

Temple Beth-El

Bar / Bat Mitzvah Guide



Dear Bar/Bat Mitzvah student and Family,

Your Rabbis, Cantor, and the entire Temple family share your joy and excitement in anticipating this special milestone in your lives. We hope that this will be a time of Jewish growth and enrichment for you.

This booklet is meant to anticipate and answer questions which many families often have about the process of becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah at Temple Beth-El.

We suggest that you, as a Bar or Bat Mitzvah family take the time to read this booklet thoroughly early in the process, and to keep it as a handy reference in the weeks and months to come.

B'Shalom,

Rabbi Mara Nathan

Rabbi Marina Yergin

Cantor Julie Berlin

Who's Who at Temple Beth-El

Rabbi Mara Nathan	733-9135 x101	mnathan@beth-elsa.org
Rabbi Marina Yergin	733-9135 x102	myergin@beth-elsa.org
Cantor Julie Berlin	733-9135 x103	jberlin@beth-elsa.org
Edith Vanderverter	733-9135 x107	edith@beth-elsa.org
Scheduling with Rabbis and Cantor, general questions		
Geri Gregory	733-9135 x120	geri@beth-elsa.org
To reserve the Barshop Auditorium		
Hagit Lifschitz	479-2482	urihagit@gmail.com
Temple Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutor		
Rabbi Alan Berlin	733-9135 x118	aberlin@beth-elsa.org
Executive Director, security guard requests or questions		
Tomas Montano	325-9792	tomasantonio@gmail.com
event set up, catering details		

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR BECOMING A BAR/BAT MITZVAH AT TEMPLE BETH-EL?

Religious School/Hebrew School Requirements:

- ◆ At a minimum, four years of Hebrew classes and Sunday Religious School classes, with regular attendance, or its equivalent.
- ◆ Students currently enrolled in Hebrew classes at the time they begin their Bar/Bat Mitzvah training are required to complete the requirements for the Hebrew class level at the same time as they prepare for Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- ◆ Students are encouraged to remain in Religious School after their Bar/Bat Mitzvah through Confirmation in 10th grade.

Worship Service Requirements:

In order to familiarize yourselves with Shabbat rituals and prayers in preparation for becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, students and at least one parent should attend at least six (6) Friday night services and six (6) Saturday morning services at Temple Beth-El during the six months leading up to your Bar or Bat Mitzvah date. It is helpful to attend as many Bar/Bat Mitzvah services as possible so the student and parents can familiarize themselves with their roles in the worship service for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

BAR / BAT MITZVAH TIMELINE

1 Year in Advance	Cantor Berlin evaluates Student
7 Months Prior	Student and Parents meet with Rabbi Nathan to choose verses for Torah and Haftarah portions
6 Months Prior	Begin Tutoring
5 Months Prior	Student meets with Rabbi to begin working on D'var Torah/ Begin weekly meetings with Cantor Berlin
3 Months Prior	Family completes honors form online
2 Months Prior	Student meets with Temple Organist, Bob Brewer
10 Days Prior	1st Rehearsal with Cantor Berlin
Final Week	2nd Rehearsal with Cantor and Bob Brewer, organist
Friday of Bar/Bat Mitzvah	Optional Family Rehearsal and photograph opportunity with Rabbi

WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR B'NAI MITZVAH PREPARATION?

One Year in Advance:

Approximately one year prior to the chosen Bar/Bat Mitzvah date, Cantor Berlin will evaluate the student's progress during their Religious School class. This informal meeting is a chance for Cantor Berlin to determine whether the student will be ready to meet with Rabbi Nathan at the appropriate time. No preparation is needed for this meeting.

Seven Months in Advance:

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate and parents meet with Rabbi Nathan, in order to select both the Torah and Haftarah portions and discuss the important concepts in the verses. Rabbi Nathan will also discuss the meaning of Bar/Bat Mitzvah with the family and future expectations for the student's religious education. Before meeting with Rabbi Nathan, parents and students are urged to read the full Torah portion, provided in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Orientation packet. Soon after this meeting, the student and the tutor will receive copies of the selected verses to be learned in tutoring sessions.

- Contact Temple's B'nai Mitzvah tutor, Hagit Lifschitz, to schedule a tutoring session, 479-2482. Requests for a private tutor, to be provided at your own expense, should be cleared through Cantor Berlin.
- Contact Edith Vanderverter, 733-9135 ext. 107, to set up the series of meeting times with the Rabbis and Cantor. Edith will try to coordinate these meetings with the scheduled appointments with the Temple tutor and Temple organist to minimize the number of times you need to travel to the Temple offices.

