

Temple Beth Zion



B'nei Mitzvah Handbook

A comprehensive guide to an easy and meaningful B'nei Mitzvah experience

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Introduction

Congratulations! You and your family are about to begin a journey towards a very important Jewish rite of passage. The words Bar or Bat Mitzvah literally mean “son” or “daughter” “of commandment.” At TBZ, we also have a B-mitzvah -- celebrations for gender non-conforming children.

Much of today’s Jewish world defines the event as the moment when a Jewish community welcomes a child into their congregation as a Jewish adult.

What does it mean to be a “Jewish adult?” Traditionally, when a boy reached the age of Bar Mitzvah, 13, his father would recite a *bracha* commemorating the time of freedom from certain parental obligations. The boy would then be responsible for his actions and would be allowed (and expected) to fully participate in Jewish ritual life.

Today, we acknowledge and emphasize the importance of parental participation in a child’s upbringing education, but we recognize that a Bar, Bat or B- Mitzvah does not really become a completely independent adult according to the benchmarks set by our secular world. At TBZ, we understand the moment of transformation to occur when the B’nei Mitzvah proves that they are no longer merely a student of Judaism, but also a teacher. By leading the congregation in song, by chanting and interpreting texts, and by engaging in *tikkun olam*, the B’nei Mitzvah children become teachers, leaders, and “adult” members of the TBZ community and the Jewish community.

It goes without saying that this transformation does not happen overnight. The B’nei Mitzvah experience is a process, which takes hard work and dedication. This handbook is meant to help relieve any anxieties you may have about reaching your special day. If you work well and are organized, your debut as a B/Bar/Bat Mitzvah will be a great success!

Included in this booklet is some comprehensive information about preparing for your family’s upcoming *simcha* at TBZ.

B’Hatzlacha! We look forward to sharing this *simcha* with you and offering our support in any way we can over the next years.

Be’sha-ah tovah and Mazal Tov – with wishes for a fulfilling *simcha*,

Rav Claudia and Rav Tiferet and the whole TBZ community.

B'nei Mitzvah Opportunities

Many families choose to celebrate their *simcha* on Shabbat morning at TBZ. However, we are eager to fashion the right kind of service to fit your needs. We are fairly flexible, and with enough notice we have been able to accommodate most families.

B'nei Mitzvah celebrations are traditionally held when the Torah is read at one of the following services:

- *Monday and Thursday mornings.* Monday Torah readings permit B'nei Mitzvah scheduling on secular holidays that fall on Mondays, such as Labor Day or Memorial Day.
- *Shabbat Mornings*
- *Shabbat Afternoons.* This is a *mincha-ma'ariv* service and includes havdalah. The first *aliyah* of the next week's *parsha* is read, and there is no haftarah.
- *Rosh Hodesh*, which is the beginning of a new lunar month. This is usually a weekday service and has a special Torah reading. Occasionally, *Rosh Hodesh* falls on a Sunday.
- Throughout *Hannukah*, which includes weekday services and special Torah readings.

Requirements

To complete the B'nei Mitzvah program at TBZ, all^{1} students must:*

- Attend Beit Rabban classes (weekly), unless enrolled in a Jewish Day School, or other arrangement
- Attend Shabbat Services and special program for B'nei Mitzvah age children during Services (at least twice a month)
- Attend B'nei Mitzvah parent-student sessions with Rav Claudia (monthly)
 - In the programs above, participation is expected to continue until the school year ends, even if the B/Bar/Bat Mitzvah has occurred earlier in the year. Please inquire also about our post Bar/Bat Mitzvah program.
- Complete B'mitzvotav - 13 *Mitzvot* Project
- Lead *shema* and *v'ahavta*
- Chant *brachot* before and after *maftir* reading
- Chant *maftir*

^{1*} We make accommodations for students with special needs. Please speak with Rav Claudia.

- Write and deliver a *D'var Torah*. Students will meet individually with our Rabbinic Intern to discuss their writing process. If the B/Bar/Bat Mitzvah would like to offer an appropriate project in lieu or in addition to a *D'var Torah*, such as a photography exhibit, a music or dance performance, or a family tree for the congregation, this can be discussed.
- Chant *brachot* before and after the *haftarah*
- Chant *haftarah* (10 verse minimum) (if celebration is on Shabbat)
- Attend 3 rehearsals with Rabbi/Rabbinic Intern
- Start/continue a family Shabbat practice. We will help you partner up with other families, if you wish, or help you do it yourselves.

Some students may finish these requirements early, or may wish to increase their participation during the service. We encourage these students to:

- Chant additional *aliyot* (there are a total of 8, including the *maftir*)
- Lead *ashrei* (*highly recommended for all students)
- Lead other parts of the Shabbat Morning Service
 - Selected Psalms from *pesukei de zimra*, which may include:
 - *baruch sheamar*
 - *esa enai*
 - *psalm 150*
 - *bar'chu*
 - *amidah*

**Helpful Hint:* Create a folder for all of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah materials. Put a few pieces of blank paper in that folder. Every time you have a question or an idea about your *parsha*, write it on the paper. Use those questions and ideas while writing your *D'var Torah*.

