

B'nai Mitzvah Handbook 2018-2019 5779



*Living (y)our
Judaism
together*

Congregation Anshei Israel

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CONGREGATION ANSHEI ISRAEL
Serving the Jewish community of Southern Arizona since 1930

Dear CAI Family:

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you a hearty *mazal tov* on your upcoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Congregation Anshei Israel.

B'nai Mitzvah, one of the most rewarding Jewish experiences, marks the coming of age for a Jewish child. In *Pirke Avot (Ethics of Our Fathers)*, Rabbi Judah ben Tama designates the age of 13 as the time for “the performance of the Commandments.” A child’s first 8 years of Jewish education are the preparation for B'nai Mitzvah, and B'nai Mitzvah is preparation for the rest of his or her life.

We look forward to sharing your simcha with you. Together we will endeavor to provide a meaningful and fulfilling Jewish experience for your entire family.

B'Shalom,

Rabbi Robert Eisen

Nichole Chorny, Cantorial Soloist

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Personal Page

Student's Name: _____

Student's Full Hebrew Name: _____

Mother's Full Hebrew Name: _____

Father's Full Hebrew Name: _____

Secular Date of Bar/Bat Mitzvah: _____

Hebrew Date of Bar/Bat Mitzvah: _____

Name of Parsha/Torah Portion: _____

Is it a Special Shabbat? _____

Haftorah is from Book of: _____

B'nai Mitzvah Classes Start (approximate): _____

Start Time for B'nai Mitzvah Service (Invitation): **9:00 a.m.** _____

Reception Start Time: _____

(Your evening celebration should begin one-hour after the end of Shabbat. Contact the office for the time if necessary.)

Other pertinent information: _____

Introduction

B'nai Mitzvah is the *beginning* of adult involvement in Jewish life, and CAI's program of instruction reflects this commitment. B'nai Mitzvah means that one takes responsibility for the mitzvot of Judaism, and among the most important mitzvot is continued study. It would make no sense for a young person to become a B'nai Mitzvah only to discontinue his or her religious education. The B'nai Mitzvah celebration, therefore, should not mark the end of one's formal Jewish education. Continued involvement in the synagogue, Jewish education and Jewish activities can help ensure that your child will remain an active member of the Jewish community for life. Our congregation, community and the Conservative Movement provide numerous opportunities for continuing post B'nai Mitzvah studies, along with activities that are focused on strengthening the Jewish identity of our youth. USY affiliation and trips, Camp Ramah and Hebrew High School are excellent examples.

In addition, it is you, the parents, who can most effectively help to make B'nai Mitzvah a truly spiritual experience for your child and the entire family. Primary emphasis should be given to the religious service, and it is vital that your entire family attends Shabbat services on a regular basis. (Shabbat service attendance is a requirement for B'nai Mitzvah class.) The most commonly voiced fear of B'nai Mitzvah students is that their family will not know what to do during the service. The easiest way to address this is for the entire family to regularly attend Shabbat services in the year preceding the B'nai Mitzvah.

Scheduling

- ✧ All B'nai Mitzvah ceremonies will be scheduled as close to a child's 13th birthday as possible.
- ✧ B'nai Mitzvah dates will be scheduled through the B'nai Mitzvah Committee three years in advance.
- ✧ Sharing a B'nai Mitzvah date or ceremony is appropriate on occasion. If you would like to do so, please discuss your preference with Nichole Chorny.
- ✧ At times, it may be necessary for two children to celebrate their B'nai Mitzvah on the same day.
- ✧ We honor our B'nai Mitzvah on Shabbat mornings. Exceptions will be considered for other services (Shabbat afternoons, Mondays, Thursdays or Rosh Hodesh) on an individual basis.
- ✧ During the fall preceding a student's B'nai Mitzvah ceremony, an invitation to participate at Havdalah following Neilah at the conclusion of Yom Kippur is sent to all B'nai Mitzvah students for the upcoming year.

