



A Journey to
Bar/Bat Mitzvah
Handbook

A guide for parents

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Welcome from Rabbi Rose

The Bnai Mitzvah (Bar/Bat Mitzvah) Program of Congregation Shaarie Torah (CST):

It is such a beautiful privilege to work with a young person toward bar or bat mitzvah. We are mindful of the importance of our task in helping to guide your child as he or she takes these vital steps towards Jewish adulthood. We also know that this is a significant moment in your life as parents, when the words uttered at the baby naming, *zeh ha-katan gadol yihyeh* ("May this little one become great!") have indeed come to pass.

Mishlei (Proverbs) instructs, *chanoch la'na'ar al pi darko*, "Educate a child according to his way." This verse is often interpreted to mean that we have to take account of our children's particular personalities, learning styles and insights. We hope that through this process, your child will find the tools to develop as an individual with his or her own unique perspective on the world and on the Torah.

As your child starts this path toward bar or bat mitzvah, I reflect on the dual meaning of mitzvah. Mitzvah is usually translated as "commandment" or "good deed." Our children must learn to make good Jewish choices and take responsibility for the Jewish tradition. But the word mitzvah comes from a verb that also means "to join together." Along this journey we will seek to give them a sense that they are connected to one another, to the Jewish people, and to Torah.

It is a great honor for me to be able to be part of this important moment in your lives.

Mazel Tov,

Rabbi Josh Rose

Welcome from Dorice Horenstein

Education Director

Mazal Tov! Your child has almost reached the age of adulthood, in accordance with Jewish law. The name of this special ceremony to recognize one's rite of passage is the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, meaning the son/daughter of the commandment. It is the coming-of-age ceremony marking a Jewish child's acceptance of responsibility to carry out the commandments of the Torah.

At a certain age, Judaism tells us, we are old and wise enough to bear responsibility for our own behavior and achievements. Consequently, a special day has been designated for your child to show our synagogue community, our kehilah, what he/she has learned. As the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony was established to allow a young adult to demonstrate a cumulative intellectual mastery of aspects of Jewish tradition, we at Shaarie Torah have created an avenue that will help your child achieve just that!

In this packet, you will find information about preparing yourself and your child for this special and important occasion. Your child will learn haftarah cantillation, his/her own haftarah, blessings, maftir, and many parts of the Torah service. In addition, we encourage your child to participate in as many mitzvot as he or she can, including short-term projects and long-term projects, and thereby truly achieve the right of passage—a meaningful Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience!

B'shalom

Dorice Horenstein
Education Director

Mitzvah Project

Coming of age in Judaism is celebrated when the Bar or Bat Mitzvah student ascends the bima to participate in a religious service in front of family, friends, and the community. This is a very special day. Festivities, food, and fun reward the child for all of the hard work that goes into preparation and study.

But the true practice of Judaism does not begin or end on this day. The spirit of our religion is maintained through the fulfillment of mitzvot, and not just in the 13th year of life. Mitzvot repair the world (Tikkun Olam), show love for G-d, and make us better people.

The three pillars of mitzvot in Judaism are known as Torah (studying Torah), Avodah (prayer observance), and Gmilit Chasadim (and acts of loving kindness).

As part of the Bar and Bat Mitzvah program for Congregation Shaarie Torah, all participants are required to perform at least eighteen (18) hours of mitzvot prior to their special day. These hours may be divided among various mitzvot or be devoted to one major project.

A Mitzvah Project Description should be completed, describing the selected project and why it was chosen. Please submit this document to the Education Director one month before your scheduled Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.

Upon completion of an entire mitzvah project, a project summary sheet should be completed describing the experience and what the participant learned from it and/or what it meant to him/her. These documents should be submitted to the Education Director one month prior to the Participant's special day. The mitzvah experiences will be shared with the congregation on the participant's special day as part of the education department's presentation.

If you need assistance selecting your mitzvot or have any questions, please contact the education office.

Important Contact Details

Synagogue Office	503-226-6131
Rabbi Joshua Rose rabbirose@shaarietorah.org	Ext. 233
Dorice Horenstein, Education Director education@shaarietorah.org	Ext. 242
Melissa Bloom, Executive Director melissabloom@shaarietorah.org ,	Ext. 226
Sarah Dishner, Bookkeeper finance@shaarietorah.org	Ext. 225

Eligibility Requirements

The following are requirements for participation in Shaarie Torah's Bar/Bat Mitzvah program.