Our Hopes. . .

The years leading up to the B'nei Mitzvah celebration offer a time to examine or reexamine your connection to Judaism, the Jewish people, and Jewish spiritual life. Many families treat this experience as a time for a major life-style change, an opportunity for introspection, or an examination of their core Jewish identity. At TBZ we want to emphasize this on-going process of introspection, reflection, and potential for change. We do not want this event to be the last Jewish “thing” your family ever does. We do not want the B'nei Mitzvah student to forever remain 13 years old when it comes to Jewish identity and tradition.

Timeline with Benchmarks for Preparation

The following timeline will guide the process:

1 ½ - 2 Years prior . . .

- Set a date for your Simcha (please be in touch with Rav Claudia)
- Assess Hebrew reading level - For Students at Beit Rabban, this will be done at Beit Rabban and under Rav Tiferet's supervision
 - Student should know all consonants and vowels and should be able to read aloud comfortably
- Begin B'mitzvotav Project²

7-12 Months prior . . .

- Connect with your tutor (**Rav Tiferet will match students with TBZ internal tutor**)³
- Read entire *parsha* in English
- Read *maftir* in Hebrew
- Learn to chant *brachot* before and after reading Torah
- Learn to chant *v'ahavta*

6 Months . . .

- Learn to chant the *ashrei*
- Learn to lead the Torah Service
- Begin learning the Torah cantillation system
- Learn to chant *maftir*, with vowels and trope markings

4 - 5 Months . . .

- Chant *maftir* fluently with vowels and trope markings
- Begin to learn additional *aliyot*, if desired
- Learn to chant *brachot* before and after *haftarah*
- Begin to learn *haftarah*
- Make or order invitations
- Will you order *kippot* for your guests? Look into getting them now
- Find or make your *tallit*
- Coordinate *kiddush* plans with TBZ office

3-2 Months . . .

- Practice chanting *maftir* from the “unpunctuated side” of the *tikkun*
- Learn additional *aliyot*, if desired

² See Page 8

³ We are launching a new model, tutoring will be part of the Beit Rabban program, and we will not be sending students to external tutors.

- Continue to learn *haftarah*
- Meeting with Rav Claudia to set up final details
- Begin to write *D'var Torah* – first draft
- Meet with Rabbinic Intern to work on *D'var Torah*
- Schedule rehearsals with Rav Claudia and Rabbinic Intern
- Send out invitations

1 Month...

- Write *D'var Torah*
- Continue B'mitzvotav Project
- Finalize party plans
- PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE
- Give out honors to family members and friends (A form will be sent to you in advance to complete)

3...2...1 Week

- Rehearsals
- If you are a parent, you may want to write down remarks to give to your child at the service (You will receive guidelines)). You may also want to give the Priestly blessing for your child
 - Finalize party plans
- PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

**Helpful Hint:* Wear the shoes you plan to use during the ceremony to one or all of your rehearsals

B'MITZVOTAV: THROUGH GOD'S COMMANDMENTS: A thirteen-step Mitzvah program for TBZ B'nei Mitzvah children

B'MITZVOTAV is modeled upon a *Mitzvah* project by the same name as designed by Temple Ner David in Bloomfield, New Jersey and inspired by the *B'Mitzvotav* project that TBZ tutor Jessica Slavin crafted for TBZ B'nei Mitzvah students, Wen-Wen Fisher, Dylan Frank & Rafi Michaels.

Family Guide

“Shimon the Righteous was among the survivors of the Great Assembly. He used to say: The world depends on three things—on Torah, on the service of God (Avodah), and on deeds of loving-kindness (G'milut Chasadim)” Pirke Avot 1:2

Becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah requires a great deal of hard work. It is true that a Jew becomes a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at the appropriate age with or without the ceremony. As a community, the TBZ congregation shares in the joyful celebration of your child's coming of age. At TBZ, we also want to make sure that the process that leads to the joyful celebration is a meaningful one. It is a process that will help you to connect to our Jewish path in the world; to ask questions about your Jewish identity, and to embrace our tradition with love. Becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah marks the beginning of a person's Jewish accountability. But becoming responsible doesn't happen overnight; reading from the Torah or giving a *D'var Torah* are not the only paths towards this transformation. It is the process that is transformative. Through this process we try to see how our being Jewish impacts on our everyday life.