B'nai Mitzvah Requirements

1. Candidates must have completed four full years of religious education (or the equivalent) prior to B'nai Mitzvah and be in attendance at a Jewish day school or Religious School in the year in which they become B'nai Mitzvah.
2. B'nai Mitzvah candidates are expected to complete Religious School classes the year of the B'nai Mitzvah **and** also through Confirmation.
3. B'nai Mitzvah candidates are expected to attend Shabbat Services each week during the year leading up to their ceremony. (It is *highly* recommended that parents attend services *with* their child.) B'nai Mitzvah who are leading portions of the Friday night service must attend those services as well.
4. By ruling of the Board of Directors, a parent must be a *member in good standing* of Congregation Anshei Israel, and must have all Religious School and B'nai Mitzvah fees paid, or on a payment schedule by sixty days prior to the ceremony.
5. The B'nai Mitzvah fee is billed nine months prior to the B'nai Mitzvah ceremony and must be paid in full at least sixty days before the ceremony. The B'nai Mitzvah fee covers all B'nai Mitzvah materials (such as books and CDs) and preparation for the B'nai Mitzvah ceremony. (The B'nai Mitzvah fee does *not* include the charge to have the service recorded. This is handled separately at a time closer to the ceremony.)

Early Planning

About 12 to 18 months prior to the B'nai Mitzvah:

- ✧ Start attending services regularly as a family if not already doing so.
- ✧ Do some reading about the spiritual meaning of the occasion. (See Appendix A: Suggested Reading List)
- ✧ Begin making plans for a reception if you are planning to have one. Many Tucson party locations require booking a minimum of one year in advance. You may book the reception in Rabbi Breger Hall or Cantor Falkow Lounge for a fee if it is available.
- ✧ Initiate contact with any ancillary professionals you may wish to use such as photographer, videographer, band or D.J., and hotels if you anticipate a significant number of out-of-town guests. (This is especially true if your event is between December and May.)

B'nai Mitzvah Study and Classes

The primary requirements for becoming B'nai Mitzvah are reading the Haftorah, reading from the Torah itself, making a short speech about the course of study, and participation in the

Shabbat service. Students begin Bar/Bat Mitzvah studies approximately nine months prior to the B'nai Mitzvah date. Instruction is provided weekly on Mondays from 4:00-5:30 p.m., and is taught by clergy and staff.

Clergy and staff direct the study and chanting of the Torah and Haftorah portions and all davening and service rituals, provide assistance with administrative details of the B'nai Mitzvah, and assist in the development of the student's speech. Students who do not reach an accepted level of proficiency may require tutorial assistance (sometimes at the parents' cost). If appropriate, there are many opportunities for advanced study, including leading more extensive portions of the Shabbat service, additional Torah readings, as well as leading parts of the Friday evening service.

Your child will be provided with all the materials he/she will need, password access to the congregation's website with digital recordings. These recordings can be downloaded to your computer, burned onto a CD, put on an iPod, etc.

B'nai Mitzvah candidates must devote time at home for *daily* study to ensure that he or she excels on the special day. Students are expected to learn two sentences a week on either their Torah or Haftorah portion. We have created booklets of prayers that coordinate with the digital recordings. We will give each student a weekly assignment on an assignment sheet. If there are problems with the pace of the class (either an inability to keep up with the assignments or a desire to work faster), please feel free at any time to discuss your concerns with your clergy. Every effort will be made to accommodate a student's needs.

B'nai Mitzvah "Speech"

Rabbi Eisen will initiate work on the speech. It may be an introduction to the Haftorah, a discussion of the Torah portion, or other topics as directed by Rabbi Eisen.

Parent and Family Involvement

An important aspect of preparation for B'nai Mitzvah is the *family educational and spiritual experience*. Parents should read the Torah and Haftorah portions in English with their children. Parents should talk with their child about what they are learning in their weekly classes and how their child feels their studies are progressing. Parents and older siblings are encouraged to read a Torah portion. Assistance and recordings will be provided if requested. To ensure competency, all service participants must be heard by the clergy before being allowed on the bimah.

