

**BECOMING B'NEI MITZVAH  
AT TREE OF LIFE:  
A GUIDE FOR PARENTS**

Issue 4, August 24, 2019

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## WELCOME TO B'NEI MITZVAH AT TREE OF LIFE!

B'nei Mitzvah\* (Bar Mitzvah for a boy or Bat Mitzvah for a girl) is a Jewish rite of passage — a way to mark our children's progress on the path of life. As parents, our job is to guide our children toward becoming independent, contributing members of our congregation, the Jewish community, and society as a whole. Through years of study at Tree of Life, we try to instill in our children a sense of purpose, as well as a commitment to Judaism and to tikkun olam (repairing the world). By becoming B'nei Mitzvah, our young people demonstrate their ongoing commitment to both Jewish and universal values — values which include Jewish ritual practice, community prayer, education (both religious and secular), tz'dakah (charity and good works) and living a moral and ethical life.

Becoming B'nei Mitzvah at Tree of Life involves a minimum of two years of study. Our children prepare to lead a congregational worship service and to chant from the Torah and Haftarah portions of the day. Our children also study Judaica, which aids them in their preparation for teaching the congregation a lesson based on their Torah and/or Haftarah portions. All of this study is important and necessary to successfully becoming B'nei Mitzvah.

Becoming B'nei Mitzvah is an important milestone in a young person's Jewish life. While it is a time of great excitement and joy, it can also be a time of some anxiety and self-doubt. The transition years from "pre-teen" to "teen" are a time charged with great emotions. In addition to experiencing physical changes, young people begin to question authority and form opinions of their own. As all of this occurs, they may ask questions about why they are engaging in the process of becoming B'nei Mitzvah. Occasionally, students convince themselves they are not capable of mastering the material, or that they are not up to the task in some other way. These self-doubts are not only natural but somewhat expected at this time in a young person's life. Remember that generations of our youth have asked these same questions and have, nonetheless, successfully and joyfully celebrated becoming B'nei Mitzvah.

At Tree of Life we believe that every young person deserves the opportunity to celebrate becoming B'nei Mitzvah. We know that not all students learn the same way or have the same natural talents or abilities, and that they come from very different life experiences. We are committed to working with every student and to making this event a truly positive and enriching experience for every family. If you would like to discuss your child's special learning needs, please contact the Education Committee.

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\* Many of the Hebrew words in the document are defined in the Glossary.

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## WHO TO CONTACT

As you begin your journey toward this milestone, we are providing this booklet as an aid to you. In it, you may find answers to many of your questions about the process of becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Tree of Life. If you do not find answers to the questions you are asking, please feel free to contact us at any time with your questions. We are here to support you.

- For questions regarding requirements or the B'nei Mitzvah process – Contact the Rabbi ([rabbi@etzhaim.org](mailto:rabbi@etzhaim.org))
- For questions regarding Prayer Class assignments, parent responsibilities or general questions – Contact the Education Committee ([school@etzhaim.org](mailto:school@etzhaim.org))
- For questions about scheduling appointments with clergy or tutors, reserving the Social Hall, luncheon or party set up – Contact the Rabbi's Administrative Assistant ([admin@etzhaim.org](mailto:admin@etzhaim.org))
- For questions regarding payment of B'nei Mitzvah fees, school fees and dues – Contact the Treasurer ([treasurer@etzhaim.org](mailto:treasurer@etzhaim.org))

## B'NEI MITZVAH PROGRAM GOALS

Tree of Life's B'nei Mitzvah program rests on three main pillars: (1) Jewish literacy and knowledge; (2) community; and (3) a sense of personal accomplishment.

Based on these three pillars, the B'nei Mitzvah program aims:

1. To strengthen the student's familiarity with the Shabbat worship service and Hebrew liturgy. At the time of their B'nei Mitzvah, students should be able to:
  - a. On Friday evening and Saturday morning lead the Sh'ma – V'ahavta
  - b. On Friday evening receive his/her first tallit and say the tallit blessing and recite the Kiddush over the wine and the Motzi over the challah
  - c. On Saturday morning chant the blessings before and after the Torah reading and chant about 10-12 verses from the Torah scroll. Also, on Saturday morning chant the Haftarah blessings and about 6-8 verses from the Haftarah.
  - d. On Saturday morning read a sermon. The sermon should speak to the Bar/Bat mitzvah's life experience. It is about the child first, Judaism second. Please consider revising any sermon that begins with the words "My Torah portion is about..." Also, please consider revising any sermon that ends with the words "I want to thank mom, dad, rabbi..." Integrate the Torah portion and influential persons organically into the heart of the sermon rather than just announce them.
2. To create an ongoing sense of community at TOL for students and their families so that they can develop a deep and lasting connection with the synagogue, the staff and the Jewish people. This sense of belonging will lead to a desire to remain involved in their community and continue to participate in Jewish life after they become Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
3. To enable students to work to their full potential, feel a sense of significant accomplishment, enhanced maturity and a sense of responsibility for one's self and others. As such, students will actively engage in *tikkun olam* as a way of demonstrating their acceptance of this responsibility.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR BECOMING B'NEI MITZVAH AT TREE OF LIFE

Students become eligible for B'nei Mitzvah upon:

1. Continuous enrollment in one of our age-appropriate youth education programs for at least two consecutive years. In addition, attendance in one of our youth education programs is required for the entire school year in which a child becomes B'nei Mitzvah.
2. Reaching their 13th birthday (in either the Jewish or secular calendar). Some girls are eligible to become a Bat Mitzvah at their 12<sup>th</sup> birthday.

For families new to the area, enrollment in another accredited Hebrew and Judaica program (in another synagogue) for the requisite years will be accepted toward TOL's two-year requirement.

### ***PLEASE NOTE***

Students who become B'nei Mitzvah at Tree of Life are strongly encouraged to continue their Jewish education. Becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah is not a conclusion, but an important milestone on the Jewish journey of lifelong learning.

## FEES

To support the special instruction your child will receive throughout the B'nei Mitzvah preparation process, Tree of Life assesses a B'nei Mitzvah fee to cover the costs of prayer classes and tutoring prior to beginning study with the Rabbi. Please be advised that the current fee for members and their extended families is \$500 for each child. For non-members, the current fee is \$1,000 for each child. This fee will be added to the statement you receive. The amount is to be paid in full when your child begins his or her tutoring. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Treasurer.

