



Temple Beth Ami B'nei Mitzvah Timeline

Five – Six Months Prior to B'nei Mitzvah Service

Group Trope Lesson with Cantor Eschler
Parents Meeting with Rabbi Pokras
14 Weeks of Tutor Lessons Begin

Four - Five Months Prior to B'nei Mitzvah Service

Drashot and Family Participation Meeting with the Rabbi Pokras

Rabbis will lead a detailed discussion of the opportunities for family participation in the service and how students should prepare for their speech (*drashot*) meetings.

Three – Four Months Prior to B'nei Mitzvah Service

Torah Review with Cantor Eschler

Students must know Torah portion, blessings before and after Torah, and Haftarah trope

D'Var Torah (Torah/Haftarah) Speech with Rabbi Weiss

Pirke Avot/Personal Speech with Rabbi Pokras

Two – Three Months Prior to B'nei Mitzvah Service

Bima Run-through 1 with Cantor Eschler

One Month Prior to B'nei Mitzvah Service

Family Meeting with Rabbi

Bima Run-through 2 with Rabbi

Week of B'nei Mitzvah Service

Final Bima Run-through with Rabbi

Family Photos (optional)

APPOINTMENTS AND BIMA RUN-THROUGHS

Below is a complete listing of all appointments and run-throughs to ensure each student is fully prepared for their B'nei Mitzvah.

- Each student is allotted 14 30-minute tutoring lessons. Please note, if the student needs to cancel a scheduled session, 24 hours' notice will be required. If proper notice is not given, the missed session will be counted against the student's 14 total allotted sessions. If the student requires additional tutoring after 14 lessons, it will be at the student's family's expense and the tutor's availability.
 - One half-hour appointment with the Cantor, approximately halfway through the tutoring process to review tutoring progress.
 - **One** half-hour appointment with the Rabbi to prepare the Torah and Haftarah speeches
 - One half-hour appointment with the Rabbi to review the personal speech
 - A one-hour family meeting with either of the Rabbis to:
 - Review the order of the service and family members' participation
 - Assign honors to members of extended family
 - Please bring with you and give to the Rabbi with whom you are meeting:
 - The Hebrew names of those individuals who will be called to the Torah, including the B'nei Mitzvah, as follows:
Hebrew Name ben (male)/bat (female) Parent 1's Hebrew Name v'
Parent 2's Hebrew Name
- Three **one-hour** run-throughs in the Sanctuary or the Chapel, one with each of the three clergy. Each student will:
 - Chant his/her/their Torah portion from the Sefer Torah
 - Chant his/her/their Haftarah portion
 - Deliver all prepared speeches.One parent should attend these run-throughs.
- Photography session (optional) An hour session in the Sanctuary before or after the B'nei Mitzvah.

The Parental Blessing: And You Shall Teach Your Children

We look forward to you, the parents of B'nei Mitzvah, addressing your child in a manner that is both meaningful and appropriate to the occasion. These important words of guidance and encouragement will be spoken from the bima (pulpit) before the entire congregation in the course of our Shabbat service regardless of whether you are celebrating in our synagogue sanctuary or from a special space you have created in your home. You will be speaking to your child in the context of an important and uniquely Jewish life-cycle event that affirms your child as a young Jewish adult, dedicated to Judaism and the Jewish people, and ready to take their place as a responsible and participating member of our congregation and the Jewish community.

We encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to bless your child. This is a custom described in our Torah and, in some homes, is a regular part of a family's ritual as they welcome Shabbat around the dinner table each week. It is only fitting that this time-honored expression of parental guidance, good wishes, and wisdom be the form in which the parents of B'nei Mitzvah at Temple Beth Ami, address their children.

Any of the blessings provided to you (found in your child's binder) can be used "as is" to express your sentiments. They can also be used as guidelines if you choose to compose a completely original blessing. The Rabbis and Cantor will be happy to help you select a blessing or review and approve one that you have written yourself. If you wish to write a very brief paragraph before the blessing, please bring a copy to the family meeting for the Rabbis to approve.

