



Bar and Bat
Mitzvah
Handbook

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Bar and Bat Mitzvah

The study of *Torah* is equal to all the other *mitzvot*,
because it leads to their performance.

– After *Mishnah Peah* 1:1

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BECOME *BAR* OR *BAT MITZVAH*?

Literally *Bar Mitzvah* means “son of the commandment” and *Bat Mitzvah* means “daughter of the commandment.” Jewish law does not require children to follow the commandments, though they are encouraged to do so. At the age of thirteen children become obligated to fulfill the *mitzvot*. *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* is not an event, rather it is a change in status. While we may perceive thirteen to be in the midst of childhood, Jewish law allows *B’nai Mitzvah* (plural of *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*) to count in a *minyan* (the minimum number of people necessary for some religious practices), to form binding contracts and to serve as a witness in religious courts.

A young person becomes *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* at their birthday, no ceremony is needed to confer adulthood. The celebration of *Bar Mitzvah* (the first *Bat Mitzvah* did not occur until 1922), is fairly recent in Jewish history, dating back only five centuries. To show a community that a young man was now legally an adult, he would be called to recite the blessing before and after the reading of the *Torah*, a *mitzvah* and privilege reserved for adults. Over time, the ceremony was expanded to include the reading of the *Haftarah* (the additional reading from the Prophets chosen by the rabbis because it amplifies a theme found in the *Torah* reading or corresponds to the time of year) and often the leading of worship following the *Torah* service. Because certain Hebrew and liturgical skills were required for this, the connection between *Bar Mitzvah* and Jewish education arose.

Today it is the educational aspect, rather than reaching the age of majority, that is stressed. At Temple Jeremiah *B’nai Mitzvah* demonstrate their ability to lead services, read *Torah*, participate in *Tikkun Olam* (repair of the world) as well as teach the community.

Bar or *Bat Mitzvah* is not the goal of Jewish Education. We are all obligated to continue the study of *Torah* and the fulfillment of righteous deeds throughout our lives. *B’nai Mitzvah* celebrate their change in status and honor their new responsibility not only on the day of their ceremony but through ongoing commitments to our tradition and community.

WHAT DISTINGUISHES THIS SACRED PASSAGE AT TEMPLE JEREMIAH?

“We are dedicated to lifelong Jewish education, *tzedakah*, social justice and the State of Israel,” (from the Temple Jeremiah Mission Statement). We encourage our *B’nai Mitzvah* to embrace their new status as adults by leading our community in prayer, good deeds and study. Preparation includes attendance at

religious and Hebrew school, private tutoring in Hebrew and a series of individual meetings with the Rabbis, Cantor and Director of Education. Our *B'nai Mitzvah* ceremonies occur at communal services on *Shabbat* morning so all our congregation can be a part of this meaningful event.

Bar or *Bat Mitzvah* is a significant milestone in our Jewish growth. The purpose of Jewish education is to provide the student with skills and knowledge required to be a literate Jew and to participate in the life of the Jewish community. Jewish education is also meant to instill a love of Judaism in the hearts of our children. At a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* ceremony our young people demonstrate that they have acquired some of these skills. One's religious education is no more complete at thirteen than one's secular education; therefore participation in the congregation's education program through Confirmation is expected and required.

HOW IS CONFIRMATION PART OF *BAR* AND *BAT MITZVAH*?

Though they are both milestones in Jewish education, *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* and Confirmation are quite different. *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* is an individual event marking a young person's entry into our adult community. Though we no longer look upon a thirteen year old child as an adult, *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* symbolically mark the beginning of a more mature, self-motivating approach to one's Judaism and to one's involvement in the Jewish community.

Confirmation is a group event originally developed by the Reform movement as a means of educating young women equally with young men. It also extended the educational process beyond thirteen to an age when students are able to address questions of ultimate religious significance with greater sophistication, maturity and intellectual capacity. The Confirmation ceremony takes place on or near *Shavuot*, the holiday that commemorates the giving of *Torah*. The Confirmation class communally confirms their responsibility to *Torah*, our temple and the Jewish people.

