

Temple Beth Chai Religious School



Bar/Bat Mitzvah Handbook

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Spiritual leader

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Message from the Rabbi and Education Director

It is our great pleasure to share the Simcha of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah with you. This is a very special milestone in the life of a Jew. It signifies the first time a Jew is called to the Torah, and is evidence of a lifelong commitment to the traditions of our ancestors.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah is not seen as the end of a child's Jewish education. Hopefully this education will continue throughout their lifetime.

We are here to make your day beautiful and meaningful in every way. We encourage you to participate in study together and join us at Shabbat Services. We are here for you to answer questions, calm a nerve or to share a story.

We are available to you from start to finish.

We will guide your child and your family in this journey and stand at their side during the ceremony.

And always in your memories will be this wonderful moment of your life...

Cherish this time.....

Cherish these years.....

L'Chaim!

B'Shalom

Rabbi Jonathan Kaplan, Spiritual Leader

Phyllis Lasky, Education Director

OVERVIEW

A Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a ceremony and a person. Becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah literally means becoming a "son/daughter of the commandment." This ceremony marks the beginning of a lifelong obligation to study Judaism's beliefs and practices, and obey its laws.

It has rightfully taken on a great significance as a major aspect of the life cycle. For a Jewish child, it is most likely the first time, s/he takes on the project of preparing a public act within the Jewish community, demonstrating the desire, ability and willingness to be counted among the responsible active adult members of the community. For parents and relatives, it is a rite of passage, a moment that signals the passage of time and the recognition of changing roles vis-à-vis their son or daughter, or grandchild. For teachers, the ceremony is a validation of their focus on learning and education, while the community is able to enjoy the fact that its traditions and standards are being upheld and transmitted.

HOW WE LEARN AT TEMPLE BETH CHAI

Why not start them young? Even the simplest blessings and prayers can be taught to our first year students at TBC Religious School. The more intricate prayers, however, are taught in 5th grade, as well as, 6th grade, when their Hebrew is most fluent. In their 6th grade term, the students will be expected to read fluently and chant several prayers, as well. Throughout the 5th & 6th grades, our educators will be evaluating all students for fine reading abilities and determine if any additional small group or private one-on-one sessions would be necessary for any students. **Home study is a very large part of our curriculum.** In just a few minutes a day, with book in hand and paralleled audio resource, your child will be well equipped for their final preparation; 6th Grade/B'Nai Mitzvah Classe and private tutoring for their Torah/Haftarah portions.

FAMILY APPROACH TO BAR/BAT MITZVAH

The celebration of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah can be a profound experience in the life of a Jewish family. The year of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation is a process of spiritual growth, commencing with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony, which highlights the spiritual dimensions of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah year.

Temple Beth Chai is committed to making this event a beautiful, meaningful and sacred event in the life of our members. It is essential that each family keep this ceremony in proper focus and perspective. A Bar/Bat Mitzvah is first and foremost a religious ceremony. Through this sacred rite of passage, our children and their families reaffirm their deep connection to Jewish tradition.

SHABBAT SERVICES

TBC holds Shabbat Services on Friday Night, during the School Year. Our services are held at *Westglades Middle School*, located on Holmberg Road. Participation in Services brings together all of the parts of the Liturgy/Prayer curriculum, and assists in the **preparation of your children for their B’Nai Mitzvah**, and continuing active Jewish life.

Regular attendance at our Monthly Shabbat Service is REQUIRED. Students who attend Services regularly can recite and chant Prayers with more ease, more comfort and with much more confidence. Furthermore, they will then have a full understanding of the entire Service and what to expect when they become a B’Nai Mitzvah.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS PRIOR TO BAR/BAT MITZVAH

1. **Beginning of, or prior to 5th grade year** – Select Bar/Bat Mitzvah date; retainer is required at this time with signed contract to secure date.

2. **6th grade year/BNai Mitzvah Class**- 6th Graders will be studying their regular curriculum from the months of August through the end of January. As of the beginning of February, this class will begin their **BNai Mitzvah Prayer Preparation**. All students will be studying the required Prayer/Liturgy necessary for their upcoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

At the conclusion of the 6th Grade/BNai Mitzvah Class, they will then be assigned the proper month to begin their private Torah and/or Haftarah tutoring (additional fees for private tutoring are not included in the 6th Grade Religious School Charges).