Learning the Torah portion, the blessings, the *haftarah*, and the prayers necessary to lead the Shabbat morning service takes time and commitment, and that part of the process is very important. But that is not all there is to becoming a B-/Bar/Bat. To be a B-/Bar/Bat Mitzvah means embracing *mitzvot*. *Mitzvot* are not just commandments or obligations, rather they are the ways in which we connect to our Jewish tradition; how we connect to all those who came before us, to all those who will come after us and to the whole Jewish community in the world today.

B'mitzvotav—through God's commandments—is a learning-by-doing B-/Bar/Bat Mitzvah program, which all B'nei Mitzvah students are expected to complete on their journey towards becoming a Bar/Bat

Mitzvah at TBZ. This action-oriented project will enable you to begin your own program for Jewish doing through the performance of various *mitzvot* or actions in the world. Performance of *mitzvot* helps us to become partners with God in making the world a better place. We are able to move beyond self and connect with others. When we perform a *mitzvah*, whether by studying the Torah, worshipping God, or performing acts of loving-kindness we not only help to improve the world—we elevate ourselves as well.

All students will complete thirteen *mitzvot* and record them in their B'Mitzvotav Journal.

Families will be guided through this process during our monthly Saturday afternoon meetings. Rav Claudia, will assist you along the way and help you to find the answers to the many questions which will arise along the way.

Mitzvot may be divided in three categories: **Torah** (study), **Avodah** (worship), and **G'milut Hasadim** (acts of loving-kindness)

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

We challenge you to complete **13 mitzvot** in three different categories (four in each category):

- **Talmud Torah:** Commitment to Jewish Learning: **4 mitzvot**
- **Avodah:** Jewish Living: **4 mitzvot**
- **G'milut Chasadim:** Acts of Love and Kindness: **4 mitzvot**

The 13th Mitzvah is: *Aliyah la-Torah*: being called to the Torah for the first time, on the Shabbat of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Below, you will find a list of *mitzvot* to choose from (4 *mitzvot* are expected for all B'nei Mitzvah students), you may choose from the other nine suggestions. This list is, of course, only a small fraction of the mitzvah connections we perform as Jews. If there is a mitzvah that you would like to perform and is not listed in this list, please let us know!

TALMUD TORAH/COMMITMENT TO JEWISH LEARNING

FOR ALL B-/BAR/BAT MITZVAH STUDENTS:

- D'VAR TORAH.** Study your Torah portion with your family, tutor and rabbis. Write a *D'var Torah* that exhibits your understanding of the portion and its meaning in your life. You will read it at your Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Four months prior to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah you and your

parents will join Reb Moshe and Rav Claudia on a meeting to discuss the process of writing your *D'var Torah*. But you don't need to wait for that meeting to begin reading and learning about your Torah portion!

OPTIONS / CHOOSE 3 FROM THE LIST BELOW:

- Read one Jewish Book** and write a review for your *Journal*. (Please check with the Rabbis or the Beit Rabban teacher, if the book qualifies for the *mitzvah*)
- Visit a Jewish museum, gallery or special Jewish cultural event** (play, recital, movie). Write about your experience in your *Journal*.
- Interview your grandparent(s)** (or other elders in your family if your grandparents are no longer with us or not capable of participating in this project). Learn about their Jewish roots and their stories. Where did they come from? What kind of Jewish life have they lived? Write about the interview in your *Journal*.
- Identify something about Jewish belief or practice** you do not understand. Research the answer using books, the Internet, the rabbis, teachers and other resources. Present the question, the answer, and your own experience of research in your *Journal*.
- Write your own midrash** (a creative story) about something in your *Torah* or *haftarah* portion. Try writing your portion from one character's perspective, creating an alternative version, or answering some unanswered question. You can illustrate this story (if you want to) and make it part of your *Journal*.
- Go to at least two Torah Study sessions** at TBZ (Saturday morning 9-10AM). Write in your *Journal* about your experience and one new thing you learned.
- Art or Music project:** You may create a ritual object such as a *mezuzah*, *Kiddush* cup or knit/crochet a *kippah*. You can paint, draw, or sculpt a scene from your portion or reflective of your portion. You may also choose to study and learn to perform some Israeli, Sephardic, or Yiddish songs.
- Watch a Movie about a Jewish** theme at home or at The Boston Jewish Film Festival (<http://www.bjff.org/>) and write a review for your *Journal*. (Please check with the Rabbis or the Beit Rabban teacher to see if the movie qualifies for the Mitzvah).

Or, propose your own alternative in this category and have it approved by one of the rabbis.

AVODAH/JEWISH PRACTICE

FOR ALL BAR/BAT MITZVAH STUDENTS:

- SHAMOR V'ZACHOR SHABBAT.** Fulfill all Shabbat attendance expectations prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah. This involves coming to Shabbat services twice-monthly during the year of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation. If you are not able to come on a Shabbat that there is WonderMinyan Services or/and B'nei Mitzvah group, come on a different Shabbat or to a Friday night Service.

