



Guide to B'nai Mitzvah

TEMPLE BETH HATFILOH
— A CENTER FOR JEWISH LIFE —



Welcome to the B'nai Mitzvah process!

We are excited to be on this process of learning and growth with you, and celebrate this milestone in your life, the life of your family, and the life of the Jewish people! While one “becomes” B'nai Mitzvah at the age of 13 and is thus considered “of age” in the Jewish community, our tradition has seen fit to mark this occasion with a ceremony that honors our youth as they enter the teenage years by inviting them to demonstrate their learning and skills in front of family and friends. And it's an opportunity to celebrate; its customary to have a party or reception as well! This guide outlines the background and process for celebrating b'nai mitzvah at TBH.

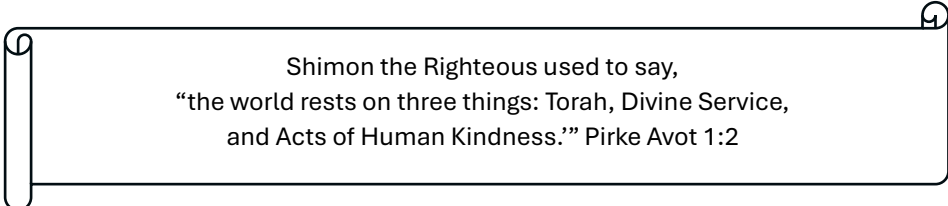
A Note on Terms

Hebrew is a gendered language. Traditionally, the ceremony is called a *bar mitzvah* (“son of the commandment”) for a male, and a *bat mitzvah* (“daughter of the commandment”) for a female. The term *b'nai mitzvah* is the plural of *bar mitzvah*, and is used in Hebrew to refer to any group of people regardless of gender (though the term is still gendered). Another option that has emerged is the shorthand *b'mitzvah* or *brit mitzvah* (“covenant of commandment”). We can refer to the ceremony in whatever way is most meaningful to you and your family.

Our Community's B'nai Mitzvah Values

The Temple Beth Hatfiloh community has identified 13 values, one for each year of life leading up to b'nai mitzvah, that reflect the qualities we want to see in our children as they progress through the b'nai mitzvah process. As they pass through this rite of passage into the next stage of life, what is it we want them to embody? The total process incorporates these values (not in any order):

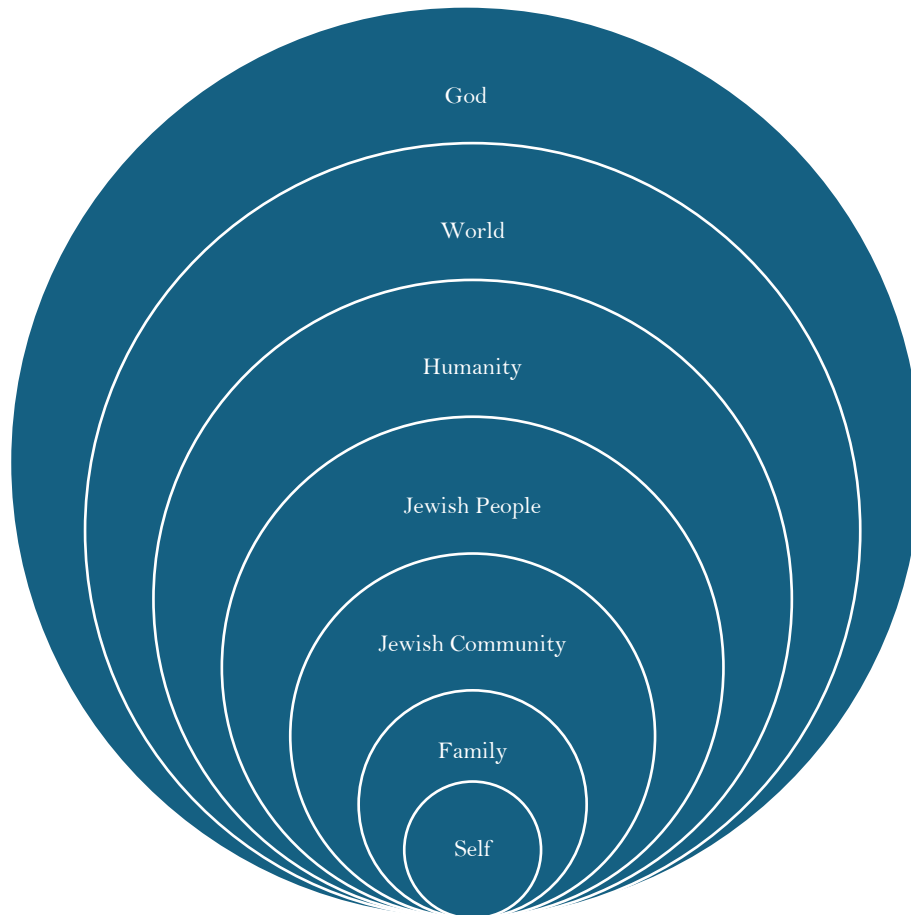
1. Service to Greater Community/Helping Others/Social Justice
2. Autonomy/Critical Thinking/Questioning/Curiosity
3. Belonging to Community/Support/Social Connections/Safety
4. Jewishness
5. Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing/Happiness
6. Empathy/Compassion
7. Being Together/Connection to Family
8. Education/Love of Learning
9. Perseverance/Responsibility/Grit/Work
10. Respecting Difference and Diversity/Cultural Appreciation/Inclusivity
11. Respect for Self and Others
12. Resilience/Adaption/Coping
13. Awareness/Mindfulness/Thoughtfulness