Only a Torah Portion is read during a Friday evening service, a Saturday evening service, a Sunday morning service or Sunday evening service; the additional reading of the Haftarah is read on Saturday mornings, accompanied by two additional Prayers.

3. **Immediately following the 6th Grade/B’Nai Mitzvah Class**, the Education Director will schedule students for their private one-on-one sessions to learn their individual Torah/Haftarah portion either with Ms. Lasky or Ms. Stephanie. (approximately 3-4 months).

We will also discuss the meaning of your Torah section and prepare a speech for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

4. **Four weeks prior** – Contact Rabbi Kaplan to set up 4 hourly sessions for rehearsals of entire ceremony (both parents are expected to attend the first session to review honors, personalizing the Siddur, etc.).

5. **Two weeks prior** – All remaining dues to Rabbi Kaplan and Cantor must be paid in full.

MITZVAH PROJECT IS MANDATORY

This is a good time to begin to think about a "**Mitzvah Project**". A **Mitzvah Project** is the perfect way to enhance the meaning and relevance of your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. A really great project combines the Mitzvah of "Tikkun Olam" (Repair of the World) with your child's specific skills and interests. It can also make the difference between s/he sleepwalking through the event and truly understanding and feeling it.

The student can raise money for a worthy cause, start a petition, teach, or take a class on an interest and report it to the school, research and write an article about a topic, help clean up a playground or a park, organize a sport or an event for underprivileged children, take up a collection or a drive, help out in a food kitchen.

There are so many opportunities available for a Mitzvah Project.

An infinite wealth of knowledge is at their fingertips.

All they need to do is take some time, a bit of careful thought and "google" away.

***ATTENDANCE AT SHABBAT SERVICES**

TBC holds Shabbat Services on Friday Night throughout the School Year. Our services are held at Westglades Middle School, located on Holmberg Road. Participation in Services brings together all of the parts of the Liturgy/Prayer curriculum, and assists in the **preparation of your children for their B'Nai Mitzvah**, and continuing active Jewish life.

Regular attendance at our Monthly Shabbat Service is REQUIRED.*

Grade 6 (BNai Mitzvah Class Prep) Five (5) attendances per year

HONORING BAR/BAT MITZVAH FAMILIES @ SHABBAT SERVICES

Temple Beth Chai is very proud of our students and we want to honor them and their families during our monthly Shabbat Services.

At the beginning of Friday Night Service, your family will be honored with the lighting of the Shabbat candles. Bar/Bat Mitzvah participates in service, as well.

Please contact our office for the Shabbat Service which would take place prior to the date of your Simcha so that your child and parents, grandparents, etc., may be honored.

We also would appreciate the B'Nai Mitzvah families to sponsor part of the Oneg Shabbat after Friday Night Services.

DRESS CODE FOR THE BIMAH

Please dress respectfully for participation on the Bimah. Blue jeans, bare midriffs or shoulders, and sports attire (i.e. sweats, jogging suits) are NOT appropriate.

DECORUM

It is important to ensure the appropriate behavior of your younger guests in order to maintain decorum during the service. Many of our students invite large groups of teenagers to their service. It is important that adults be seated with them to avoid disruptions.

Remember, this is your child's special day.

CANDY

The custom of throwing candy was meant to shower the young person with sweetness. Please do buy soft candies and have them in a designated area with a sign stating their purpose. It would be very distracting to constantly hear the wrinkling of candy wrappers during the ceremony. The Rabbi will instruct your guests when it is the proper time to shower the Bar/Bat Mitzvah with candy.

STUDENTS

- Study well, think well and practice well
- Prepare as much of the service as your ability will allow
- Keep up with your schoolwork
- Do not get stressed out by doing too much
- Do not get behind by doing too little
- Believe in yourself and your ability
- Be proud of how much of a better person you are today
- Most importantly, remember, this is a ONCE IN A LIFETIME event
Live it.. Enjoy it..Remember it and mostly Cherish it!!

Mazal Tov!!