



Bet Mitzvah Family Guidebook

as of January 2026; subject to revision

Congregation Bet Haverim
1715 Anderson Rd.
Davis, CA

Dear Bet Mitzvah Families,

Mazal tov and welcome to a very exciting time in the life of your family!

Preparing for your child's Bet Mitzvah is a time of learning, growth, and pride as well as an opportunity to find new meaning in the beauty and wisdom of our Jewish traditions.

In recent years, existing terms for the Jewish coming-of-age ceremony—commonly referred to as a Bar or Bat Mitzvah in singular, B'nei or B'not Mitzvah in plural—seem inadequate due to their gendered nature. Bet Mitzvah is a term inclusive of all gender identities and gender expressions. Individual students still choose to become Bar, Bat, or Bet Mitzvah. This handbook will use 'Bet Mitzvah' as the Hebrew inclusive term for all these choices.

All of us at Congregation Bet Haverim look forward to sharing your upcoming simchah (joyous occasion) and are available to support you. If your child or family need special accommodations, please contact us. We hope this handbook will serve as a guide for you and your family throughout this journey. In it you will find the guidelines and expectations for the Bet Mitzvah program at CBH, as well as helpful suggestions on planning every aspect of the celebration. We also encourage the 7th grade Bet Mitzvah Class families to share information throughout the planning process and support each other as we build community.

We look forward to working in partnership with you to make this significant occasion a cherished memory in the life of your family.

Wishing you many blessings!

B'simcha (with joy),

Rabbi Leah Julian
Director of Education and Youth

Wendy Haworth
Executive Director

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The History of Bar & Bat Mitzvah

Our Torah never mentions the age of thirteen as being the age of maturity, nor does it ever refer to the terms bet mitzvah. The earliest reference that we do have to the significance of the age of thirteen is in a statement by Rabbi Judah ben Tema, during the second century. According to Avot 5:34, Rabbi Judah ben Tema taught:

“At five years of age, a child is ready to study the Bible; at ten years, the Mishnah; at thirteen years, the commandments.”

The first reference to the term bar mitzvah is found in the Talmud, Baba Metzia 96a, and used to define *“one who is subject to Scriptural commands.”*

The ceremony celebrating a child becoming bet mitzvah is a modern innovation. During the fourteenth century in Europe, boys were not allowed to be called up to the Torah, either to recite the brachot (blessings) or to read from the holy writings. In addition, boys were not permitted to wear a tallit (prayer shawl) or tefillin (small black leather boxes containing parchment with Torah verses) until their thirteenth birthday. On the Shabbat immediately following his thirteenth birthday, a boy would be called up to the Torah to recite the maftir (final reading from the Torah portion) as well as the haftarah (reading from the Prophets).

On this special occasion, in many communities, a se’udat mitzvah (a festive meal) was held in celebration. During this meal, the young man would deliver a d’rashah, a sermon designed to demonstrate his knowledge of Judaism, and would use the opportunity to thank his parents and the guests. Many of these traditions continue today, although they are now integrated into the actual Shabbat service.

Reform Judaism, which began in Germany in 1819, pioneered the inclusion of women in an equal role in religious life. The first bat mitzvah, however, did not take place until 1922 in New York City. Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan invited his daughter Judith to recite the blessings over the Torah and to read her Torah portion from a book. Reform Judaism and Congregation Bet Haverim have proudly made significant progress from that day. We recognize complete equality between all genders in Judaism, equal requirements for Jewish education, and equal responsibilities for Jewish observance. For these reasons, bet mitzvot are typically celebrated in the identical manner at the age of thirteen.

According to Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin, a well-known Reform rabbi, writer and teacher:

“Bar and bat mitzvah is about ritual maturity. It is about growing up as a Jew. It is about becoming a full-fledged member of the Jewish community. It is about connecting to Torah and to the covenantal traditions of the Jewish people. The bar and bat mitzvah service is sacred and deserves celebration.”

The History of Bet Mitzvah at Congregation Bet Haverim

Our known history of bet mitzvah celebration in Davis begins in 1961. The first bar mitzvah was Sammy Kirchner, whose father Julie was the first president of the Jewish Fellowship of Davis. This father and son constructed an ark for the occasion to house the Sefer Torah, on loan from a local Sacramento congregation. The service, conducted by Joe Kalb, a graduate student with an encyclopedic knowledge of Judaism, took place in a schoolroom of the Davis Community Church. It was attended by the entire membership of the Jewish Fellowship of Davis, about ten families at the time, reinforced by the complete Bacteriology Department of the University of California Davis, in which Julie Kirchner was a student.

The service was so inspiring that at its conclusion, one of the participants was moved to plead for immediate measures toward the establishment of a permanent place of worship for the Jewish community. This appeal prompted the initiation of the building fund, which led to the construction of our first synagogue building on Oak Avenue. While times have changed for Congregation Bet Haverim, and we are now a community much larger and diverse than the original ten families, we still believe in the importance of the community joining together to celebrate the bar, bat or bet mitzvah of one of our members.



Guiding Principles:

In order to fully understand the requirements and timeline related to becoming bet mitzvah at Congregation Bet Haverim, it is important to understand the following ideas:

Accepting Responsibility

As a young person matures in our Jewish tradition, it is important that they grow in accepting responsibility. Responsibility involves maturity, independence, and assuming the role of a young adult in the community.

Community Participation

Bet mitzvah are celebrated within the community and represent an important Jewish value of living in community. As Jews, we acknowledge and strive to be in relationship with God, with other Jews, with our families, and in meaningful communities. Bet mitzvah marks the entry of a child as an adult member of the Jewish community. At Congregation Bet Haverim, bet mitzvah services are open to the community and everyone is encouraged to attend.

Lifelong Learning & Teen Programs

The meaning of bet mitzvah is enduring only with an understanding of ongoing Jewish learning. The process of becoming a Jewish adult should be perceived as a celebration and continued commitment of discovering, questioning, and affirming Jewish knowledge. Following bet mitzvah, it is expected that our students will continue into our teen offerings including Keshet (eighth and ninth grade class), Confirmation (tenth grade class), DRTY (Davis Reform Temple Youth) youth group, and our Madrichim (teaching assistant) programs.

Torah

Everything that we do as Jews, everything that we believe, and everything that we value is based in Torah. Torah represents the testimony of the Jewish people's encounter with God. While there are many different interpretations and understandings of the teachings from the Torah, the sacredness of mitzvot, prayer, tzedakah, tikkun olam, history, and God continue to provide a foundation for our children, our families, and our community.