OPTIONS: CHOOSE 3 FROM THE LIST BELOW:

- Attend a Jewish lifecycle event** (wedding, funeral, baby-naming, *brit milah*, *shivah minyan*, etc.) other than a Bar/Bat Mitzvah and write down your impressions in your *Journal*.
- Celebrating Shabbat at Home:** Light Shabbat candles and/or sing the FULL Shabbat evening *Kiddush*, and say *ha-motzi on the challah* every Friday evening for at least a month. Describe the experience in your *Journal*.
- Attend one festival** (*Sukkot/Pesach/Shavuot*) morning service if possible. What was the meaning of the festival as it was conveyed through the service? What value is there to setting aside Jewish sacred days in a non-Jewish world? Comment in your *Journal*.
- Blessing for food:** Lead your family in *ha-motzi* before your main meal and every day for at least two weeks, and lead in the *birkat hamazon* (Grace After Meals) for four Shabbat dinners. Discuss the experience with your family. Write about how you and your family felt about this ritual in your *Journal*.
- Kashrut:** Keep one (1) aspect of *kashrut* (refraining from eating pork products, or shellfish products, or not mixing milk and meat) that you do not normally observe for one month. What did it feel like? What was it like to give up something you enjoyed? Are there positive aspects to keeping *kashrut*? Share your thoughts in your *Journal*.
- Tie your own tzitzit on a tallit** (perhaps the one you will wear at your Bar/Bat Mitzvah). Is there any meaning to the way the *tzitzit* are

knotted? Comment in your *Journal* as to what purpose you think this ritual serves.

Likboah Mezuzah: If there is not one there already, affix a *mezuzah* to your bedroom door. What is the text of the handwritten parchment we put into the mezuzah case? How do you feel when you see it there? Think about what's inside. Write about this in your *Journal*.

Or, propose your own alternative in this category and have it approved by one of the rabbis.

GEMILUT CHASADIM/ACTS OF LOVING-KINDNESS

FOR ALL BAR/BAT MITZVAH STUDENTS:

TIKKUN OLAM (REPAIRING THE WORLD) PROJECT.

Participate in a substantial, individual *mitzvah* project, which you will choose with the help of your teacher, tutor and/or rabbi. Write about why you chose this project, what you did, and how you felt about it in your *Journal*. **This is the heart of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience. We recognize the unique qualities of each of you and encourage you to use your talent and creativity in choosing and performing this mitzvah.** We ask you to not only fundraise to support the charity you chose, but to make it a hands on experience.

ADDITIONALLY, PLEASE CHOOSE 3 FROM THE LIST BELOW:

Love your neighbor as Yourself: Help a classmate who is ill. Bring homework, library books and messages between home and school. Help them keep up with notes in class by relaying information to them. Write about this experience in your *Journal*.

Clothing those in need: Go through your house with your family and collect clothing and household for donation. Reflect on this experience in your *Journal*.

Honoring the Elderly. Visit a Jewish nursing home. Speak with residents about their lives. You can join TBZ in our visit to the elderly at 1550 Beacon Street, bringing Holidays gifts (for Rosh Hashanah, Hanukah and Purim and Pesach). Write down their stories and your impressions in your *Journal*.

Be kind to Animals: Volunteer time at the local Animal Shelter or another organization that cares for animals. Write about what you did and how you felt doing it in your *Journal*.

Comforting the Mourners. Attend a *shivah minyan* at a house of mourning. Write down your impressions about your experience in your *Journal*.

Taking Care of the Environment: In honor of *Tu B'Shevat*, plant a tree or some flowers in your yard and buy at least one tree from the JNF for Israel. Write about this experience in your *Journal*.

Participate in Remember Us: The Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Project offers an invitation to children preparing for Bar/Bat Mitzvah to connect with the memory of children lost in the Holocaust before they could be called to the Torah. For more information go to <http://www.remember-us.org> or ask the rabbis.

Support the Bar/Bat Mitzvah of a Special Needs child in Israel. For more information go to <http://www.masorti.org/masorti-programs/masorti-youth/bbmitzvah-special.html> ask the rabbis.

Or, propose your own alternative in this category and have it approved by one of the rabbis.

THE B'MITZVOTAV JOURNAL

Performing the *mitzvot* in the program is important, but *doing* alone is not enough. It is equally important that you reflect on what you did, how you did it, how it felt, and how it may or may not have changed your ideas about being Jewish. **That's why the *Journal* is important.** In your *Journal*, you have a safe place to question, gain perspective, record your insights, and be creative.

There will be a Folder on Google Drive to share your writing.

We want you to write about your experiences and learn from them. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. Be honest about what happened and how you felt.

This *journal* will become a very important gift that you will give to yourself for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

You are also welcomed and encouraged to use some of your entries for the *D'var Torah* that you will share with the TBZ community on your Bar/Bat Mitzvah day.