Bar and *Bat Mitzvah* is distinct from Confirmation and is not a substitute for it. Every student who is honored with the ritual of *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* is expected to continue with religious studies through Confirmation. Active registration and participation during the *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* year is required. Our Confirmation year, as well as our pre-Confirmation program, is filled with challenging experiences, adult level discussions and memorable moments for our high school students. During the Confirmation program, students concentrate on Jewish ethics and values, Jewish identity and Jewish religious concepts with a practical eye to developing a Jewish lifestyle as they leave their parents' homes. The

Confirmation year meshes with a real growth in our students' intellectual and conceptual capacities. Students look back on their Confirmation year as both the most challenging and the most worthwhile of their Jewish education. As mentioned above, every child is expected to be a member of our school through Confirmation (end of 10th grade). If there is an extenuating circumstance preventing a child from continuing in Religious School, the issue must be discussed in advance with either of our Rabbis and our Director of Education.

We hope that every child in our Religious School will want to celebrate becoming *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*, and we expect that, three years later our Confirmation class will be as large or even larger than the *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* group. An opportunity for post-Confirmation study with the Rabbi is also encouraged. It states on the *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* certificate, may we be blessed in "life-long *Torah* study" undertaken by every Jew.

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

1. The student will have successfully completed a minimum of four years of Hebrew school education at Temple Jeremiah or other programs of instruction recognized by Rabbi Cohen and Dr. Lidsky, the Director of Education.
2. In the course of our Hebrew Program, the students learn to read, chant and understand the meaning of the various Hebrew prayers that are a part of our *Shabbat* worship, including: *Shalom Aleichem*, *Birkat Nerot* (blessing over the *Shabbat* Candles), *Adon Olam*, *Bar'chu*, *Yotser*, *Shema*, *V'havta*, *Mi Chamocha*, *Avot v'Imahot*, *Gevurot*, *Kedusha* Responses, *Sim Shalom*, *Birchot Ha-Torah*, *Birchot Haftarah*, *Aleinu*, *Kaddish*, *Kiddush l'Leyl Shabbat* (blessing over the *Shabbat* wine), *Eyn Keloheinu* and *Hatikvah*.
3. The *Tikkun Olam* Project: Approximately seven months prior to *B'nai Mitzvah*, the student, guided by their parents, Rabbi Greenberg and Dr. Lidsky, becomes involved in a *mitzvah* program to be completed prior to *B'nai Mitzvah*. The list of *mitzvot* is varied and includes activities in the areas of study, worship, and service to the community. Each family meets individually with Rabbi Greenberg to develop their *Tikkun Olam* project to reflect their interests and values.
4. Approximately 6 months prior to your event, parents and b'nai mitzvah candidates will be invited to a required, small group meeting with the Director of Education. Detailed information will be provided and there will be an opportunity to ask questions.

ELEMENTS OF PREPARATION – RITUAL

Tutoring

Each student receives five months of private tutoring for ½ hour a week. Tutors will contact families for scheduling. If your child is scheduled to become a *Bar or Bat Mitzvah* during the months of August, September, October or November and will not be available for tutoring during the summer prior, please notify Cantor Zussman so that your child will receive the full five months of tutoring to which she/he is entitled.

At Temple Jeremiah, the *Torah* and *Haftarah* portions are chanted. Students are provided with a cassette or CD containing recordings of the blessings, prayers, *Torah* and *Haftarah* portions that they are expected to chant. Cantor Zussman offers classes in trope, the system of cantillation marks used in chanting *Torah* and *Haftarah*, for interested students. This optional class is offered specifically for *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* students. Please contact Cantor Zussman for further details.

D'var Torah

Literally, this means a “word of *Torah*.” Each *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* student will write and deliver a speech explaining not only what their *Torah* portion is about, but offering their own understanding of it. The students and their parents will have two meetings with Rabbi Cohen to discuss the content and style of a *D'var Torah*. Prior to the meetings, each family will receive a packet of materials explaining how to prepare a *D'var Torah* and commentaries on the student's specific *Torah* portion.

