

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Manual



OLD YORK ROAD
TEMPLE-BETH AM

Dear Bar/Bat Mitzvah Families:

You are entering into a wonderful and exciting milestone of Jewish education and celebration - your child becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. All of us at Old York Road Temple-Beth Am wish to help make this a meaningful and memorable experience for your child, your family and our entire congregation!

Participating in Shabbat morning worship as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah provides an emotional experience difficult to surpass when approached with both a religious and educational commitment. As part of this honor, your child will chant a portion of the Torah, a corresponding portion of the Haftarah and other prayers and blessings as designated by the Rabbi, Cantor and teachers. They will also write and give their D'var Torah or "word of Torah". This centerpiece of student learning and community leadership gives b'nai mitzvah a chance to teach us all some of the Torah they have to share. When a family celebrates a Bar or Bat Mitzvah at Old York Road Temple-Beth Am, the family, parents and children are expected to learn, study and attend services together. This shared experience will help nurture your family as you prepare for this special occasion and continue your Jewish journey.

This manual is designed to answer many of the questions you may have concerning preparation for this special day. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us with questions along the way.

Mazal Tov on your upcoming simcha! We are so excited and honored to share it with you.

Robert Leib

Robert S. Leib
Senior Rabbi

Shoshanah Tornberg

Shoshanah Tornberg
Rabbi - Educator

Elena Zarkh

Elena Zarkh
Cantor

Educational Preparation

During your child's preparation, they will be asked to think about what Judaism means to them, discuss the meaning of the prayers, write a D'var Torah (teaching) based on their Torah portion, learn to chant important sections of the liturgy and become involved in a "Mitzvah Project" of community service. It is our goal to create the most meaningful experience possible, while instilling in your child a sense of Jewish pride, responsibility, and the desire to continue their religious education. In order to participate in this process successfully, students must:

- Be enrolled in the "Mensch Lab" during the B'nai Mitzvah years.
- Have successfully and regularly attended at least four years of formal Hebrew training in our "Mensch Lab" or have participated in equivalent instruction from another Jewish education program (requires previous approval).

D'var Torah (The student teaches the congregation)

Approximately one year from the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, you will receive a folder that includes lots of important information including the Torah portion. Please read it! Then, contact the Clergy's Administrative Assistant to schedule the first D'var Torah meeting. The first appointment will be a family meeting to discuss the Torah portion, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process and the student's mitzvah project. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah student is given the opportunity to select the section to be read, making this experience even more meaningful.

Lessons

After the initial D'var Torah meeting, you will be notified by the "Mensch Lab" administrative assistant to work out a convenient time and day for you to meet with a Beth Am Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutor. Lessons take place either Mondays or Thursdays.

Our Cantor will provide guidance with chanting, bimah etiquette and the final preparations during the training process. The coordinating lessons with the Cantor are scheduled on the same day as the Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring.

If additional tutoring is necessary or advantageous, we will work with you to find the appropriate solution for your child's needs.

Worship Service Attendance Requirements

We find that our students have the most successful Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience when they meet their service attendance expectations – or even exceed them. Making this a priority for your family will serve you and your child well.

Beth Am requires that each student and parent(s) attend eight services, within one year prior to their becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Six services are required to be attended at Beth Am Shabbat morning or Friday Shabbat services. Two services can be elsewhere with a note from the parent with the date of the service and the name of the synagogue. Shabbat attendance will increase your family's comfort in the sanctuary.

Mitzvah Project

Beth Am has always stressed the principle of "The Caring Community." A Mitzvah Project is an integral part of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience. It is certainly not the first mitzvah your child will have performed; it is a special one that marks this special time of change and growth. Parents, clergy and student will work together to design a meaningful project.

- Each student is required to perform at least 10 hours of community service.
- All Mitzvah projects **must** contain an **interactive** element such as reading, visiting or participation in community activities.
- Mitzvah Projects must be completed six weeks prior to becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

About the Special Day

Time: The Shabbat morning service begins promptly at 10:00 a.m. and usually concludes approximately at 12:00 p.m. Your invitations should specify a 9:45 a.m. starting time so that your guests will arrive in a timely manner.