Shimon the Righteous used to say,
“the world rests on three things: Torah, Divine Service,
and Acts of Human Kindness.” Pirke Avot 1:2

“The Jewish Social Ecological Model”

In addition to the text quoted above, the basis for the b’nai mitzvah process and ceremony is a “Jewish Social Ecological Model”—a network of seven concentric circles of identity and relationship in which we Jews define our lives. Our expectations will reflect each one of these circles:



Each of these 7 circles has a goal or goals attached to it to make up the b’nai mitzvah experience. All together, the goals will have a component of **learning, teaching and doing**. Additionally, taken as a whole, all the goals will engage your **physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual** selves and reflect the 13 values listed above.

Some of these aspects are done “behind the scenes” during preparation, and some are put on display at the ceremony. The ceremony itself will be held in sacred time in sacred community: at a **Shabbat morning service at TBH**.

So what will we work on?

Circle	Goal
Self מידות (Character and Strengths)	<p>The year of your b'nai mitzvah, you will take the Moving Traditions class with Rabbi. This class meets for 30 minutes on Saturday morning following our twice-monthly service. The class covers spirituality, ethics and what it means to be a “Jewish adult.”</p> <p>You have the option to add to the ceremony, so you can ask: what are my main interests/skills/talents that I want to bring to the process? (i.e., music, art, etc.)</p>
Family משפחה	<p>You are invited to interview family/friends/community members about their B'nai Mitzvah and other family rituals.</p> <p>Your parents will give a speech at the ceremony</p> <p>Family and friends can be included in the service in various ways (“honors”)</p>
TBH קהילה (Community)	<p>You will prepare a biography to publish in our email newsletter introducing yourself to the congregation.</p> <p>Your family is invited to host/sponsor a kiddush luncheon following the service for all those in attendance.</p> <p>Also, the ceremony includes a presentation and gifts from the congregation.</p> <p>In the fall you are invited to attend the TBH Simchat Torah celebration to be recognized and honored as a group in the community.</p>
Jewish People תורה ומסורה (Text and Tradition)	<p>You will learn the system of Torah chanting, and then learn to chant from the Torah a minimum of 9-10 verses.</p> <p>You will study the Torah portion with the rabbi and prepare and deliver a d'var Torah (speech) of 5-7 minutes.</p>

<p>Humanity תיקון עולם (Repair of the World)</p>	<p>You will develop a mitzvah project that addresses a need in our community such as volunteering, a product drive, etc, and create a poster board to highlight their project.</p>
<p>World טבע (Nature/Environment)</p>	<p>(This circle is not specific, and can take a variety of forms. Perhaps the mitzvah project has an environmental theme. Or the food served is locally sourced. Or we incorporate something in the service. Or the d'var Torah has an environmental theme. Or something else.)</p>
<p>God עבודה (Spiritual Service)</p>	<p>You will attend Shabbat morning services twice a month as a means of learning the service and the meanings behind the prayers.</p> <p>At your ceremony, you will lead some of the prayer service.</p> <p>With Rabbi, you will complete the personal prayer writing exercise that you will present at your service.</p>

We note too that each student is an individual with their own strengths and interests, and we can make accommodations and modifications to create a meaningful experience.

Shaharit shel Shabbat (Saturday morning service) B'nai Mitzvah Outline

The *b'nai mitzvah* ceremony is incorporated into a Shabbat morning service. This is an outline of the service including roles for the B'nai Mitzvah and family/friends. Prayers in **bold** are the ones the B'nai Mitzvah will be invited to lead¹. Items in **red** are “honors” that can be assigned by the family. (more explanation below.)