- ❖ Members in good standing of CST. A member in good standing has all dues and charges paid to date.
- ❖ Two years of formal Jewish education prior to the bar/bat mitzvah date. This formal education may be taught by a Jewish day school or synagogue religious school. This requirement may be waived if the candidate evidences competence in Hebrew and familiarity with Jewish traditions and synagogue practices.
- ❖ Participation: It is expected the student will participate in our Wednesday Night School program.
- ❖ Proficiency in reading Hebrew. Proficiency will be evaluated by the Education Director prior to approval of the event date. If proficiency has not been achieved, the family will need to arrange for additional tutoring.
- ❖ Selection of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date at least eighteen (18) months in advance. Contact the synagogue for date approval procedures. Boys must be at least 13 years old by their Bar Mitzvah date. Girls must be at least 12 years old.

- ❖ Commencement of the program instruction twelve (12-18) months (28-30 lessons) prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The synagogue offers a multi-faceted curriculum, in which all Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidates are expected to participate. If an alternative method of primary instruction is required, the student will meet periodically with the Education Director to assess progress. When signing up for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date, the study method must be declared. Additional lessons will be prorated.
- ❖ Attendance & participation at services. Candidates will be strongly encouraged to participate in synagogue services. They are required to attend at least two services per month, and 24 services the year of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Options of services include the Friday night service, Shabbat service (either in the main Sanctuary or the monthly Saturday family service/community minyan), daily services on Monday, Thursday, or Sunday mornings, or other services throughout the year.

The Ceremony

- ❖ Students will chant sections from the Torah, followed by chanting of the Haftarah.
- ❖ Alternatives to the Shabbat Morning services: There are other opportunities for Bar/Bat Mitzvah if a Saturday morning service does not fit the family. These include Shabbat Mincha service, holidays (except High Holidays), Rosh Chodesh, and daily morning services on Mondays and Thursdays.
- ❖ Speech: The Bar/Bat Mitzvah address consists mainly of reflections on the Torah/Haftarah and is given during the ceremony. The speech is prepared under the guidance of the Rabbi in the meetings prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony.
- ❖ Presentations to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah are usually given by representatives of the synagogue. Because of time constraints, these presentations will be limited.
- ❖ Friday night service: We usually have a Friday Night service only once a month but if so desired, such a service can be arranged in addition to the Shabbat morning service.

General Expectations

- ❖ Parental involvement: Parents are encouraged to attend services with their child. Children who come to see their parents as positive role models who exhibit ethical behavior tend to value the experience more. When children see their parents fully participating in their own learning and prayer, they come to view their participation as important and worthy of their involvement.
- ❖ Dress code: Modest attire is required for attendance at all *Shabbat* and *Festival* services. Jeans, shorts, mini-skirts, t-shirts, tank tops, and baseball caps are not appropriate. In general, shoulders should be covered and dresses and skirts should be at least knee length. This serves to remind us that *Shabbat* and *Festivals* are special, days set apart from other days.
- ❖ Etiquette: All candidates in the program for a given school year should be invited to attend their classmate's ceremony. In addition, it is customary that candidates also invite Rabbi, Gabbaim, Education Director, and teachers to the service.
- ❖ Decorum: Video recordings of B'nai Mitzvah ceremony are to be prearranged with the office. We have video recording capabilities.
- ❖ Synagogue policies: Cell phones and cameras should not be used on the synagogue premises on *Shabbat* or a *Festival*. Likewise, writing of any kind is forbidden.

❖ Guests. Please include in your invitations information about the synagogue expectations noted above. Your guests are expected to respect all synagogue policies, including dress code and decorum.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Preparation

It is the program's goal that Bar/Bat Mitzvah students be able to participate fully in all synagogue services in a meaningful way. To achieve this goal takes time and prioritization. With this in mind, five main areas are identified:

1. B'nai Mitzvah seminar held monthly on a Wednesday night, some with parents and some only with students. Please look at the B'nai Mitzvah Seminar page for more detailed information.
2. Individual skills: this includes learning the meaning and the use of the cantillation, chanting Torah and Haftarah, and learning the meaning and melodies of the prayers which the student will lead on his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah day. This will be accomplished by weekly group lessons.
3. Knowledge of the Friday Night and Shabbat Morning services is expected. This is best achieved by frequent attendance of services in the main Sanctuary and family services. The students are required to attend at least 24 services during the year prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Parents and student must not underestimate the significance of attending services as this is the only way to become proficient with the service.
4. Rabbi's guidance: Every student and Bar/Bat Mitzvah family will meet with the Rabbi regarding speech and final dress rehearsal before the simcha time. The Rabbi will guide him/her with the writing of the speech.
5. Wednesday Night School enhances Jewish identity. Students in 6th and 7th grades are expected to participate in the Wednesday Night School for the purpose of expanding their Jewish education and enhancing community involvement and social action outings.