One or both parents may deliver a short speech to their child on this special occasion. Total allotted time for parental speech(es) must be limited to one and one half minutes. Rabbi Eisen must see a copy of your speech and will ask you to deliver the speech at the rehearsal before the B'nai Mitzvah. It has also become a custom for a sibling(s) to recite the *Ashrey* prayer with the B'nai Mitzvah.

Kiddush following the Service

CAI is pleased to work with you to arrange for the Kiddush following the service. Please contact Debra Lytle six months prior to the B'nai Mitzvah date to make arrangements. There are numerous menu options available.

Picture for *Kolenu*

Approximately two months before the B'nai Mitzvah date, you will receive a packet of forms from the office, including a request for a small photograph of your child and publicity information for the synagogue bulletin. Please note that the deadline for this information is **firm**.

Honors and Aliyot

The B'nai Mitzvah family has the opportunity to assign a variety of spoken and unspoken honors, including the following: an English responsive reading (page 251), open ark, close ark, carry Torah, Hagbah (lift Torah), Gelilah (dress Torah), open ark, close ark, hold Torah during Haftorah, carry Torah, and four aliyot (people called to the Torah to recite the blessings before and after the Torah reading).

For all of the above honors, the person selected must:

1. Be Jewish.
2. Be at least 13 years of age or have had their B'nai Mitzvah.
3. Dress appropriately. (Anyone coming up to the bimah is required to wear appropriate head covering: a kippah for men; a kippah, hat, or chapel veil for women; tallit for men. No bare shoulders for women and no purse on bimah. No shorts allowed.)
4. Hagbah should be given to someone with the physical strength to safely lift the Torah.

A non-Jewish family member can read the Prayer for the Country (page 332) or Prayer for Peace (page 333). Please be certain that those whom you are honoring with an aliyah know the berakhot fluently. These berakhot (in Hebrew and in English transliteration) can be found in Appendix B: Blessings.

If a member of the Board of Trustees is a personal friend, you may want to ask him or her to sit on the bimah as the Board of Trustees Representative the day of your child's B'nai Mitzvah. After the Haftorah, the Board Member leads a reading. It is also permissible to pick an alternative reading in the back of the prayer book.

Approximately a month prior to the B'nai Mitzvah, a meeting will be scheduled to finalize the honors form.

Purchasing Invitations, Religious Apparel and Other Items

Please obtain a kippah, tallit and tefilin for your child's B'nai Mitzvah. If you need assistance in purchasing appropriate tefilin, please contact any of the clergy. We realize that tefilin are expensive; however we urge you to make every effort to purchase them. A class will be conducted during B'nai Mitzvah training to teach our students how to lay tefilin. Both a Bar Mitzvah and a Bat Mitzvah must wear a head covering on the special day, and at any time on the bimah following it.

Kippot must be worn when a B'nai Mitzvah reception is held in the synagogue and should be worn any time a b'racha, such as "Motzi," is recited at a kosher/dairy affair. Imprinted kippot may be ordered in bulk in a variety of colors. The Women's League Gift Shop has a wide assortment of items to choose from as well as a gift registry and gift certificates.

Tzedakah (The Gift of Giving)

It is not too early to begin to think about the joy of giving. It is traditional, and we recommend, that the family take part in a service project (e.g., deliver food to the Community Food Bank, visit a nursing home or hospital, participate in a project at the synagogue, etc.). There may also be a special community or congregation service project in which the B'nai Mitzvah class has chosen to participate. The following list is a good place to start. Rabbi Eisen will also be happy to discuss any of these ideas or other options in further detail.