Here are a few guidelines to help you on your way. You can type out your reports and entries on the computer. You can write them by hand. Here are things to consider when asked to reflect on an experience:

- What did I think it was going to be like?
- What was it actually like to do a *mitzvah*?
- Did I feel comfortable performing the *mitzvah*?
- Who helped me do the *mitzvah*?
- How did my family react?
- What surprised me about the experience?
- Write a quick list of thoughts.
- Would I try this again?

These are just beginnings. Feel free to write from your own thoughts and to share your ideas honestly. Entries should be at least one page for each *mitzvah*.

Remember to make your *mitzvah* projects memorable and special. Make sure that your heart is into the project, and that it will be meaningful to both you and to those you help.

B'hatzlacha!

Mistakes. You will probably make one mistake during your ceremony; don't let it bother you!

Helpful Hint: Don't worry about making mistakes. EVERYONE makes mistakes. Even the most experienced Torah readers and rabbis and cantors make mistakes. You will probably make one mistake during your ceremony; don't let it bother you!

FAQ'S

Before my B-/Bar/Bat Mitzvah, do I really have to attend services on Shabbat? What if I have a weekly conflict on Saturday mornings?

YES. We know that it is difficult to get out of bed on a Saturday morning, or to have to miss out on a soccer game or other event with your friends. But, trust us, you will feel MUCH more comfortable on the day of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah if you have heard and sung the prayers on a regular basis, if you recognize the faces of those around you, and if you have attended other B'nei Mitzvah ceremonies at TBZ. Our Shabbat Morning program for older kids (during WonderMinyan) also provides great opportunities for batting practice. During the weeks leading up to your ceremony, you will get the chance to practice your portion in front of your friends.

I go to a Jewish Day School. Do I have to go to the Shabbat morning Services?

There are several reasons why it is a good idea for you to attend these bi-monthly services. First of all, you will meet and get to know your TBZ peers, who are a FABULOUS group. Secondly, you can use these mornings to familiarize yourself with the TBZ melodies, some of which are different from the ones you might have learned in school. Finally, we don't just use these times to read, or sing through the Shabbat prayers and Torah portions. We've developed the content of the mornings to be of interest to all students. And, we have really interesting discussions. Leprosy, blood and guts, divination...the options are endless!

I can't sing. Can I just read my portion?

Nope. The *mitzvah* of hearing Torah is not complete unless the reader chants. In the Talmud (B. Meg. 32a), Rabbi Yohanan stated, "Anyone who reads the Scripture without a melody... of him the Scripture says [Ezek. 20:25], "Moreover I gave them laws that were not good, etc." Did you know that everyone is born with the ability to sing? Some people have an easier time than others, but 90% of the battle is getting over your fear of singing in public. It may be hard for you, but no one will be judging you on your singing voice. No one needs to be—or should be—a rock-star in order to chant Torah.

What if I don't finish everything on time?

Breathe. No one is “grading” you on your performance or withholding your certificate from you if you don’t finish everything you set out to do. However, we want you to work hard and do your best. If you practice every day and follow the suggested timeline in this guidebook, you should be able to complete a great amount of work.

Did you just say that I have to practice every day?

Well... you can be reasonable about the hours you spend on your practicing. Realistically, you are going to be very busy in the months leading up to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah. You probably won’t have time to practice every day. But, you DO need to practice. Only you can really know how much work you need to put in to make yourself feel secure and accomplished. See the next section for tips on how to work smarter, not harder.

I’m still confused. What is my “Parsha” And, what is “Maftir”?

Good questions! The Torah, as you hopefully know, is already divided into 5 Books

(Genesis—*Bereishit*—Exodus—*Shemot*—Leviticus—*Vayikra*—Numbers—*Bamidbar*—Deuteronomy—*D’varim*).

In each book, smaller divisions are found, called *parshiot*—singular: *parsha*. The word *parsha* (פרשה) means “portion.” There are 54 *parshiot*, one for each week of the year.

Every *parsha* is divided into 8 smaller sections, called *aliyot*. The 8th *aliyah* is called the *maftir*. *Maftir* comes from the Hebrew root פטר which means “to conclude.” (Often, the text of the *maftir* is the same as the seventh *aliyah*). The word *haftarah* comes from this root. *Haftarah* is the concluding text from the books of the prophets, which rounds out each week’s *parsha*.

There is just one more thing you need to know. Remember how there are 54 *parshiot*, one for each week of the year? Well, each of these *parshiot* are quite lengthy. So lengthy, that many congregations choose to only read 1/3 of the text each week (Triennial reading). Therefore, it actually takes 3 years to get through the entire Torah. This is good news for you. It means that your workload is actually cut drastically, and that you and your family and friends can get to lunch earlier! To find your *parsha*, go to www.hebcal.com and look for the date of your Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

What do you mean when you tell me to practice my Torah portion from the “unpunctuated side” of a *tikkun*?