Address: Old York Road Temple – Beth Am, 971 Old York Road, Abington, Pennsylvania 19001

Decorum

The success and beauty of the Shabbat morning service depends, in part, on the conduct and timely arrival of your guests. We do not allow food, drink or gum in the sanctuary, and all cell phones and electronic devices must be placed on silent mode. We ask that your guests not take photos or video during the service with either cameras or cell phones.

Attire for Family and Guests

Appropriate dress is expected by all men and women who enter our Sanctuary for all services. We expect everyone in the congregation and especially those joining us on the Bimah to dress appropriately and modestly – women should have their shoulders covered with dress of appropriate length.

Tuxedos are not to be worn on the bimah. The Bat Mitzvah and the mothers of B'nai Mitzvah should wear dresses of appropriate length and should not wear gowns on the Bimah.

Tallit and Kipah are strongly encouraged but not required. (Sisterhood's Gift Shop has a full and beautiful selection of Tallitot and Kippot at discounted prices).

Family Participation

When a child celebrates becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the participation of family members is critically important. It is crucial that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah see parent(s) as standing behind the decision to raise them as Jews in order to reinforce their Jewish identity.

Candle-Lighting/Kiddush

To begin the Shabbat weekend when your child will become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the parents, Bar/Bat Mitzvah and sibling(s) will be invited to the bimah for the blessing of the Shabbat candles on Friday night. Only a Jewish parent lights the candles; a non-Jewish parent may take part in the reading of the introductory passage. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will lead the congregation in Kiddush.

Aliyot

On Saturday morning, family members and/or friends are given the honor of participating in the Torah service either by being called to open the Ark, by holding or dressing the Torah or by reciting/chanting in Hebrew the blessings before and/or after the reading of the Torah. **Please make sure that those honored with the Torah blessings are able to recite/sing the blessings in Hebrew.** Aliyot must follow the outline available on our web site.

- The Passing of the Torah. During this dramatic ceremony, the Torah is passed from one generation to the next signifying the continuity of our Jewish heritage through the generations - from a Jewish great-grandparent, to a grandparent, to a parent, to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- The Aliyah to the Torah. The blessings over the Torah are recited/chanted only by those of the Jewish faith. A non-Jewish parent or relative of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, if he or she so desires, can stand alongside his/her (Jewish) spouse while the latter chants the blessings.
- Parent's Prayer. Parent(s) are strongly encouraged to compose their own suitable prayer which must be submitted to the Rabbi one month in advance. Another option is to select an appropriate prayer from a booklet of parents' prayers – given to all families at the time they meet with our Executive Director.
- Sibling Participation – Siblings are encouraged to participate in the service in the following ways: An older sibling can chant the blessing before or after the Torah portion. Any sibling may read the “Prayer for the Nation.” Siblings may also open the Ark.
- Holding and Dressing of the Torah - This honor may be given to any person of the Jewish faith.

Ushering/Oneg Requirement

Each family is required to tray desserts at one Friday Oneg Shabbat and must usher at least one Saturday morning Shabbat service prior to their own family simcha. Someone will contact you to schedule your date. If there will be more than 25 children attending your Bar/Bat Mitzvah service, please notify the Executive Director at your pre-Bar/Bat Mitzvah meeting so that we can arrange for extra ushers.

Gifts from Beth Am

Each Bar/Bat Mitzvah will receive:

- books that will enable them to continue learn and grow as Jews
- a Bar/Bat Mitzvah certificate.
- a \$250 NFTY gift certificate toward a Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) sponsored trip to Israel.
- a one-year membership to Beth Am Federation of Temple Youth (BAFTY), our senior youth group.
- Either a Kiddush Cup or Shabbat Candlesticks from Sisterhood and Brotherhood.

Tzedakah Donation to Beth Am

Contributions to Beth Am are a wonderful way to say, “thank you” for your child’s preparation, and help Beth Am continue to serve the community. If you are so inclined to commemorate this occasion with a permanent marker, opportunities include:

- A Diamond on our beautiful Simcha Wall
- Dedication of sanctuary seats

Alternatively, a contribution to any synagogue fund is always appreciated.