Timeline:

Third Grade:	<p>Continue attending Religious School (Sunday mornings) Begin attending Hebrew School (Wednesday afternoons) Begin or continue attending community bet mitzvah celebrations Begin or continue attending community Shabbat celebrations</p> <p><i>If a student has not been able to attend Hebrew or Religious School during third through sixth grade, private tutoring for bet mitzvah will be required and may extend beyond the child's thirteenth birthday</i></p>
Two Years Prior: <i>usually in fifth grade</i>	<p>Attend Bet Mitzvah Parent Orientation Meeting Work with the Education Director and Executive Director to identify the calendar date for bet mitzvah.</p> <p><i>In order to confirm your date, a deposit payment of half of the Bet mitzvah fee is required. This payment is made in the Office to the Bookkeeper and guarantees the availability of the Rabbi, the CBH Sanctuary and Social Hall, and places the date on the CBH calendar. Payment plans are available.</i></p>
One to Two Years Prior:	<p>Inform family and friends of date Select venue for reception/celebration if not at CBH Research/reserve caterer, DJ, photographer, additional vendors as desired</p> <p><i>If a private tutor is needed for extra support, speak with Rabbi Leah.</i></p>
One Year Prior:	<p>Schedule meeting with Rabbi to review expectations and timeline Select tutor, in consultation with Rabbi and Director of Education Contact tutor to discuss tutoring schedule Begin attending Shabbat and Bet Mitzvah services on regular basis Begin researching and planning mitzvah project Compile guest list; include CBH class, teachers, staff Reserve hotel rooms as needed Send save the date notification if desired</p>
Six to Nine Months Prior:	<p>Begin working with Bet mitzvah tutor on weekly basis to work on practicing <i>tefillot</i> (prayers), and Torah and Haftarah readings Read Torah and Haftarah in English for content Continue attending Shabbat and Bet Mitzvah services on regular basis Begin working on mitzvah project Select/contact song leader for Saturday Shabbat morning service Select gabbai (person to call people to Torah) for Shabbat morning service Finalize all financial obligations with CBH Office including balance of bet mitzvah fee</p>

Three to Six Months Prior:	<p>Invite assign Torah readings, aliyot</p> <p>All relevant people begin to learn, review Torah blessings</p> <p>Determine, review roles for siblings, other family members</p> <p>Finalize guest list</p> <p>Create invitation</p> <p>Purchase tallit (prayer shawl) and kippot (head coverings)</p> <p>Hire Jew Crew</p> <p>Finalize menu options for all catered meals</p> <p>Review, pay deposits to vendors</p>
Two to Three Months Prior:	<p>Begin D'var Torah (teaching words of Torah) with Rabbi</p> <p>Finalize service outline with Rabbi and song leader</p>
One to Two Months Prior:	<p>Meet with Executive Director to confirm all facility arrangements</p> <p>Submit introduction, photo, mitzvah project information to Etone</p> <p>Purchase synagogue dress clothing for all family members as needed</p> <p>Finalize parental speech to bet mitzvah</p> <p>Finalize preparations for Kabbalat Shabbat (Friday evening) Oneg</p> <p>Email/Mail invitations, generally six to eight weeks prior to event</p>
One Month Prior:	<p>Review and finalize D'var Torah</p> <p>Complete plans for mitzvah project</p> <p>Create program, song sheet page; review with Rabbi</p> <p>Submit honors list to Rabbi</p> <p>Complete Social Hall set up, tablecloth selection, etc. with CBH Office</p> <p>Finalize details, lists, requirements, payments with all vendors</p> <p>Plan/Order flowers, plants for Sanctuary bimah if using</p> <p>Schedule rehearsals with all participants</p>
Two to Three Weeks Prior:	<p>Review Torah readings, blessings with participants</p>
One Week Prior:	<p>Final rehearsal session with Rabbi</p> <p>Bring kippot, clips, programs, song sheets, plants, flowers, etc. to CBH</p> <p>Pick up key</p> <p>Confirm with the CBH Office that candy baskets, tablecloths are ready</p>
Kabbalat Shabbat (Friday):	<p>Bet mitzvah family helps to light Shabbat candles and recite blessing</p> <p>Bet mitzvah student helps to lead Shabbat prayers</p> <p>Host Oneg, usually with support of seventh grade class</p>
<p>Saturday Evening</p> <p>Sunday Morning, Afternoon</p> <p>(if desired):</p>	<p>Host reception or celebration with family and friends</p>

One Week After:	Return Social Hall key to CBH Office Confirm that all items are removed from CBH Kitchen
One Month After:	Write and send thank you notes
Ongoing:	Continue attending Religious School or Keshet. 8th Grade and beyond, join and participate in DRTY, Keshet, Confirmation, Madrichim programs Continue reading Torah, Haftarah, leading services

Identifying A Date:

A bet mitzvah at Congregation Bet Haverim is traditionally held during our regularly scheduled Shabbat services on a Saturday morning, beginning at 10:00am. Participation in the Friday evening, Kabbalat Shabbat Service, is also part of the bet mitzvah weekend celebration. Certain dates will not be available in order to accommodate congregational programming, clergy schedules, and Jewish holidays.

During your child's fifth grade year, a Bet Mitzvah Parent Meeting will be held with all parents, the Director of Education, and the Executive Director. During this meeting, an overview of the process will be provided and there will be an opportunity for questions. Families with previous experience will often have advice to share. Following this meeting, the Director of Education and the Executive Director will send out an email outlining the process of identifying a date.

In order to hold a date, a payment of half of the Bet mitzvah fee is required. This deposit should be paid to the Bookkeeper in the CBH Office and guarantees the availability of the Rabbi, reserves the CBH Sanctuary and Social Hall, and places the date on the congregational calendar.

In identifying a date for your special occasion, it is important to consider the following:

- At Congregation Bet Haverim, it is required for a child to be within three months of their thirteen year before their official bet mitzvah ceremony.
- Consider a [Torah portion](http://hebc.com) (hebc.com) that is meaningful and interesting for your child and family.
- Consider holiday weekends or other times that may make travel easier for family members and friends.
- Consider not selecting peak travel times if travel expenses may be prohibitive.
- Consider school and camp calendars, ensuring that your child will have adequate time for preparation.

- f. Review the CBH calendar for pre-scheduled Friday Shabbat “themed” Services, and decide if your family is comfortable sharing the evening with the community. These dates are pre-determined and cannot be changed.