## ATTENDANCE AND PRACTICING

We expect your child to be regularly practicing at home between tutoring appointments. We recommend practicing at least 30 minutes per day, six days per week. We also require notice of 24 hours, if you are going to miss a tutoring appointment or prayer class (last-minute illness is an excused absence). Please keep your child home if s/he is sick.

## **B'NEI MITZVAH EXPECTATIONS**

On the day of his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the student becomes the teacher as s/he stands on the bimah alongside the Rabbi. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will help the clergy lead the service, chant Torah and Haftarah and teach the congregation in his/her D'var Torah and/or D'var Haftarah. While every student is different, making each service is unique, students typically fulfill the following service components.

### **SERVICE**

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will lead the prayers alongside the Rabbi and, if there are two B'nei Mitzvah on the same date, alongside his/her partner. Leading prayers includes the wine and bread blessings both on Friday evening and Saturday morning. Additional information is available from the Rabbi.

We wish to remind you that flash photography and the throwing of candies are prohibited during services.

### **TORAH READING**

Each Bar/Bat Mitzvah student will typically chant ten to twelve verses from the Torah scroll divided up by three aliyot, during which family honorees are called up to recite the blessings before and after the chanting from the Torah scroll. Your family will have the responsibility to designate people who will have an aliyah and recite the blessings over the Torah. You may invite any number of people per Aliyah, and a non-Jewish family member may accompany Jewish family members at an aliyah.

### **HAFTARAH READING**

Each Torah portion has a corresponding Haftarah portion (a reading from the Prophets). Each student will read six to eight verses.

### **SERMON**

Each student will be given the opportunity to teach the congregation about the Torah or Haftarah portion. The student will work with Rabbi to find a meaningful connection between the portion and the student's life. See the discussion under program goals.

## THE PREPARATION PROCESS

**Approximately 24 months prior to your child's 13th birthday, you will receive a Bar/Bat Mitzvah date packet containing the following items:**

1. A letter notifying you of your child's current eligibility for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. This letter will explain the complete process for securing a Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.
2. A list of all students at TOL who are eligible to become B'nei Mitzvah in the same year as your son or daughter. This list will include birthdates and phone numbers.
3. A form to fill out and return to us, letting us know your date preferences and if there is more than one family requesting the same date you may have an opportunity to request a specific B'nei Mitzvah partner for your child.
4. Instructions explaining how to fill out the forms and what happens after you have filled them out.

All children become B'nei Mitzvah in a congregational worship service — no service is a private event. Therefore, when young people become B'nei Mitzvah the joy of our community is increased.

Once you have selected a date for the B'nei Mitzvah ceremony, the next step is the actual service preparation process. A great deal of preparation has already been done by your Bar/Bat Mitzvah-to-be in TOL's youth education programs. S/he probably already knows a great deal of the service and has some facility with the prayers s/he will be leading. The best way for your entire family to prepare for the B'nei Mitzvah ceremony is to attend services at TOL regularly, particularly the full Torah service on Shabbat mornings during which the Rabbi chants from the Torah and the Haftarah. Through regular service attendance, your family will learn the prayers and the prayer melodies and become familiar with the B'nei Mitzvah ceremony.

The best way for your family to prepare for the B'nei Mitzvah of your child, and to help your child become comfortable with the service protocols, is to regularly attend services at TOL, particularly the full Torah service on Saturday mornings, during which the Rabbi chants from the Torah and from the Haftarah.

**The final preparation process generally follows the timeline below:**

### 24 MONTHS BEFORE

Religious school - The TOL Religious school program is an important part of the preparation process. Regular attendance for the two years prior to the B'nei Mitzvah ceremony is essential for your child to have a successful experience. Additional information on TOL Religious School is available from the Education Committee.

### 12 MONTHS BEFORE

Individual Tutoring - Approximately six months before the ceremony, the student will begin weekly tutoring with the Rabbi to learn the Torah and Haftarah portion that s/he will be chanting and how to

chant from the Torah and Haftarah. With the Rabbi, s/he will begin preparing the D'var Torah. These sessions are typically 30 to 60-minute one-on-one classes.

Family Meeting – Approximately twelve months before the B'nei Mitzvah ceremony, there will be a meeting with the Rabbi for the student and parents to address any questions or concerns. This meeting also serves as an opportunity to check in about the process thus far and to look ahead for what to expect as the process continues. At this meeting, the Rabbi will review general study and preparation guidelines for each Bar/Bat Mitzvah student.

### THREE MONTHS BEFORE

Bimah Practices – During the last three months, students will meet in the Sanctuary on the bimah with the Rabbi and, in certain situations, with the student's partner (co-B'nei Mitzvah) in 60 – 75-minute sessions to become comfortable with the space, practice reading from the Torah scroll and gain comfort in singing with their partner while working through the entire service. During this time, the student will polish his/her Torah and Haftarah portions and prayers with the Rabbi.

Parent Meetings - During the last six weeks, parents will meet once with the Rabbi to discuss honors for your family and friends who will be called to the bimah during the service. Parents will also meet once with the Rabbi to discuss the blessing for their student. Each meeting is 30 minutes.

### TWO WEEKS BEFORE

Family Practice – The B'nei Mitzvah students and their parents' practice on the bimah with the Rabbi for a final rehearsal. This practice is for the student and his/her immediate family.

### THE FRIDAY EVENING BEFORE

The Friday evening immediately prior to the B'nei Mitzvah service, your family will participate in the Shabbat evening service by helping to lead the Shabbat candle lighting and Kiddush. Our B'nei Mitzvah leads the chanting of the Friday evening Kiddush, V'ahavta and Motzi. It is traditional to present a *tallit* (prayer shawl) to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah, on this, the first day when he or she is permitted to wear one. It is fitting for a family member or close friend to present the *tallit* and address the young adult with appropriate words relating to the significance of the occasion.

It is also customary for the family, together with the assistance of friends to provide the Oneg Shabbat on Friday evening, consisting of some desserts, fruit and or cheese and nuts together with kosher wine and grape juice, and a challah

### THE DAY OF THE B'NEI MITZVAH CEREMONY

Enjoy!

## IMPORTANT QUESTIONS REGARDING B'NEI MITZVAH PREPARATION

### **What if my child has special learning needs?**

If your child has special learning needs, please contact the Rabbi to discuss B'nei Mitzvah study arrangements. If your child is enrolled in our Religious school or B'nei Mitzvah programs, the Rabbi should be made aware of your child's learning needs. He will accordingly plan that your child starts her/his B'nei Mitzvah studies earlier than six months prior to her/his date. If you are not sure if your child should start learning earlier, please feel free to make an appointment with the Rabbi so that he might evaluate your child's Hebrew progress. The Rabbi will decide with you the best starting date for your child. Special learning needs should not be a deterrent to your child's achieving this important Jewish milestone. At TOL we are committed to offering the opportunity to celebrate becoming B'nei Mitzvah to all of our children.