Tikkun Olam Project

Fulfilling the *mitzvot* is a primary obligation for Jewish adults. The *Tikkun Olam* Project is an opportunity to realize how many of the commandments we already fulfill as well as develop our abilities to help in *tikkun olam*, repairing the world. The *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* will work closely with Rabbi Greenberg to develop a fundraising, volunteer and/or educational project that suits their interests and benefits the community.

Erev Shabbat Service

This service is the beginning of a weekend of celebration for the family of a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*. Families attend this service and are encouraged to invite extended family and friends to join them. The *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* will receive a part in the service, and along with his or her parents will be invited to participate by lighting the *Shabbat* Candles, leading the *Kiddush* or leading the *Motzi*. The time of the *Erev Shabbat* service the Friday before your *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* will be determined in the month of May preceding that date.

Shabbat Morning Service

Part of becoming *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* is being comfortable in a synagogue setting. It is difficult, at best, to ask young people to lead a service that they are unfamiliar with as participants. Students need to become fluent through active participation and are, therefore, encouraged to come to a minimum of 6 Temple Jeremiah *Shabbat* morning services during the *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* year with their families.

Family Participation

Parents are encouraged to participate in the *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* service. Traditionally, parents offer a blessing for their child from the *bimah*. This blessing can be one of the three prayers on pages 380 and 381 of *Mishkan T'filah*, our prayer book, or parents may instead choose to compose their own blessing, not to exceed what fits on a 3 x 5 index card. Another moving part of the service is a "handing down" ceremony, in which the *Torah* is passed from the grandparent to the parent then to the *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*, symbolizing the chain of Jewish tradition.

Certificates

To prepare your child's *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* certificate you will be asked to provide the child's Hebrew name, mother's Hebrew name (if applicable), and father's Hebrew name (if applicable). Please have this information 3 months before the *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* date. Should you have any questions regarding these names, please feel free to contact any of the clergy.

Tallit and Kippah

At Temple Jeremiah, the wearing of a *Kippah* (*yarmulke* or skullcap) or a *Tallit* (prayer shawl) is optional. Both boys and girls may choose to wear a *Kippah*, and a *Tallit*, if they wish. The wearing of *Tallit* and *Kippah* should not be viewed as something "unique" to the *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* ceremony. If a child opts to wear them, then he or she should plan to wear them whenever he or she attends synagogue. If the practice in the family is not to wear *Tallit* and *Kippah*, then the child should probably not wear them for the service. This can be discussed with the clergy. *Tallit* and *Kippah* can be purchased at our Sisterhood Gift Shop.

Appropriate Dress

Boys and Men	Jacket and Tie
Girls and Women	Shoulders and Knees Covered

ELEMENTS OF PREPARATION – CELEBRATION

Fees

The *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* fee covers the cost for private tutoring and materials, *bima* flowers, boutonnieres for the ushers and *Kiddush* following the service that includes *challah*, juice, cookies and coffee cake. Billing for *b'nai mitzvah* fees will be done in three installments over a period of one year. The first installment will be nine to twelve months prior to your assigned date.

Scheduling and Communicating

In order for us to be properly prepared for you and to help make your event memorable, photo sessions, deliveries, caterers, etc., must be scheduled in advance with the temple administrative office. A Temple staff member will contact all families for specific details. Clearly communicating your needs and concerns in advance will help everyone involved.

Synagogue Facilities

Shabbat services are held in the Sanctuary or Chapel. The Chapel seats 100 people, however additional chairs may be added to accommodate no more than 120. If we expect less than 120 people at the *Shabbat* service when your child is being called to the *Torah*, you may choose the Chapel or Sanctuary. The Sanctuary seats up to 360 people without opening the dividing wall. We can make further accommodations if we know well in advance.

