

Temple Am Echad



The South Shore Reform Congregation

B'nai Mitzvah Program
Parent Manual

Revised 11/3/2017

Welcome to the B'nai Mitzvah Program, an amazing journey of study for your child and family. Many of us remember our service when we became a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, but the months of preparation are not so clear. Your child will be logging in many hours of study leading up to that one, joyful Shabbat, and our goal is that every moment, both on and off the bimah, will be worthwhile with time well spent. May this one special moment be followed by many, many milestones on your child's life-long Jewish Journey.

The beauty of becoming a bar/bat mitzvah lies in the emotional and spiritual growth which results from prayer and study of Torah. However, such beauty is dependent on the "nuts and bolts" of daily study and progress, the essential elements for success.

This handbook is designed to present the "nuts and bolts" of your child's journey to become a B'nai Mitzvah and to provide guidelines for what you, as parents, can do to help your child during this period of study, learning and growth.

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Questions

The first place to look is this booklet. For questions on dates, administration and the ballroom, please contact Irene Drantch, Temple Am Echad's Executive Director. For general questions on content of the B'nai Mitzvah Program, contact Rabbi Bellush. For Religious School questions please contact Jared Berry. For B'nai Mitzvah Program questions, please contact Cantor Dubin. All can be reached at (516) 593-4004.

Student Requirements

Religious School

All students must attend at least three years of religious school at Temple Am Echad. Transfer students from other synagogues and from Jewish day schools will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Regular and consistent attendance is required during these years.

The chart below outlines the education timeline for children enrolled in Temple Am Echad's Religious School.

Date/Time	Student
Kindergarten	Consecration at the start of religious school
Second/Third Grade	Hebrew Language Program begins as part of a Larger Judaic curriculum
1 Year Before Bar/Bat Mitzvah	Family B'nai Mitzvah Class
Approximately Six months prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah	Start Tutoring
13 Years Old	Bar/Bat Mitzvah
Weeks After Bar/Bat Mitzvah	Graduate to Chai School Program
Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Grades	Chai Program; Madrichim
Eleventh Grade	Madrichim/Confirmation
Twelfth Grade	Madrichim

Hebrew

The religious school curriculum emphasizes learning *siddur* (prayer book) Hebrew in third through seventh grades. Fourth through seventh grade specifically targets these lessons and further develops the skill sets essential to leading worship services. Hebrew, in fourth through seventh grades, teaches the reading and grammar necessary to graduate to the next level, reading Torah.

As a supplement to our Hebrew teaching, the Tuesday program covers Hebrew reading rules and the decoding strategies for pronouncing Hebrew words without vowels.

If your child is consistent in attendance to our Sunday/Tuesday program, attends services as required, and maintains a basic level of home practice, your child will excel in Hebrew learning.

Liturgy

Shabbat services, both evening and morning, contain the weekly prayer liturgy for the congregation. One of the educational goals for your child is to prepare him/her to be the *shaliach tzibor*, the public prayer leader of the Saturday morning service.

A *shaliach tzibor* is responsible for leading prayers in both Hebrew and the English. In addition to the Hebrew, the English of *Mishkan Tefilah*, our *siddur*, will require practice. Students will receive their own copy of *Mishkan Tefilah* in order to prepare to become B'nai Mitzvah.

In Family Shabbat Services, your child will also learn some of the *bimah* skills of asking worshippers to rise and to be seated at appropriate times. These are simple skills but they require a familiarity with the service.

Torah and Haftarah

For the typical student, the assignment of a Torah portion is approximately twelve verses, which are divided into four *aliyot*. For students with learning issues, the Cantor, in consultation with the Rabbi, will adjust the assignment to create a challenging but doable portion.

The *Haftarah* is taken from the prophetic writings, the middle section of the Hebrew Bible, known in Hebrew as the *Tanakh*. The portion is designated by tradition. The *Haftarah* typically assigned is four verses. We expect all of our students to chant both Torah and Haftarah. Torah and Haftarah chanting is based on a system of trope or cantillation marks which serve to provide emphasis and punctuation during the public reading.

Service Attendance

Attending worship services is part of our weekly ritual and parents need to model service attendance and prayer for children. Celebrating Shabbat is a habit that has to be taught. With your help, our goal is to introduce your child to worship and make them feel comfortable being part of the *Kahal*, the worshipping congregation.