As you prepare to write your comments in their entirety, please consider:

Content: In Genesis 12:12. G-d tells Abraham, "I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing." Generations of Jews have enjoyed the *mitzvah* of blessing their children on this sacred day. Your child will speak to the congregation about the meaning of his/her *Torah* portion and how it affects the way he/she will live. Your blessing should briefly relate your hopes and dreams for your child, particularly in relation to being called to the Torah. It is an opportunity to articulate the meaning of the moment. This blessing is not to be confused with the speeches that may take place at the celebration following the service. This is a unique opportunity – in the presence of our community as well as friends and family – to ask G-d's blessings for your child. The gesture should be addressed to your child, not the congregation. Moreover, it should be directed toward the future. Where do you hope this moment will lead your child? What do you hope he or she will take from here? When you are finished, please feel free to hug and kiss your child. Crying is permitted.

Length and manner of presentation: In order to maintain and preserve the sacred moment, we request that the parent's blessing (whether delivered by one parent or two) be limited to two minutes. Nothing (like props or memorabilia of any sort) should distract from the sacred moment.

Honors Available for Families Celebrating A B'nei Mitzvah

You will be asked at your family meeting to select honors appropriate for your extended family. You may choose from the following:

- Presenting the Tallit: The B'nei Mitzvah child may choose to wear a tallit. One or two family members may present that tallit at the beginning of the service. This is a non-speaking role
- Passing the Torah (see "Passing the Torah" page below)
- Undressing / Dressing the Torah: This honor generally requires between two and four people, at least one of which must be an adult strong enough to hold the Torah upright while sitting on the bimah. Often this honor is appropriate for a younger sibling. If two families are sharing the service, this honor is shared as well. The family of the child who is chanting from the Torah first usually undresses the Torah, and the second child's family dresses the Torah at the conclusion of the Torah service.
- Participation in the Service: Each family may choose up to three additional opportunities for participation, either in the form of one or two aliyot to the Torah or readings in the service, to a total three honors.
 - Readings: Readings in the service may be assigned to family members from the siddur. Our Rabbis and Cantor are happy to help you select readings which are most appropriate for the individuals you wish to honor, including non-Jewish family members. Optional readings can be found in your child's binder. Please note there are different options for morning and afternoon services.
 - Family Aliyah: In addition to the B'nei Mitzvah child, the family may invite others to share the honor of being called to the Torah by their Hebrew names for an aliyah (to recite the blessings before and after the Torah is read. The blessings are recited in Hebrew.) Often Jewish parents, grandparents, or an older sibling who has celebrated B'nei Mitzvah receive this honor. Each family may assign up to two family aliyot.

We invite you to attend Shabbat evening services before the B'nei Mitzvah, where you will be offered the opportunity to light candles for the congregation, and the B'nei Mitzvah child will lead the congregation in Kiddush and Motzi at the conclusion of services.

Passing the Torah

One of the most meaningful rituals during a B'nei mitzvah is the passing of the Torah through the generations from great-grandparents to grandparents to parents and then to the child. This symbolizes the transmission of our tradition, its values, and practices, from generation to generation. Instead of physically passing a Torah scroll, those who are participating in this ritual should think of a Jewish value they would like to verbally pass on to the B'nei Mitzvah.

We have provided a list of websites below to help you in selecting the Jewish values you want to pass along, along with guidelines for how to do so:

1. Each person or couple (whichever you prefer) should select one value.
2. Please coordinate with each other to make sure that you all select different values.
3. Each person should speak for a maximum of 30 seconds. This is not an opportunity for a full-blown speech about the child and your relationship with them. Rather, please consider the spiritual framework for passing the Torah and limit yourself to the actual value you want to pass along.
4. For those who wish, it will be possible to pre-record your Torah value.
5. Your officiating rabbi will be available to help you as you prepare your values.

Here are some recommended sources to help you. The first is our own values statement at Temple Beth Ami. The other three links will take you to very different but reliable sources to give you a breadth of perspective. Good hunting!