Requirements:

Bet mitzvah marks the maturation of a young person as they enter the Jewish community and accept increased responsibility for their Jewish observance and identity. The young adult is now counted as part of the adult community and assumes the privileges and responsibilities of Jewish life including things like being counted in a minyan, fasting on Yom Kippur, being called to the Torah for an aliyah, observing Shabbat and other Jewish holidays, and participating in Jewish study whenever possible.

Our respect for Torah study, performance of mitzvot, and communal prayer is reflected in the preparatory process and requirements of the bet mitzvah process. At Congregation Bet Haverim, these requirements have been carefully designed to help each young adult arrive at this lifecycle event with a high level of skill, confidence, and comfort. These requirements also support a sense of community within the Hebrew and Religious School class, both for the students and parents, as the class shares this rite of passage. The Rabbi and Director of Education are available for answering any questions and will support you in finding your way through the process and making the experience meaningful and unique.

Eligibility

The celebration of a bet mitzvah at Congregation Bet Haverim is a privilege accorded to our partners. Each child must be at least thirteen years old and currently enrolled in our Religious School or Keshet Class at the time of the bet mitzvah. Each student must complete at least four consecutive years of both Hebrew and Religious School and successfully meet all school requirements. If a child has not been able to attend Hebrew School, an alternative plan for their Hebrew and Religious School education must be approved by the Rabbi and Director of Education.

Financial Obligations

Partners' financial obligations to the congregation must be in good standing and partners are required to be financially current at least three months prior to the bet mitzvah ceremony. Information about the current Bet Mitzvah Fee will be provided at the Bet Mitzvah Parent Orientation Meeting during the fifth grade year. A deposit of half of the Bet mitzvah fee must be paid when the calendar date is selected. The remainder of the Bet mitzvah fee is required nine months prior to the date, when the student begins working with the private tutor. The Bet Mitzvah fee helps offset congregational costs related to the student's preparation for the ceremony, use of our facilities including security, and the time

of the Rabbi, Bet Mitzvah Tutor, and administrative staff. Any questions about financial obligations should be addressed with the Executive Director.

Shabbat Service Attendance

Congregation Bet Haverim expects that all bet mitzvah students, accompanied by at least one parent, regularly attend other Bet Mitzvahs and Friday night Shabbat services. The attendance requirement supports both students and families in becoming familiar and comfortable with the required prayers and rituals. In addition, becoming bet mitzvah is a celebration for the entire community, one supported by the participation of each of us. During the year preceding the bet mitzvah, students and families are expected to attend as many Bet Mitzvah and Friday night Shabbat services as possible. We also encourage students to attend services at other communities to see what they are like.

Tutoring

The official period of formal preparation for bet mitzvah begins approximately nine months before the scheduled date, depending on the student's needs. As part of the Bet Mitzvah fee, students may have 26 half hour sessions with their tutor, over the course of nine months. During this time, the student will meet with the tutor on a weekly basis. Regular and prompt attendance at all lessons is expected. Regular practice of prayers, Torah, and Haftarah are expected outside of tutoring sessions.

Approximately three months before the Bet Mitzvah ceremony, the student will begin meeting weekly with the Rabbi to practice the prayers they will lead during the service, as well as write their D'var Torah speech.

Mitzvah Project

Students will create and complete a mitzvah project under the supervision of the Director of Education. This project will help the students to demonstrate their dedication to tzedakah (righteous giving) and tikkun olam (repairing the world). The Director of Education is available to support families in selecting a project that is meaningful, accessible, and valuable. *Please find the Mitzvah Project Worksheet & Report on page 29.*

Parent Participation

The process of becoming bet mitzvah requires active parental involvement and participation. Congregation Bet Haverim expects all bet mitzvah students to regularly attend Shabbat services accompanied by at least one parent. Parents are expected to maintain regular communication with both the tutor and Rabbi during their child's preparations. In addition, it is important that parents of the Bet mitzvah class communicate with each other throughout the year in order to share the joy of these celebratory events and to create a support system.

Continued Education

It is a congregational expectation that students continue their Jewish education with ongoing enrollment in our Religious School, Keshet, and Confirmation classes. Many teens also enjoy active participation in our DRTY youth group as well as our Madrichim (teaching assistant) program.

Shabbat Services Etiquette & Expectations:

At Congregation Bet Haverim, we want all members and guests to feel comfortable and warmly welcomed. It may be helpful to share information with your guests in advance of your celebration.

- a. It is important that you invite all members of your child's class, both the student and their family, to your bet mitzvah service.
- b. Some families invite families of siblings as well as families of children from the grade above or below. As a small congregation, many of our students know each other and enjoy sharing these special occasions.
- c. It is our tradition to include dates of all bet mitzvah services on the Hebrew & Religious School calendar as well as our Teen Calendar. The Rabbi and Director of Education will announce these dates in the weeks preceding your special event.
- d. Appropriate modest attire for a house of worship should be worn.
- e. Cell phones and other electronics should be silenced or turned off before entering the Sanctuary. Cell phones should not be used as recording devices.
- f. At CBH, it is customary for some to wear a head covering (kippot or yarmulke) as a sign of respect for the holiness of the Sanctuary. Kippot and tallitot (prayer shawls) are provided near the entrance to the sanctuary. Some families purchase kippot for their guests as a special memento but it is not required.
- g. At CBH, Jewish people, over the age of thirteen, are invited to wear a tallit (prayer shawl). Non-Jewish guests should not wear a tallit.
- h. During the service, we will use a Siddur (prayer book) as well as a Chumash (Torah, Five Books of Moses). These books are considered holy and are treated with great respect. They are never to be placed on the floor. Jewish reverence for these holy books is reflected in the tradition of kissing a Siddur or Chumash that has fallen on the floor.
- i. During some parts of the service, worshippers are required to stand. All participants, Jewish and non-Jewish, are asked to stand if they are physically able.
- j. When the Ark is open, while a Torah passage is being read, or during the recitation of the Amidah, as a sign of respect, please do not leave or enter the Sanctuary.

- k. Bowing is done at certain points of the service. Non-Jewish visitors are not expected to participate in the bowing.
- l. Applause is not appropriate at any point during the service.
- m. Official photography and videography is permitted from the back of the Sanctuary.
- n. Smoking is not allowed in the Sanctuary or on the CBH campus.

