

## BAR/BAT MITZVAH REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELINES

*As Approved by the Board of Trustees June 25, 2013*

### **Introduction**

Almost nothing we do at Temple Beth Or is more important than teaching our students, as they learn to read Hebrew and discover the riches of Judaism. As our sons and daughters prepare to be called to the Torah on the day of their bar/bat mitzvah, we recognize that this is not just a special event in the life of a student or his/her family, but also an occasion to be celebrated by our entire community. For this “coming of age” event represents a commitment by the young person to make Judaism an important part of his or her life in the years to come, and to live by the values that have come down to us through past generations.

In keeping with the spirit of this serious undertaking, the Board of Trustees at Temple Beth Or has adopted these guidelines. It is the Board’s expectation that students and their families will commit themselves to the fulfillment of these requirements as a family priority, even as we look forward to sharing with you and yours a joyous and very special occasion.

### **Requirements**

Although special circumstances can always be handled on an individual basis with the guidance of the rabbi, the following provisions shall generally apply:

- The celebration of bar/bat Mitzvah at Temple Beth Or is a privilege accorded only to members in good standing in accordance with the temple’s Constitution.
- Each child must be 13 years old and registered within the community’s religious school, Kol Ami.
- Each child must have completed at least three years of religious education immediately prior to the bar/bat Mitzvah, including at least two years of Hebrew education. Candidates for bar/bat Mitzvah are expected to be able to read Hebrew comfortably; to lead certain prayers used in worship at Temple Beth Or as ascertained by the rabbi; to learn to read and/or chant suitable portions of Torah and Haftarah, as ascertained by the rabbi.
- Additionally, there are various costs incurred by the temple, which might include musical accompaniment; custodial services; catering or other services associated with a reception or lunch, head-coverings and other costs based on individual arrangements. All such costs shall be borne by the family.
- In making these arrangements, the family should abide by the Facilities Use Guidelines adopted by the temple’s Board of Trustees.

- Temple Beth Or requires all B'nai Mitzvah students (accompanied by at least one parent) to attend at least eight Friday evening Shabbat services at Temple Beth Or and four Shabbat morning services at Temple Beth Or during the one-year period preceding their being called to the Torah.
- Each bar/bat Mitzvah candidate is expected to complete a mitzvah project, in keeping with the core Jewish theme of giving to and helping others. We encourage the student and his/her family to consult with the rabbi at least six months prior to the service, to prepare a suitable community project that involves more than just making a charitable donation.
- During the bar/bat Mitzvah service, the young man or woman will offer a D'var Torah – a rabbinic-style commentary on that week's Torah portion. Working with the rabbi to review suitable commentaries, midrash or other materials, the student's D'var Torah should be approximately 350-500 words. The "speech" should also include a description of the mitzvah project, and may include appropriate expressions of thanks to parents and teachers.
- The student will be expected to lead several prayers during the Friday night service immediately preceding the bar/bat Mitzvah, in addition to those prayers recited and led on Shabbat morning.
- The family will also work with the rabbi to review honors and practices, such as opening/closing the ark; candle lighting; *aliyot* to the Torah, presentation of *tallit* and other aspects of the service.
- It is recommended that the rabbi and family meet approximately three years prior to the anticipated date of the bar/bat Mitzvah to set a date and a schedule of study.

_____	_____
Student	Date
_____	_____
Parent	Date
_____	_____
rabbi	Date

## Guidelines

### WHO ELSE CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE SERVICE?

Honors are an important part of the bar/bat Mitzvah ceremony. Family and friends who are given honors cease to be observers and become active participants. A variety of opportunities exist within the Shabbat morning worship service for family and friends.

Below is a basic guide to honors at Temple Beth Or. The rabbi will review all honors possibilities with the family.

### SPEAKING PARTS: ALIYOT

An aliyah is the act of being called to the Torah. Each Aliyah – there may be between 3-7 in the service – has two parts:

- the blessing before the reading of the Torah;
- the blessing after the reading of the Torah.

Generally speaking, the last aliyah is reserved for the bar/bat mitzvah; the penultimate one is reserved for parents, with prior aliyot going to grandparents and other relatives.

### NON-SPEAKING PARTS

When the ark is opened, the Torah is passed down from grandparent(s) to parent(s) to the bar/bat Mitzvah. Other honors include opening and closing the ark; unwrapping and dressing the Torah; sitting with the Torah during the Haftarah; raising up the Torah as it is wrapped after the reading.

### PARTICIPATION OF NON-JEWS

Temple Beth Or welcomes the participation of non-Jewish family and friends. While there are some limitations, we very much want all of your guests to feel welcome.

Non-Jews may participate in any of the above honors except the handing down of the Torah through the generations, hagbah (the lifting up of the Torah), and the recitation of the Torah blessings. In the instance of an interfaith marriage, both parents are called to the Torah, but typically non-Jewish spouses read the translation while the Jewish spouse recites the blessings. We always permit a non-Jewish parent or grandparent to stand with the family during an aliyah or passing of the Torah. Special circumstances, e.g., following a divorce and remarriage, will be planned after discussion with the rabbi.

## INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNGER SIBLINGS AND CHILDREN

Siblings or other young children may be given age-appropriate honors such as helping to dress the Torah or opening the Ark. Siblings might also help in the Motzi (blessing over the challah) in conjunction with recitation of the kiddush. Older siblings may be given an aliyah.