Please remember that children learn by example. If Shabbat observance is treated as a burden, your children will adopt that same attitude. If you celebrate Shabbat with song, prayer, and gathering as a family, they will experience the beauty Shabbat has to offer.

We encourage students and their families to attend worship services on a regular basis. Temple Am Echad offers a variety of Friday night services, Saturday morning b'nai mitzvah services and several Shabbat morning learners' Services throughout the year.

B'nai mitzvah students need to attend 5 Friday night and 5 Shabbat morning services in the 12 months prior to their becoming b'nai mitzvah.

A minimum number of services at other synagogues may count toward this requirement.

Tzedakah – Bar/Bat Mitzvah Project

With so much emphasis placed on the child, it is easy for the student to assume that the entire bar/bat mitzvah celebration is about him or herself. Ideally, this Shabbat celebration and this milestone on the journey to becoming a Jewish adult are to be shared by the entire family and the congregation.

One of the tools the synagogue uses to teach students that they have a responsibility to the community is the lesson of *tzedakah*. First, we ask that your child perform acts of tzedakah in preparation for becoming a bar/bat mitzvah. Because we want our children to grow into contributing members of society, and because we also want to use this experience to shape our children into aware adults, we ask that **you and your child find some way of rolling up your sleeves and physically doing some work**. We ask that your child, and you'll probably have to do it right along with him/her, engage with animals, people (elderly, children, people with disabilities, etc.) or the earth (playground clean-up, community gardening, etc.) We ask you to explore how you would perform *tikkun olam*, or repair of the world, and then pitch in! We also think that doing this the year before Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring begins in earnest is a fine time to fulfill this requirement.

Ten hours of donated time is considered an appropriate gift of self as part of becoming a bar/bat mitzvah. We do not track a student's hours for their tzedakah project, but do ask that parents emphasize the importance of fulfilling this aspect of the B'nai Mitzvah Program.

Another act of *tzedakah* related to our B'nai Mitzvah Program is participation in Mazon, A Jewish Response to Hunger. Our suggestion is that every family donate 3% of the cost of celebrating this *simcha* to Mazon. More information about the organization and making donations can be found at www.mazon.org.

In addition to donating to Mazon, Temple provides other giving opportunities in honor of a child's becoming a bar/bat mitzvah. Please consider a donation to the following:

- General Fund
- Tikken Habayit (continues support restoration of sacred scrolls and our Sanctuary)
- Rabbi's or Cantor's Discretionary Fund
- Prayer Book Fund
- Library Fund
- Scholarship Fund

You can also commemorate this special occasion with a plaque on our Halleluyah Panel in the Lobby - \$200 for a small plaque, and \$600 for a large plaque. A pew plaque in our Sanctuary is \$180, and a brick placed in our brick garden is \$500 or \$1,000. A leaf on our Wall of Life may be purchased for \$360 for a small leaf or \$720 for a large leaf.

Please call the Temple office at (516-593-4004) to arrange for any of these commemorative donations.

Sermon (D'var Torah)

One of the last tasks a bar/bat mitzvah student performs is the writing of a *d'var torah* (Torah teaching) for the congregation. The *d'var torah* has three components. The first is an examination of the Torah portion; the student will be expected to describe the portion, teach a lesson from those verses, and finally, explain why this portion might be relevant today. The second part of the *d'var torah* is a personal statement on the meaning of becoming a bar/bat mitzvah and the role Judaism plays in the child's life. The third component of the *d'var torah* is for the student to describe how performing his/her acts of tzedakah has impacted his/her life. The *d'var torah* allows the student to reflect on the transition from childhood into young adulthood brought about by becoming a bar/bat mitzvah.

Each student will study the Torah portion with Rabbi Bellush using age appropriate commentary. The text of the *d'var*, a draft of the sermon, should be emailed to Rabbi Bellush for review approximately two to three weeks before the service. The sermon allows parents and child to learn Torah together, but it is to be written by the student in his/her own words. The *d'var torah* is also an opportunity for students to offer words of thanks to those who have guided them on their b'nai mitzvah journey.

A common guide to length is about three pages typed (in Times New Roman, 14 pt font), which also converts to approximately 750 words.

After the student meets with Rabbi Bellush to review the draft of the *d'var*, it should be finalized and copy brought to the b'nai mitzvah service rehearsal (see Rehearsal section later in this manual.)