Six Months in Advance

The student will begin Hebrew preparation to study the prayers, blessings and the Torah portion. Weekly meetings are generally held at the Lifschitz home or the Temple for the first four months of study.

Five Months in Advance

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate will work with the Rabbi in preparing a written D'var Torah.

The student will begin to meet weekly with Cantor Berlin, at the Temple or at the JCC Campus, to learn to chant the Haftarah portion and its blessings. Students may also choose to learn to chant their Torah portion.

Three Months in Advance:

Parents of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah will be sent a link to filling out the Family Honors sheet, along with instructions. Parents will have the opportunity to designate family members or friends to participate in the service in various ways.

Two Months in Advance:

The student will meet with Bob Brewer, Temple organist, to rehearse appropriate selections of the service, including the candle blessing, Bar'chu, Sh'ma, the *Kedusha*, and *Oseh Shalom*.

Tutoring sessions with Hagit Lifschitz will increase from once to twice a week, with at least one meeting per week held in the Temple Sanctuary.

Ten Days to Two Weeks in Advance:

Cantor Berlin will conduct the first rehearsal with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student in the Temple Sanctuary. Only the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student is required to attend this rehearsal, though the parents are welcome.

Week of Bar/Bat Mitzvah:

The student will meet with Cantor Berlin and Bob Brewer for a second rehearsal in the Temple Sanctuary.

Friday of Bar/Bat Mitzvah:

The family has the option of having a final rehearsal with the Rabbi. This is a brief rehearsal for the family members participating in the service, other than the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Some families choose to have a photographer at this rehearsal to take pictures with the Torah.

HOW CAN PARENTS BE OF HELP TO THEIR SON OR DAUGHTER?

As in any endeavor in a young person's life, parents are supportive partners. In the context of preparing for Bar/Bat Mitzvah, below are suggested ways to show your involvement:

- ◆ Prior to the initial meeting with Rabbi Nathan, read the entire Torah portion with your child and discuss its meaning and relevance to your lives. Sitting with you and discussing the material contained in the Torah provides motivation down the line for practicing to read that portion in Hebrew, as well as thought for discussion in the D'var Torah.
- ◆ Attend services with your child often. This will help you and your child to gain confidence and comfort in participating in the Shabbat Morning service.
- ◆ Help your child choose a mitzvah project that interests him/her. Once chosen, parents can participate with the student and also be a source of encouragement.

Parents, demonstrate your interest in these things to your child, and you will help your child to see through the preoccupations of Bar/Bat Mitzvah (caterers, invitations, arrangements) to the essence of this celebration.

Shabbat Services

General Information:

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony is on Shabbat, which includes both Friday evening and Saturday morning services. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah is part of our congregational worship service at which all members of Temple Beth-El are always welcome. The announcement in the Temple Bulletin should be considered an invitation for all of the congregation to attend.

Participation Friday Evening:

- ◆ On Friday evening, members of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family will participate with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child in lighting the Shabbat candles. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah usually sings the candle blessing.
- ◆ The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will lead the service from *Bar'chu* through *V'ahavta*, and will also chant the Torah blessings, if the Torah is to be read at the service.
- ◆ B'nai Mitzvah families generally act as hosts for the Oneg Shabbat in honor of their child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah. If you are interested in bringing additional food to enhance our usual Oneg Shabbat please let Geri (210-733-9135 x120) know at least one month prior. Additional food items need to be at the Temple by 5:30 pm, trayed and ready to serve.
- ◆ Some families choose to host a Shabbat dinner for their guests. This is entirely optional. Should you choose to hold a Shabbat dinner it may be held at the Temple or at another venue. If you decide to have Shabbat dinner at the Temple, it can take place before or after Shabbat services, which begin at 6:30 p.m. Rental fee for use of the Temple facilities is dependent on the location of the dinner, and includes set up of tables and chairs for the dinner. All other aspects of the dinner including clean-up are the responsibility of the family and/or caterers. Please contact Geri (210-733-9135 x120) as soon as possible to reserve a space for a dinner.