## PREPARATION FOR BAR/BAT MITZVAH

Generally speaking, lessons in reading Hebrew begin in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, by personal arrangement with the rabbi; learning portions of our standard liturgy follow, along with preparation of specific scriptural readings (Torah and Haftarah portions). Although Temple Beth Or averages only a few b'nai mitzvah in any given year, families are encouraged to set a date as soon as practicable – preferably 2-3 years prior to the occasion – in order to select an appropriate Torah portion and reserved space in the temple.

## ONE-YEAR PREPARATORY MEETING

Approximately one year before your date, the rabbi will meet with the bar/bat Mitzvah student and his or her parents for an introduction to the coming year of study. At this time each student will receive his/her own Torah portion (parashah or sedrah) and other materials, including guidance on a mitzvah project. During the final year prior to the bar/bat mitzvah service the rabbi and families will select English readings for the service; make music arrangements and begin to allocate honors. The rabbi will work with students on a d'var Torah [brief Torah commentary otherwise known as “the speech”], and on chanting Torah and/or Haftarah portions, and the accompanying benedictions in Hebrew.

A final family rehearsal with the rabbi will be held during the week prior to the bar/bat Mitzvah celebration.

### **Additional Considerations**

During the Friday evening (Erev Shabbat) service preceding a bar/bat mitzvah, the student is expected to lead certain prayers, in consultation with the rabbi. Typical prayers include *Bar'chu*; *Sh'ma*; *V'ahavta* and *Avot V'imahot*. The student's mother or other family member is typically invited to light candles on that Shabbat.

## TIMING

The Shabbat morning service begins at 10:00 a.m. and usually lasts until about noon. Temple Beth Or discourages holding b'nai mitzvah services outside of its regular worship schedule. A bar/bat mitzvah service is a communal worship event; holding a so-called “Havdalah” bar/bat mitzvah usually has the effect of turning the service into a private family event, which is antithetical to the idea of welcoming a young person into our community.

## INVITATIONS

When ordering invitations, please specify that the Shabbat morning service begins promptly at 10:00 a.m.

The rabbi can be helpful in providing examples of invitations, Hebrew wording if desired, and wording for special circumstances.

#### KIPPOT/YARMULKES

If desired by the family, personalized kippot/yarmulkes may be ordered through the temple's Sisterhood Gift Shop, or directly from an outside source.

#### PROGRAM

If desired by the family, the rabbi can work with the family to prepare a Torah/Haftarah booklet containing texts of the portions in Hebrew and/or English, and supplementary material about the temple, the service and what bar/bat mitzvah has come to signify in Jewish life. The rabbi has numerous examples of such booklets for review by interested families. Publication will be the responsibility of the family.

#### PHOTOGRAPHY

Temple Beth Or does not permit active photography during the service. You may arrange for video-taping from a discreet, stationary location. You may also arrange for photographs to be taken on the bimah during the week prior to your ceremony or on the morning itself. (In either event, please coordinate your arrangements with the temple office.) We cannot guarantee that the Sanctuary will be available unless the space is reserved.

Photography may resume at the kiddush following the conclusion of the service.

#### PRESENTATIONS

Each bar/bat Mitzvah shall receive a certificate from the temple affirming his or her having been called to the Torah. Additionally, the bar/bat Mitzvah student will be presented with special gifts from the Sisterhood and Men's Club, and from the temple leadership.

#### USHERING

It is customary for each bar/bat Mitzvah family to arrange for ushers during the service. Ushers will distribute prayer books and other materials, and assist with maintenance of decorum. Ushers will use discretion in admitting late-comers into the sanctuary after the service has started.

#### BIMAH FLOWERS

It is the family's responsibility to order Bimah flowers. Please make sure that the flowers are delivered to the temple on the Friday before your event no later than 12:00 Noon. Please call the temple office if you have any

questions regarding the flowers.

#### ONEG SHABBAT

For Friday evening, our regular Shabbat attendance is between 30-50 people. The temple provides challah and wine/grape juice for its expected attendance. If you are planning to invite additional guests, or serve supplementary food or beverages, it will be the responsibility of the family to provide and set-up. The temple office should be notified of the arrangements.

#### KIDDUSH LUNCHEON

The Saturday morning Kiddush Luncheon, if held at the temple, will be the responsibility of the family in accordance with the temple's Facility Use Guidelines. The family should provide a diagram of the requested social hall set-up at least two week prior to the event. All table linens, dishes, glassware, silverware, etc. should be provided by the family.

A copy of the temple Beth Or Facility Use Guideline is available from the temple office.

#### AND ON TO CONFIRMATION...

Kol Ami, the joint religion school of Temple Beth Or and Agudath Israel \* Etz Ahayem Synagogue, offers a Confirmation program, usually a two-year sequence for students in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Confirmation class is taught jointly by the rabbis of both congregations, and offers students a rich experience; being a joint class, students learn that Judaism can include different authentic experiences and expressions.

**We expect that every bar/bat mitzvah student will continue on through Confirmation. We strongly believe in the concept of life-long Jewish learning; become a bar or bat mitzvah is not the end of a process, but the beginning of one's commitment to learning about Judaism on ever deeper levels.**

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you have any questions about these arrangements, please contact the temple office or the rabbi at 334-262-3314.