certificate, signed by a board member and the Rabbi, as well as a \$3,250 certificate towards a Union of Reform Judaism (URJ) sponsored trip to Israel. **Families are encouraged to ask a board member of their choice to present these gifts. The board member will have an opportunity to share brief words of congratulations to the B'nai Mitzvah. This moment is even more meaningful when the board member has a relationship with the family!**

## **Remembering Loved Ones**

Please provide the Rabbi with any names of loved ones you would like to lift up during Mourner's Kaddish. These can be names of any loved one, even if their yahrzeit does not fall on the Shabbat of the B'nai Mitzvah.

## **Candy**

The custom of throwing candy is meant to shower the young person with sweetness. Unfortunately, this custom has also become a chance for "target practice." In lieu of throwing candy, families have the opportunity to pour candy on their child's head following the child's Torah reading as a literal means of blessing them as they transition into adulthood. **This custom is optional.**

## **Twinning**

One option for B'nai Mitzvah is to be symbolically paired with a Jew from the FSU (Former Soviet Union), a Reform Jewish child in Israel, an Ethiopian Jewish child, or a child who perished in the Holocaust. This is a unique opportunity for the B'nai Mitzvah

to enrich their Jewish identity and strengthen their bonds with Jewry throughout the world. Information is available from the Rabbi. Opportunities vary depending on political circumstances.

## **Greeters**

Ask a few friends to arrive at 10:00 am to help greet your guests, to distribute the prayer book/service or program, and to encourage guests to take their seats by 10:25. These friends can direct guests to kippot and tallit. As Congregation members, these friends can help your guests feel welcome and at home. If you have many teens attending, ask adult friends to intersperse themselves among the teens to model appropriate behavior, and to distribute prayer books to teen students.

## **Program Guide**

You are welcome to work with the Rabbi to develop a Program Guide for the main service to be printed at your expense. Families often opt to develop a Program Guide to enhance the understanding of the service for guests and family.

This guide can include:

- A letter from the family and B'nai Mitzvah
- Explanation of Mitzvah Project
- Glossary of Terms
- Explanation of Service
- Hebrew and English text of Torah portions

## **Thank Yous**

We understand the importance of thanking family, guests, tutors, and the Rabbi for attending and supporting the B'nai Mitzvah's preparation process. We suggest that any Thank Yous be addressed prior to the closing song, addressed in a Program Guide, or reserved for the B'nai Mitzvah celebration.

In honor of your child's B'nai Mitzvah, we also encourage you to consider donating to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund as an expression of gratitude. The Rabbi's Discretionary Fund is used to support congregants in need, important causes within the congregation, community, and worldwide, and supplement the costs of events and programs for the Temple.

## **Flowers**

You may choose to add flowers to the *bimah* at your expense. Please consider that many individuals who may be in attendance have allergies to particular fragrances or flowers when selecting a floral arrangement.

## **Kippot**

Traditionally, all Jewish men and boys wear a kippah (yarmulke). The wearing of a kippah, however, is not mandated by Jewish law and it is not limited to men. There are no restrictions on wearing a kippah for people who are not Jewish. Kippot (plural of kippah) are available for members and guests. We have a collection of kippot that can be worn by your guests, but you are welcome to purchase personalized kippot to distribute as well.

## **Tallit**

Jewish men and women are encouraged to wear a tallit (prayer shawl) during morning services, but it is not required. As the tallit represents the acceptance of the mitzvot, it is not appropriate for non-Jews or children under the age of bar/bat mitzvah to wear one. Tallitot (plural of tallit) are available at the sanctuary rear door for members and guests.

Many families give the bar/bat mitzvah a tallit to wear at the service. The tallitot that children receive at their bar/bat mitzvah celebrations often become cherished possessions. PLEASE NOTE: Many people today purchase a tallit online. If you choose to buy a tallit for your child online, please be sure to buy from a reputable vendor such as [www.kolbo.com](http://www.kolbo.com), [www.israelbookshop.com](http://www.israelbookshop.com), or [www.levinejudaica.com](http://www.levinejudaica.com).

Please be aware that on non-Jewish websites like Amazon "Messianic Christian tallitot" are presented alongside of Jewish tallitot. In the past unsuspecting families have purchased these non-Jewish tallitot, only to be surprised on the day of the celebration to find that they contain Christian symbols and verses from the New Testament in Hebrew or in English. If grandparents or other relatives are purchasing a tallit for your child, please make sure that they purchase a Jewish tallit from a Jewish source.