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Preparation

Homework

Because children learn languages differently, a tutorial can be ½ hour to an hour, 1-2 times a week. The program is designed to introduce new material, correct mistakes, and polish bimah-ready Hebrew material. It is not designed to be the only component of study; **study must take place at home; daily and with parental supervision.**

If the parent doesn't read Hebrew, this is not an obstacle. Sitting your child down at the table and keeping him/her on task for a set amount of time is the most important parental duty of home study. Each student is also provided with an MP3 file of all the Hebrew. The students are supposed to use this MP3 at home as a part of the study process.

The largest "portion" of the B'nai Mitzvah Program is home study. This is an academic exercise in language acquisition and it is essential that this learning take place on a daily basis. Simply put, if your child does not study, he/she will not master the material.

Cantor Google Doc

The Cantor will create a google doc in order to keep lines of communication open between you, your child, herself, and the Rabbi. Assignments, expectations, and assessments can be found here. You and your child can write comments and concerns to discuss in person so that we are all working together to know how each child is progressing.

Tutoring – Torah portions, Haftorah and Prayers

The tutoring schedule begins and is assigned by the Cantor approximately 6-8 months prior to the service. The period may be longer if the summer months occur during this time.

There will be approximately 30 sessions that 20 minutes - 1 hour in length with Temple's Cantor. By experience, we have found that for most children, if they study at home and are prepared when they come to their lessons, this is ample time for them to prepare to become a bar/bat mitzvah. Parent participation in a child's journey to become a bar/bat mitzvah is essential. We ask that you invest the time in practicing with your child (even if you don't know Hebrew).

Special Needs

The Religious School curriculum and the B'nai Mitzvah Program are tailor designed to requirements to meet the needs of students with learning issues. Regardless of the issue or disability, Temple Am Echad will provide a Bar or Bat Mitzvah for students who are willing to engage in study at an appropriate level. When you choose a date for your child, contact the Cantor (or Cantor and Rabbi) to discuss learning issues. We will change and adapt our teaching methodologies to the best of our abilities to match the successful methods used in your child's secular school.

Sulam is a local agency that hosts a religious school for children with special needs. Temple Am Echad is a partner with this agency. If your child is autistic, Sulam will provide the training and support services for training. For more information, you may contact Sulam directly by calling Libby Adler at 516-474-1500 or sending an email to ladler.directory@sulam-li.org. Their website is www.sulam-li.org.

Parent Responsibilities

Three Years Before

- Choose a date
- Receive this booklet (also available on line)

Two Years Before

- B'nai Mitzvah Fee
- Booking the Ballroom (if desired)

One Year Before

- "Family B'nai Mitzvah" Program
- Review B'nai Mitzvah Program Parent Manual

8 Months Before

- Students begin study with Cantor
- Decide on and begin Tzedakah Project

3 Months Before

- Schedule Photographer shoot time with office.

1 Month Before

- Liability Insurance certificates for outside caterers due for Ballroom rental
- Final synagogue payments due
- Find Hebrew names for student and those receiving the honor of an Aliyah (blessing before and after the Torah reading)
- Parents begin to prepare their speech for Friday night

2 Thursdays Before

- Sermon first draft due to Rabbi Bellush
- Give out honors (aliyah)
- First walk through with Rabbi Bellush and Cantor Dubin

1 Thursday Before

- Sermon Rehearsal with Rabbi
- Sermon is due
- Confirm photographer shoot times.
- Second walk-through with Cantor Dubin

Booking the Date

In years with large numbers of students becoming b'nai mitzvah, some dates may be a double bar/bat mitzvah ceremony. The synagogue cannot determine which dates will be singles and which will be doubles until all of the students have been assigned dates and the dates have been accepted by the parents. Unless families request otherwise, the synagogue prioritizes giving students a single.

As soon as the calendar dates are set, families will be notified.

Congregation Dues and Fees

Dues must be current and religious school fees must be paid in full 30 days prior to the bar/bat mitzvah service. The b'nai mitzvah fee is billed immediately after the bar/bat mitzvah service date is chosen in fifth grade.

Family B'nai Mitzvah Program

This is a mandatory family education program for both parents and students. This course investigates the themes presented in the book by Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin: Putting God on the Guest List. Purchasing the book is not required, but if you would like to do so, it can be ordered online, and is usually available in the Jewish sections of larger bookstores. Each class is approximately one hour to one and one-half-hour long, and is usually held on a Sunday morning during religious school.

