

Kol Shalom Bar/Bat Mitzvah Guidelines

Introduction: Bar/Bat Mitzvah Ceremony in Perspective

A Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a public acknowledgment that a boy or girl has become a responsible adult member of the Jewish community. It is an important step in the transition to adulthood and the acceptance of responsibility for one's own actions. As a public expression, the ceremony takes place in the context of a normal worship service at which a portion from the Torah is read and a Haftarah is chanted. During the course of that service, the Bar or Bat Mitzvah is given the opportunity to demonstrate that he or she has acquired the requisite skills to fulfill the obligations of a Jewish adult.

We must stress the fact that the ceremony is part of our regular Shabbat service and not a separate, private ceremony for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family alone. That enables our entire worshipping community to celebrate the life cycle with family and friends.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah brings honor to him or herself by the manner in which he or she participates in the service. Since Kol Shalom is an egalitarian congregation, participation in the service is not dependent on the gender of the student nor is there any limit to the extent of that participation.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Kol Shalom is an event for the congregation as well as for the family. We all look forward to sharing the joy, as our children become young adults.

Scheduling the Bar/Bat Mitzvah

1. Families must be members of Kol Shalom when the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is scheduled and must remain members through the time of the ceremony itself. It is expected that members will be current in their financial obligations.
2. Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidates are expected to have attended Talmud Torah during third through seventh grades or to have attended a Jewish day school. Candidates are expected to continue their Jewish education while they are preparing for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Any deviations from the required educational background, as well as any extenuating circumstances, should be discussed with the rabbi. All post B'nai and B'not Mitzvah are urged to continue their formal Jewish education in Kol Shalom's Hebrew High School.
3. Families may request a date for their Bar or Bat Mitzvah up to three years prior to the event. Both boys and girls are to be scheduled as close to the thirteenth Hebrew birthday as possible, with no celebration scheduled more than six weeks prior to thirteenth Hebrew birthday. Requests are given on a first come basis.

4. B'nai Mitzvah celebrations will be scheduled primarily on Shabbat mornings and on certain festivals. On certain Shabbatot, such as Shabbat Shuvah, we avoid the scheduling of a bar/bat mitzvah. Requests for other times are to be discussed with the rabbi.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Preparation

At Kol Shalom well-qualified teenagers from the congregation and adult professional tutors conduct the Bar/Bat Mitzvah training. A list of current tutors is available from the Rabbi.

Tutoring customarily begins between nine months and one year prior to the date, with the length of time depending on the previous preparation of the student and anticipated interruptions for summer vacations and other scheduling complications.. Lessons usually last one hour each week and continue until the time of the simcha. Tutors are in periodic contact with the rabbi in order to keep him informed of any possible difficulties or problems. (Please note: tutoring is not to take place during Talmud Torah school hours or on Shabbat or festivals.).

About one year before the ceremony, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and family will meet with the Rabbi to discuss various aspects of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah year, including the student's participation in the service itself. Regular contact with Rabbi Maltzman will be encouraged.

About two months prior to the ceremony, the family and student will meet with the rabbi to discuss the D'var Torah (lesson) to be presented to the congregation, the completion of the 100 Questions curriculum, and the family honors.

Regular attendance at Shabbat services for both students and parents is an integral part of the preparation. It is the single most effective way of learning the liturgy and enabling the individual and family to feel at home in the synagogue and to participate comfortably in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. All B'nai Mitzvah candidates are expected to attend Shabbat services regularly, with their parents, during the year prior to the ceremony.

All Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidates are also expected to complete the "100 Questions" curriculum and submit it in writing to the rabbi at least one month before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. These questions are discussed in class in our Talmud Torah.