**Please consult with the Rabbi if you have questions or concerns.**

## **Videography and Filmography**

In order to allow important life cycle celebrations to be captured for posterity while maintaining the sacred, religious character of the events and maximizing the enjoyment of those in attendance, the following guidelines have been established:

- No flash photography or artificial supplemental lighting is permitted during religious services or ceremonies at Temple B'nai Sholom.

- Those who wish to take flash photos or posed photos in the sanctuary may do so 60 minutes - 90 minutes before or 30 minutes after the Service. You may also choose to have photographs taken on the day of the final rehearsal. In this case, please arrange to do so after the rehearsal itself.
- Still photography, without flash, is permitted from the rear of the Sanctuary.
- Please set up all photographic equipment before the service or ceremony begins in order to avoid noisy distractions. Please allow for clearance at the doorways and passageways.
- Video taping is permitted, as long as no artificial lighting is used. Set up the video camera at the rear of the sanctuary. Set the equipment to the side of the doorway so people can still enter and leave through that doorway with ease.
- Our service will be livestreamed and accessible for those unable to attend in person.

### **What to Wear**

We respectfully request that clothing be appropriately modest. Inform your family and guests that they should dress for a sacred religious service. Please inform your guests that formal evening wear, low necklines, tee-shirts and bare shoulders are not appropriate for our Shabbat services. You can direct your guests to check the Temple's website for information on appropriate attire for worship services.

### **Security**

Our armed security guards and members of our volunteer security team will be present throughout the B'nai Mitzvah service. Should the family request additional security, there may be additional fees associated with increasing the number of guards and extending their hours. **Please speak with our Security Committee Chair, Frank Levy, for more information.**

### **Oneg Shabbat**

B'nai Mitzvah families are expected to host the *Oneg Shabbat* reception on the Friday evening following Shabbat Services, as well as provide a *challah* for Friday evening and Saturday morning.

## **For the Temple Times and Social Media**

Temple B'nai Sholom would like to honor your child(ren) in celebration of their B'nai Mitzvah. Submit a photo with a light background, and a brief biographical sketch of your teen including a short paragraph about their portion to our Communications and Program Associate. The photo and article will not be returned.

Please e-mail the text and a digital photo to [communications.tbs@gmail.com](mailto:communications.tbs@gmail.com). The paragraph should include the following information: the student's name, Bar/Bat Mitzvah date and time, the school the student attends, mention of a favorite interest and/or activity, a comment about what their Bar/Bat Mitzvah means to them or about their involvement in the Jewish community, and an invitation to the community to attend the event.

Please submit to our Communications and Program Associate by the 15th of the month **preceding** your child's B'nai Mitzvah.

## Shabbat Morning Service Order - B'nai Mitzvah

*Please note that this is a SAMPLE service order, and can be amended based on each B'nai Mitzvah's particular needs.*

Page	Prayer/Reading	Notes
188	Hinei Mah Tov	
-	Welcome - RPJ	
184- 185	<b>READING</b>	BM chooses <b>ONE</b> English reading on p. 184-185
186	Modeh Ani	
-	Parent's Blessing/Tallit Presentation	
190	Reading: "As I Wrap"	BM
190	Tallit Blessing - Hebrew and English	BM
192	Mah Tovu	
196	Elohai N'Shamah	
198-199	Nisim B'chol Yom	RPJ and BM Chant Together first six words in Hebrew, followed by the English of the prayer.
204	Blessing for Torah Study	BM Hebrew
204	Blessing for Torah Study - English	BM Reads English
214	Mizmor Shir/Psalm 92	
215	Ashrei	
215-216	Ashrei - Silently	
218	Psalm 150	
226	Barchu	BM announces/RPJ and BM
228	Yotzer Or	
231	<b>READING</b>	BM chooses <b>ONE</b> English reading on p. 231
232-233	Shema	BM announces/RPJ and BM
234	V'ahavta	BM announces/RPJ and BM