The social hall, kitchen and other areas of our building are available for rental to entertain guests following a 10:45 a.m. *Shabbat* service or in the evening on Saturday or Sunday. Guests may be accommodated after a 9:00 a.m. service in an alternative area. You may have already locked in a social hall reservation at the time dates were assigned. If we have availability after dates were assigned, we will be happy to accommodate you. We require a deposit and signed contract to confirm your reservation. A preferred provider list is available.

Cancellation Policy for Parties

Temple Jeremiah will refund 100% of the room rental fee paid if canceled 18 months prior to the event; 50% of the room rental fee paid will be refunded if a refund is requested in writing between 18 months and 12 months prior to the event. Temple Jeremiah will not refund any money on booked events if the refund request is received less than 12 months prior to the event date, unless the Temple is successful in re-renting the space for not less than the same rental rate.

Certificate of Liability

We require all outside vendors, which includes videographers, photographers, caterers, entertainers, workmen and all others who provide goods and services to have a current certificate of liability. Our preferred providers already meet this requirement.

Guidelines for Food Served

No forbidden foods are permitted. This includes any shellfish or pork products. Meat (which includes poultry) and dairy foods are not to be combined in the same dish or tray. (*Details will be provided upon your request.*) Due to extensive nut allergies, please make sure to clearly label food that contains nuts.

Sabbath Light

The *Sabbath Light* is the printed handout distributed with prayer books by ushers to everyone attending *Shabbat* services. It lists the names of students becoming *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* at the service, an explanation of what it means to become *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* at Temple Jeremiah, a brief guide to the *Shabbat* morning service, the *Kaddish* list and a brief description of upcoming Temple events. It also lists page numbers of the *Torah* and *Haftarah* portions in *The Torah: A Modern Commentary Revised Edition*. With this information, the congregation can read the English translation as your child is chanting.

Honors

There are many honors for family members during the service. Approximately one week before your rehearsal you will be asked the names of those whom you wish to honor. If you need more specific information in advance, do not hesitate to ask. The transliterated text and CD of the *Torah* blessings are available and you can also access them by visiting the Temple Jeremiah website. The following link will take you there: http://www.templejeremiah.org/w/bar_bat_mitzvah.php

Ushering

Asking friends and family to usher during your child's *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* is an honor. The ushers are there to make sure your day goes smoothly. They will greet your guests, help with seating and maintain proper decorum during the worship service. We ask that you have one usher for every 35 people you have invited. An usher coordinator will be provided by the Brotherhood. You will be sent guidelines to pass on to your ushers so they will feel comfortable performing this *mitzvah*. You will also be asked to email the names of your ushers to a Brotherhood representative.

Oneg

B'nai Mitzvah families participate in hosting the *Oneg Shabbat* or reception on the Friday evening prior to their child's ceremony. Your contribution can be purchased and delivered, be home made or you may donate money for us to use for this purpose. Families typically provide pastries, cookies and other sweets in individual portions, fruit trays, vegetables and dips, punch, flowers, candy, cheese and crackers or other appetizers. Please note that to avoid allergic reactions to nuts, make sure to clearly label food that contains nuts. It is your responsibility to have your items here by 1:00 p.m. on Friday and put on platters. Trays and doilies are available in the kitchen for your use. Please let our *Oneg* Coordinator know at least a week in advance how you will participate so she can coordinate what is being brought that evening.

Photography

No photographs or handheld camcorders are permitted during the ceremony. Appointments must be made through the temple office for your photography session. We will help you find a convenient time that does not conflict with other temple functions. Pictures can be scheduled in the Chapel or Sanctuary. During your photography session, you may move the *bimah* flowers; however, we ask that you put them back. You may not take out the *Torah Scrolls* in advance. We have a "prop *Torah*" that has been made for use during these photography sessions. You should notify your photographer of the temple policy regarding use of the *Torah Scrolls*. Please have your photographer check in at the office prior to setting up. As appointments can be made up to one year in advance, we recommend that you make your appointment as soon as possible so you may have a choice of available times. Temple Jeremiah reserves the right to adjust scheduled times when necessary.

