

**Congregation B'nai Jacob
Phoenixville, PA**

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Handbook

(Revised 02/11)

Dear Parent,

Bar or Bat Mitzvah is an exciting time and a milestone in a child's life. When a child turns 13, they become a *bar* or *bat mitzvah*, just as once a child turns 16, they may legally learn to drive or once they turn 18 they become old enough to vote. Becoming a *bar* or *bat mitzvah* happens whether or not one celebrates the moment, whether or not one has gained the specific skills that demonstrate proficiency in certain areas of Jewish life. On the other hand, our tradition has developed a lovely way of marking the moment when a child reaches the age at which they are now responsible for their own moral and ethical decisions, the age of majority in the Jewish tradition. Marking this rite of passage takes place during a Jewish worship service that includes a Torah reading.

We at Congregation B'nai Jacob view Bar or Bat Mitzvah as an opportunity for students to demonstrate the capabilities that have been developed through participation in religious school and participation in our religious services. Your child is encouraged to strive for skills not only in the reading of Torah and Haftarah but also in leading as much of the service as his/her abilities permit and in teaching us something that they have learned in the process.

We teach that the Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony is just the first of many opportunities to take a leadership role in the synagogue. From this point forward, the Bar or Bat Mitzvah "counts" - as a member of our minyan - the quorum of 10 Jewish adults - our prayer community - for daily, Shabbat or holiday services. The Bar or Bat Mitzvah is also invited to lead us in worship and to say prayers and blessings on behalf of those who are not able to say them for themselves.

This Bar or Bat Mitzvah handbook explains the process leading up to the service that marks becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Please read it carefully. Remember to fill out the forms attached to the back of the book and return them to the office as soon as possible. This paperwork will help us prepare or obtain the necessary resources based upon your needs.

We are available to make this experience as joyful as possible. Please feel free to call upon us to assist you and to share in the excitement and anticipation of this *simcha* (joyous time) in your family's life.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Rachel Brown

Cheryl Trobman, B'nai Mitzvah Advisor

The Bar or Bat Mitzvah Services

A. Shabbat (Saturday) morning:

A service that celebrates a child becoming a bar or bat mitzvah is not very different from a regular Shabbat morning service. That similarity is one of the reasons that we ask families to attend services regularly before the actual day of the celebration. A celebratory service *is* different from a regular Shabbat service in that a celebratory service may include additional explanations as the service progresses, additional speakers (for example, the Bar or Bat Mitzvah child) and additional blessings bestowed by the Rabbi and the congregation on the child and his or her family.

A traditional Shabbat morning service is really a collage of three different services: the morning service (*Shacharit*) [which itself is three different parts: morning blessings (*Birkhot Hashahar*), verses of song (*P'sukai D'zimra*), and the morning service (*Shacharit*)]; the Torah service; and an "additional" service (*Musaf*). At B'nai Jacob, by the time most students finish the 6th grade in our religious school program, they have learned the prayers of the Torah service well enough to lead them. Many students have also learned the prayers of *Musaf* well enough to lead them. Some students may wish to learn the prayers of *Shacharit* and to lead that part of the service as well.

At B'nai Jacob we encourage students to learn trope (the cantillation system) for reading from the Torah and the Haftarah and we ask students to read from the Torah and the Haftarah during the service. We also ask students to study the Torah and/or Haftarah portion closely, so that they might prepare a commentary to deliver to the congregation in the form of a *d'var Torah* - a teaching or a speech that relates to the week's Torah portion.

As Jewish tradition recognizes that a child's celebration of becoming a bar or bat mitzvah is a result of that child being raised and taught by their parents, other family members, friends and the Jewish community, we include family members, friends and synagogue members in the service as a way to honor them. Parents of the bar or bat mitzvah are given the specific role of having an *aliyah* to the Torah (being called up to the Torah in order to say the blessings before and after a small portion of the reading). That *aliyah* may be followed by a traditional blessing that acknowledges that the parents have reared their child to the point where they are no longer responsible for the [ethical and moral] decisions of that child. Parents are also given the option of speaking formally to the congregation about their child during the service, though because the service is already fairly long, many families choose to save these speeches for the celebratory meal, later in the day.