### **What if I want my child or my family to go out of town for several weeks during the six months prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah?**

As you can appreciate, it is important that your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah study be a priority during the six months prior to your date. When B'nei Mitzvah study is interrupted for two or more consecutive weeks, the study process may be compromised. These concerns may require you to modify camp schedules, travel plans, and family vacations.

If a student misses more than two consecutive weeks of B'nei Mitzvah study, there will be a charge, in addition to the B'nei Mitzvah fee, for each half-hour session to cover the extra tutor/teacher time.

### **What if my child could benefit from outside tutoring in addition to the tutoring s/he will receive at TOL? How will I know if this is the case?**

Sometimes, for a variety of reasons, students benefit from working with other tutors in our community in addition to TOL's B'nei Mitzvah tutors. If our Rabbi or religious school tutors believe that a student could use some extra help with structuring her/his study time, or with Hebrew, they will recommend extra tutoring to the student and to you. There are wonderful tutors in our community who can supplement the teaching a student is receiving from TOL tutors. A list of these teachers and their fees will be made available to you should the need for extra tutoring arise.

### **May a B'nei Mitzvah student work only with tutors outside of TOL?**

No. B'nei Mitzvah students must work with TOL tutors and with the Rabbi. This time spent together enables those of us at TOL to come to know our students as individuals. We value these relationships very highly and look forward to creating them. It is the time we spend with each individual student that enables us to personalize every B'nei Mitzvah experience.

## THE CEREMONY

### INCLUDING AND HONORING NON-JEWISH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

It is the goal of our congregation to balance many aspects of kavod, giving honor and respect, as we formulate the role of non-Jewish parent and family members in our congregational worship. The following considerations all play a role in guiding our thinking:

Judaism is both a universalistic and a particularistic faith tradition. While many of its central ideas are shared by the great faith traditions of the world, its prayers, its holy language and many of its practices are particularistic — unique to the Jewish people. These holy deeds are incumbent upon Jews as a way of life but are not binding on non-Jews.

Some of our words of prayer are particularistic. Certain prayers, such as the blessings before and after reading from the Torah, refer to the particular obligations Jews owe to God. Moreover, some actions also fall into this category (for example, lifting the Torah into the air, hagbahah). While those who are not Jews are welcome to say these blessings at home or along with the congregation, it is not considered fitting (as it is not their obligation) for them to lead the congregation in these blessings. Though the parallel is not perfect, a Christian or Buddhist or Muslim would not lead Jews in the performance of a mitzvah, just as a Jew would not lead a Christian in taking communion or lead the call to worship in a mosque.

On the other hand, certain prayers, such as Motzi, do not contain these particularistic words. These prayers are appropriate for anyone to say. Moreover, there are other actions, such as opening the Ark or dressing the Torah, which may be performed by any person your family would like to honor.

Our custom is that every Jewish male serving in a leadership role during the service on Saturday morning wear a kippah (skullcap) and a tallit (prayer shawl).

Non-Jewish guests are permitted but not required to wear a kippah and tallit.

The following are some specific examples:

1. What the bar/bat mitzvah or a Jewish guest (potentially accompanied by a non-Jewish spouse) may do Friday evening
  - a. Light candles
  - b. V'shamru
  - c. Adon Olam
2. What anyone may do Friday evening
  - a. Announce the Hebrew name of the bar/bat mitzvah, especially if it's new
  - b. Read an English text from Psalms, e.g. "Let the heavens rejoice," "Exalt Adonai our God," "The righteous bloom like a date-palm"
  - c. Read the English text or interpretive version of a prayer, e.g. "Blessed are You ... who speaks the evening into being," "Grant, O God, that we lie down in peace"
3. What the bar/bat mitzvah or a Jewish guest (potentially accompanied by a non-Jewish spouse) may do Saturday morning

- a. Remove Torah from the ark
  - b. Parade Torah around the sanctuary
  - c. Torah blessings
  - d. Torah lifting (hagbahah)
  - e. Torah dressing (g'lilah)
  - f. Replace the Torah in the ark
  - g. Ein Keloheinu
  - h. Kiddush
4. What anyone may do Saturday morning
- a. Read an English text from Psalms, e.g. "Happy are those who dwell in Your house," "Hallelujah! Praise God in God's sanctuary"
  - b. Read the English text or interpretive version of a prayer, e.g. "Praised are You... Creator of light and darkness"
  - c. Open/close ark at beginning of Torah service
  - d. Parental speech after young person's sermon
  - e. Open/close ark at end of Torah service

You will have an opportunity to discuss your family's honors in detail during your honors meeting with the Rabbi.

### EXAMPLES OF SERVICE HONOR ASSIGNMENTS

On Shabbat, there will generally be three aliyot of Torah read. An aliyah typically consists of three verses of Torah. Any number of people may be called up for an aliyah (Torah blessing). Each B'nei Mitzvah family may choose "Torah blessers" for three aliyot. The third aliyah is usually given to the parents of the Bat/Bar Mitzvah.

The family of the B'nei Mitzvah who reads the first three aliyot may offer friends and family the honors of opening the Ark, lifting and dressing the Torah once in the service, opening and closing the Ark twice in the service, or other opportunities. Any number of family and/or friends to lead the Motzi.

The B'nei Mitzvah and Rabbi will lead many of the prayers together; some will be divided between the two.

Torah scrolls will be passed "from generation to generation" and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah will carry a scroll through the congregation.

### PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES AT THE B'NEI MITZVAH CEREMONY

**Parent support is essential throughout the entire preparation. This includes encouraging daily practice sessions, timely arrival at sessions with the tutor and regularly attending Shabbat services.**

- If the family would like flowers on the bimah on the day of the service, it is their responsibility to purchase them and arrange for their placement.
- Many families order specially imprinted *kippot* in honor of the occasion. This is in no way obligatory and you may use the congregation's ample supply.
- If desired, a leaflet or pamphlet may be prepared by the family which describes the meaning of Bar or Bat Mitzvah, explains the order of the service and articles found within the synagogue,

and/or contains supplementary readings. The pamphlet may also contain the Torah and Haftarah portions which will be read during services. This material should be approved by the Rabbi prior to printing.