1. Ask a CAI staff member what projects are needed (e.g. pre-school, grounds, library, kitchen, etc.).
2. Promise to go to a daily minyan post B'nai Mitzvah for a specific time period.
3. Volunteer with the Chesed Committee.
4. Adorn the bimah with an appropriate bimah basket in lieu of flowers.
5. Mazon is another area of *tzedakah*. Its purpose is to allocate funds to established agencies that have proven track records in the battle against hunger. Mazon asks that 3% of the cost of your simcha be contributed to feeding the hungry. For more information contact Mazon at 2940 Westwood Boulevard, Suite 7, Los Angeles, CA 90064.

Additionally, a very important aspect of this simcha, or celebration, is for the family to decide together what specific tzedakah (charitable gift) to make in honor of the occasion. It is appropriate to express one's joy through a gift for Israel, and one's joy *and* appreciation through a contribution to one or even several congregational funds that would be meaningful to your family. Many families choose to contribute to the Discretionary Fund of the Rabbi, Cantorial Soloist or Education Director; Religious School Scholarship Fund; Israel Scholarship Fund; USY; Congregational Fund, etc.

Bimah Baskets

We encourage each family to participate in the mitzvah of *tzedakah* by sponsoring a *Bimah*

Basket on the morning of your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. By donating \$125.00, a basket will be placed on the *bimah* with a sign that features a social **action** organization of your choice to whom half of the donated funds will be directed. The remaining half will be donated to CAI's USY Fund. By participating in this mitzvah, you will be empowering your child to fulfill two vital *mitzvot* – giving *tzedakah* and supporting USY. Please contact Education and Youth Director Rabbi Ruven Barkan at least 30 days before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony so we can coordinate all of the arrangements.

More Details

1. Your invitation should state **9:00 a.m.** as the time services begin.
2. Some families prefer to create their own information sheet or program reflecting their thoughts about this special occasion. Any information sheet or booklet you wish to hand out at the ceremony must be approved by Rabbi Eisen before it is printed and distributed. Please submit it to the office no less than one week prior to the B'nai Mitzvah. The clergy secretary has examples of B'nai Mitzvah programs that you may consult for ideas.
3. We strongly urge you to invite your child's **entire** B'nai Mitzvah class to the ceremony **and** party. It is hurtful for one child or just a few children to be left out.
4. Appropriate synagogue attire is necessary (see page 9).
5. Please discourage your guests from bringing gifts to the synagogue. Greetings should be exchanged after the service.
6. **No smoking or picture-taking** is permitted on the synagogue premises on Shabbat.
7. Cell phones should be turned off during services.

B'nai Mitzvah Final Rehearsals

There are **two** final rehearsals.

- 1) A final "liturgical" rehearsal will take place with Nichole Chorny sometime within two weeks of your particular Shabbat. It is a full run-through of the entire service. It takes place in

the Sanctuary. It is **only** for B'nai Mitzvah, **not** for parents. Bring all books, study materials and speech. The rehearsal lasts between one and one and a half hours.

2) Your final rehearsal with **Rabbi Eisen** will usually be on the Wednesday afternoon or Friday morning prior to the B'nai Mitzvah. There is some variation depending on Rabbi Eisen's schedule and whether there are holidays at this time. The rehearsal usually lasts about half an hour. Make final arrangements with the photographer and the videographer to be present at the B'nai Mitzvah rehearsal; this will be their only opportunity for pictures!

You should plan to bring the following items to Rabbi Eisen's rehearsal:

1. All notebooks and booklets provided by the synagogue (e.g., Haftorah booklet)
2. B'nai Mitzvah's speech and an extra copy for Rabbi Eisen
3. Parent speech and papers
4. Tallit and Kippah
5. Any immediate family members participating in the service