We also welcome the participation of other family members and family friends. If they are Jewish, they may be assigned an *aliyah* to the Torah or another honor associated with the Torah service. If they are not Jewish, or there are more people to honor than there are *aliyot*, they are welcome to lead the congregation in an English prayer or reading. The Rabbi has a collection of such prayers that you may choose for this purpose. In families where one parent is not Jewish, that parent may accompany the Jewish parent on the *bima* during the *aliyah* while the Jewish parent says the blessings. The Torah blessings are "Jewish specific" and it would be inappropriate for someone who is not Jewish to actually say them.

In addition to the family assigning honors to family members and friends, we ask that the family leave two or more *aliyot* unassigned, to be given to members of the congregation on the day of the service. Leaving *aliyot* open serves two purposes: 1. Our Jewish tradition teaches us that when someone has undergone a traumatic or celebratory experience or event, they are to be called up the Torah for an *aliyah* and 2. the bar or bat mitzvah child and your family are part of a larger Jewish community, one that provides education for our youth and adults, as well as a place to celebrate our Jewish traditions and to gather. Leaving *aliyot* open for members of the congregation

allows for the unpredictable moments of life, should anyone in our congregation be experiencing something traumatic or joyous. It also lets our community know that you appreciate the congregation as a whole, as opposed to specific individuals.

B. Friday night:

The bar or bat mitzvah is invited to lead as much of the Friday night service as he or she wishes and is capable of leading. Family members and friends may also be given honors during this service. As the Friday night service is much shorter and somewhat less formal than the Shabbat morning service, Friday night is a lovely time to honor additional people.

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTAL B'NAI MITZVAH SPEECHES

1. The purpose of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah is to mark the child becoming an adult member of the Jewish community with the attendant obligations and responsibilities. Parental remarks should reflect this purpose and acknowledge that it is a sacred occasion.
2. It is appropriate to talk about the child's spiritual/ethical development. It is not appropriate to praise at length the child's academic, athletic, artistic or other accomplishments. Please bear in mind that this is not just a celebration of a child's coming of age but of a child assuming an important role in the Jewish community.
3. The speech should ideally contain references to Jewish values and texts and to the importance of community. It is fitting to refer to your aspirations for your child within the context of the above guidelines.
4. The parental speech is optional and not required.

PREPARATION FOR THE BAR OR BAT MITZVAH SERVICE

1. The bar or bat mitzvah student and their parent meet with the Rabbi 14 months to 1 year prior to the bar or bat mitzvah date. Lessons will begin approximately 8 months to 1 year prior to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah date with a tutor assigned or approved by the Rabbi, following that meeting.
2. All candidates for Bar or Bat Mitzvah must meet our academic standards. As a member of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, B'nai Jacob requires that the child shall have completed or be completing the *Hay* class (seventh grade) or have, through an approved program, achieved its equivalent. This policy will be strictly enforced.
3. In Conservative Judaism, it is required that all Bar or Bat Mitzvah candidates be enrolled in an approved form of religious instruction at the time of Bar or Bat Mitzvah. This instruction is in addition to Bar or Bat Mitzvah lessons. Students are expected to have learned many of the prayers during the years prior to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah day, through attendance at religious school and religious services. The tutor will emphasize trope (cantillation), *Haftarah* (the readings from the books of the Prophets) and *Maftir* (the last part of the day's Torah reading).
4. Our fee for Bar or Bat Mitzvah is \$600.00. This fee pays for 12 hours of private, individual lessons with a tutor, private meetings with the Rabbi, photocopies and cd's of blessings, Torah readings, Haftarah readings, prayers and other study materials. We ask that this fee be paid in advance so that B'nai Jacob can cover the costs for these resources. This fee is charged whether or not the student makes use of CBJ tutors.
5. Tutorial lessons are given on an individual basis. Students meet the tutor at a mutually convenient time for 24 weekly half hour private sessions outside of religious school times. Your child should plan to spend time **daily** at home preparing for their lesson. CD's are available to serve as aids. We require that attendance at lessons be regular and punctual. The tutor may require an additional fee to make up for missed lessons. With your supervision and encouragement, your child is expected to be prepared for each lesson. After 12 lessons, the Rabbi, tutor, parent and student will meet to assess progress and set goals as to how much of the service the student will lead. If the student wishes to learn more than the 12 hours of tutoring will allow, arrangements may be made with the tutor for additional lessons. Parents will be responsible for the cost of these extra lessons.
6. Preparations for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah includes familiarity with Shabbat services for the child and his or her parents. To become comfortable with the flow of the Shabbat service, we have found that attendance of a minimum of 2 Shabbat morning services per month is necessary, though you are certainly welcome to come every week! We also ask that you come to at least one Friday night service a month, again, in order to be completely familiar with the flow of the service. During the weeks or months leading up the celebratory service, your child may be asked to lead the Torah service or be given other honors during the service. This "leadership training" serves to familiarize your child with what it is like to be on the bima during a service. Therefore, we ask that when your child comes to services, that he or she dress in "synagogue appropriate" attire: pants or skirts - no jeans - and a nice top - no sleeveless shirts or dresses, along with closed shoes or nice sandals - no sneakers or flip-flops.
7. We hope that the Bar or Bat Mitzvah will not be the culmination of five years of religious school training but rather will be the demarcation of the continuation of a lifelong involvement in Jewish learning and Jewish community. Luckily, our Community is blessed to be part of the Chester county branch of Gratz College Hebrew High School. Students may enroll in the Gratz College Hebrew High School program beginning in 8th grade. **Please contact the Rabbi for additional**