- Many families have found it helpful to designate individuals to serve as ushers to distribute service inserts, kippot, and/or chummashim (bibles). Members of the B'nei Mitzvah class or friends of the family frequently serve in this capacity.
- When the Torah is removed from the *Aron Hakodesh* (ark), the family may choose to pass the scroll from generation to generation, symbolizing the transmission of Judaism, its practices and values, from one generation to the next.
- Aliyyah (Blessings recited before and after the Torah reading) – On Shabbat, there will be three aliyyot of Torah read. An aliyyah normally consists of three or more verses of Torah. Each B'nei Mitzvah reads three aliyyot. Any number of people may be called up for an aliyyah. Each Bar/Bat Mitzvah family may choose people to recite the blessings for three aliyyot. The third aliyyah is usually given to the parents of the B'nei Mitzvah.
- Parents' Blessing — Parents are given the opportunity to bless their child following the child's sermon. The blessing may be written by the parents. Your blessing should be spoken to your child in the presence of the Congregation. However, it is not a speech to the Congregation. This is a very powerful moment for your son or daughter. Please remember that at the celebrations surrounding the service, you will have ample opportunity to speak at length with, and about, your child. However, out of respect for the congregation and the integrity of the communal service, we ask that you keep your blessing to your child during the service brief (one paragraph, no more than half a page in length) and from the heart.
- Kiddush Lunch following B'nei Mitzvah Service – If you are providing a Kiddush lunch following the service, we ask you to include all those attending the service. Whether or not a Kiddush lunch is provided, we ask that you provide a large challah for the Saturday Kiddush. To accommodate the diverse ritual practices within our congregation and because our plates and silverware are kosher, only dairy or pareve items should be served at an Oneg Shabbat and Kiddush luncheons. While kosher wine is used for ritual purposes, other wine may be served for refreshment.
- Assigning Honors to Friends and Family Members – Your family has the opportunity to designate many of the people to be honored in the service during which your child will be called to the Torah for the first time. Our tradition at Tree of Life is to call up no fewer than three and no more than seven people for *aliyyot* (blessings before and after the reading of the Torah). Although *aliyyot* are reserved for Jews who have reached the age of thirteen, a non-Jewish spouse may accompany his or her Jewish partner to the bimah for the recitation of the Torah *b'rachot*.

In addition, one person is needed to serve as *Magbiah/Magbihah*, lifting the scroll at the conclusion of its reading, and another to serve as *Golel/Golelet*, wrapping and dressing the Torah scroll. Someone may also be selected as *Gabbai*, to call up individuals for *aliyyot* and monitor the reading of Torah. Once again, these are reserved for adult Jews.

Younger friends and relatives may assist in opening and closing the ark at the beginning and end of the

Torah service.

- Each family meets with the Rabbi to discuss these honors in the two-four weeks prior to the service, and then turns in the final honors form two weeks before the B'nei Mitzvah service.

***IMPORTANT***

To develop a greater sense of community in the B'nei Mitzvah class, TOL requests that your family attend other B'nei Mitzvah services preceding the service when your child becomes Bar/Bat Mitzvah. We request that your entire immediate family come to the B'nei Mitzvah services. These services are announced in the weekly TOL e-mail blast and the Newsletter.

## ANSWERS TO SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What time do services begin?**

On Friday night, the service begins promptly at 7:30 p.m. Your attendance at the Friday night service before your child's becoming a bar/bat mitzvah is required.

On Saturday or weekday mornings, the service begins at 10:00 a.m. At 9:45 a.m. your family — along with grandparents if you wish — will meet with the Rabbi in his office.

### **What photography or videography is allowed during the service?**

Photographs are not permitted during the service, except from the foyer/library area and photographers and videographers may not block the center aisle nor interfere with services. Flash photographs are not permitted at any time during the service. Please ask your guests not to attempt to take photographs during services.

### **Do we need to bring flowers for the bimah?**

Flowers are not required. However, you and your partner family (in the case of a co-B'nei Mitzvah) may bring in a floral arrangement for the bimah if you choose. Any display or arrangement of flowers may not exceed three feet in height and four feet in width. We encourage families to use a bimah display that reflects their values — for instance, books to be donated to a school or canned goods to be donated to the hungry are also options for a bimah display.

### **What honors are available to my non-Jewish friends and family?**

There are honors in the service that may be offered to non-Jewish family members and friends, while other honors must be performed by Jews. Please see the section titled "Including and Honoring Non-Jewish Family and Friends" and speak with the Rabbi for details. You will have an opportunity to speak in-depth about honors with Rabbi in your meeting.

### **Does the student give a speech?**

B'nei Mitzvah do not give "thank you" speeches during the service. Instead, students will teach the congregation a lesson about their Torah and/or Haftarah portion and will apply these lessons to our life today. See the previous discussion under goals. We encourage students to offer thanks to family members and friends at the party or reception following the service, not during their sermon.

### **How is the service divided between two young people becoming B'nei Mitzvah?**

When two people become B'nei Mitzvah on the same day (a co-B'nei Mitzvah), they will lead most of the service together, joining with our clergy. Our goal is to engage the entire congregation in worship and song so the room is filled with the beautiful sound of voices lifted up together.

Some of the prayers are chanted responsively by the prayer leader and the congregation. These prayers will be divided between the two students becoming B'nei Mitzvah.

We will then take two Torah scrolls out of the Ark and pass them through each family's generations to each B'nei Mitzvah. Each B'nei Mitzvah will carry a Torah around the sanctuary. We will read from one Torah.

The older of the two B'nei Mitzvah will have the honor of reading from the Torah first. The younger of the two will have the honor of reading Haftarah first.

Each of the B'nei Mitzvah will give a sermon. The assignment will be determined by either: 1) the students' preference if they are in agreement; or by 2) the flip of a coin.

Each set of parents will have an opportunity to give a blessing to their son or daughter after their child's sermon.

## INFORMATION TO HELP OUR GUESTS UNDERSTAND AND SHARE IN THE SERVICE

*(Please feel free to copy and mail to invited guests)*

We are delighted that you will be with us to share our joy on this special day.

We appreciate that the service at Tree of Life may be unfamiliar to you and have provided the information below to help add to your understanding and enjoyment.

Services are led from the Bimah (pulpit) at the front of the sanctuary. On the wall of the Bimah is the Holy Ark, which contains the Torah.

Above the Ark is a small light, called the Ner Tamid (Eternal Light), which reminds us of God's constant presence in our midst.

During both the Friday evening services and the Saturday morning services, during the Amidah prayer, you will be asked to face East to pray. We do this to face in the direction of the Jewish Temple which was standing in Jerusalem until it was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E.

