B'nai Mitzvah Handbook



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 B'nai 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 Ancestors*), Rabbi Judah ben Tama designates the age of 13 as the time for "the observance 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 their life.

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

B'Shalom,

Rabbi Metz

Nichole Chorny

Rabbi Metz

Nichole Chorny, Cantorial Soloist &
Education and Youth Director

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Personal Page

Student's Name: _____

Student's Full Hebrew Name: _____

Parent #1's Full Hebrew Name: _____

Parent #2'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): **9:30 a.m.**

Start Time for kiddush lunch: Around **12:30 p.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, commandments 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 our Madrichim program 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.) We often hear from B'nai Mitzvah families that they are worried that they 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.

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 with clergy 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 this with Nichole Chorny.
- ✡ We honor our B'nai Mitzvah on Shabbat mornings. Other possibilities can be discussed.
- ✡ 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. B'nai Mitzvah candidates are expected to complete B'Yahad classes the year of the B'nai Mitzvah **and** also through 8th grade.
2. 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.
3. By ruling of the Board of Trustees, a parent must be a *member in good standing* of Congregation Anshei Israel, and must have all B'Yahad and B'nai Mitzvah fees paid, or on a payment schedule by sixty days prior to the ceremony.
4. 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 recordings) and preparation for the B'nai Mitzvah 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.
- ✡ Take some time to read 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 a B’nai Mitzvah ceremony 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 B’nai Mitzvah studies approximately nine to twelve months prior to the B’nai Mitzvah date. Instruction is provided weekly on Sunday mornings and is taught by clergy and staff.

Clergy and staff direct the study and chanting of the Torah and Haftorah portions and all prayer 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 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 they will need and password access to the congregation’s website with digital recordings. These recordings can be downloaded to your preferred device.

B’nai Mitzvah candidates must devote time at home for *daily* study to ensure that they feel comfortable in services. 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 difficulties with the pace of the class (in either direction), 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 Metz will initiate working on the speech with your child throughout their learning. It may be an introduction to the Haftorah, a discussion of the Torah portion, or other topics from discussions with the student. She will meet one-on-one with them about 3 times (one-hour meetings) beginning about 2 months prior to the B’nai Mitzvah.

The speech is an opportunity for students to share a theme or teaching from their Torah portion. The student will speak on a subject important to them and relevant to their lives. The students meet with Rabbi Metz working closely. She will guide them each step of the way. Meetings will be a combination of working during B’Yahad times, in person and zoom meetings.

Parent and Family Involvement

An important aspect of preparation for B'nai Mitzvah is the family educational and spiritual experience. We encourage parents to read the Torah and Haftorah portions in English with their children. Rabbi Metz is happy to provide extra materials, summaries and discussion questions upon request. Parents can then 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. We ask all service participants to be heard by the clergy before B'nai Mitzvah date.

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

Kiddush

It is customary for the B'nai Mitzvah families to sponsor the Kiddush luncheon following the Shabbat morning service with our community. Please contact Administrative & Youth Education Assistant, Kim Miller for more information at EdAsst@caiaz.org

The Throwing of Candy

There is a tradition for the family & community of the B'nai Mitzvah to toss candy at the B'nai Mitzvah child, when they complete the Haftarah reading to signify a sweet life. If you choose to do this, please prepare ahead of time by purchasing bags of Sunkist Fruit Gems or other individually wrapped soft Kosher candy.

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**.

If you'd like to publish an announcement in the Arizona Jewish Post, please visit ***https://azjewishpost.com/submit-lifecycle/***

Honors and Aliyot

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

For all 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 asked to wear nice clothing and appropriate head covering: a kippah, hat, headband and tallit.
4. Hagbah (the honor of lifting and displaying at least 3 columns of the Torah text) should be given to someone who is able to safely and correctly lift the Torah.

Please be certain that those whom you are honoring with an aliyah can recite the blessing fluently and are expected to wear a kippah or headcovering and a tallit. These blessings (in Hebrew and in English transliteration) can be found on the last page of this handbook, and Nichole Chorny can send recordings if needed. Non-Jewish family members or friends can be honored by reading the Prayer for the Country or Prayer for Peace or joining a Jewish guest in their honor.

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. A B'nai 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 blessing, such as "Motzi," is recited at a kosher 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.