Shabbat Morning Service (Saturday):

The Shabbat service celebrating a bet mitzvah is a regular congregational gathering. People will be in attendance not only to honor your family, but also potentially remembering a yahrtzeit (an anniversary of the death of a loved one), mourning a recent loss, or simply enjoying Shabbat. You may also have the opportunity to share the joy of another celebration such as a baby naming or the blessing for an upcoming wedding.

With Rabbinic approval, the family may add or modify English readings. Prayers are generally recited in either English or Hebrew, but not both.

A brief pamphlet provided to your guests at the Saturday service is voluntary. If you choose to make one, some families include:

- Welcome message from the family
- Information about the mitzvah project
- Honors
- Thank yous
- Baby or family photos

There are four areas of participation for a bet mitzvah during a Shabbat morning service. These include serving as a Shaliach Tzibur (leading the prayers), chanting from the Torah, chanting from the Haftarah, and offering a D'var Torah (words of teaching based on the weekly portion).

Shaliach Tzibur:

One of the oldest and most prestigious roles in the synagogue is to be the Shaliach Tzibur and to lead the worship. At Congregation Bet Haverim, each bet mitzvah student joins with the Rabbi in this sacred role. Most of the Hebrew prayers for the service are taught during Hebrew School. The basic Hebrew prayers expected of a bet mitzvah include the following:

- ChatziKaddish
- Barchu
- Shema & V'ahavta
- Mi Chamocha

- Amidah
 - Avot & Imahot
 - G'vurot
 - Kedushah
- Blessing for putting on a tallit
- Aliyot before and after Torah reading
- Blessings before and after Haftarah reading

K'riat HaTorah (Torah Reading)

Each bet mitzvah assumes the role of a Ba'al/Ba'alat Koreh, a Torah reader. Congregation Bet Haverim maintains the tradition of reading seven aliyot, sections of the Torah reading, during the Shabbat morning service. Aliyot vary in length depending on their content, with three verses being the minimum length for each reading. The bet mitzvah student will learn and chant the Maftir (final) reading and may have the opportunity to prepare additional Torah sections. In addition to the Torah chanting, the bet mitzvah student will also chant the blessings before and after the final aliyah.

Haftarah (Chanting from the Prophets)

Following the chanting of the Torah, the bet mitzvah student will chant from the Haftarah, a selection from the prophetic books of the Bible. The Haftarah is chanted according to a specific set of notes and melodies, related to, but different from the trope used to chant from the Torah. The number of verses to be chanted will be determined by the tutor, in consultation with the Rabbi. In addition to this reading, the bet mitzvah will chant the blessings before and after the Haftarah.



D'var Torah (Teaching Words of Torah)

After the chanting of the Torah and Haftarah, the bet mitzvah will deliver a summary of the week's Torah portion along with a reflection of its meaning and lessons. This speech is written by the student based on discussions with the Rabbi about the meaning and significance of the text. Many students also share information about their mitzvah project and lessons learned from their volunteer work.

Kabbalat Shabbat Service (Friday Evening):

It is expected that the bet mitzvah student and family attend the Friday evening Kabbalat Shabbat Service. At Congregation Bet Haverim, there are a variety of offerings for Friday night services; more information is available on the CBH calendar or from the Rabbi. The family is generally honored by leading the lighting and blessing of the Shabbat candles

during Kabbalat Shabbat. The bet mitzvah will help to lead Hatzi Kaddish, Shema, Va'ahavta, and Amidah; they may also help to lead other prayers if desired.

The family is expected to provide an Oneg (refreshments) following the Friday evening service. Often, families within the Bet Mitzvah class share responsibilities and coordinate providing the Oneg for each other. *More information can be found on page 19.*

Honors & Participation Opportunities:

Participation in the Shabbat service is considered an honor and is an important part of our Jewish worship. A variety of opportunities exist for you to honor your family and friends. Each honor is equally important and requires special preparation. The Rabbi and your tutor will work with each family to answer questions, determine the best options, and prepare honored family and friends. The people receiving honors need to be well-informed and well-prepared, for their own comfort and to maintain a smooth flow to the service.

As part of your preparations, each family will complete an Honor's Page with all necessary information to ensure a successful service. This sheet should be submitted to the Rabbi at least two weeks prior to the bet mitzvah date. Honors include the following:

Aliyot:

An aliyah (aliyot, plural) is the act of being called up to the Torah to recite the blessings in Hebrew before and after a portion of the Torah is read. Each Shabbat morning service traditionally has seven aliyot, plus the Maftir. The Maftir, a repetition of the seventh aliyah, is reserved for the bet mitzvah. The seventh aliyah is traditionally reserved for the parents, who will then remain standing beside their child for the Maftir aliyah. The first aliyah is reserved for members of the community as well as students that have recently completed their bet mitzvah. The second through sixth aliyot are for family and friends in attendance. Anyone who is Jewish and called for an aliyah is expected to wear a tallit, and headcovering

At Congregation Bet Haverim, those honored with an aliyah should be Jewish and post bet mitzvah age. Non-Jewish spouses or partners are welcome to accompany their Jewish partner in these honors on the bimah (prayer stand). Members of the Bet mitzvah class may be called as a group and all students may recite the blessings.

Torah Reading:

The family is given the honor and opportunity to invite friends and family members to chant from the Torah. Often a parent, grandparent, older sibling, tutor, the Rabbi, the Director of Education or community members are available and delighted to support the bet mitzvah in this manner. All Torah readers must be over the age of thirteen and must read directly from the Torah scroll. The tutor, Rabbi, and Director of Education are all available to help guests

prepare Torah readings as well as to find additional Torah chanters if needed. Tutors can make recordings of the Torah readings if requested.

Leading a Song, Prayer, or Reading

Speaking honors can also be given to family and friends in the form of sharing a prayer, poem, or reading. Both Jewish and non-Jewish family and friends may lead these readings, however the Hebrew selections should be reserved for Jewish participants. Sample readings, prayers, and song selections that have been used in the past, are available for your family to review. Please consult with the Rabbi for appropriateness of any alternative selections.

Gabbai

Congregation Bet Haverim is blessed to have community members who serve as a Gabbai (caller to the Torah) on Shabbat morning. This person calls people to the bimah for aliyot and ensures that everything runs smoothly for the Torah Service. Please discuss this honor with the Rabbi, especially if you have any special requests.