239	<b>READING</b>	BM chooses <b>ONE</b> English reading on p. 239
240	Mi Chamocha	BM announces/RPJ and BM
242	Adonai S'fatai	BM announces/RPJ and BM
244	Avot v'Imahot	BM announces/RPJ and BM
246	Gevurot	BM announces/RPJ and BM
248	Kedushah	BM remains standing - RPJ sings
	<b>SILENT MEDITATION</b>	
260	Oseh Shalom	
362	<b>TORAH SERVICE</b>	
	Ark is Opened and Torah is Removed	Ark Openers: RPJ invites Grandparents and Parents for Torah Pass - Say Names
367	Al ShlosHa D'varim	
364	Ki Mitziyon	
366	Baruch Shenatan	
	Torah Pass - Generation to Generation L'Dor Vador	
366	Shema and Echad	RPJ and BM
366	Gadlu	RPJ
366	L'cha Adonai	RPJ
367	Rom'mu	RPJ
367	Psalm 150	RPJ
	<b>BM D'VAR TORAH</b>	
	<b>Torah Reading</b>	
370	V'Zot HaTorah	RPJ calls Hagbah/G'lil
374	Eitz Chayim Hi	
	<b>RPJ D'VAR TORAH</b>	
	<b>BIRKAT KOHANIM - BLESSING</b>	

648	Shehecheyanu	
586	Aleinu	
591	BaYom Hahu	
598	Mourner's Kaddish	
	<b>CONGREGATIONAL PRESENTATIONS</b>	
	<b>ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>	
-	Closing Song: TBD	



## B'nai Mitzvah Honors Form

Honor	Name(s)
Opening and Closing the Ark for Aleinu on Friday Evening	
Opening and Closing the Ark for Torah Service on Saturday Morning	
Undressing Torah for Torah Reading	
Participating in Chain of Tradition (Grandparents, Parents, B'nai Mitzvah)	
Chanting Blessings Before and After Torah Reading - Aliyah #1	Grandparents (include Hebrew name(s) below)
Chanting Blessings Before and After Torah Reading - Aliyah #2	Parents (include Hebrew name(s) below)
Chanting Blessings Before and After Torah Reading - Aliyah #3	B'nai Mitzvah (include Hebrew name below)
Torah Lifter	Include Hebrew name, if applicable
Torah Dresser	Include Hebrew name, if applicable

## **The Mitzvah Project**

When choosing a mitzvah project, we recommend that you look for something which you are passionate about. You will then find the project more enjoyable, rewarding and successful. Brainstorming as a family as to what those passions are will often lead to a meaningful choice for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah project. It can also allow the family to embark upon the project together, adding more meaning to the entire Bar/Bat Mitzvah process.

### **General Ideas**

- Volunteer to spend time with residents of a local retirement home
- Record books and donate recordings and books to a school, library, or senior citizen residence, or association for the blind
- Make blankets and donate them to various organizations, i.e. people living with ALS or Children's Hospital
- Create and perform a socio drama, teaching kids about the economics of poverty in America
- Toiletry Collection - collect hotel-size items to be donated to shelters, camps or areas affected by natural disasters
- Collect money or toys to be donated to a children's hospital or local shelter
- Organize a Mini-Mitzvah Day
- Organize a food drive for a local food distribution program
- Raise money for a medical foundation
- Donate time, money or needed items to an animal hospital or shelter
- Create scholarships at a university or community college
- Organize a team and walk for a specific cause
- Feeding your local fire station dinner
- Collect and donate various items to a school or shelter, i.e. sports equipment/helmets or musical instruments
- Raise money for a specific cause through a bake sale or read-a-thon

### **National Organizations**

- My Chemo Bag Inc.: Create bags of necessary items for local patients who are starting chemotherapy
  - <https://www.thechemobagproject.com/>
- KaBoom!: volunteer or raise money to build playgrounds in underserved

- Communities.
  - kaboom.org
- Pennies for Patients: a program through the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.
- Collect change to help children with cancer.
  - Schoolandyouth.org
- Locks of Love: Donate hair to provide hairpieces to children with long term medical hair loss.
  - locksoflove.org
- Habitat for Humanity Youth United: raise money to help build homes for people in need
  - dchabitat.org
- Race for Hope Brain Tumor Walk - braintumor.org
- Race for the Cure - raceforthecure.org
- Special Olympics - Specialolympics.org
- Back on My Feet, an organization that uses running to help those experiencing homelessness change the way they see themselves so they can make real change in their lives that results in employment and independent living
  - www.backonmyfeet.org

### Supporting Israel

- The Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC), an organization that advances pluralism in Israeli society and defends the freedoms of conscience, faith, and religion
  - Irac.org
- Susan's House in Israel, a home that provides a last chance for wayward youth in Jerusalem. Sponsor a teen to learn a craft that will allow them to provide for Themselves.
  - susanshouse.org.il
- Israel Guide Dog, trains dogs for the visually impaired in Israel
  - israelguidedog.org/your-mitzvah-project/
- United Hatzalah, a network of more than 6,200 volunteer medics help save thousands of lives each year across Israel by providing medical treatment in an average response time of 3 minutes or less. Their humanitarian services are free, universal, and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
  - israelrescue.org
- Matnat Chaim is an organization in Israel that is dedicated to encouraging individuals found suitable for making a life-saving kidney donation, and focuses

exclusively on altruistic i.e. voluntary donations. The organization functions on a voluntary, not-for-profit basis. The sole motive that drives the volunteers of the organization is the desire and willingness to help others and save lives.