Mitzvah Project (Giving of Tzedakah)

Tzedakah is a mitzvah, a commandment for us to make our world better. It is traditional (and recommended) that the B'nai Mitzvah students and family take part in a service project to represent their commitment to giving back to the community as they become a Jewish adult. We discuss and brainstorm ideas in class, but it is up to the family to implement a project. There are different ways to approach the project, and we encourage it to be based on each child's interest or things that are important to them or their family (for example, a student who is passionate about reading may choose to collect books for an organization like Literacy Connects, or a student who has a family member who has had cancer might want to raise money for a cancer-research organization, etc). Here are three categories that might be considered:

1) Volunteering time (often has to be done WITH parents at this age)
2) Collecting items for an organization (which might involve creating flyers, asking family members and/or our Anshei community to bring items in for a particular organization)
3) Collecting funds for an organization

Rabbi Metz or Nichole Chorny would be happy to discuss more ideas or other options in further detail. Please contact us if you have questions.

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; Religious School Scholarship Fund; Israel Scholarship Fund; USY; Congregational Fund, etc.

More Details

1. Your invitation should state **9:30 a.m.** as the time services begin.
2. Our Executive Assistant does a beautiful job of creating a leaflet for the special day, which includes names and relationship to the B'nai Mitzvah of all honors. We will go over options with you as the day approaches, and ask you to proof the leaflet before it is printed. Some families prefer to create their own, which is also fine. Any information sheet or booklet you wish to hand out at the ceremony must be approved by the clergy before it is printed and distributed. Please submit it to the office no less than one week prior to the B'nai Mitzvah.
3. Please 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. Please discourage your guests from bringing gifts to the synagogue. Greetings should be exchanged after the service.
5. **No smoking or picture-taking** is permitted on the synagogue premises on Shabbat.
6. Cell phones should be turned off during services.
7. It is customary to sponsor the Kiddish Luncheon following the service to celebrate with your community.

B'nai Mitzvah Final Rehearsals

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.

Rabbi Metz will also arrange a time for the B'nai Mitzvah student to practice giving their speech in the sanctuary. This can occur at the rehearsal with Nichole Chorny or another mutually agreed upon time.

Please contact us if you would like to arrange for your photographer to take formal pictures during the week before the date.

Video Recording & Zoom

We will provide you with a zoom link that you may share with family or friends to be able to watch the service if they are unable to attend in person.

We also record the entire service and will send you a link to download a digital copy for you to keep. Be sure to download the recording within 10 days, as it will be removed from the server.

B'nai Mitzvah Ceremony

1. It is important that the B'nai Mitzvah families be seated in the Synagogue by **9:30 a.m.** The B'nai Mitzvah family sits in the front left center section of the sanctuary in front of Rabbi Metz's lectern.
2. The tallit ceremony takes place early in the service (about 9:45 a.m.). Parents hold the tallit in front of the B'nai Mitzvah as they recite the b'racha. The clergy then leads the family in the recitation of the Shehecheyanu. The parents then place the tallit on the shoulders of the B'nai Mitzvah. All B'nai Mitzvah students recite the Shehecheyanu in celebration of the day.
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 in conversation with Rabbi Metz.)
4. The Torah Service begins at approximately 10:15 a.m. Aliyah honorees should be seated in the sanctuary by 10:00 a.m.
5. Anyone coming up to the bimah is required to wear appropriate head covering; for example a kippah, hat or headband.

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 B'Yahad hours.
3. The "motzi" can be recited at the beginning of the meal, and some form of the "birkat hamazon," the Grace after Meals, can be recited at its conclusion. Let us know if you would like assistance with this.
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 nice way to start the reception is with Havdalah, a brief, colorful ceremony separating Shabbat from the activity of the work week. Let us know if you would like assistance with this.
6. Again, we strongly urge you to invite your child's **entire** B'nai Mitzvah 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!

Rabbi Metz

Nichole Chorny, Cantorial Soloist & Education and Youth Director

Debra Lytle
Executive Director

Appendix A: 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

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

Lev Shalem (This is the siddur used for the Saturday morning service and may be purchased from the Executive Assistant.)

Birchot Hatorah

Before Aliyah

Barchu et Adonai ham'vorach. בָּרְכוּ אֶת יְיָ הַמְבוֹרָךְ׃

Bless Adonai, the blessed One.

Baruch Adonai ham'vorach l'olam va'ed. בָּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְבוֹרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד׃

Blessed is Adonai, the blessed One for all eternity.

Baruch atah Adonai,
Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
asheir bachar banu mikol ha'amim,
v'natan lanu et torato.
Baruch atah Adonai,
notein hatorah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים,
וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ׃
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה׃

Blessed are You, Adonai, Ruler of the universe, who chose us from all the nations and gave us His Torah. Blessed are You, Adonai, Giver of the Torah.

After Aliyah

Baruch atah Adonai,
Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
asheir natan lanu torat emet,
v'chayei olam nata b'tocheinu.
Baruch atah Adonai,
notein hatorah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת,
וְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם נָטַע בְּתוֹכֵנוּ׃
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה׃

Blessed are You, Adonai, Ruler of the universe, who gave us the Torah of truth and implanted eternal life within us.