Tallit Presentation

It is traditional to present a tallit (prayer shawl) to the bet mitzvah on this special day, the first day that they are permitted to wear one. The family may present a tallit to the bet mitzvah, offering a personal blessing. Note that a public presentation of a tallit is not required of the family; the tallit can also be given without a public blessing or in a private family moment. There are a few options for choosing this tallit including creating, purchasing, or passing down a family heirloom. Jewish gift stores at Congregation B'nai Israel in Sacramento or Afikomen in Berkeley are available to visit, or there are many online options.

Yad Presentation

Some families also present their child with a yad (a special pointer used to guide the Torah reading). This presentation may be similar to that of the tallit and is sometimes given by a sibling.

Generational Passing of the Torah Scroll

When the Torah is removed from the Aron HaKodesh (the holy ark), the family gathers to pass the scroll from generation to generation, symbolizing the transmission of Judaism, its practices and values, from one generation to the next. Non-Jewish parents and grandparents are invited to pass the Torah to the bet mitzvah in recognition of the important role they play in passing the love of Judaism onto their children.

Hagba'ah & Gelilah (Raising, Dressing the Torah Scroll)

The Magbiah, the person honored with Hagba'ah (lifting of the Torah), will lift the Torah overhead following the last Torah reading. The Gollel/Gollelet, the person honored with Gelilah (Torah dresser), will help to dress the Torah after it is raised.

Opening & Closing of the Torah Ark

The holy ark, housing the Torah, is opened twice during the service and this honor may be assigned to two different groups of people. The first opening occurs at the beginning of the Torah Service with the second opportunity at the conclusion of the service.

Parental Blessings

Towards the end of the service, parents are invited to share brief words of blessing and wisdom with their child.

Please find The Parents' Blessing: A Sacred Opportunity from the Ritual Committee on page 30.

Candy Distributors

Following the reading of the Haftarah, soft, wrapped, non-chocolate candies may be gently showered on the bet mitzvah. This tradition symbolizes our blessings for continued sweetness on their Jewish journey. Many families use Sunkist fruit gels for this tradition.

Participation of Siblings & Children

Siblings and other young children should be given age-appropriate honors such as passing out candy, helping an adult to dress the Torah, or helping an adult to open the Ark. Older siblings are encouraged to participate by reading a Torah portion or reciting an aliyah. If you have any questions about options for honors of siblings and children, please consult with the Rabbi before making assignments.

Participation of Non-Jewish Family & Friends

Congregation Bet Haverim welcomes the participation of your non-Jewish family and friends and will work to honor and celebrate the unique nature of each family. While there are many opportunities for meaningful participation, there are some limitations to their participation in the Shabbat service. Non-Jews may participate in any of the above honors except those rituals involved in the Torah chanting. Non-Jews may stand at the bimah while the Torah blessings are being said, but we ask that only Jews recite the blessings as the Hebrew words speak to the unique nature of being Jewish. Non-Jewish parents of the bet mitzvah however, are invited to say the blessings as they have played an integral role in raising a Jewish child. Jewish and non-Jewish grandparents and parents are invited to participate in the generational passing of the Torah. Additionally, the Rabbi will work closely with each family to find appropriate and meaningful honors for all family members.

Identifying a Music / Song Leader for Saturday Shabbat Morning Service:

The musical component of the bet mitzvah service provides leadership, prayer continuity and ruach (spirit). CBH has regular song leaders who may be available. Please work with the Director of Education to identify music leadership for the bet mitzvah service.

Selecting a Bet Mitzvah Tutor:

Congregation Bet Haverim has several outstanding approved bet mitzvah tutors. Please work with the Director of Education to identify a tutor. The Bet mitzvah fee includes six months of weekly tutoring sessions for thirty minutes each. Some tutors may require additional fees for lessons. Contact information and additional information about tutor fees is available from the Director of Education.

Mentor Program:

The Education & Youth Committee is delighted to support families as they prepare by providing a mentor. This may be as simple as a one-time meeting with a parent that has recently hosted a Bet Mitzvah or ongoing support throughout the process. For more information, or to request a mentor, please contact the Director of Education.

Tzedakah and Expressing Gratitude to Congregation Bet Haverim:

Tzedakah, defined as righteous giving, is an important part of Jewish traditions and communal celebrations. Many families decide to make a charitable contribution and encourage guests to do the same in order to honor the bet mitzvah. Families are encouraged to consider a variety of local, national, Jewish and Israel based organizations. Often a suggested tzedakah contribution is related to the mitzvah project. Some suggestions include:

- a. Donate a percentage of food costs to an appropriate organization that supports food supply. One Jewish opportunity is to support MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger.
- b. Make a contribution to Congregation Bet Haverim, directed to a specific area of interest. The Education & Youth Donation Fund is also available.
- c. Donate a portion or percentage of the bet mitzvah's received gifts to tzedakah. Involving the teen in this decision will acknowledge the responsibility of making tzedakah a priority in their life.
- d. Many families also ask how they can express their appreciation to the CBH clergy for their important contribution to the Bet Mitzvah experience. The traditional mode for doing this is by making a contribution to the Rabbis' Discretionary Fund. Through this fund, the clergy support needy individuals, synagogue programming and the work of other non-profit organizations with which they are involved. Again, this is optional.

Invitations:

There are many options for creating your invitations including online services such as RSVPify, Paperless Post, Greenvelope, Zazzle. Some families have professional invitations designed while others prefer electronic invites. Some online invitation sites allow you to track attendance and send reminders.

Please note that it is important to invite all members of your child's bet mitzvah class, both the student and their family, to your bet mitzvah Saturday service in order to support a sense of community. Please be sure to include the Rabbi, Director of Education, Bet Mitzvah Tutor, and Song Leader (if appropriate) in your invitation list to the Shabbat Saturday service. All guests who attend the morning service are invited to the kiddush luncheon. If you are having a separate celebratory gathering later in the weekend, you may wish to send a separate invitation. Again, all students from the current Religious School or Keshet Class should be included.

Decorations; Flowers and Plants in the Sanctuary & Social Hall:

Many families enhance the beauty of Shabbat and the bet mitzvah by purchasing flowers or plants to decorate the bimah in the Sanctuary or to use as centerpieces in the Social Hall. Flowers and plants should be delivered on Friday afternoon before 3pm. Local florists can easily make arrangements; Costco and Trader Joes may provide additional affordable options. Some families create table decorations that reflect the mitzvah project, such as food baskets or book donations.