information. This program combines Jewish studies in a variety of subjects with social activities. Some of the courses also allow your child to gain college credits.

8. The Education Committee and the Rabbi recommend that each child participate in a service project and prepare a commentary on the Torah or Haftarah portion that is read at the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. These activities are done under the supervision of the Rabbi. The service or mitzvah project may be anything that is mutually agreed upon by the Rabbi and the student. In general, a service project should require about 40 hours over the course of the year.

9. Both the Rabbi and the tutor are involved with Bar or Bat Mitzvah preparation. The tutor provides lessons in the Hebrew portion of the service while the Rabbi reviews this preparation and provides help with the commentary and service project. The Rabbi will also meet with you to review your responsibilities and the honors that are accorded to the family during the religious services.

10. Submit an article to Hakol six to eight weeks before the Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

The Rabbi, the Religious Life Committee, the Education Committee, Sisterhood, the tutor and the B'nai Mitzvah advisor want to make sure that all of your needs and expectations are fulfilled. Please do not hesitate to call for assistance.

HONORS

Honors of being called to the Torah are accorded to Jews who have passed the age of Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The exceptions to this is the honor of opening and closing the Ark, and the honor of dressing the Torah, which may be given to a Jewish child. As a member of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, we recognize persons as Jewish based on matrilineal descent or conversion.

Honors to the Torah are as follows:

1. Open and close the ark at the beginning of the Torah service - this honor may be given to an adult or a child
2. Kohan* First Aliyah
3. Levi* Second Aliyah
4. Third through Sixth Aliyot
5. Seventh Aliyah – This aliyah is given to the parents of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah
6. Maftir Aliyah – This aliyah is given to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah
7. Hagbah - Lifting the Torah - This honor is given only to people who are physically able to lift the Torah.
8. G'lillah - Wrapping and dressing the Torah - This honor may be given to an adult or a child
9. Open and close the Ark at the end of the Torah service - this honor may be given to an adult or a child.

There are a number of English readings that may be given to people who are Jewish and to people who are not Jewish. Please talk to the Rabbi about specific readings for specific people.

* A Kohane or daughter of Kohane traditionally receives the first Torah honor. If you have a Kohane on your list, please give that person the first aliyah. If you have a Kohane and a Levi, give the Kohane the first aliyah and the Levi the second aliyah. If you have neither a Kohane nor a Levi, you may give the first two aliyot to other people.

Families are encouraged to leave two aliyot open to be assigned to members of the congregation by the *gabbai* on the day of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. It is preferable to call only one person to the Torah for each aliyah. Under special circumstances we will permit couples who have made life commitments to each other, such as a husband and wife, to be called together for one aliyah.