### THE TORAH

The Torah is the sacred scroll, hand-inscribed in Hebrew, with the first five books of the Bible (which are referred to in English as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). Our Ark contains several scrolls, each with the same text. It is considered a mitzvah (commandment) to have more than one Torah scroll. Whenever the Ark is opened or the Torah is lifted, the congregation rises to show respect for our holy teachings. It is our custom to never turn our back to the Torah scroll. It is a special honor to be invited to open and close the Ark during the service.

### DRESS AND DECORUM

You may notice that some people in the congregation have their heads covered with a kippah (Hebrew for skullcap; also called a Yarmulke in Yiddish). Wearing a kippah is not required. It is a sign of reverence, indicating our awareness that there is One who is above us. Some adult Jewish worshippers also wear a tallit (prayer shawl). The fringes (tzitzit) of the prayer shawl remind us of the mitzvot (commandments) in the Torah. See the previous section for our customs regarding the attire of those who come upon the bimah to lead services.

Some of you have asked about the dress code. Dress as you would for any special occasion, and be mindful of the holiness of the place — boys should wear a jacket or a nice sweater, no T-shirts or jeans please, and girls should wear skirts, dresses or a nice pantsuit (no very short skirts or bare shoulders). Please be aware, as well, that loud talking, giggling and gum chewing are inappropriate in our sanctuary. We ask that you turn off all cell phones so as not to disturb the service.

### THE SERVICE

Our Shabbat worship service is a joyous and peaceful celebration of the seventh day. It or a Torah study program, takes place every Saturday morning, whether or not a young person is becoming Bar/Bat

Mitzvah that day. Jewish worship in a Reform synagogue is expressed through songs and prayers, some ancient and some contemporary, in both Hebrew and English.

You will pick up our Siddur (prayer book) in the back of the pew within the sanctuary. It opens from right to left, as Hebrew is written. Our Siddur explains the reasons and history behind many of the prayers and contains alternate readings. It also prompts you, explaining when to sit, stand, etc. (be sure to read the text insertions in "boxes" for these commentaries and explanations).

The service is highly participatory — the congregation is meant to be actively involved rather than silent spectators. Be sure to use the prayer book, and to join in as much as you can.

If you arrive a few moments early, take a moment to look through the Siddur to acquaint yourself with the service. Many of the prayers and songs appear in Hebrew, English, and transliteration (the English phonetic version of the Hebrew). So even if you do not know Hebrew, you can say the Hebrew words by sounding out the transliteration.

About Children - The service will last about two hours, depending on whether there are special events taking place that day (a baby naming, prayer for a new month, a blessing for a couple who are about to be married, special prayers for a festival, etc.). The service may be a bit long for youngsters. Folks with children usually sit at the back or sides of the sanctuary, so they can get outside easily if they wish. Feel free to take your child out or elsewhere in the building if he or she becomes restless.

## STRUCTURE OF THE SERVICE

A Jewish worship service is a collection or set of prayers grouped into major sections. These headings are indicated in the prayer book.

It's the Sabbath - the day of rest and refreshment of the soul. Our service opens with song, followed by some study, psalms of praise and blessings that remind us of the miracles of daily life.

Friday Night - Our Friday night service begins with the lighting of the Shabbat candles. The mother of our B'nei Mitzvah has the honor of lighting the Shabbat candles. The Friday night kiddush will be chanted by the B'nei Mitzvah, preceded by an English reading led by their fathers.

The Call to Worship - The service officially begins with the chanting of Barchu ("Let us Praise"). It is a "call and response" prayer. The Rabbi invites the congregation to praise God, and the congregation responds, while bowing, then stands straight. This gesture is an expression of humility in the presence of God.

The Translated Prayer: "Praised be the Holy One, the Infinite, now and forever!"

The Sh'ma and its Blessings - The Call to Worship is followed by a blessing that acknowledges God as creator of the universe (Yotzer Or, "The One Who Creates Light" in the morning service, or Ma'ariv Aravim, "The One Who Brings On The Evening" in the evening service), and a second blessing that thanks God for showing love to the Jewish people through the gift of Torah (Ahavah Rabbah, "With Great Love" in the morning service, or Ahavat Olam, "Eternal Love" in the evening service). These

blessings lead into the Sh'ma, the central affirmation of Jewish faith, taken from our Torah - Deuteronomy 6:4–9.

The words of the Sh'ma are the last words that an observant Jew says at night, and the last words spoken before dying. It states the Jewish belief that God is singular and unique, and proclaims our duty to love, study and teach God's word. Translation: "Hear, O Israel, the Eternal is our God; the Eternal is One." You may notice that some people close or cover their eyes while reciting the Sh'ma. This custom helps us shut out external distractions and focus on the meaning of the words.

Following the Sh'ma is the G'ullah (Redemption) prayer, which recalls the Israelites' exodus from Egypt and thanks God for helping us survive other dark times in our personal and national life.

The Amidah – The Standing Prayer is said standing, facing east, towards Jerusalem.

It is a central section of our liturgy, evoking what the Jewish people need: to be linked to our ancestors; to believe that there is a reality which transcends the grave; to feel part of God's holiness; to open our heart with sincerity to God; to give thanks; to find fulfillment, peace and shalom (wholeness).

The Amidah consists of seven blessings on the Sabbath (on the weekdays there are 19 blessings). We recite the first few blessings together, then continue individually in silence. This is a period for personal prayer or meditation. If you wish, you may follow the traditional liturgy, or read the English prayers, poems and meditations in the Siddur, or take time for your own thoughts and prayers. When you finish, you may be seated.

During the Friday evening service at TOL, it is our custom to offer a Prayer for Healing (Mi she-berach) on behalf of those who suffer from illness of body or spirit. Feel free to say aloud the name of someone for whom you are praying when the Rabbi invites you to. After the Prayer for Healing, the Rabbi will invoke God's blessing upon those becoming B'nei Mitzvah and upon all children who are present who have a parent present in the sanctuary.