Studying the Texts

The first step in studying the texts is to ensure your home has a siddur and Humash--texts that should be proud possessions in any Jewish home. At Kol Shalom we use Siddur Lev Shalem and the Conservative Humash Etz Hayim. We suggest you begin as a family by translating or reading the translation of the Torah portion and the Haftarah. See whether you agree with some of the commentaries given in the Humash. How does the portion tie in with the previous week's sidrah? How does it relate to the following week's parsha? The student is urged to continue studying the text in English and carefully

read explanations and comments found in other texts. What is the relationship between the Torah portion and the Haftarah? Sometimes there is an obvious parallel in the texts; sometimes the connection is obscure. These are among some of the questions the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family can discuss with the tutor as well as with members of the family, and with the rabbi as well

Each tutor has his or her method of teaching students trope - the musical notes used in the cantillation of the Haftarah and Torah reading. Because every tutor is given the responsibility for deciding on an appropriate schedule for his or her students, we cannot recommend a specific timetable for mastery of specific parts of the service. Instead, we urge parents to check with the tutor periodically to be sure their child is "on track." While we know some children are highly motivated, it is our experience that others may need more encouragement and diligent monitoring on a weekly basis from their parents.

Reminders to "practice, practice, and practice" cannot be overstated. Of course we understand there is a fine line between parental support and nagging; everyone is eager that this time in your child's life be a positive experience. We can assure you that the students who practice routinely will recognize their own weekly progress and will gain the confidence that, in fact, makes preparation satisfying and successful. We strongly recommend that students be completely prepared well before the ceremony. This is, perhaps, the most effective way to avoid stress as the Bar/Bat Mitzvah day approaches.

The student intent on learning to read Torah is encouraged to obtain a Tikkun. This is the book, which contains the Biblical text on the right side of the page with vowels, punctuation marks, and trope signs and the corresponding text from the Torah itself on the left side of the page. The Tikkun published by Meshor is the easiest to use.

The printed right side of the Meshor text which contains the vowels, punctuation marks and the trope signs corresponds exactly with the Torah script on the left side of the page; this makes preparation easier for the student. The Meshor text is consistent with the layout of the text of the sefer Torah used at the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Torah readers develop a greater sense of self-confidence in knowing where all the words will appear before they read publicly from the scroll.

We also recommend purchasing "Trope Trainer" from Kinnor.com This is an excellent resource for studying Torah and Haftarah trope on the computer.

Tallit and Tefillin

The Bar and Bat Mitzvah are presented with a *tallit* on the day of the ceremony. The *tallit* is a symbol both of Jewish adulthood as well as of one's connection to God and the Jewish people. Take time to select a *tallit* with care. Workshops are available to guide in designing one's own *tallit*. The student might also wish to obtain a kit to tie one's own *tzitziot* (fringes) as

well. Local *tallit* makers will work with families to create made-to-order *tallitot*. Please call the office for recommendations.

Tefillin are traditionally worn during the weekday morning Service by all Jewish men who have reached the age of thirteen. They are put on to fulfill the commandment, "Bind them as a sign on your hand, and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead." (Deuteronomy 6:8). Nowadays, some Jewish women choose to wear a *tallit* and *tefillin* when they pray. It is customary for the parents or grandparents to present a set of *tefillin* to the student prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony.

Tefillin come in pairs, consisting of one *tefillah* for the arm and one for the head. Each contains a piece or pieces of parchment on which are written four portions of the Torah dealing with the commandments regarding *tefillin*: Exodus 13:1-10 and 13:11-16 and Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21.

Tefillin are put on and taken off while standing. The *tallit* is always put on before the *tefillin* and taken off after them. The *tefillah shel yad* – the one for the arm – is put on first, followed by the *tefillah shel rosh* – the one for the head. When the *tefillin* are removed, the order is reversed.

The *tefillah shel yad* is always put on the weaker hand. Thus, right-handed people put it on the left hand, and left-handed people put it on the right hand. Begin by removing your watch (if you wear one on that hand) and rolling up your sleeve almost to the shoulder. This is done because there must be nothing between the *tefillah* and your skin. Then unwrap the strap, or *retsuah*, of the *tefillah shel yad*, remove the cover, and slip it over your arm so that the box is over your bicep. The knot should be next to the box on the side closer to your body. At this point, say the first blessing. The blessings may be found in "Siddur Sim Shalom", which is translated below.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe whose mitzvot add holiness to our life and who gave us the mitzvah to put on tefillah.