The honor of an aliyah requires the honorees to recite blessings in Hebrew. Those being given this honor should be made aware of this requirement before they accept. For those needing additional assistance, please provide them with a copy of a transliteration. A copy of the blessings in Hebrew and transliteration will be available during the service on the *bima* for those who have an aliyah.

All men and women coming to the *bima* to lead a part of the service or to have an honor must wear a head covering. Jewish men must wear a *tallit* or prayer shawl. Women are invited to wear a tallit, though we don't require this. Women's shoulders must be covered.

The Rabbi will meet with you a few weeks before the Bar or Bat Mitzvah to review your list of honors. A complete written list should be given to the Rabbi prior to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The list must include the English names of all the honorees. It must also include the Hebrew names of all people receiving an aliyah. (The Hebrew name includes the name of the person as well as his/her parents.)

The list of all those that you wish to have called to the bima must be reviewed by the Rabbi.

SYNAGOGUE POLICIES

1. Males are required to wear a *kippah* (yarmulke) while in the synagogue (this includes the sanctuary, social hall, lobby and all other rooms in the building.) This policy applies to non-Jews as well as Jews. A *tallit* is traditionally worn by Jewish males over the age of 13 and may be worn by Jewish women as well. Many families choose to purchase special *kippot* for their guests. These may be ordered through the synagogue gift shop.
2. Please ask your guests to dress appropriately for the synagogue. It is appropriate to wear clothing that is modest and in keeping with the holiness of being present at a worship service. This means that congregants and guests should refrain from wearing blue jeans, revealing or sleeveless apparel, inappropriately short skirts or dresses, or other attire that may be appropriate for parties but not for worship services. Please remind all guests, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, of our need for modesty in the synagogue.
3. Smoking is prohibited anywhere in the synagogue or on the grounds at any time, including Shabbat and holidays. Please remind your guests to turn off cell phones and pagers.
4. Photographing, videotaping and tape recording are not permitted in the synagogue on Shabbat or holidays. Since photographs and videos can help make the day more memorable, please arrange to have these taken either before or after the Sabbath.
5. It is our tradition to extend an invitation to the entire Bar or Bat Mitzvah class and their teacher to attend the service. We also strongly urge you to send invitations to your party to all religious school classmates.
6. Many families choose to provide a booklet with information about the order of the service and the meaning of the prayers. Samples of booklets from past Bar and Bat Mitzvot can be provided. It is the responsibility of the parents to provide these booklets at their own cost.

FINANCIAL MATTERS AND OBLIGATIONS

1. Synagogue membership is required of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah candidate's family. All synagogue financial obligations (including the bar or bat mitzvah \$600 fee) must be current before bar or bat mitzvah tutoring can begin. If meeting financial obligations poses a hardship, the Synagogue's Retention Committee must be notified so that tutoring can begin. In that case, the Synagogue can and will work with the family. Not meeting financial arrangements or making arrangements prior to when tutoring is expected to begin could lead to the postponement of the ceremony.
2. It is customary for families to mark the celebration of a milestone occasion by following in the tradition of making a donation to the synagogue. The Rabbi will be happy to advise you about appropriate choices. The synagogue has many funds worthy of your support. Your generosity will be greatly appreciated.
3. In addition to your own generosity, we encourage you to enhance the significance of this step into religious maturity for your child by encouraging him or her to make a contribution to the synagogue or religious school as well as to any other worthy charity your child may select. *Tzedakah* is a noble Jewish precept to be learned at a young age and practiced throughout one's life. Therefore it is encouraged that each student donate a portion of their Bar or Bat Mitzvah gifts in performance of this mitzvah.

ONEG AND KIDDUSH

1. It is customary for the family of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah child to sponsor the *Oneg Shabbat* on Friday evening and the *Kiddush* on Saturday morning. The *Oneg* and *Kiddush* should be planned to accommodate the guests of the family as well as the usual number of congregants who may choose to attend services at that time.

2. At a minimum, the Friday night *Oneg* consists of cake, cookies, fruit and beverages. The Saturday morning *Kiddush* traditionally includes wine, cookies, cake, fruit and beverages. More elaborate food and beverage service may be arranged. Please contact Sisterhood to arrange for the purchase of kosher wine for the *Kiddush*.