- [kilya.org.il/en/](http://kilya.org.il/en/)
- Magen David Adom: Raise money for an ambulance or rescue vehicle in Israel
  - [afmda.org](http://afmda.org)

### **Supporting Soldiers**

- Write letters to Israeli or American Soldiers or support organizations that help
- wounded soldiers and their families
- The Yellow Ribbon Fund - [www.yellowribbonfund.org](http://www.yellowribbonfund.org)
- Wounded Warrior Project - [www.woundedwarriorproject.org](http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org)
- Other ideas can be found at [themitzvahbowl.com](http://themitzvahbowl.com) and in The Mitzvah Project Book by Liz Suneby and Diane Heiman

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## The D'var Torah

“D’var Torah” literally means, “a word of Torah.” It is a brief talk about the weekly Torah portion. It sometimes examines the Torah portion as a whole, or it can look at a smaller section of the portion. Sometimes, a d’var Torah will focus just on a single verse, or even on a single word. Rather than a full-fledged sermon, the d’var Torah is a simple explanation of the Torah portion, the identification of an issue or problem within it, a personal reflection on the meaning of that issue, and a proposed interpretation.

Usually, a d’var Torah is no more than a few minutes long when read aloud. The Rabbi will work closely with each student to help him or her develop a meaningful and interesting d’var Torah. The process proceeds in several steps.

Part 1: A summary of your Torah portion in your own words.

Part 2: You’ll teach the congregation something about your Torah portion. Emphasize a specific point in the Torah portion and relate it to yourself, the congregation, and/or the times in which we live. Show us what we can learn from this portion - in other words, give us the moral. You may then go a step further and give the congregation an opportunity to follow through on the lesson by giving specific examples of what they can do to fulfill your message.

Part 3: You’ll share what it means to you to become a b’nei mitzvah. If you performed a Mitzvah Project, mention it and the lessons learned along the way and the positive feelings it enabled you to experience.

## Timeline

### 3rd Grade

Enroll your child in Kulanu (beginning in Fall 2025) and Hebrew program.

### 3rd-6th Grade

(80%) attendance in Kulanu (beginning in Fall 2025) and the Hebrew program is required throughout 3rd-6th grade.

### 5th Grade

Meet with Rabbi no later than January of the 5th grade year to schedule B'nai Mitzvah date and ensure it is reserved on the Temple Calendar.

### 8-9 months prior

Families (including the B'nai Mitzvah) will meet with the Rabbi to discuss the B'nai Mitzvah process, service, Torah reading, music, and address questions and concerns.

### 6-7 months prior

The B'nai Mitzvah will begin to meet with the B'nai Mitzvah tutor or Rabbi to review prayers and begin practicing the prayers and the Torah portion for the child's B'nai Mitzvah.

### 5-6 months prior

The B'nai Mitzvah begins to meet with the Rabbi **every other week (2x/month)** to write their D'var Torah, discuss their Mitzvah project, and address any logistics related to the service. Meetings with the Rabbi are about 30 minutes in length.

### 2 months prior

The B'nai Mitzvah begins to meet with the Rabbi **weekly** to write their D'var Torah, discuss their Mitzvah project, and address any logistics related to the service. Meetings with the Rabbi are about 30 minutes in length.

#### **4 weeks prior**

Students transition to **weekly bimah rehearsals** with the Rabbi. Bimah rehearsals allow each student to feel comfortable and confident on the bimah as they become familiar with the space and have the opportunity to rehearse. Rehearsals with the Rabbi are about 45-60 minutes in length.

#### **2 weeks prior**

The family meets with the Rabbi to review the service together. At this meeting, you will review all family ritual honors (aliyot, ark openings, etc.) and family yahrzeits. This will also serve as a bimah rehearsal for the B'nai Mitzvah. This meeting with the Rabbi is about 90 minutes in length.

#### **Week of B'nai Mitzvah**

Families will have a final rehearsal with the Rabbi. This rehearsal will be an extended run-through and will provide the opportunity for family members to practice their participation in the service as well as ask any further questions. The Rabbi prefers to hold this rehearsal on the Friday morning before the service.