Participation Shabbat Morning:

- ◆ In most cases, as their schedules permit, both Rabbis and the Cantor will officiate at the Shabbat morning service. If the family wishes to also include a guest Rabbi, Cantor, or soloist who is a family member or friend, Rabbi Nathan must be consulted at least six months in advance. Rabbi Nathan will be happy to extend an official invitation for other clergy to share the *bimah*.
- ◆ The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will lead the majority of the worship service, beginning with the *Bar'chu* through the Torah service.
- ◆ The student will read a section of the weekly Torah portion for Shabbat morning from the Torah scroll. Students may also choose to learn to chant their Torah portion. Cantor Berlin can help your child learn to chant if they are interested in doing so.
- ◆ The student will also learn to chant the weekly Haftarah portion. A parent or family member usually reads the English translation.
- ◆ On Saturday morning the father or mother, before addressing the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrant, is encouraged to invite the entire congregation present to attend the Kiddush or luncheon.
- ◆ There are several ways that family and friends can participate in the service. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah family may invite others to:

Torah Blessings— you may invite 2-4 people who are Jewish, 13 or older and know the blessings. There are 2 opportunities for this honor.

English Haftarah—you may invite 1-2 people to read the English of the Haftarah portion.

Ark Opening— you may invite 2-4 people to open the ark. There are 3 opportunities for this honor.

Reception:

- ◆ Families may choose to celebrate with a Kiddush luncheon, an evening party, or both. As soon as the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date is confirmed, families are asked to contact Geri Gregory (733-9135 x120) to reserve a space for the Saturday celebration. The Temple does not typically provide anything more than a simple Kiddush of wine and challah for a Saturday morning service.
- ◆ Bar/Bat Mitzvah afternoon celebrations may include music and dancing of the family's choosing. The Temple has a beautiful dance floor, which you may use for your celebration. It is available for rental to Temple members.
- ◆ The entire Barshop Auditorium, or any part of it, may be used for your luncheon. The rental fee is based on the space used and the anticipated length of the event. The fee includes the use of the kitchen as well as the china and silverware.
- ◆ The caterer or family is responsible for leaving the Temple facilities as they found them. All equipment brought from outside the Temple must be removed immediately after the event, unless prior arrangements with the Facilities Manager have been made.

Neither pork products nor shellfish may be brought onto the Temple premises.

- ◆ Families may decorate the Barshop auditorium in accordance with our Temple's guidelines, but decorations will not be permitted in the Stahl Gallery for afternoon receptions.
- ◆ If a luncheon or party is planned at the Temple, Tomas Montano will work with you and your caterer/event planner on the best locations for serving tables and guest tables. Tomas will create a floor plan drawing based on your request. Your caterer or event planner may need to make adjustments if your needs change at the last minute.
- ◆ To build a spirit of camaraderie, we strongly urge families to include all Religious School classmates of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrant in all the events of the weekend. A class list with mailing addresses will be provided to each family via email.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH CANDIDATE:

- We encourage all Bar/Bat Mitzvah students and their families to participate in a mitzvah project. This should be something that interests the student and may include collecting items for a favorite organization or volunteering on a regular basis for that organization. For example, if a student loves to read, s/he may choose to collect books for a local shelter or a less well funded public school. If a student has a love of animals, s/he may choose to volunteer on a regular basis at an animal shelter or other organization and collect items they may need. You might also use the collected items for centerpieces at the celebration.
- ◆ We encourage all Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidates to contribute 1/10 of their monetary gifts to *tzedakah*. The celebrants should designate the recipients of their generosity and notify the Rabbis.
- ◆ Become a member of the San Antonio B'nai Tzedek team. B'nai Tzedek is a local philanthropic program created and governed by local teenagers. The teenagers help others by financially assisting others. Students are encouraged to contribute \$250 from their Bar/Bat Mitzvah gift money. That money is matched with \$250 from private donors. Annually, students will choose a qualified charity to which a donation will be made from a percentage of the fund balance. Call (210) 302-6960 and speak to Amy Reagin to learn how to participate.
- ◆ As a family, you have a unique opportunity to give a thanksgiving gift to the Temple or to another worthy institution. Consider donating 3% of the total cost of the food for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration to MAZON, a Jewish-sponsored organization dedicated to alleviating hunger. See www.mazon.org for more information.

Additional Information:

Kippot:

Temple Beth-El provides kippot/yarmulkes for all congregational worship services. Kippot are optional for men and women and may not be handed out at any service.

In accordance with policy adopted by the Board of Trustees, a family that wishes to purchase kippot for the Shabbat morning service should choose kippot that are a solid color, have an abstract design or contain only Jewish symbols. These kippot may be personalized with the name and date of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah on the underside. Only kippot provided by Temple Beth-El will be made available for Friday evening worship.

Flowers:

The flowers for the pulpit are selected and ordered by the Temple. Family or friends may make a donation to underwrite the flowers, or a Temple fund will do so. If you or a family member chooses to pay for the pulpit flowers to honor your child, recognition will be printed in the Order of Service that is distributed at each service.