Page	Prayer
141	<i>Mah Tovu</i>
	Presentation of the Tallit (Tallit blessing)
153-161	<i>Birhot Hashahar</i>
162	Prayer for Body
165	<i>Elohai Neshama</i>
177	<i>Baruch She'amar</i>
231	Psalm 150
235	<i>Nishmat</i>
237	<i>Ilu Finu</i>
241-3	<i>Shochan Ad</i>
245	<i>Hatzi Kaddish</i>
247	Barechu
247	<i>Yotzer Or</i>
268	“Every day Creation is renewed...”
269	<i>Or Hadash</i>
273	<i>Ahavah Rabbah</i>
277-285	Shema
291	Mi Chamocha
306-323	Opening kavannah and silent Amidah
320	“Grant peace...”
381	Oseh Shalom
383	Torah Service— <i>Ein Kamocha</i>
	Ark Opened
385	<i>Vayehi Binsoa</i>
	Torah Removed and Passed
	Ark Closed
393	<i>Shema, Echad, Gadlu, Lecha Adonai</i>
	Torah Procession
	Aliyah 1²
	Aliyah 2--Parents
	<i>Mi Sheberach</i>
	Aliyah 3
407	Raising and Dressing of the Torah

¹ We can add prayers beyond the assigned ones if interested.

² We start from a baseline of 3 aliyot, and can add up to 4 more depending on the interest and progress of the student

	D'var Torah
	Parent's Speech
	Rabbi Blessing
	<i>Shehecheyanu</i> (Candy tossing)
422	Prayer for Peace in English
	Personal Prayer
433	<i>Yehallelu</i>
	Torah Processional
	Ark Opened
441	<i>Etz Chayyim</i>
	Ark Closed
445-449	Aleynu
451	Mourner's Kaddish
459	Adon Olam
464	Kiddush (Veshamru) and HaMotzi

How We Prepare

Hebrew: If the desire is to read from the Torah at the b'nai mitzvah ceremony, the student MUST be proficient in "decoding" Hebrew prior to beginning b'nai mitzvah training. Please check with Catherine about assessing Hebrew ability as well as resources for supplemental Hebrew learning if needed. In general, students should be proficient by the end of the 5th grade year.

Shabbat Morning Services: The primary "learning" for b'nai mitzvah happens in the context of our twice-monthly Shabbat morning service in a number of ways:

- The best way to learn prayers is in context and through exposure.
- Student becomes familiar with the structure of the service that they will lead and participate in, including the reading of the Torah.
- Service includes Torah study, which prepares the student for developing their own d'var Torah.
- It is an opportunity to develop personal spiritual practice.
- The focused Moving Traditions class occurs after the service.

Also, this is a wonderful time to connect with other students and families, as well as other community members.

Tutoring: Individual preparation will be with Rabbi Seth and will occur in two stages. First, students whose b'nai mitzvah fall around the same time will be grouped in a cohort to learn the system of chanting the Torah (*trop*). Students will then meet one-on-one with Rabbi for individual tutoring to apply the system of chanting to their own Torah portion, to review prayers, prepare the d'var Torah, and work on the other parts of the ceremony. Typically Rabbi Seth will meet with a student for 30-minutes once a week, either in person or on zoom. It is expected that the student will be regularly practicing or doing assignments at home in between tutoring sessions.

B'nai Mitzvah Service Honors and Customs

Service Honors

In addition to celebrating the student, the b'nai mitzvah service is also an opportunity to honor family members and friends who play an important role in the student's life. This takes the form of allowing the family the opportunity to assign various Shabbat morning service roles, listed below:

Opening and Closing the Ark: There are two instances of ark opening/closing—before the Torah reading and after the Torah reading. The people who open the ark remain to close it each time. The two instances of ark opening/closing are treated as two separate honors. This honor can be performed by any children or adults, Jewish or not.

Aliyah: During the Torah reading service, the Torah will be read in sections. For each section, a person, or group, is honored with an *aliyah*, being “called up” to the Torah to recite a blessing in Hebrew before and after the reading. The last Aliyah is for the B'nai Mitzvah, the second to last is for the parents. Those honored with an *aliyah* must be above the age of 13, and non-Jews may participate alongside Jews.



Torah translation (Optional):

Traditionally, the Torah was read both in Hebrew and the vernacular in the synagogue. Though the printed *humash* (book of Torah readings) obviated the need for a spoken translation, a spoken translation adds meaning and makes the service more accessible. This is also a meaningful way to honor other family members and friends. Reading the translation can be performed by one person or several people. The translator will be called up when the *aliyah* is called up.

Raising the Torah and Dressing the Torah (*Hagbah, Glilah*): After the Torah is read, the scroll is lifted up for all to see, then dressed in its cover and crowns. These are two different honors assigned to two different people. The person assigned to raise the Torah should be physically able to lift the scroll by holding it upright by the handles. This honor should be performed by Jews.