<https://bethami.org/about-us/>

https://jewisheducation.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/0/7/21075566/panim_jewish_values_matrix.pdf

<https://www.jewishlearningmatters.com/AL-New-Jewish-Values-Page-744.aspx>

<https://ajws.org/blog/8-nights-8-jewish-values-reflections-for-chanukah-on-the-jewish-obligation-to-build-a-better-world/>

Family Meeting Worksheet

Childs Name:

Hebrew Name:

Ben (son of)/

Bat (daughter of)

B'nei (non-binary): _____^{v'}
Parent 1 Hebrew name Parent 2 Hebrew name

Pirke Avot Passage: _____
Chapter Verse

Undressing/dressing the Torah _____
Who

Presenting Tallit _____
Yes/No Who

HONORS: EACH FAMILY IS ALLOWED A TOTAL OF THREE HONORS, A COMBINATION OF ALIYOT AND ENGLISH READINGS. READING SELECTIONS MUST BE COORDINATED BETWEEN FAMILIES SHARING THE DATE BEFORE THE FAMILY MEETING.

Optional first Aliyah:

_____^{v''}
English Name Hebrew name ben/bat/b'nei Parent 1's Hebrew name Parent 2's Hebrew name

Optional second Aliyah:

_____^{v'}
English Name Hebrew name ben/bat/b'nei Parent 1's Hebrew name Parent 2's Hebrew name

First optional Siddur Reading:

Title of Reading English Name Relationship

Second optional Siddur Reading:

Title of Reading English Name Relationship

Third optional Siddur Reading:

Title/page number English Name Relationship

FAMILY OBLIGATIONS

FINANCIAL

- You will be charged a B'nei Mitzvah fee in 12 month's prior to your child's B'nei Mitzvah. This fee is set annually by the congregation and is inclusive of all tutoring, clergy meetings, and run-throughs. This fee must be paid in full prior to the first tutoring session.
- You must be current in all financial obligations at least six weeks prior to your B'nei Mitzvah date.

USHERING

To assure that your family and friends feel welcome and to give each family the opportunity to help another family, each B'nei Mitzvah family is expected to serve as ushers at two or three B'nei Mitzvah services, at least one to be completed prior to your child's becoming a B'nei Mitzvah. Ushers are expected to greet worshipers, seat latecomers, and maintain decorum during the service. Following the service, they collect books; pass out wine, white grape juice and challah.

KIDDUSH AND REFRESHMENTS

A simple Kiddush consisting of wine (white grape juice for children) and challah for all those attending the service is provided by the congregation following both Shabbat morning and Shabbat afternoon services.

All private functions, including extended Kiddush luncheons or Shabbat dinners, must be scheduled in advance through the Operations Manager. For partnered services, if both families desire an extended Kiddush, it can be shared or held separately. All questions concerning scheduling of Temple facilities should be directed to the Operations Manager.

MAZON

Temple Beth Ami is committed to the work of MAZON, a Jewish response to hunger worldwide. It is suggested that 3% of everything spent on food for your simcha be donated to MAZON.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

TWINNING

There are several opportunities available for those becoming B'nei Mitzvah at Temple Beth Ami to share their day with others who were not able to experience this simcha. The B'nei Mitzvah twinning experience is a unique opportunity designed to carry on the tradition of uniting Jews with their peers around the world. There are currently several ways in which our students can fulfill this mitzvah.

- Yad Vashem B'nei Mitzvah Twinning Program: <https://www.yadvashem.org/remembrance/bar-bat-mitzvah-twinning-program.html>
- The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous: <https://jfr.org/barbat-mitzvah-twinning-program/>
- World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust & Descendants: <https://www.holocaustchild.org/education/twinning-and-remembrance/>

B'NEI MITZVAH NOTICES IN THE WASHINGTON JEWISH WEEK

The Washington Jewish Week publishes both a weekly listing of each synagogue's B'nei Mitzvah schedule, submitted by the Temple office, and an individual write up on each child, submitted by the family. The format includes the child's name; parents' name and city of residence; date and location of B'nei Mitzvah; family members joining, including siblings and grandparents (include city of residence); and grade and school of child. If you are interested in submitting a B'nei mitzvah notice to the Washington Jewish Week, you may do so through this link: <https://www.washingtonjewishweek.com/contact-us/bnai-mitzvah-announcements/>

NFTY

Studies show that an Israel trip during the teen years is one of the most important experiences for building long-lasting Jewish identity and commitment (Jewish overnight camping is the other). The Temple is a partner with the Union for Reform Judaism to help our youth travel to Israel. NFTY (National Federation of Temple Youth) provides each B'nei Mitzvah student with a gift certificate redeemable towards a NFTY trip to Israel.