Photography and Videography:

- ◆ We encourage families to take their formal bimah photographs on Friday morning at the conclusion of the final rehearsal.
- ◆ Photography without flash, is permitted during the service ONLY from the balcony. Photographs may be taken in the Wulfe Sanctuary after the services are completed and all worshippers have left the Wulfe sanctuary. No professional photographs may be taken at the Friday evening Oneg Shabbat.
- ◆ Video-taping of the services is permitted, but the camera must be situated in the balcony and use existing light sources. Video-taping of the Oneg Shabbat on Friday is not permitted.

Babysitting:

Babysitting will be provided for toddlers and infants on Friday evenings and Saturday morning during services.

Security Guard

The Temple provides one security guard for the Friday evening and Saturday morning Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. This guard is posted at the entrance facing San Pedro. For security purposes, the Belknap doors normally remain locked. Should you decide to have the Belknap entrance unlocked for guests to enter the Sanctuary a second security guard must be added to monitor those doors. The family assumes the cost of \$140 for the additional guard. Contact Rabbi Alan Berlin at 733-9135 x118 or aberlin@beth-elsa.org to add a second security guard.

You must have a security guard(s) at your evening party. The Executive Director will make the arrangements and provide you with the additional cost. If your event has more than 50 participants, the Executive Director will decide what level of security must be provided and you will be billed accordingly. Contact Rabbi Alan Berlin at 733-9135 x118 or aberlin@beth-elsa.org about evening security issues.

Photographs and Announcements:

- ◆ A photograph of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student, suitable for publication, is needed at least two months before the event.
 1. Submit one photograph, for the Temple Bulletin, to Edith Vanderverter, 733-9135, ext. 107 or edith@beth-elsa.org. It should be a head shot, minimum size 600 x 750 pixels, jpg or tif
 2. If you wish to have the Bar/Bat Mitzvah announced to the San Antonio Jewish Community, submit a second photograph to the Jewish Journal, at the Jewish Federation Office, 12500 N.W. Millitary, San Antonio, Texas 78231, with a Bar/Bat Mitzvah announcement.

Below is a sample announcement for the Jewish Journal:

Jacob Cohen

Jacob Moses Cohen will be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah on Friday, January 5, 2001 and Saturday, January 6 at Temple Beth-El. Jacob is the son of Rebecca and Isaac Cohen and the brother of Esau. He is the grandson of Sarah and Abraham Cohen of Houston and Thelma and Michael Miller of Austin. Jacob attends Bush Middle School where he participates in debate team and choir.

- ◆ If special invitations are to be sent, they should emphasize that it is Sabbath worship services to which people are being invited. Sample wording for an invitation is below:

(Parent's names) joyfully invite you to
Worship with them at Sabbath Services on
Friday, August 27, 2001 at 6:30 in the evening
And Saturday, August 28, 2001 at 10:30 in the morning,
When their (son/daughter) (name),
Will be called to the Torah as a (Bar or Bat) Mitzvah.
Receptions will follow each service.
Temple Beth-El
211 Belknap Place
San Antonio, Texas

Please remember that all Religious School classmates should be invited to participate in all the festivities of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration. Each family should use their own discretion as to inviting the parents of the classmates.

WHAT FEES DOES THE TEMPLE REQUIRE?

The B'nai Mitzvah fee is \$1025. which is billed on your monthly statement beginning with the first meeting with Rabbi Nathan. This must be paid in full two months prior to the worship service. This fee helps to offset the following costs:

- ◆ Study and rehearsal times with the professional staff (Rabbis, Cantor, organist)
- ◆ Education materials (prayer book, study sheets, orientation materials, etc.)
- ◆ Use of the Sanctuary for rehearsals
- ◆ Maintenance and utility costs
- ◆ Tutoring sessions with the Temple tutor

Families may choose to work with an approved private tutor, instead of working with the Temple tutor. Private tutors are approved at the discretion of the Cantor. **Fees are not discounted for those who choose to work with a private tutor.** Students working with private tutors will work with the Rabbis and Cantor as any other student would, and will enjoy equal access to rehearsal time in the Wulfe Sanctuary. Sanctuary rehearsal times are scheduled through Edith at 733-9135 x107 or edith@beth-elsa.org.

In addition, families are required to sponsor the Oneg Shabbat after the Friday evening service with a donation of \$150.

Many families also choose to sponsor the pulpit flowers in memory of a family member or in honor of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah child with a donation of \$75.

Scholarships are available, and will be handled confidentially, upon request to one of the Rabbis, the Cantor, or the Executive Director.