Pull on the strap to tighten the *tefillah* so it will not slip. You may also wind it once around your upper arm to keep it in place. Then, wind the strap seven times around your lower arm between the elbow and the wrist. Ashkenazic Jews wind the strap in an inward fashion; Sephardic Jews wind it in an outward fashion. In either case, keep the black side of the strap facing out, and be sure none of the seven loops touch each other. Then, bring the strap around your hand below the thumb. This is to keep it in place while you put on the *tefillah shel rosh*.

Unwrap the straps on the *tefillah shel rosh* and remove the cover. Slip the looped strap over your head so that the box is in front, at the hairline, and the knot is in the back. It is permissible to remove your *kippah* momentarily while you put the *tefillah* over your head, and then to put the *kippah* back over the strap. The important thing is that, as with the *tefillah shel yad*, the *kippah* should not become between the strap and your head. When you have

the *tefillah* properly positioned on your head, bring the straps forward to hang over your chest, keeping the backside out. (The straps should be long enough to reach your waist. If they are not, you should take the *tefillin* to a Jewish bookstore and ask to have longer straps put on.) Then, say the blessing, which is translated below:

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe whose mitzvot add holiness to our lives and who gave us the mitzvah of tefillin.

Praised be God's glorious sovereignty throughout all time.

Now, you are ready to finish up with the *tefillah shel yad*. Unwrap all of the excess loops around your palm, leaving only one. Wrap the strap three times around the middle finger, once around each joint in the following order: lowest joint; uppermost joint; then middle joint. While you do this, recite Hosea 2:21-22, which is translated below:

Thus says the Lord: I will betroth you to Me forever. I will betroth you with righteousness, with justice, with love, and with compassion. I will betroth you to me with faithfulness, and you shall love the Lord.

Then, wrap the strap once around the three middle fingers, and then around the whole hand, forming a V with the first loop, the one you wrapped around your hand before you put on the *tefillah shel rosh*. Now, wrap the strap once more around the middle of the hand, forming the letter *shin*. (The bottom of the *shin*, where the three loops come together, should be next to your thumb.) Wind any leftover strap around the middle loop of the *shin* and tuck the end of the strap under the loop to keep it from unwinding. You are now ready to recite the prayers of Shacharit, the morning Service.

The *tefillin* are removed while standing and in the reverse order. First, unwind the loops that form the letter *shin* and also the loops around the fingers. Then, wind the strap over the first loop around your hand. Next, remove the *tefillah shel rosh*, put the cover on the box, and wrap the strap around the *tefillah*. Finally, unwind the strap around the arm, remove the *tefillah shel yad*, put the cover back on, and wrap up the strap.

The Service

The parents and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah should gather in the rabbi's study at 8:45 a.m. for last minute instructions and for the Tallit Ceremony.

During the service, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is honored by being called to the Torah for the Maftir (final) aliyah to chant the blessings before and after the aliyah and to chant the Haftarah and the blessings that precede and follow it. Students will ordinarily prepare a D'var Torah as well. Most students also read the Maftir aliyah and are encouraged to read as much of the Torah reading as possible. Family members or friends from outside Kol Shalom may also volunteer to read Torah but must be approved by Rabbi Maltzman who will hear them read at a specified time before the ceremony.

Kol Shalom is quite unique in that, in the absence of a professional cantor, we conduct our services with the highest possible level of participation of lay people. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah is given unlimited opportunity to conduct as much as possible of the Shabbat morning as well as the Friday night service, which they are asked to attend. Additional parts given to them include the Torah service, Musaf service, the Preliminary Service (P'sukay D'zimrah), and even the entire Shacharit (morning service). The rabbi will be actively involved in supervising this aspect of the training and encouraging our students to become shlichei tzibbur and tutors themselves.

Honors during the Service

During the Shabbat morning service, a number of people are given various honors by being called to the bimah for an aliyah, to raise or dress the Torah scroll, to open or close the Aron HaKodesh (Ark), etc. Most of the honors are reserved for the families celebrating B'nai Mitzvah though on occasion some of the honors are reserved for regular members of the congregation.

Your selection of honorees should be discussed with the rabbi about two month's prior to the ceremony. Please do not make any commitments about granting honors before talking with the rabbi. This might avoid a potentially difficult situation or disappointment.