The Torah Service — The centerpiece of the Shabbat morning service is the reading of the Torah and a text from the Prophets (the Haftarah). The Torah, containing the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, is a link with Jewish history and with Jews throughout the world, who will read the same Torah portion on this day. Standing before the Ark, the parents of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah offer their child some personal words of blessing, before passing the Torah through the generations and placing it in their child's arms. Opening the Ark during the Torah service is considered to be a great honor. This honor is often given to friends or family of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

It is customary to carry the Torah scroll through the synagogue for everyone to see and touch. This Hakkafah (circling) recalls the Israelites' journey through the wilderness; it also demonstrates that the Torah belongs to all of us, not just those who stand on the bimah. The congregation sings as the Torah is carried through our midst. At this time, it is our custom to touch the Torah with the fringes of our prayer shawl or the corner of their prayer book, rather than with bare hands, and then kiss the fringes or the book. This shows our love for our ancient and holy teaching. We honor the Torah by never turning our back on it, so it is proper to turn around and follow the journey of the Torah, watching as it is carried through the congregation.

The young person celebrating their Bar or Bat Mitzvah (the age of religious responsibility) will be called for the first time for an aliyah (the honor of reciting the blessing before and after the Torah reading) and will read from the Torah. Reading Torah is not easy, Hebrew is difficult: It reads from right to left and there are no vowels or punctuation in the Torah scroll. Torah readers must also learn a special chant (trope) for the public reading of Torah.

The B'nei Mitzvah will deliver a sermon—a commentary on the weekly Torah portion, which teaches about some element of Jewish history, values or practice, and applies the lesson to our lives today. The sermon may also include a commentary on the Haftarah. This ability to study and teach Torah or Haftarah is a mark of maturity and is an honor accorded those who have attained the age of religious responsibility in the Jewish community.

The weekly Torah portion is divided into sections, each preceded and followed by a blessing. Friends and family, as well as members of our congregation, are honored by being invited to recite these blessings. The congregation follows along with the reading, in Hebrew and/or English, in the Chummash (from the Hebrew word for “five”), a book containing the Hebrew text of the five books of the Torah, Haftarah, Commentary and an English translation.

During the Torah reading, our congregation offers a Prayer for Healing (Mi she-berach) on behalf of those who suffer from illness of body or spirit. Feel free to say aloud the name of someone for whom you are praying when the Rabbi invites you to. After the Prayer for Healing the Rabbi will invoke God's blessing upon those becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah and upon all children who are present and who have a parent present in the sanctuary. Once the Torah reading is complete, the Torah is lifted into the air (hagbahah) and dressed (g'lilah). Lifting and dressing the Torah are considered to be great honors. These honors are often performed by friends and family of the B'nei Mitzvah.

The Haftarah (reading from the Prophets) is usually linked thematically to the Torah portion for the week. Following this introduction to the portion, the Haftarah will be chanted, along with the blessings that precede and follow the reading. The congregation follows along in the Chumash.

At the conclusion of the Haftarah chanting, the Torah will be returned to the Ark.

Concluding Prayers—Concluding prayers begin with the Aleinu, which acknowledges that God has given the Jewish people a unique destiny: to strive for the repair and healing of our broken world (tikkun olam). After the Aleinu, we recite the Mourners' Kaddish, to honor the memory of those who have died. The Kaddish does not mention death, but praises God and acknowledges the precious gift of life.

## **KIDDUSH AND MOTZI**

Following the service, there will be some special presentations to the B'nei Mitzvah. We also join together in Kiddush, the blessing over kosher wine or grape juice (a symbol of joy in Judaism), and Motzi, the blessing which thanks God for bringing forth bread from the earth.

### ***REMINDER***

TOL's Photography Policy on Shabbat — Please refrain from flash photography during our Friday evening and Saturday morning Shabbat services. Please set up all cameras, tripods, and video cameras just

outside the sanctuary entrance, in the library area and do not block the center aisle. Please ask your guests to refrain from taking photographs during the services. This will enhance the worship experience for all in attendance.

Once again, we are delighted that you will be sharing this special day with us! We truly appreciate your show of support, respect, and love. Please contact the Rabbi if you have any questions or concerns.

## WHAT NON-JEWS NEED TO KNOW

*This material is adapted from Putting God on the Guest List: How to Reclaim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah by Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin, published by Jewish Lights Publishing, P.O. Box 237, Sunset Farm Offices, Rte. 4, Woodstock, VT 05091. The publisher grants permission to you to copy this for distribution to your guests.*

Jews and Christians look at many things differently. We have a different theology, a different liturgy, a different holiday cycle, and a different life cycle.

But Jews and Christians share certain things, and that sharing is no less profound than the differences. As philosopher Martin Buber once said, "Jews and Christians share a Book and a hope" — a Messianic hope. Jews and Christians "share" the first five books of the Bible. We both believe in a God that can be approached through prayer and worship. We believe in a God who loves and who is revealed through Scripture and holy interventions in history.

Jews and Christians also share a belief in the power of ritual. Rituals make a group distinctive and transmit identify from generation to generation. They dramatize a religious group's beliefs about the world and about how God interacts with it.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah means that a thirteen-year-old Jewish child is old enough to perform mitzvot (the commandments of Jewish life). It is one of the most venerable and most potent of Jewish symbols and rituals. When a Jewish child becomes Bar or Bat Mitzvah, he or she publicly reads a section from the Torah, the Five Books of Moses. Each week, every congregation in the Jewish world reads the identical passage. In this way, the youth is linked to the entire Jewish people, regardless of where the thirteen-year-old happens to live. The youth also reads a Haftarah, which is a selection of the weekly section of the prophetic writings—from Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, etc., or from historical books like Judges, Samuel or Kings.

### **There is More to the Service than Meets the Ear**

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony occurs during the Sabbath worship service. The first part of the service ends with the congregation singing Mi Chamochah ("Who is like You among the gods that are worshipped?"). It echoes the song that Moses and the Israelites sang at the shores of the Red Sea when the Israelites had been saved from the Egyptians. The second part of the service ends with a prayer for peace for the Jewish people and for the whole world. During the third section of the service, the Torah is read. The Haftarah, by tradition, must end on a note of *nechemta* (comfort). This portion of the service ends with the implicit hope that all humanity will embrace God's words.

The entire service concludes with two prayers: Aleinu, a triumphant plea that the world will ultimately recognize that there is only one God, and Kaddish, a plaintive mourner's prayer which proclaims that God's Dominion, the fulfillment of God's hopes for the world, will come someday. Kaddish's form and function are closely related to the Lord's Prayer.

The ultimate message of the service is the triumph of hope: Hope for freedom, hope for peace, hope that all our words will end on joyful notes, hope for universal redemption.

## **There is More to the Torah Scroll than Meets the Eye**

The Torah symbolizes the moment when God met the Jewish people at Sinai and made a covenant with us. It reminds us of God's revelation and of God's intervention in human history.