B'nai Mitzvah Ceremony

1. It is important that the B'nai Mitzvah families be seated in the Synagogue by **9:00 a.m.** Once services begin, please *remain* in your seats. The B'nai Mitzvah family sits in the front left center section of the sanctuary in front of the Rabbis' lectern.
2. The tallit ceremony takes place early in the service (about 9:15 a.m.). Parents hold the tallit in front of the B'nai Mitzvah as they recite the b'racha. Rabbi Eisen leads the family in the recitation of the Shehecheyanu. They then place the tallit on the shoulders of the B'nai Mitzvah. All B'nai Mitzvah students recite the Shehecheyanu. (See Appendix B: Blessings for tallit blessing and Shehecheyanu.)
3. The Torah is passed from generation to generation, from grandparents (if present) to parents to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. (Instruction will be provided at the rehearsal.)
4. The Torah Service begins at approximately 9:45 a.m. Aliyah honorees should be seated in the sanctuary by 9:30 a.m.
5. Anyone coming up to the bimah is required to wear appropriate head covering: a kippah for men; a kippah, hat or chapel veil for women.

Reception

1. The reception itself should have a Jewish character, for it is called a "*se'udat mitzvah*," a religious celebration.
2. Please do not schedule your reception or party during Religious School hours (e.g., Sunday Brunch).

3. The “motzi” should be recited at the beginning of the meal, and some form of the “birkat hamazon,” the Grace after Meals, should be recited at its conclusion.
4. Kippot must be worn when the reception is held in the synagogue and should be worn any time a b'racha such as “Motzi” is recited at a kosher affair. Please provide kippot and benching books for kosher affairs.
5. A Saturday evening reception should begin after the end of Shabbat (at least one hour after candle-lighting time).
6. A nice way to start the reception is with Havdalah, a brief, colorful ceremony separating Shabbat from the activity of the work week.
7. Whenever possible, the clergy will attend a se'udat mitzvah, but only if it is kosher.
8. If you would like to schedule your party at the synagogue, please contact Debra Lytle to reserve Rabbi Breger Hall and/or Cantor Falkow Lounge (fees apply) at least one year prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
9. Again, we strongly urge you to invite your child's **entire** Religious School class to the ceremony *and* reception. It is hurtful for one child or just a few children to be left out. Thank you.

Conclusion

We are committed to making each of your B'nai Mitzvah experiences as rewarding and meaningful as it can be for you. Sometimes it is easy to lose sight of qualitative considerations amidst all the details that demand your attention and energy. This could be a period of great anxiety for the B'nai Mitzvah and their families, but it should also be a period of intensely positive feelings. Please do not hesitate to call upon the synagogue staff for help in any way during this time. Together, we can move toward the goal of imparting to your children an

awareness of the responsibilities of adult Jewish life and a love of Judaism.

Mazal tov!

Robert Eisen

Rabbi Robert Eisen

Nichole Chorny

Nichole Chorny, Cantorial Soloist

From Rabbi Eisen

I feel it is important that we clarify our policy on our attendance at the receptions and dinners, which are part of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah or wedding.

One of the fundamental tenets of Conservative Judaism is Kashrut. The dietary laws are part of the fabric of our faith. When anyone celebrates a simcha like a wedding or B'nai Mitzvah and has a reception or dinner, it is considered a *simcha shel mitzvah*. That is to say, it is really a continuation of the religious ceremony, be it a B'nai Mitzvah or a wedding. As such, I am uncomfortable going to a *simcha shel mitzvah* where non-kosher food is served. I believe that we send a message to our children and to ourselves that the dinner is distinct and separate from the religious ceremony, when in reality it is part of the religious celebration.

As a Conservative Jew, I will eat fish in a restaurant but not meat. Also, I will attend a community dinner meeting after the meal has been served if it is not kosher. This is based on the principle of *al-tifrosh min ha tzibur* (Do not separate yourself from the Community).

When possible, the clergy will make every effort to attend a dairy, fish or vegetarian meal at a restaurant as part of a B'nai Mitzvah or wedding. When meat is served, we have no choice but to graciously decline. We ask your consideration: when extending an invitation to us, advise us if the meal is kosher or not.

In light of the above, the professional staff of Anshei Israel would like to share with you in your simcha when appropriate. However, it may not be possible for any of us or all of us to join in, depending on circumstances and the situation. Therefore, even if you have a kosher or vegetarian affair, please do not assume we will attend.