Kashrut Dietary Laws:

Any food brought, prepared, or served at Congregation Bet Haverim, including meals prepared by a non-kosher caterer, must be vegetarian, vegan or dairy. Kosher fish, with both fins and scales, such as salmon, tuna and halibut are acceptable. Meat including chicken, beef, shellfish, and fish lacking either scales or fins are not acceptable. It is also important to avoid baked goods or other foods that may contain lard, chicken broth, or beef fat. Selecting products with kosher packaging labels is an effective way to follow the dietary guidelines required by CBH.



Oneg Preparation: Friday Night & Saturday:

As with many joyous events, food enhances the celebration. The bet mitzvah family typically provides a dessert Oneg (refreshments) for Kabbalat Shabbat on Friday evening as well as a Kiddush Luncheon on Saturday afternoon. Please plan on providing enough food for both your invited guests as well as approximately fifteen to twenty other congregants at both events. The rental use of the Social Hall and Redwood Grove are included in the Bet Mitzvah fee for the Friday Oneg and Saturday Kiddush Luncheon.

Friday Oneg Responsibilities

- Although the bet mitzvah family provides this Oneg, it is common for families within the Bet Mitzvah class to share responsibilities and coordinate providing the Oneg for each other.
- The Oneg takes place in the Social Hall or Redwood Grove and consists of desserts such as beverages, cookies, brownies, cupcakes as well as fruit and cheese & crackers.
- Wine, grape juice, 1-2 challahs, hot water, and limited tea selections are provided by CBH. Cups, plates and napkins are also provided for the Friday Oneg by CBH. If the family wants a color theme, they need to provide them themselves.
- When it's an F3 Shabbat: Connect with Education Director, Ardyth Sokoler, if your Friday night service happens to be a grade-level F3 Shabbat.

Friday Dinner option: Some families choose to host a private dinner before or after Friday service in the Social Hall. In order to do so, **a Rental Agreement must be completed 2 months prior with the CBH Executive Director.** There is an additional charge for this.

Saturday Kiddush / Oneg Responsibilities

- It is the obligation of the family of the Bet Mitzvah to provide a Kiddush following the Shabbat morning or Shabbat afternoon service consisting of a light luncheon. An example is bagels, cream cheese/hummus, lox, fruit salad and/or cookies.
- **The Facilities Set-Up Form and Rental Agreement must be completed 2 month prior with the CBH Executive Director.** This will include Social Hall set up of tables and chairs, tablecloth selection, etc.
- Additional janitorial and clean-up fees may be incurred depending on the size of your event.
- CBH will provide 1-2 challahs, wine, and grape juice. All plates, utensils, cups, napkins are supplied by you.

- ❖ The Social Hall seating capacity is 100-120 depending on buffet set-up.
- ❖ Weather permitting, there is an additional seating capacity of 100 in the Redwood Grove.
- ❖ The Sanctuary seating capacity is 270 people.

Catering Vendors:

Some families prefer to prepare the food themselves which can be cost effective, but creates additional planning, preparations, and responsibilities. From Costco, for example, you can purchase bagels, lox, cream cheese, salads, hummus, drinks, and cookies.

If you are interested in working with a caterer, you can hire a full-service caterer— a company that will prepare the food, provide service during the event, and clean the kitchen and Social Hall at the end. Another option is purchasing prepared food, from either a caterer or local market, and hiring the Jew Crew to provide service and clean up responsibilities. The Jew Crew is not trained to replace a caterer and can only do minimal food prep.

The following caterers/restaurants have been used in the past. While none of these vendors are officially sanctioned, we encourage you to learn more about potential options from families with recent celebrations.

Jenni Brewster, Caterer & Pastry Chef
 Chipotle Catering
 Dos Coyotes Catering
 Ike's Love & Sandwiches
 Noah's Bagels
 Nugget Markets "Gourmet to Go"
 Sellands Market Catering

The Jew Crew

The Jew Crew is a group of Congregation Bet Haverim teens that may be hired through CBH for special events. The Jew Crew will act as greeters, distribute juice and challah, place tablecloths and centerpieces, set up the buffet, replenish the buffet, and clean the kitchen following the event. More information about hiring Jew Crew is available through the Office.

Contact the CBH Executive Director 2 to 3 months prior to your event to reserve Jew Crew.

Social Hall Additional Information

The CBH Office can provide you with a tour, help with your Facilities & Set Up Request, and issue a Social Hall key for the weekend of your event.

- Tablecloths, in a range of colors, are available through the Office and must be reserved for a nominal fee to cover laundering. Tablecloths may not be removed from the CBH campus.
- Although it is advisable to check ahead of time to confirm, additional items in the CBH kitchen may include:
 - Non disposable plates, both 10” and 8”
 - Non disposable forks, spoons, and knives
 - Non disposable wine glasses and mugs
 - Serving platters, serving utensils, water pitchers
 - Vases in a limited quantity
- Some families provide a greeting book at the luncheon for guests to sign in and provide a congratulatory message.
- Some families provide a decorated box or basket at the luncheon for guests to place envelopes for the bet mitzvah. If you would like a gift table, be sure to include this on your Social Hall Reservation & Set Up Form.

Everything in the Social Hall must be returned as it was found. The dishwasher in the kitchen is not available. You are welcome to bring food items on Friday and leave them in the Social Hall refrigerator. Please clearly label any food items with your family name.

Photography and/or Videography Vendors

Many families hire a professional photographer to help preserve this special occasion. A photo session may take place the week of the bet mitzvah or on Saturday before or after the Shabbat service. Photographs taken with the Torah inside the Sanctuary must have prior approval and assistance from the Rabbi or Director of Education.

A Zoom recording of the service is available through the CBH Office. Contact the CBH office prior to your event to confirm. Arrangements may also be made through the CBH Office for a video recording of the Shabbat morning service by a preset, unattended video camera focused on the bimah. Active video recording or photography is not permitted as it is distracting to the bet mitzvah and disruptive to the spirit of Shabbat.

Cell phones and other electronics should be silenced or turned off before entering the Sanctuary. Please inform your guests of this policy.

The following photographers have been used in the past by CBH families. While none of these vendors are officially sanctioned, we encourage you to learn more about potential options from families with recent celebrations.

Artistic Focus Photography, Kimberly Olker
Vis A Vis Photography, Julia Aue

Venues for Additional Celebrations

Many families choose to have an additional celebration as part of the bet mitzvah weekend. CBH rejoices with all of its families and acknowledges that there is no “right” way to celebrate. We highly recommend you talk with other families to learn about the various options that may be a good fit for your family. It is also highly recommended that you reserve your venue at least one year in advance.