Honors

There are several opportunities during the synagogue service to involve family and friends. These opportunities are regarded as honors. There are certain requirements for an honoree to participate in Congregation Shaarie Torah services, and they vary by type of honor. The Education Director can assist families in selecting people they wish to honor at the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* celebration.

During the Torah service, the weekly reading is divided up into seven sections, each of which is introduced by a set of blessings. The person who approaches the bimah to recite these blessings is said to have an *aliyah*. The number of *aliyot* honors is generally seven on *Shabbat*, of which five may be filled by the family and friends of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. In addition to these seven honors, there is an additional *maftir* honor that is reserved for the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* student.

Aliyah Requirements

- All honorees having an *aliyah* must be Jewish, over thirteen years of age, and able to chant the blessings.

Order of Aliyot

- The first *aliyah* goes to a *kohen*;
- The second *aliyah* goes to a *levi*;
- Two *aliyot* must be left open for the rabbi to designate as he sees appropriate.

Please refer to the *List of Honors* form for a complete list of available honors.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planner

The parents of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah need to complete the following tasks prior to the event.

- ❖ Develop a printed program to be distributed to the congregants at the ceremony by using the template given by the Education Department. The Education Director **must review and approve** the final program for content. Please submit the program draft **no later than two weeks prior** to your event.
- ❖ Submit a list of honors to the synagogue no later than **two weeks prior** to your event. Please indicate the Hebrew name when necessary.
- ❖ **Schedule a total of 4 meetings** with the Rabbi: Two meeting to discuss Dvar Torah, one meeting for the Torah reading rehearsal, and one meeting for tzitzit tying.
- ❖ Schedule a dress rehearsal with the Education Director to go over the entire service and logistics **2 weeks in advance**. The rehearsal is provided as an opportunity to become familiar with the physical logistics of the day and gives the candidate a final chance to run through all of the prayers and other material from the bimah. Families may use this opportunity to take pictures of their child (ren) on the bimah.
- ❖ Schedule a short dress rehearsal of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah **during the week prior** to the date of the event with Rabbi.

Costs

\$250 is required at the time of reservation of your date.

An inclusive Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee of \$1600 is assessed 18 months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Payment needs to be **paid in full 30 days prior** to your simcha.

The fee covers:

- ❖ B'nai Mitzvah seminar -to be held monthly- See dates and overview curriculum
- ❖ 28-30 lessons with CST Educator or tutor
- ❖ Meetings with the Rabbi to develop a Dvar Torah, tie the tzitzit and dress rehearsal
- ❖ Periodic meeting with Education Director to assess progress
- ❖ Bar/Bat Mitzvah related administrative expenses and materials, including prayer book
- ❖ Custodial set up and cleanup for the Saturday morning celebration
- ❖ Usage of the synagogue building for the Saturday morning simcha

Event Planning Guide. To help plan your event, please schedule a time to meet with our Executive Director for information regarding caterers for Kiddush lunch or Friday night dinner, and special set-up requirements, including choice of menu, table cloth selection, etc.

** Additional lessons beyond our regular program will be prorated as needed.*

Checklist

Below is a timeline listing tasks that must be completed prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date:

12-18 months prior:

- Initial evaluation with Education Director
- Submit to synagogue:
 - Completed registration form and payment for enrollment in Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program (Available from the Education Director and in this packet)
 - Request date for the B'nai Mitzvah at the meeting with the Rabbi.
 - Registration payment of \$250 is due at this time.

12 months prior (as coincides with school year 28-30 private lessons):

- Pay 50% of total and receive all materials- \$800
- Commence Bar/Bat Mitzvah instruction

0 - 12 months prior:

- Attend twice monthly synagogue services (report to Ed. Director)
- Attend B'nai Mitzvah Seminar, services, and Bar/Bat learning sessions.

2 months prior:

- Submit photograph and a brief biography of the student. (optional)
- Schedule 4 meetings with the Rabbi for Dvar Torah, Torah rehearsal and tying Tzitzit.
- Meet with the Rabbi for D'var Torah preparation
- Schedule meeting with Education Director for dress rehearsal
- Remainder payment is due- \$800
- Schedule meeting with Executive Director to go over catering needs, costs and other logistics

3 weeks prior:

- Submit draft of the written program to the Education Director
- Submit Dvar Torah to the Rabbi

2 weeks prior:

- Submit list of honors (coordinate with Education Director)
- Participate in dress rehearsal of entire service with Education Director

1 week prior:

- Participate in final Torah rehearsal – schedule with Rabbi Rose. Any remaining fees related to Bar/Bat Mitzvah must be paid at this time.