The Torah also symbolizes all that the Jewish people hold sacred: stories, laws, histories, poetry. When a Jewish child reads from the Torah, he or she is enveloped in its heritage, in its power, in the majesty of Sinai. He or she says to the community: "I am now thirteen years old. I am now ready to fulfill the covenant with God by being responsible for performing mitzvot, the obligations of Jewish life."

## **Many Ritual Moments of Becoming Are Similar**

Most religions—many cultures—have their moments of becoming. It is a moment when an individual goes from childhood to maturity, a moment of sacred initiation.

Historically, age 13 was when a child was considered to be spiritually and legally mature — in other words, responsible for their own choices. There is a prayer that has been recited by parents thanking God for releasing them from responsibility for the child who has now become Bar or Bat Mitzvah. At a b'rit milah or baby naming, the parents make a pledge that their infant will grow up to study Torah. Now the child takes that responsibility on him or herself.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a symbolic way to usher a child into the adult Jewish community, a way for the entire community to say to that no-longer-child, "All we cherish, all we hope to be, the sum total of our visions, we place them in your hands. May God make you ready. May God make you strong."

## CELEBRATIONS

This section is devoted to helping you plan your celebration. We delight in celebrating when our sons and daughters reach this important milestone in their lives. The kind of celebration that is appropriate for your family can only be determined by you, your family and your partner family together. We offer here some thoughts, guidelines and practical information that can guide you through this process.

### **What Makes a Good Party?**

Think about all the parties you have ever been to in your life — the big and the small. What made the meaningful events meaningful? What was it that contributed to the dissatisfaction you experienced at other events?

Was it great to see Aunt Rose? How did it feel having all of your family together in one place at the same time? Did good friends bring special meaning to the event or to the day? Did watching Bubbe and Zeyde dance together “make” the party?

Was the music too loud? Could people who hadn’t seen each other in years actually carry on a conversation together? Were there too many distractions? When you wanted to talk to someone, were they always busy getting a henna tattoo or having their picture taken? Did you keep asking yourself, “Wow, I wonder what Herb (or Sally or Joe) spent on this?”

Some questions you will need to consider in planning your celebration are:

- Do you want to have a party, or would you rather take a trip to Israel, to Jewish New York or someplace else? Would your son or daughter enjoy going somewhere special with friends?
- Do you prefer a simple Oneg Shabbat, a buffet Kiddush lunch or a more elaborate luncheon with assigned seating? Or are you more of the evening party type?
- Does your family do best at small gatherings? Or do you like big affairs?
- Does it make sense to have a buffet Kiddush lunch and then have just a kids’ party later on?

Perhaps the most important questions to ask are:

- How can we celebrate in a meaningful way?
- How can we retain the religious and emotional significance of the event?
- Does our celebration express the values of community, family, caring and tz’dakah?

### **Invitations**

Choosing invitations is one of the more fun activities associated with your celebration. There are myriad designs to choose from. Some things to consider as you look are:

- What kind of paper are the invitations printed on? Some companies use recycled paper, which may be a nice step toward the mitzvah of cherishing the earth’s resources. You may wish to take this a step further and consider electronic invitations, eliminating the need for paper or stamps.
- Is there any Hebrew on the invitation? Does it look like it has something to do with B’nei Mitzvah?

- Can you print an especially meaningful line from your son's or daughter's Torah portion on the invitation?
- Have you used your son's or daughter's Hebrew name, as well as their English name?
- As you choose the wording, remember that someone "becomes" Bar or Bat Mitzvah; they do not "have" a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. We, therefore, don't invite people to the Bar /Bat Mitzvah. Instead, we invite them to the community service during which a young person "will celebrate becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah," or "will be called to the Torah as Bar or Bat Mitzvah."

### **Communicating Your Values and Project**

Many TOL students and their families have sent additional notes with their invitations in order to communicate the Jewish values on which they wish to focus. These values have included expectations for dress and conduct during the worship service, Judaic information for non-Jewish guests (for further information, see "Information to Help Our Guests Understand and Share in the Service," "What Non-Jews Need to Know," and suggestions for giving tz'dakah in lieu of gifts. It might also be appropriate to mention your tikkun olam project and suggest ways of giving that reflect the focus of your project. For instance, if you helped out at the local Humane Society, you might suggest that guests give to the Humane Society or Israeli Guide Dogs for the Blind Society. If you helped serve food at a shelter, you might suggest that contributions be made in your honor to that shelter, or to Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger. See the following pages for Jewish giving suggestions. We encourage families to use a bimah display that reflects their values — for instance, books to be donated to a school or canned goods to be donated to the hungry.

Following are some examples of notices that students in our congregation have included in their invitations.

*In an enclosed, photocopied letter:*

Dear Friends and Family,

In thinking about what is important to me in becoming a Jewish adult, one of the things I feel is very important is giving to charities. Tikkun olam, which means "repairing the world," and g'milut chasadim, which means "acts of loving-kindness," are Jewish values I think are very meaningful. I enjoyed working in a soup kitchen this year and hope to work with underprivileged preschoolers next year. I also enjoyed giving some of my allowance each Chanukkah to various charities. Three organizations I especially want to help this year are described below.

[Jewish and non-Jewish giving suggestions were listed here, with 3-5 sentences of description that the Bat Mitzvah wrote herself.]

So, if you are thinking of giving me a gift in honor of my Bat Mitzvah, I wanted you to know that I would greatly appreciate a contribution to one of these organizations.

Thanks, and Love, Rachel

*Or enclosed as a card that matches the invitation:*

Dear Family and Friends,

Your presence on July 14<sup>th</sup> is the only present I need! If you would like to do more, I would appreciate your contribution to the

American Diabetes Association, American Heart

Association, American Cancer Society, or a charity of your choice. See you soon!

Love, David

### **Budget**

Every family's celebration budget will be different. Important items to consider when putting your budget together include invitations, postage, food, music, flowers or other centerpieces, photographer, videographer, site fees, decorations, entertainment, and tz'dakah. Including tz'dakah in your celebration budget will ensure that you do not forget to plan for it. TOL encourages every family to make tz'dakah a part of your celebration. There are many ways to do this. You might create centerpieces for your tables using toys or books or canned goods to donate. You might encourage guests to make a donation in lieu of a gift. You might make a donation to MAZON — A Jewish Response to Hunger — or some other organization. Be creative — there are so many opportunities for tikkun olam on this joyous occasion!

For more in-depth celebration planning, a good resource is *The Complete Bar/Bat Mitzvah Book* by Patti Moskowitz (much of the material in this section has been adapted from Patti's book).