Renting at Congregation Bet Haverim: With this option, guests return to CBH in the evening for a private party, for which the Social Hall and/or Redwood Grove is rented. More information about food guidelines and the cost of rental is available through the Office.

Other venues: While none of these vendors are officially sanctioned, we encourage you to learn more about potential options from families with recent celebrations.

The Veteran’s Memorial Center
UC Davis Facilities
Stonegate Country Club
El Macero Country Club
Great Bear Winery

CBH parents offer the following list of considerations:

- How many people will be in attendance? What is the maximum capacity for the space?
- Do you want space for dancing?
- Will your celebration include a havdalah ceremony?
- Do they have a required caterer? What are the catering requirements?
- Is alcohol allowed? If so, may you bring your own or must you purchase it from their distributor?
- Do you need or want to hire a bartender?
- Is a projector and screen available for a slide show?
- Is the location easily accessible to local and out of town guests?
- What time will you be able to arrive to finalize preparations?
- How late will you be allowed to remain at the venue?
- Are there noise restrictions?
- Are you allowed to light candles, either as decorations or a candle lighting ceremony?
- Is there ample parking?

- Do you need to hire a security guard?
- Who will help to manage the flow of your event?

Music & Photo Booth Vendors

There are a variety of options and price ranges including pre-recorded music, a DJ, or a live band. When working with a DJ, you will usually be asked if you want dancing or additional activities including a photo booth, a flip book station, games, and prizes. Many of these things will include an additional cost. If your DJ is leading games, it is worthwhile to clarify if you need to purchase the prizes or if they will be provided.

The following musicians have been used in the past by CBH families. While none of these vendors are officially sanctioned, we encourage you to learn more about potential options from families with recent celebrations.

JD the DJ Productions
 Beat Fleet DJs
 Buzzardball DJ Entertainment
 Steve Schon Function 45
 Alan Waltz Entertainment

Local Lodging Information

There are many places available in Davis to provide lodging for your guests. Most hotels will set aside a block of rooms at a discounted rate if you give them enough notice. Some of the local accommodations include:

Best Western University Lodge
 Best Western Palm Court
 Aggie Inn
 Hallmark Inn
 Hilton Garden Inn
 Holiday Inn Express & Suites

Hyatt Place
 Hyatt House Davis
 LaQuinta Inn & Suites
 Residence Inn
 University Park Inn and Suites

Glossary of Terms:

Aliyah: literally an ascent. During the Torah service, an aliyah is the call to recite the blessings before and after a Torah reading. During an aliyah, the person being honored is called by his or her Hebrew name as well as the number of the respective aliyah.

example: Sh'lomo ben David Shlishi = Salomon, son of David, [for] the third [aliyah]

Aron HaKodesh: literally the Holy Ark; the cabinet at the front of the sanctuary containing the Torah scrolls.

Bar/Bat/Bet Mitzvah: a boy (ben) or girl (bat) or gender neutral person (bet) who has reached the age of religious responsibility; this term is commonly used in reference to the service and festivities celebrating this occasion; the term b'nai mitzvah refers to two or more children, while the term b'not mitzvah refers specifically to two or more girls.

Bimah: a raised platform supporting the desk from which the Torah is read or prayer services are led.

Brachah, Brachot (singular, plural): blessing, blessings.

Challah: braided egg bread, blessed and enjoyed on Shabbat and holidays.

Chumash: the five books of Moses or the Torah, in book form.

Davener: someone praying (davening).

D'var Torah: a brief discussion or sermon of the content and meaning of the week's Torah portion. The D'var Torah given by a bet mitzvah often also includes reflections on the Haftarah and the mitzvah project, thoughts on becoming a bet Mitzvah, and thanks gratitude to teachers, family, etc.

Gollel, Gollelet (male, female): the person called after the Torah reading to roll and dress the Torah scroll.

Haftarah: a reading from the Prophets, chanted after the weekly Shabbat (or festival) Torah reading and having some thematic relation to the preceding Torah reading.

Kabbalat Shabbat: literally means Welcoming the Shabbat, is the Friday evening synagogue service.

Kashrut: adherence to ritual dietary laws.

Kiddush: a prayer of sanctification, recited over wine in celebration of Shabbat and festivals.

Kiddush Luncheon: a communal, celebratory meal held directly after Shabbat morning services, starting with blessings (Kiddush) over wine/juice followed by a spread of foods like bagels, lox, salads, and sweets to foster community, joy and connection.

Maftir: the concluding aliyah of the Torah reading. The Torah reading for the maftir is either a repetition of the seventh aliyah or its last few verses. On festivals or special Shabbatot, the Maftir may be a separate and relevant Torah reading. The person reciting the Maftir aliyah customarily also chants the Haftarah with its blessings.

Magbiah: the person who is called after the Torah reading to raise the Torah scroll from the desk and hold it while it is being rolled up and dressed by the Gollel, Gollelet before it is returned to the ark.

Minyan: ten adult Jews; the required quorum for a complete public worship service.

Mishnah: the part of the Talmud comprising originally oral scriptural interpretations by the rabbis and divided into tractates; examples include Avot, Baba Metzia.

Mitzvah, Mitzvot (singular, plural): religious obligations or commandments.

Oneg Shabbat: literally means Sabbath delight. A social gathering with refreshments after the Shabbat services. Providing the oneg means supplying and arranging food and drink for the reception following services.

Pareve: term referring to kosher foods that are neither dairy nor meat.

Pentateuch: see definition for Chumash.

Rosh Chodesh: the first day of each new Hebrew month.

Sefer: literally means book; the Sefer Torah means the book of Torah and is commonly used to refer to the Torah scroll, written by a Sofer on parchment.

Se'udat mitzvah, Se'udah shel mitzvah: a festive meal in celebration of a religious act such as a bet mitzvah observance.

Siddur: the Jewish prayer book used for daily, Shabbat, and holiday services; during the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, a special prayer book called a Machzor is used.

Simchah: joy or a joyous occasion.

Tallit: prayer shawl, worn during morning worship by men or those of bet mitzvah age or older; also worn by those leading the prayer service at any time.

Talmud: compilation of rabbinic scriptural interpretations, commentaries, and writings; the authoritative source of instruction on traditional observant Jewish living.