English readings, Songs, Etc. (Optional): There are numerous opportunities to embellish the service with English readings. Our prayerbook, *Kol Haneshamah*, has many meaningful readings that can be added to the service. The Rabbi will place these readings in the service where appropriate. Please consult with the Rabbi if you wish to use readings other than those in the siddur.

Special *minhagim* (customs):

In addition to these standard service honors above, we at TBH also observe several customs that make the b'nai mitzvah ceremony more meaningful.

Biography: We ask that you provide a biography and picture to run in our weekly newsletter to introduce the B'nai Mitzvah to the entire community and announce the service. Kayla will be in touch at the appropriate time.



Presentation of the Tallit: In Jewish tradition, the *tallit* (prayer shawl) is worn by Jewish adults during the morning service. The B'nai Mitzvah will wear a *tallit* for the first time at the b'nai mitzvah service, and the family may wish to ceremonially present the *tallit* and say a few words.

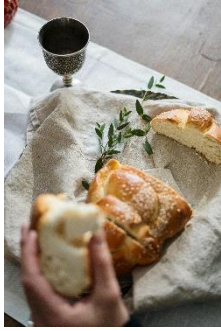
Passing the Torah: As the sacred text of the Jewish people, the Torah is handed down from generation to generation. We “enact” this handing down by taking the Torah out of the Ark and passing it to a member of the oldest generation present, then down the family tree to parent(s), then to the B'nai Mitzvah. (Each generation may be represented by more than one person.)

Parent Speech: The parent(s) of the B'nai Mitzvah are invited to speak from the *bimah* after they have delivered their *d'var Torah*. This is an opportunity for the parent(s) to share some words with your child. The form of the parent speech and what is said varies from family to family. Some parents may want to share their personal thoughts and feelings at that moment. Some may want to offer some words of advice at this important occasion. Whatever form the speech takes, what is important is that it is an authentic reflection of parent and child. Please feel free to ask the Rabbi for guidance or ideas.

Candy Tossing: In recognition of the sweetness of the event and the joy felt at a b'nai mitzvah ceremony, it is customary at TBH to gently shower the B'nai Mitzvah with candy after the community recitation of the *Shehecheyanu* blessing. TBH will provide the candy. If you would like to include this *minhag*, please designate people ahead of time to hand out the candy (this is a good opportunity to include young children). The Rabbi will indicate during the service when to distribute the candy, usually between the parent's presentation and Rabbi's charge.



Memorials: The memory of close family members and friends no longer with us can become more acute during times of celebration such as this. It is the custom at TBH to announce the names of those the B'nai Mitzvah and their family are remembering when we announce the weekly *yahrzeit* list. Please indicate to the Rabbi whom you wish to be included.



Kiddush and Reception: Because it is a celebratory event, it is customary to have a party or reception following the service. This can be different things: a luncheon following the service in the TBH social hall, a party at another location later in the evening, or a combination of the two. Because after Shabbat morning services it is customary to have some food and drink (kiddush), all families will be asked to provide a light Kiddush for all to enjoy after the service. The blessings over the wine and challah will take place in the sanctuary at the end of services. (If the primary reception is at TBH immediately following the service, then it is expected that all who are in attendance may attend.)

Other Optional Components

Bimah Flowers: Flowers on the *bimah* add a distinctive touch to the event. Families may wish to provide flowers for the bar/bat mitzvah service.

Photography: Photography is not permitted during Shabbat services. A family may take photographs in the sanctuary before or after services—if before, please be finished a half-hour before the service begins (9:30 a.m.).

Kippot: As a unique keepsake, one may order personalized *kippot* with a stamp of the B'nai Mitzvah's name and date on the inside.



Programs: The family may wish to provide a program to welcome guests to the b'nai mitzvah ceremony. Programs typically include a description of the service and the synagogue. It may also include a brief summary of the Torah portion, the list of honors, an announcement of the B'nai Mitzvah's *mitzvah* project, personal words, etc. This is optional and up to the families to create, and templates are available. Please give the Rabbi a copy for review prior to making copies.

And finally...



Hybrid (and Recording): We are committed to hybrid services at TBH. For the b'nai mitzvah ceremony you will be provided with a unique zoom link that you can send out to your family and friends who may not be able to join in person. Please let us know if you wish to record the event through zoom.

Greeters: For safety reasons, the main doors at TBH are kept locked at all times, and during services and events a greeter admits and welcomes attendees. While a number of congregational volunteers serve as greeters, we could use some help and support! If you have a family member or friend who is willing and able to serve as a greeter, please let us know and we can provide the proper orientation. This is a good time to hand out programs if you are creating them. [Please note that greeters are asked to arrive no later than 15 minutes before the start of the service and stand by the doors for no less than 15 minutes after it starts.]