Torah Honors: During a Shabbat morning service, seven people in addition to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah are called to the Torah, i.e. given an aliyah. Often a couple or two relatives or friends are given a single aliyah. (Only in very rare cases will more than two people be given the same aliyah). We follow the tradition that a Kohen or Bat Kohen be called for the first aliyah and a Levi or Bat Levi for the second. Usually, honorees include parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles. Close friends and tutors may also be included.

Those designated for an aliyah should be prepared to recite the blessings in Hebrew. Obtain from your guests receiving aliyot their Hebrew names, i.e., their names and those of their father and mother. Please ensure that the honorees learn the blessings well in advance of the ceremony to avoid embarrassment.

Hagbaah (Lifting the Torah Scroll)

This honor is designated by the congregation or given to someone who has the ability and expertise to raise the Torah in a proper manner. Exceptions may be made only if the rabbi is assured the family member or friend is known to be experienced. On days when two Torah scrolls are used, two different individuals are chosen for the honors.

G'lilah (Dressing the Torah scroll)

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah family may designate the person who rolls and dresses the Torah after it has been raised. On days when two Torah Scrolls are used, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family may designate two people to dress the Scrolls.

Opening the Aron HaKodesh

The family may designate two people to come to the bimah to open and close the Ark. It is opened and closed three times, once at the beginning of the Torah service, once after the reading, and before Shir HaKavod at the end of the service.

Other Honors. Others whom you may wish to honor may be asked to lead the congregation in prayers for the country, for peace, or for the State of Israel (in Hebrew). The Conservative practice is to designate Jewish people for all Torah related honors. However, non-Jewish family members or friends are permitted to be given other honors and to accompany their Jewish family members on the Bimah. Please consult the rabbi for further information. It is our hope that visitors and family members of all faiths will feel comfortable at Kol Shalom.

Information for Your Guests

Those attending a Shabbat service for the first time may not be familiar with a Conservative congregation and may feel more comfortable during their visit if advised in advance of proper decorum and what may or may not be expected of them.

Dress

- Women must wear a head covering if they are to receive an honor. These are available at the entrance.
- Women, in general, may wear a *tallit*. They are required to wear one if they are reading Torah or serving as a Shaliach Tzibbur (prayer leader) or Gabbait.
- Both Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrants are to wear a *tallit*.
- Dress should reflect the honor and dignity of Shabbat.
- It is customary for Jewish men to put on a *tallit* before entering the sanctuary. This is a requirement for a man chosen to ascend the *bimah* to receive an honor.
- All men and boys should put on a *kippah* or other head covering prior to entering the synagogue as a sign of respect. These are available at the entrance.
- Non-Jewish men are to wear a *kippah* but should not put on a *tallit*.

The Shabbat Kiddush and Kashrut

Kol Shalom members look forward to celebrating with the Bar or Bat Mitzvah family on Shabbat morning. Kol Shalom families who will be sponsoring the Kiddush in honor of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah will meet with the Executive Director at least 60 days prior to the simcha to review the kashrut guidelines and catering options.

Kol Shalom adheres to the standards of Kashrut articulated by the Conservative movement as interpreted by the rabbi. We urge all Bar/Bat Mitzvah families to be consistent in their celebration by observing the dietary laws at all meals associated with the simcha wherever they are held. These meals are called "Seudot Mitzvah"- meals that have strong religious overtones because they are intimately connected with the ceremony itself.

The rabbi is available to answer questions or provide advice in this matter. Kol Shalom's policy is that our Rabbi, Executive Director, and Talmud Torah principal will not attend any "Seudot Mitzvah" that are not kosher, dairy or vegetarian.

MAZON

Kol Shalom is a proud partner in the work of MAZON, a Jewish response to hunger. We strongly encourage all families to consider adding a voluntary 3% tax to the cost of their celebration as a contribution to help feed the hungry. Participation in MAZON also provides an opportunity for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to receive first-hand experience with the mitzvah of Tzedakah at an important time in his or her life.

Visit the MAZON website for more information: www.mazon.org.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Fee

Kol Shalom imposes a fee of \$400 to the family of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah to cover the extra costs of preparation for the event. The fee will be billed sixty days, and is due thirty days, prior to the simcha.