Tefillin: phylacteries; two small cubical boxes attached to leather straps and containing scriptural passages on parchment scrolls. During weekday morning prayers, one is placed on the left upper arm, the other on the forehead in literal compliance with the cryptic directions included in the Shema:

“And you shall bind them for a sign on your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes.”

Torah: the five books of Moses, commonly used synonymously with the term Sefer Torah.

Tzedakah: literally righteous giving, commonly used to reference charitable contributions.



Blessing Before Torah Reading (Aliyah)

*Ascend to lectern and stand on the Torah reader's right side.
Touch Torah with tallit, kiss tallit, and recite blessing.*

Bar'chu et Adonai ham'vo-rach.

בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יְיָ הַמְּבָרֵךְ.

Congregation responds then you continue.

Baruch Adonai ham'vo-rach l'o-lam va'ed.

בָּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבָרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha-olam,

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

Asher ba-char ba-nu me-kol ha-ameem

אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים

V'na-tan la-nu et Tor-a-to

וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ.

Baruch Atah Adonai No-tayn Ha-Torah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

Praise the One to whom our praise is due.

Praised be the One to whom our praise is due, now and for ever.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe: You have called us to Your service by giving us the Torah. We praise You, O God, Giver of the Torah.

Blessing After Torah Reading

Upon completion of reading, touch Torah text with tallit, kiss, and recite blessing.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha-olam,

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

Asher na-tan la-nu Tor-at eh-met

אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת,

V'Cha-yei o-lam na-ta b'to-chei-nu

וְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם נָטַע בְּתוֹכֵנוּ.

Baruch Atah Adonai no-tayn Ha-Torah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, You have given us a Torah of truth, implanting within us eternal life. We praise You, O God, Giver of the Torah.

Move to other side of the lectern; remain during the next aliyah and Torah reading.

Shabbat Morning Honors List

During the Shabbat morning service, you will have the opportunity to honor family members and friends by having them participate in the service. As part of the preparations, you will need to assign the following participation honors and gather the following information.

Gabbai: The Gabbai calls people to the Torah to recite the blessings. The Rabbi or Director of Education can provide suggestions for the Gabbai for your special occasion.

Aliyot: An aliyah is when someone is called to the Torah to recite the blessings before and after the reading. The first aliyah is saved for members of the congregation. In order to call someone for an aliyah, you will need the following information: English name, Hebrew name, their father's and mother's Hebrew names.

Torah Readings: There will be eight readings from the Torah and the Maftir (final reading) will be chanted by the bet mitzvah. All Torah readings must be chanted from the actual Torah. Parents, siblings who have already become bet mitzvah, friends and family members are all welcome to learn a Torah reading. The Rabbi, Director of Education and your Bet Mitzvah tutor may be available to read from the Torah.

	English Name	Hebrew Name	Relationship	Torah Reader
First Aliyah <i>saved for congregants</i>				
Second Aliyah				
Third Aliyah				
Fourth Aliyah				
Fifth Aliyah				
Sixth Aliyah				
Seventh Aliyah <i>saved for parents</i>				
Maftir Aliyah <i>saved for bet mitzvah</i>				
Hagba'ah <i>raising the Torah scroll</i>				
Gelilah <i>dressing the Torah scroll</i>				
Ark Opening <i>taking Torah out</i>				
Ark Opening <i>returning Torah</i>				
English Readings				
Candy Distributors				



Mitzvah Project Worksheet & Report

As part of your preparations for becoming a bet mitzvah, each student will complete a Mitzvah Project. This project will help you demonstrate your dedication to tzedakah (righteous giving) and tikkun olam (repairing the world). There are many possible options and the Rabbi and Director of Education are available to help you and your family in selecting a project that is meaningful, accessible, and valuable.

The following questions will help guide your decisions, reflections, and impact:

What are two or three goals that you would like to accomplish through your mitzvah project?

Why is this work important to you?

What potential resources such as organizations or people may be available to support your project?

Please describe your mitzvah project. What will you be doing? Who will benefit? How much time will it take to do this work? Will others be involved in your project?

Will there be a fundraising element related to your mitzvah project? If so, how much money will need to be raised? How will you generate this income?

Please describe your experience of working on your mitzvah project. What did you learn? What was one of the challenges? What did you most enjoy? What surprised you about your work?

Ideally your mitzvah project will be completed before the date of your bet mitzvah celebration, however many students and families are inspired to continue with this work. Please sign and return this completion contract and return to the Rabbi.

Bet Mitzvah Name _____

Bet Mitzvah Signature _____

Date of Completion _____



The Parents' Blessing: A Sacred Opportunity

We are delighted to share this advice and information from the CBH Ritual Committee in support of your preparation of your Parents' Blessing.

As parents, we know that our words have great power. Early on, we name, shape and create our children's world through the words we use to describe life around them. Once again, with the Parents' Blessing, you have the sacred opportunity to illuminate a path, share cherished values and offer words of wisdom that will help guide your children into their future Jewish lives.

The parents' prayer is intended to be a brief powerful blessing to your children as they enter the adult Jewish community with a new sense of responsibility and potential. As such, it should deal with sacred and eternal themes that relate to ethics, spirituality, and Judaism. Here are some guidelines to help you raise up this holy moment of transition and transformation:

- Speak directly to your children. Your remarks are meant for them, to inspire and bless them. We, the congregation, are privileged to be able to listen in, if you choose to share them out loud. You may speak just to your child while standing at the bimah. But don't forget that the community is also in attendance. Please keep your words of blessing concise, limiting your remarks to 250 words per adult. That's one side of a page, typed, double-spaced.
- Speak in the moment. It is not so important what you remember about the past, particularly about when your children were born, or about some moment in their childhood. They are being asked to assume adult responsibilities; speak to who they are now, and who they might yet become. Your hope for their lives as Jews is an excellent subject.
- Remember that this is a blessing, not a speech. Reach for your own sense of what it means to be a Jew, what inspires you, and transform that into a blessing, a hope, a wish for your child.

You may want to choose one of rich areas or topics to explore and frame your blessing:

- What do you want your child to remember of this day?
- Which of your child's spiritual and/or moral qualities do you want to reinforce and affirm?
- What do you hope for your child's Jewish future?
- In your child's Torah or haftarah portion, what verse or teaching speaks to you?
- What are the sacred traditions in your own family?
- For whom was your child named? What special qualities did that person have?
- What is important in your family's Jewish story or background?

In the end, remember that this is a beautiful and powerful moment to share the Torah of your family's life with your children; words that you hope they will keep in their hearts for many years to come.