We deeply appreciate the kind invitations of our families, and the desire to include us in your simcha. But we believe it is time that our Congregation, which is one of the leading Congregations in the Southwest, adheres to the norms of the Conservative Movement.

If you have any questions or do not fully understand our policy, I would be pleased to discuss it with you.



Rabbi Robert Eisen

Appendix 1: Suggested Reading List

Putting God on the Guest List, How to Reclaim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah by Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin

Bar Bat Mitzvah Basics, A Practical Family Guide to Coming of Age Together edited by Cantor Helen Leneman

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Survival Guide by Randi Reisfeld

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planbook by Jane Levit, and Ellen Epstein

Likrat Shabbat compiled and translated by Rabbi Sidney Greenberg
(This is the siddur used for the Friday Evening service and may be purchased from the clergy secretary.)

Etz Chaim (The Torah and commentary used in the sanctuary.)

Siddur Hadash compiled and edited by Rabbi Sidney Greenberg and Rabbi Jonathan D. Levine
(This is the siddur used for the Saturday morning service and may be purchased from the clergy secretary.)

Appendix 2: Blessings

Tallit Blessing

(The complete Hebrew text can be found on page 142 of *Siddur Hadash*.)

Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai,
E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech Ha-o-lam,
A-sher Kid-shanu B'mitz-vo-tav,
Vi-tzi-vanu L'hit-a-teif Ba-tzi-tzit.
[Congregation responds AMEN]

Shehechyanu

(The complete Hebrew text can be found on page 846 of *Siddur Hadash*.)

Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai, E-lo-hei-nu
Me-lech Ha-o-lam, She-he-che-ya-nu
Vi-ki-ye-ma-nu Ve-hi-gi-a-nu
La-ze-man Ha-zeh.
[Congregation responds AMEN]

Praised be Thou, O Lord our God,
King of the Universe,
Who has granted us life, sustained us
and enabled us to reach this joyous occasion.

Torah Blessings

(The complete Hebrew text can be found on page 322 of *Siddur Hadash*.)

Blessing Before the Torah Reading:

Bar-chu et A-do-nai Ha-m'vo-rah.
(Congregation) Baruh Adonai Ha-m'vorah l'olam va-ed.
Ba-ruch A-do-nai Ha-m'vorah L'olam Va-ed.
Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai, E-lo-hei-nu Me-leh Ha-o-lam,
A-sher Ba-char Bah-nu Mi-kol Ha-amin,
V'na-tan Lanu Et To-rah-to,
Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai, No-teyn Ha-torah.

Blessing After the Torah Reading:

Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai, E-lo-hei-nu Me-leh Ha-o-lam,
A-sher Nah-tan lah-nu To-rat Emet,
V'ha-yey O-lam Nah-tah B'to-hey-nu,
Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai, No-teyn ha-torah

Appendix 3: Public Speaking Guidelines

For B'nai Mitzvah families who would like additional tips for improved public speaking, we have provided the following information. If you cannot be understood, much of your valuable preparation will be directed only to those in the first few rows. Here are some guidelines to help you.

1. **PROJECT** your voice out to the back row as if you had no microphone.
2. **COUNT TO 3** after each period. **COUNT TO 2** after other punctuation marks.
3. Every period and other punctuation mark is there for a specific reason, **ESPECIALLY** when read out loud.
4. **STRESS VERBS** as they are the **ACTION** words in a sentence.
5. **LOOK UP** frequently since the congregation has no text to follow your speech. This means going over and over it many times so that you know it well.
6. **FINISH** every word; the end of words and sentences tend to be lost if not exaggerated like “word-d-d-duh”.
7. If words and sentences trail off, the words sound like a foreign language and the speech is hard to understand. There is a lag time for the listener to “hear” the words.
8. Be **ENERGETIC**, **EARNEST** and **ENTHUSIASTIC** about what you are saying.
9. Remember: Loud does not mean fast and slow does not mean soft.