Financial Arrangements

Beth Am's policy states that **all financial obligations must be paid in full six weeks prior to your date.** This includes:

- Synagogue Commitment
- Sustaining Fund
- Tuition
- Bar/Bat Mitzvah fees
- Security fees
- Rentals
- Any other outstanding obligations

* Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee includes lessons and all teaching materials. You will be billed 1/3 when the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date is given, 1/3 will be billed July 1 of that year and the final 1/3 will be billed the following July 1.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Receptions, Oneg and Kiddush Luncheons

We encourage the use of our facilities for your celebrations. The Executive Director can schedule your celebration and assist you with planning.

Hours for Reception

- Kiddush and Extended Kiddush begin immediately following the Shabbat morning service. Food for the Kiddush and Extended Kiddush are provided at the expense of the family.
- Luncheon parties begin after the Shabbat Service and must end no later than 4:30 p.m.
- Dinner parties may begin as early as 6:00 p.m. and must conclude within 5 hours.
- Music is permitted at all affairs, both day and evening. If you are planning any entertainment other than a band or D.J., you must obtain prior approval from our Executive Director. All vendors must supply a Certificate of Insurance naming Old York Road Temple-Beth Am as "Additional Insured."

Flowers and/or Bimah Baskets

You may choose to decorate the bimah with either fresh flowers or bimah baskets. If you choose flowers, our office will order flowers on your behalf, with your tax-deductible donation to the Floral Fund to cover the cost. If you choose bimah baskets, your donation will benefit the Mitzvah Food Pantry. Please contact Because We Care at 215-635-4774 to order two baskets to be placed in front of each clergy podium.

Oneg Shabbat

Following Erev Shabbat Services beginning either at 7:00 p.m. or 7:30 p.m., the Congregation is invited to an Oneg Shabbat. Your generosity in sponsoring the Oneg Shabbat would be appreciated, and an acknowledgement will appear in the weekly service program. Your contribution to the Oneg Fund is tax deductible. If the Erev Shabbat service prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m., a Kiddush and Motzi will follow the service, and your contribution to help offset the cost for that would be appreciated.

Rehearsal and Photography

We strongly encourage that your formal portraits be taken BEFORE the final rehearsal.

- The rehearsal will be the Wednesday before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah at 4:00 p.m.
- Alternatively, a photographer may take pictures before the service on Saturday morning as early as 8:15 a.m. and must be completed by 9:00 a.m.
- On Saturday morning, photographers may not use the upper lobby for pictures. The lower lobby or auditorium can be used for this purpose. When the weather cooperates, please consider taking photos outside in the Saltzman Biblical Garden!
- Still photography will NOT be permitted during the service.

DVD

- If you are interested in having a DVD of the service, contact our Executive Director at least six weeks prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- Our videographer will record your service from the balcony. The equipment is completely silent and requires no additional lighting.
- There will be an additional fee for this service which must be paid along with the other financial obligations in advance.

Catering

Please consider celebrating your family's Simcha in your Synagogue Home!

Room rental fees cover the additional expenses incurred for a private party that includes labor for set-up, clean-up, utilities and supplies. The Temple charges the caterer a "kitchen use fee" based on the number of guests attending to cover kitchen upkeep and maintenance and is in lieu of charging each caterer an annual flat fee.

Beth Am's kitchen is "kosher style." We do not allow meat and dairy to be served during the same meal and do not permit shellfish or pork products. You may hire a caterer of your choice for your Kiddush lunch or extended party, provided the caterer has agreed to our kitchen use policies and the menu has been approved. Your caterer **MUST** contact the Executive Director before your contract is finalized. The caterer **MUST** adhere to our Rules and Regulations for Kitchen Use and Room Rental.

We have long-standing connections with two Kosher caterers. They are:

Barclay Caterers – 215-612-2837 Food Designs – 215-843-2292

If you would like to reserve the Strick Auditorium for a luncheon or dinner party, please contact the Executive Director.

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