The Torah only contains the consonants of the text. The reader is expected to memorize the vowels and the melody. An example in English is:

MRY HD LTTL LMB WHS FLC WS WHT S SNW

A *tikkun* is a book that contains both the punctuated and unpunctuated versions of the text, side by side, to make it easier for you to learn. For example:

MRY HD LTTL LMB

versus

MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB

I've noticed that there are people who stand around the Torah readers and correct them. Who are they? Will they be there when I have my B-/Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

These people are called the *Gabba'im*, which literally means, "They've got your back"! Often one of them will be your tutor or a teacher that has helped you in your learning and they will help you if you get stuck, or gently correct you if you make a mistake.

Non-Jewish Family Members may accompany a Jewish family member when they come up for an *aliyah*, without actively participating (saying the *bracha* and wearing a *tallit*), although they still need to have their head covered.

Tallitot and Kippot for all Jewish Members: All men and women who are coming up for an honor, are encouraged to wear a *kippah* and a *tallit*. We acknowledge that many women do not have this practice and we hope that they will try at least one of these practices, hopefully both.

What if one of my parents is not Jewish? Can they participate in my B-/Bar/Bat Mitzvah? YES! We will find many ways for your non-Jewish parent to participate in your ceremony and in your celebration, including saying a special blessing, if they wish to do so. Please speak to Rav Claudia, who will help you determine what exactly that will look like.

The D'var Torah

Your D'var Torah should be 7-10 minutes, with the following structure:

1. Welcome
2. Summary: What is my *parsha* about?
3. Go into depth about one thing in the *parsha* that interests me. Research this thing. Read the commentators, and formulate your own ideas.
4. What does this *parsha* mean to ME and to my experience of becoming a B-/Bar/Bat Mitzvah? Speak about (and if possible) connect to your *mitzvah* project(s).

5. Thank you...!

Although there are many different techniques for writing a *D'var Torah*, you should take into account the following suggestions.

DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE WEEK BEFORE YOUR B-/BAR/BAT

MITZVAH! You may not actually write your *D'var Torah* until the last minute, but give yourself time to think about your *parsha* to let your mind visit and revisit the text.

Read, Read, and Read. Read your text. Read it again. Make sure you understand every word. If there is a word you don't know, you can look it up in a dictionary or ask someone.

Think. Is there something about the text that interests you? Disturbs or frustrates you? Confuses you? Write down your ideas and discuss them with someone else – a parent, your tutor, Beit Rabban teacher, or your rabbi.

Find other interpretations. You can obtain commentaries from your rabbi, your teacher, or your library. There is no need to reinvent the wheel; people have studied these texts for centuries. Avail yourself of their wisdom. It will give you food for thought and different approaches to the text. Consider these sources:

- *Plaut's Commentary* provides clear insights into Torah and *haftarah*.
- Field's *A Torah Commentary for Our Times* is a user-friendly reference that includes traditional as well as contemporary insights.
- Nehama Leibowitz's *Studies* provides authoritative modern perspectives.
- The Soncino *Chumash* and *Rashi* in particular are the classic rabbinic commentaries.
- *The Five Books of Moses* by Everett Fox is a word-for-word translation of the Hebrew text.
- *The Encyclopaedia Judaica* is a classic resource.
- The URJ Website: www.urj.org, where the skeleton of this D'var Torah guide also appears!

***Using any of the ideas from the commentaries above is fair game, but remember to cite them!*

Determine your approach. Consider these possibilities:

- **Analyze a small fragment of the text in great detail.** You will

- know that you have picked a good one if other commentators are as interested in it as you are.
- **Observe the whole text from a distance, taking note of some of its interesting details.** This approach is particularly suitable for *parshiyot* that deal with ritual details at great length. Discuss the role of finer points in the building of a religious life. For example, why did the screws that were used to build the Temple have to be a certain material and a certain length, and why is this relevant to us today?
 - **Begin with an idea from the text and apply it to another issue that is of great interest to you.** For example, if the text contains a long list of names, present a history of the origins of some typical Jewish names, perhaps including the names of those present.
 - **Analyze the characters of biblical figures and the events of their lives in ways that will shed some light on our own.** For example, consider the sibling rivalry between Jacob and Esau and the issue of preferred children.
 - **Using the classic form for the *D'var Torah*, present several apparently discrepant facts** and then explain how they are not contradictions at all but instead point to a deeper meaning that is not obvious at first. If you take this approach, be sure to read *midrash* connected to your text.
 - **Historical insights can illuminate a text in an exciting way.** Even if you don't draw any deep morals from this approach, it can still be enriching.

Write a first draft that grapples with the meaning. A *D'var Torah* does not merely summarize the *parsha*. If you are having a problem, try the indirect approach: After your initial reading of the *parsha* and some commentaries, write down any thoughts you have about it and then set what you have written aside. Keep it in the back of your mind. Read it right before you go to bed. Think about it. Once you begin writing your *D'var Torah*, jot down all your thoughts no matter how tangential they are: They may lead you somewhere.