### **OUR EXPECTATIONS**

Building friendship and community is a very important part of life at TOL. Toward this end, we encourage our young people to include their entire Religious School class at the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration. No one likes to feel left out, and by encouraging students to reach out to one another, we fulfill the mitzvot of kindness and concern for others.

At TOL, the Kiddush lunch immediately following the Shabbat morning service is open to everyone who joined the Shabbat service, extending the joy of celebrating Shabbat together. By including the congregation, we avoid making any of our members feel unwelcome on Shabbat morning and build ties to the greater TOL community as well. In practice, families should expect and plan for members of the community to attend.

### **CELEBRATING AT TOL**

The TOL Social Hall is our dedicated space for a Kiddush luncheon following the Shabbat services, as well as afternoon celebrations. We encourage families to discuss their intentions for the Kiddush lunch as part of choosing a date. There is a nominal fee for use of the Social Hall. Please contact the Rabbi's Administrative Assistant in the TOL office for our current fee schedule and to schedule your event. Additionally, the Education Committee is available as a resource for families who would like to discuss the planning process in general.

## USE OF SYNAGOGUE FACILITIES FOR YOUR CELEBRATION

In order to reserve and use the facilities, all member families who contract for events at TOL must be current in their payments of dues.

A restocking fee of \$75 will be charged for use of TOL supplied paper plates and Kiddush supplies (cups, kosher grape juice, and kosher wine). This one-time charge will cover both the Friday night Oneg and the Saturday Kiddush.

No candles are permitted except Shabbat and ceremonial candles.

**Catering Regulations – please also read the TOL kitchen policy (<https://www.etzheim.org/worship-events/ritual-policy/> THE SOCIAL HALL AND KITCHEN) which contains the latest regulations.**

1. All caterers must provide proof of liability insurance to TOL one month prior to the event.
2. Any food or drinks delivered to TOL in advance of the event must be clearly marked with the host family's name. Caterer/congregant has to make arrangements prior to delivery.
3. No shellfish, pork or other treif may be served at TOL at any time. In addition, during Passover, no baked goods containing leaven may be served. No meat and dairy may be served together in the same appetizer or entrée, i.e. no cheeseburgers, meat lasagna, etc. As previously stated, only dairy or pareve should be served.
4. No food service is allowed in the Sanctuary
5. All garbage must be securely wrapped and put in the containers outside the main kitchen back door. All leftover food must be removed from the kitchen and refrigerators.
6. Loading and unloading of catering vans are to be done with a minimum of noise and conversation.
7. Catering personnel may not gather/congregate outside either of the kitchens to talk, eat or smoke, to avoid noise disturbing the neighbors
8. The stove, kitchen counters, and movable carts must be cleaned after use. The floor must be swept and mopped.
9. Caterers are given one-hour after the completion of the event to clean up and to remove all their equipment, supplies, and utensils.
10. The use of tape, nails, or any metal fastener on or into any surface in this building is prohibited.

### **Band or Other Music Regulations**

1. All noise must be kept to a level that is within legal limits and which does not generate complaints from neighboring residents.
2. No outdoor sound amplification of music for social events is allowed.
3. The back main kitchen door and the Social Hall doors to the outside must be kept closed at all times when music is being played.
4. The host family is responsible for monitoring compliance with these rules and shall cooperate with TOL if they are informed that the noise level must be lowered.

## **Use of the Sanctuary**

1. After a ceremony, the Sanctuary area will be closed off and no one may enter except for photographic purposes. No food or drink may be brought into the Sanctuary.
2. Flowers for the bimah cannot exceed the 36-inch height of the reading table, to avoid interfering with the service. No nails or tape may be used to affix flowers or decorations to anything on the bimah. Please inform your florist.
3. No throwing of flower petals, rice, candy, or any other item is allowed in any part of the facility, or on the synagogue grounds during B'nei Mitzvot.
4. No flowers or ribbons may be taped to the pews in the Sanctuary as the tape damages the wood.
5. Videotaping or still photography is prohibited in the Sanctuary during a religious service but is permitted in the Library area located directly behind the Sanctuary. Artificial lights and flash attachments are not permitted. All equipment shall be placed so as to avoid interfering with access to or exit from the Sanctuary. The view of those seated in the Library area must remain unobstructed. Photographers should remain stationary and refrain from using audible camera shutters or mechanically adjusting equipment whenever Hebrew is being spoken or sung and especially during any standing Hebrew prayer.

## GLOSSARY

Aliyyah/Aliyyot (plural)	Literally, “going up.” Refers to ascending the Bimah for an honor to recite the blessings before and after the Torah reading and to the Torah reading itself.
Bar/Bat Mitzvah	Ceremony for 13-year old or older boy or girl welcoming him or her into the adult community. Literally, “child of the commandment”.
Bimah	The raised platform in the synagogue from which the Torah is read
B’nei Mitzvah	Plural of Bar/Bat Mitzvah
Challah	Braided egg bread eaten on Shabbat and festivals
Chummash	From the word “Chamesh,” meaning “five,” as in five books of Torah: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Refers to the books which contain Torah, Haftarah, and commentary.
D’var Torah	Literally, a “word of Torah.” Refers to the interpretation and explanation of the Torah portion which the Rabbi and Bar/Bat Mitzvah deliver.
D’var Haftarah	The interpretation and explanation of the Haftarah portion.
G’lilah	Dressing the Torah
G’milut Chasadim	Acts of lovingkindness
Haftarah	A section from the books of the prophets which is assigned to a particular Shabbat or Festival. Haftarot (plural) often are attached to a particular Torah portion, but may instead be attached to the day. For example, there is a special Haftarah portion for the Shabbat between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.
Hagbahah	Lifting the Torah into the air after the reading is completed
Kavod	Honor, esteem
Kiddush	Blessing said over the wine
Mitzvah	Commandment
Morashah	Inheritance, legacy
Motzi	Blessing said over bread, and on Shabbat said over the Challah
Sermon	A speech prepared by a B’nei Mitzvah tying life experiences into D’var Torah or D’var Haftarah or both
Tallit	Prayer shawl
Tikkun Olam	Repairing the world
Torah	The first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Also known as the five books of Moses.
Trope	In Hebrew, the “Ta’amei ha-Mikra.” Refers to the signs in the Torah and Haftarah text that indicate how the text should be chanted.
Tz’dakah	Righteous giving
V’ahavta	One of the prayers students lead on Friday evening and Saturday morning which follows the Sh’ma and is drawn from Deuteronomy (Deut. 6:5-9)

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