Video Taping

Taping is permitted during the ceremony. It is only possible to accommodate one professional videographer at each service. If there are two families sharing a double ceremony, and both wish to have videotaping, it is the responsibility of the two families to come to a mutual agreement as to which professional videographer will be used by both of them. Please be aware that there is an area designated for the videographer in the Sanctuary or Chapel. This is the only area for your videographer. They may not connect their equipment to our sound system nor may they use additional lighting.

Security and Police

If you have planned an extended *Kiddush*, luncheon or evening celebration, we will arrange with the Northfield Police Department to have an off duty police

officer for every 25 children. You will be billed directly by the Northfield Police Department.

Coats & Apparel

A coatroom is available for your guests' use however Temple Jeremiah is not responsible for lost or stolen property.

Giving

Our Torah teaches us "Every person shall give as she is able according to the blessing of *Adonai*, thy God, which *Adonai* has given thee" (*Deuteronomy 16:17*). As children of God we are commanded to share with those who are less fortunate. Parents can teach the lesson of *tzedakah* by setting an example and giving to a worthy cause in honor of their child's *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*.

Your child's *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* celebration is one of the most joyous occasions in family life. Temple Jeremiah knows that you want this day to be meaningful and memorable. That's why we offer you a variety of unique ways to celebrate this milestone. Please see a complete listing of our various *B'nai Mitzvah* giving opportunities at <http://www.templejeremiah.org/a/donations.php>.

Additional Giving Opportunities

- You may commemorate a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* by placing your name in our new Siddur, Mishkan T'filah, or The Torah: A Modern Commentary. Donation amount for the Mishkan T'filah is \$36 and \$72 for the Torah Commentary.
- Inscribing a leaf on the Wall of Life is a meaningful way to celebrate a child's *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*. The donation amount is \$360 per leaf.
- There is an opportunity available for those becoming *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* at Temple Jeremiah to share their day with others who were not able to experience this *simcha*. It is a unique opportunity designed to carry on the tradition of uniting Jews with their peers in our adopted Jewish community of Yerevan, Armenia in the Former Soviet Union. Sponsoring a day of Religious School at \$50 per day for our sister congregation in Yerevan is one of the many giving opportunities.
- Temple Jeremiah is among many congregations and organizations across the country asking people to generously donate to MAZON: The Jewish response to Hunger. Since 1985, MAZON has provided food, help and hope to hungry people of all faiths and backgrounds. A suggested minimum donation of 3% of your catering budget is recommended.

BAR AND BAT MITZVAH CHECKLIST

THINGS TO DO:

- Coordinate your videographer if sharing the service with another family.
- Schedule a photography session and provide photographer's name to the Temple.
- Download directions and maps from our website, or request from the office, if needed.
- Confirm the time of the Friday evening service.
- Confirm your information for your invitations prior to printing them.
- Make provisions for your contribution for the Friday *Oneg Shabbat* and discuss with our *Oneg* Coordinator.
- Inform the Temple office of the number of guests you are expecting for the service (and party if applicable) so that the proper number of chairs may be set.
- Decide on honors.
- Decide on ushers.
- Get child's and parents' Hebrew names.

If your party is at Temple Jeremiah, contact the Temple office to

- Provide names of:
 - a. Caterer
 - b. Coordinator (if applicable)
 - c. Videographer
 - d. Centerpiece person/florist
 - e. Band/DJ/entertainment
- Provide information on:
 - a. Furniture and/or dish rentals and/or linen rentals
 - b. Set-ups for maintenance
 - c. Delivery dates/set-up dates/pick-up dates

PLEASE NOTE:

You will be contacted by the Synagogue in preparation for your meetings with our Rabbis, Cantor and Director of Education.

This Space is for Personal Notes or Questions You Want to Ask

**Names and Extensions of Whom to Talk to About What
at Temple Jeremiah – (847) 441-5760**

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