Helpful Hint: Remember to make your *D'var Torah* personal. Relate the *parsha* to a relevant moment in your life, or to a cause or ethic that you believe in. Above all, we want to hear about YOU!

Show your work to someone else. It can be really helpful to get a second opinion. Someone else can also tell you if something you are saying is confusing.

Edit, edit, edit. It is usually harder to be brief, but brevity is always

appreciated. A few thoughts and examples are really all you need to present. A seven minutes *D'var Torah* is a great length. Anything longer than ten minutes may induce your guests to pay more attention to their grumbling tummies.

Other VERY important information:

- We would be delighted if parents, siblings, relatives, and friends want to read Torah at your *simcha*. Let us know well in advance, so that we can be sure they are well prepared.
- Please arrive at least 30 minutes before the start of the service.
- TBZ supplies the candy!
- You are welcome to order *kippot* for your guests, however it is not a requirement.
- Some families like preparing a program for their guests.
- Usually during a *simcha* the Kiddush prayer will be said upstairs. It is easier to say Kiddush before going downstairs when there is a large crowd. We hope you can lead Kiddush & Hamotzi
- Your family is expected to sponsor a *kiddush* following Shabbat morning services for the congregation and your family and friends. If you decide to set different lunch plans for your family and guests, we at least hope your family will attend the *kiddush*, so we have the opportunity to offer a *mazel tov*. At least two months in advance, let the synagogue office know of your Kiddush plans (See our Simcha list below and please be advised that some information may change. Closer to your simcha we will send you the most updated one.)
- If the Bar or Bat Mitzvah is scheduled for a Sunday *Rosh Hodesh* or for a Shabbat *mincha - maariv* service or another day which is not Shabbat, the family is expected to sponsor a congregational Kiddush on a different Shabbat morning.

B'nei Mitzvah Agreement

A B-/Bar/Bat Mitzvah is an important life event for the entire family and a great joy for the congregation. To assure that all runs smoothly, it is important that you carefully read and understand the financial procedures associated with a TBZ B-/Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

B-/Bar/Bat Mitzvah cost (see below) will be broken into a monthly charge beginning with the first month your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah date is reserved and entered onto the synagogue calendar through the month prior to the actual *simcha*.

The total B'nei Mitzvah cost (two year program) is \$4800 or \$200/month for 24 months.

Agreement cost includes all of the following:

- Tuition for 6th and 7th grade Beit Rabban.
- Up to 24 hours of private instruction in Hebrew and Torah trope provided by TBZ tutors, beginning 6-8 months before the date of the B-/Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- All meetings with Rabbi:
 - At the beginning of the process to set up a date and clarify expectations.
 - 3-4 months prior to the B-/Bar/Bat Mitzvah to review the last steps of preparations for the event and to check in on the progress of the learning.
 - Individual meetings with rabbinic intern to work on *D'var Torah*, and service, etc.
- Rehearsals in the Sanctuary beginning 3 weeks prior to B-/Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- Monthly learning program with Rav Claudia, over the two school years prior to B-/Bar/Bat Mitzvah (6th and 7th grade). The family is expected to continue attending these monthly meetings throughout the school year regardless if the B-/Bar/Bat Mitzvah has been celebrated earlier in the year.
- Experiential learning sessions for the B'nei Mitzvah group.
- Drumming during service.

- All facilities costs including cleaning, set-up, supplies (ex. candy) etc.

Abatements are available for those experiencing financial hardships. Please be in touch with our Executive Director, Susan Diller for a confidential meeting.

If you do not need individual tutoring or if your child attends a Jewish Day school and does not need to attend Beit Rabban, the cost of the agreement cost will be as follows:

- Families whose children attend Jewish day schools: \$3600
- Families who provide their own tutor (not at TBZ): \$3100
- Families whose children attend Jewish day schools and provide their own tutor (not at TBZ): \$1900

Please speak to Susan Diller to discuss your specific needs.

The Fee of the B'nei Mitzvah program does not include:

- Cost of catering the community *kiddush* following the service.
- Floral arrangements in the Sanctuary, if you wish to have.
- Rental of function hall for an evening event or private meals or any Kiddush not taking place immediately following Shabbat morning service.

The B'nei Mitzvah Agreement is found in the next page:

Please sign and return ASAP.
TBZ will sign and send you a copy.

You may pay by check, made out to Temple Beth Zion, or by Visa or MasterCard.

A Bar/Bat Mitzvah date reservation is ONLY guaranteed after TBZ receives the signed contract and the first installment toward the full Bar/Bat Mitzvah agreement.

B-/BAR/BAT MITZVAH AGREEMENT

We will add TBZ signature and send you your copy for your records.

