

Section 2 – Bar/Bat Mitzvah Preparations

Ongoing Religious School Assessments and Expectations

In the middle of the 4th grade, all students' Hebrew skills are assessed. Extra help, if needed, is arranged on a case-by-case basis.

In the middle of the 5th grade, all students are assessed again. At this point, students may be required to have additional lessons to reinforce Hebrew skills.

By the middle of the 6th grade, students are expected to know basic prayers, blessings and rituals related to the bar/bat mitzvah experience. No student may begin bar/bat mitzvah preparation without these skills. Should your child require tutorials to raise his/her Hebrew level, you will have to arrange privately for this. The Religious School can assist you in finding a qualified private tutor.

Shabbat worship participation is an ongoing aspect of our educational program. Students in grades 3 through 6 must attend Family Shabbat services and Junior Congregation regularly.

Actual Preparation

The student learns appropriate prayers and blessings, Torah and haftarah verses, and composes four essays that are read at the bar/bat mitzvah. Please note that special adaptations to the educational process described below will be made for those students with special needs. If you have specific questions, contact Helen Fleischmann, (201) 848-1027.

1. Eleven to twelve months prior to the bar/bat mitzvah date, the student meets with Helen Fleischmann for an overview of the Torah and a discussion of the student's portion. The student then writes a two- to three-page summary of the entire Torah portion and submits it to Helen Fleischmann. One purpose of this summary essay is to guide the student's choice of Torah verses to be studied and chanted. The student is encouraged to choose the section that is most interesting to him/her.

Still working with Helen Fleischmann, the student composes a second essay, summarizing the haftarah portion and explaining its connection to the Torah portion.

2. Beginning approximately 10 months prior to the bar/bat mitzvah date, the student begins his/her studies with the bar/bat mitzvah coach. Students have private lessons with the coach, each lasting 20 minutes. (Extra lessons, if required, are to be approved by the Cantor and will incur an additional expense.) During this period, the student learns to read and chant the verses and blessings. After completing the haftarah verses, students begin learning Torah verses with the Cantor. Students should be finished with all of their lessons one month before the scheduled date in order to begin rehearsals with the Rabbi.

*(This excludes the summer months. Students with **fall** bar/bat mitzvah dates **should not go away for the full month of August.**)*

3. The student meets with the Rabbi three to four times during the three-month period prior to the bar/bat mitzvah date to study the Torah and haftarah portions. The following essays are written:
 - An analysis of the selected Torah verses
 - An essay about the student's Jewish identity

Your help is critical in keeping the student focused and getting the job done!

Note: To cover costs for items 1 through 3 above, there is a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Preparation fee for which you will be invoiced approximately 11 months prior to your bar/bat mitzvah date. If you have any questions, check with the Temple Office.

Mitzvah Projects

Every student is expected to participate in the following three mitzvot with family support:

- Gemilut Chasadim (Deeds of Loving Kindness)
- Tzedakah (Material Contributions)
- Tzedakah (Financial Contributions)

Details describing Mitzvah projects are provided in the "Mitzvah Projects Requirements" section later in this Guide. If you have questions regarding Mitzvah projects, please contact your child's teacher.

Family Meeting and Rehearsals

The family and Rabbi meet together about one month before the event to discuss all aspects of the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony. Two to three weeks before the date, the student and Rabbi begin to meet to rehearse. There are at least two full rehearsals in the Sanctuary.

Shabbat Participation

Understanding that becoming competent in Jewish prayer is a key component to becoming a bar/bat mitzvah, each student is expected to attend 12 Shabbat worship services, beginning one year before his/her date. (These do not include holidays, which are an additional expectation.) This should include six Friday evening services and six Saturday morning services. All attendance is assumed to be a family experience.

Seventh graders participate as worship leaders in several Junior Congregation services.

Usher Responsibilities

The Ritual Committee will contact you about your usher responsibilities, which help support our worship community. Parents usher the Friday and Saturday Shabbat services for the preceding bar/bat mitzvah (usually one week prior). An usher from the Temple leadership is also present.

Family Education

The seventh grade curriculum includes a family education unit with the Rabbi for three sessions. Parents and students should attend together. Siblings are welcome.

Parents are encouraged to study and probe the Torah portion together with their child.

Ma'ayan, Confirmation and Post-Confirmation

Becoming a bar/bat mitzvah is an affirmation of Jewish commitment. It is expected that the student will continue his/her Jewish education in Ma'ayan, through to the ceremony of Confirmation. In addition, many of our students now continue with their studies through regular attendance at our Post-Confirmation class.

**These family opportunities strengthen us and our connection to one another.
We promise to use your time in a meaningful way!**