3. All arrangements of the *Oneg* and *Kiddush* may be made with a kosher caterer approved by B'nai Jacob or through Sisterhood. You may also choose to cater them yourself under the supervision of a member of the kitchen committee. If you choose to use a kosher caterer or if you self-cater, Sisterhood must be made aware of your plans and your menu. If Sisterhood will be catering the *Oneg* and/or *Kiddush*, at least one month advance notice is required. Most caterers require more than one month's notice, so please do not wait until the last minute to make preparations.

We strongly urge you to reinforce the religious nature of this occasion by using a kosher caterer approved by B'nai Jacob and by observing the rules and traditions of kashrut with all food served in your home or party place. We suggest you acknowledge the religious nature of this rite of passage by having a *seudat mitzvah* (a meal celebrating the fact that your family has just performed a mitzvah of marking your child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah) that is shared with the community after services on Shabbat. A party may be held on Saturday night after Shabbat has ended or on Sunday.

4. Please arrange to have all deliveries to the synagogue completed no later than 2:15 P.M. prior to Shabbat. In keeping with the dignity of the Sabbath, items must be delivered prior to the Sabbath and nothing may be removed from the synagogue until after the conclusion of the Sabbath. Please remember that the synagogue has very limited staff. Make sure that someone is in the building to allow your suppliers access for deliveries and pick-ups.

5. The synagogue will not be responsible for any article of clothing, gifts or other items not in the hands of the host family or its guests.

6. The synagogue has a standard reservation form showing various charges for the use of synagogue facilities as well as for janitorial charges. This form must be on file with the synagogue office prior to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

7. It is the responsibility of the parents of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah child to assure that all children (including teenagers) are under the supervision of an adult. Please assign a friend or family member to assume this responsibility for you. A room for baby-sitting can be provided at no extra charge.

8. Services begin at 7:30 P.M. on Friday evening. Services begin at 9:30 A.M. on Saturday morning. Services usually conclude on Saturday morning between noon and 12:15 P.M. If you are planning a luncheon away from the synagogue, please plan on leaving the synagogue no earlier than 12:45 P.M., so that you and your guests have time for *Kiddush*.

BUILDING USE FORM

Family Name _____ Date of the celebration _____

Contact person _____

Phone number and e-mail address _____

Synagogue policy requires that building use form be completed for all events held in the synagogue. This modified form may be used in lieu of the standard form.

Oneg Shabbat (Friday evening)

Number of guests and members expected: _____

Will this be catered by an outside caterer, Sisterhood or self-catered? _____

If using an outside caterer, please provide name, address and phone number:

Kiddush (Saturday morning)

Number of guests (including members and "regulars) expected: _____

Will this be catered by an outside caterer, Sisterhood or self catered? _____

If using an outside caterer, please provide name, address and phone number:

Luncheon (Saturday) (Note: If this is a private affair the synagogue will charge a rental fee.)

Number of guests expected: _____

Will this be catered by an outside caterer, Sisterhood or self catered? _____

If using an outside caterer, please provide name, address and phone number:

Flowers (If a florist will be making a delivery, please provide name, address and phone number: _____

Names, addresses and phone numbers of any other vendors who may come to the synagogue to make deliveries:

Honorees

Name of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah: _____

Date of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah: _____

List the names of the people who will be participating in the service:

Erev Shabbat

Kabbalat Shabbat: _____

Ma'ariv: _____

Kiddush: _____

Yigdal: _____

Shabbat Morning

Birkot Hashakar: _____

P'sukei d'zimra: _____

Shacharit: _____

Torah Service: _____

Musaf: _____

Torah: _____

Haftarah: _____

Aliyot

<u>Aliyah</u>	<u>English Name</u>	<u>Hebrew name ben/bat parents' Hebrew names</u>
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1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. Parents of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah _____

Maftir (Bar or Bat Mitzvah) _____

Hagbah (lifting the Torah; must be someone with experience in doing this) _____

Gelilah (tying the Torah) _____

Ark Openings

Before Torah Reading: _____

After Torah Reading: _____

Contacts

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Hakol

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(revised 2/11)