I have read, understood and agree to the terms of Temple Beth Zion's B-/Bar/Bat Mitzvah program.

Name of Child: _____

B-/Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date: _____

B-/Bar/Bat Mitzvah Family

Temple Beth Zion

Name: _____

Please Print Clearly

Name: _____

TBZ President

Signature: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Please set up our payment plan as follows (check one):

- Plan A - Pay by check monthly
- Plan B - Pay by credit card monthly
- Plan C - Pay full amount in advance

To set up a payment plan using Visa or MasterCard, please complete the following information:

Name on Card : _____

Card Number: _____ Exp. Date: ____ CVV _____

Signature: _____

Steps to a successful Simcha at TBZ - Details about the Kiddush and more.

(This document is constantly updated and it will be sent to you when closer to your celebration with the most updated information)

A simcha is a happy time and the staff of TBZ want to be as helpful to you as possible to make sure everything runs smoothly for your events. We hope this list will help.

The main contact for all simchas is the Executive Director, Susan Diller – 617.566.8171 x 10 – sdiller@tbzbrookline.org). Please contact her with any questions, not addressed below, as well as any other concerns.

Common Questions:

What is the setup of the room that you want? (we have sample plans)
This is needed one month prior.

Tables available: 15 - 60” round tables, 6 - high tops, 13 - 8’ tables, 13 - 6’ tables, 3 - 4’ tables How many people can the community and meeting room hold for the Kiddush? 275

How many congregants should we figure will be at Shabbat services?
80-100 TBZ members

Included with the B’nei Mitzvah Kiddush package is:

1. Room set up before the event
2. Kitchen supervisor (Maira) available to help prepare the Kiddush
3. Use of TBZ supplies as needed including: wine for kiddush (ceremonial only), 2 regular size challot.
4. Coffee and tea are available as needed.
5. Use of our white tablecloths, utensils and paper goods which are all compostable.

When should deliveries be made? Deliveries of food and flowers must be made before 1:00 PM on the Friday of the event.

Sanctuary Flowers: artificial flowers in the sanctuary will be in place to enhance the space. If you desire, you may bring in fresh flowers for your event.

Who provides candies to be thrown at the Bnei Mitzvah? TBZ provides the candies that are thrown at the guest(s) of honor.

What about pictures and video? Photos during the event are not allowed, however you can make arrangements with the office to do pictures before Shabbat, usually during the last rehearsal.

What about Kippot? TBZ has a supply of various kippot. If you decide to provide them, the number, color, etc is up to you. Many people decide to make up enough for everyone who attends the simcha so they can have them as a memento. There is no requirement to supply kippot.

How many people can fit into the sanctuary? The sanctuary can hold approximately 350 people (maximum)

Can we bring in additional food? NO food can be brought in that is not kosher, this means that only food that is marked with kosher certification from a recognized kosher caterer is allowed. This includes food prepared in your own home kosher kitchen.

Is drumming provided at Bnei Mitzvah services? Yes, we will be contacting Ron and if he is not available we will ask him to help us find another drummer.

Is there a model or a sample of the Service/Brochure? The office has samples of service brochures you can use as a model for your own program. Please contact the office if you would like a copy of the samples we have and they will send you a digital copy. We will provide basic information that needs to be included.

Who are the approved caterers? Caterers must be kosher with a hechsher approved by Rav Claudia. Food cannot be cooked on Shabbat and MUST be delivered before Shabbat. If your caterer is not listed here, please contact Susan Diller to get approval.

1. Ora Catering, www.oracatering.com, 617.566.2147, OraCatering@comcast.net (Va'ad)
2. Catering by Meital 413.739.2770, www.cateringbymeital.com, Cateringbymeital@gmail.com (Springfield Va'ad)
3. Yoel Konstantine- Dushez Catering, www.dushezcatering.com, 617.953.2449 yoel@dushezcatering.com (Va'ad)
4. Tova's Catering, www.tovascatering.com, 508.286.2242, tova@tovascatering.com (Va'ad)
5. Catering by Andrew, www.cateringbyandrew.com, (617) 731-6585 (Va'ad)

6. Inna's Kitchen, www.innaskitchen.com, (hecksher approved by Rav Claudia)

Private family dinner on Friday night? Families can rent space at TBZ (community room or meeting room) for Friday night dinner. Dinner must happen after services end (after 7:30pm), Same restrictions for catering, Rental is not available when there are TBZ events on Friday night (like Shabbat Nariya or community dinners) check with the office about availability.

Saturday night private parties? TBZ is also available to be rented for Saturday night or Sunday celebrations. Member rental fee applies. Same catering restrictions. Saturday night party must start after shabbat ends.

Note: B'nei mitzvah celebrations that do not happen on shabbat morning (afternoon, mincha/havdalah, Sunday Rosh Hodesh or Monday holiday) rental fees apply for celebration in the community room following service.