List of Honors

Please complete the following tables for honors that you wish to give to family and friends during the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* service. Submit 2 weeks prior to the B'nai Mitzvah. **Please leave two Aliyot open for the congregation.**

Aliyah:

Honor	English name	Hebrew name	Relation to student	Hebrew names: _____ ben _____
Aliyah 1 (Kohen)				
Aliyah 2 (Levi)				
Aliyah 3				
Aliyah 4				
Aliyah 5				
Aliya 6				
Aliya 7				
Maftir				
Hagbah (lifting torah)				
Gelilah (dressing torah)				

Prayer for American government (1 person)	
Prayer for Israeli government (1 person)	

A generic "What to Expect" to be sent to families on the guest list who are unfamiliar with Congregation Shaarie Torah or Jewish customs.

Dear Parents,

We want to give you a little background to help make _____'s Bar Mitzvah experience a great one, especially if this is the first Bar or Bat Mitzvah your child will be attending.

_____ has been attending Jewish day school as well as a Wednesday night program, and Shabbat (Sabbath) programs since kindergarten. _____ learned to converse in Hebrew from childhood, visited Israel 4 times and has been a proud participant at our synagogue's youth programs. He has been studying many prayers, how to read from the Torah (our ancient scroll), and haftarah cantillations (from prophets and later books).

- Saturday morning services: Services begin on Saturday morning at 9:15am. _____ will begin leading the service at 10:00 a.m. Please plan to arrive by 9:45 a.m. to get settled in your seat. The service is over around 12:30 p.m. and is followed by a luncheon to which the entire congregation is invited. A good pick-up time would be around 1:30 p.m.
- Attire during services: Dress clothes are appropriate in a synagogue. Boys can wear nice slacks, button down shirts and ties. A head covering, known as a "kippah", will be provided at the synagogue. Girls should wear a dress or skirt that goes below the knee. It is appropriate for women of all ages to keep their shoulders covered in a synagogue; please do not wear strapless, sleeveless or spaghetti strapped dresses to the services.
- Behavior: A gentle reminder that conversations should be kept to a minimum and no louder than a whisper during the service. There is also a time in the Saturday morning service, following _____'s reading of his haftarah, when candy is passed around and *gently lofted* (not thrown) at him, following his reading. This tradition is to add to the festive atmosphere and make _____'s entry into the adult community sweet. All youth are invited to quickly come to pulpit area to collect the candy. Make sure you keep the candy wrapper until you find an appropriate place to dispose of it. Please also note that flash photography, cell phones, iPods, writing, and applause are not permitted in the synagogue.
- Saturday evening party: The 7:30 p.m. dancing party will be at the synagogue in party attire and include dinner, dessert and a DJ. Pick up time is *promptly* at 11:30pm at the synagogue entrance.

In case we have forgotten something, you are welcome to call us at home, _____, SOON! 😊 Please do not wait until the night before to give us a call, as we will be involved in a whirlwind of activities....last minute arrangements and details, as well as trips to the airport for out-of-town guests. We look forward to meeting many of _____'s friends and having them join us in this celebration.

Sincerely,

B'nai Mitzvah Seminar

Congratulations! Your child's Bar/Bat mitzvah is taking place in the coming year! You have been envisioning this event for a long time, with family and friends coming to share in this special simcha. Your child has been learning his prayers, and has begun to learn his haftarah. We, at Shaarie Torah, are rejoicing with you in your special day and we are looking forward not only to seeing your child become an adult in our Jewish community, but also to become a valuable member of our shul.

To make this rite of passage even more meaningful, Rabbi Rose and Dorice will lead a series of enrichment classes for this group. The goal of these classes are for the students to gain knowledge beyond the prayer service, unify and bond as they are preparing for their individual Bar/Bat Mitzvah, and to create a community of families going through similar life cycle, thus forming a Kehilah. Some of the workshops are intended for B'nai Mitzvah students and their parents while others are for the B'nai Mitzvah group only. The class will take place once a month on Wednesday evening and will cover major aspects in Jewish life, as well as contemporary issues that are of interest to our developing teens,

It is our hope that all families will participate in this unique program. To create a Kehilah, all are needed. The parents are the role models for our youth, as well as the youth who are the future of our people. Please make all the effort to attend the meeting once per month.

Mark Your Calendars!

September 16	Ready, Set, Mitzvah What is a mitzvah and how it is related to your simcha? Decorating your siddur. With parents
October 14	Speech writing workshop: What should I say?
November 11	What is a Jewish prayer? Write your own prayer With Parents
December 16	Feeling blessed? Blessing workshop! With Parents
January 13	The three building blocks of Judaism- Do I have them?
February 10	Different movements within Judaism. Where are we? With Parents
March 9	Chosen people understanding privileges and responsibilities
April 13	Midot and their value in Jewish Life!
May 18	With Parents- This is only the beginning!