Honors

A copy of the honors worksheet may be found at the back of this booklet. This copy is for your use for planning purposes. A final version should be brought to the first rehearsal for review by the rehearsal leader.

Videotaping & Photography

Videotaping of both the Friday night and Saturday morning service is allowed. However, your videographer must do so from the choir loft at the back of the sanctuary.

Private still photography is not allowed during the service. However formal portraits, including poses with the Torah are welcomed and encouraged. You may use the photographer of your choice either during the week or Saturday morning before the service. Either the Rabbi, Cantor or a board member must handle the Torah scrolls, which means you must book the date and the time of your photo shoot with the Temple office. The Rabbi and Cantor will make themselves available for photos upon request by the family and if their schedules allow.

We would appreciate it if during the service cameras are put away, and phones and recording devices turned off. Thank you for your understanding.

Parent Presentation

At the Friday evening service the night before your child becomes a bar/bat mitzvah, one of the parent responsibilities is the presentation of the child as the newest member of the worshipping community, the *kahal*. The congregation looks forward to this presentation. Everyone recognizes the many years of religious school, the intensity of preparation and the significance of another one of our children becoming a bar/bat mitzvah. In many ways, your words will be the highlight of the Friday evening service. On that Friday night, an entire congregation will rise in recognition of your hard work and offer a blessing to the bar/bat mitzvah and his/her family.

Service Times

Our Shabbat evening service starting times vary between 7:00pm and 8:00pm depending on the program for the evening. Please check the Temple website calendar or call the office for service start times on specific dates. Generally, our service times are as follows:

7:00pm Service

- Family Service (usually held on the First Friday of the month)

8:00pm Service

- All year

Shabbat Morning Service

Our Shabbat morning service begins at 10:00am. B'nai mitzvah services usually conclude between 11:45am and 12:00. A bar/bat mitzvah will be leading the service from the beginning of the morning. Please tell your friends and family to arrive on time!

Kippot and Tallitot

Temple Am Echad does provide baskets of “kippot” for our guests and congregants. These baskets are full of kippot in all sorts of colors, shapes, and sizes. If you would like to purchase kippot for your child's service, you are welcome to do so. Several businesses in the area provide this service but it is just as easily accessible online.

Prices will vary between a four panel and a six panel kippah, lined or unlined, and finally, by the material requested. Impressing the name and date on the inside of the kippah is an extra, though usually nominal fee. Please give the manufacturer 8 weeks to complete the order.

Kippot and tallitot (prayer shawls) are a matter of personal ritual practice. However, b'nai mitzvah students both boys and girls, are encouraged to wear these items during their service.

Please note that kippot and tallitot are available in the lobby for use during the service, should guests and those receiving honors choose to wear them.

Bimah Dress Code

Our Temple, and especially the sanctuary, are considered sacred space. In that context the *bimah* (the elevated portion at the front of the sanctuary), on which is located the Holy Ark containing our sacred Torah scrolls and from which our services are led, is considered the 'holiest of holy places.' In keeping with the joyful, yet solemn nature of our worship services, acceptable attire for participating in a bar/bat mitzvah service tends to be more modest than for other, everyday occasions. Those individuals accepting an honor in the service should reflect their understanding of the sacredness of the moment in their choice of attire. Ballgowns, black-tie attire and bare shoulders are not appropriate for a worship service.

The bar/bat mitzvah should choose his/her attire with regard to the auspicious nature of the religious service and with thought to his/her ability to hold and carry the Torah scroll, which can be quite heavy, during the *hakafah* (the ceremonial delivery of the Torah to the congregation.) For this reason, high heels, large gowns, and tight, short dresses are strongly discouraged.

Ushering

Families in the B'nai Mitzvah Program share the duties of ushering for the Erev Shabbat and Shabbat Morning services. Each family is asked to usher for the bar/bat mitzvah service that directly precedes their own. If your child is the first bar/bat mitzvah in the autumn, you will usher for the last bar/bat mitzvah service in the Spring/Summer and if your child is the first service in the spring, you will usher for the last bar/bat mitzvah service in the Fall/Winter.

Ushers should arrive at the synagogue thirty minutes before services both Friday night and Saturday morning. They are asked to welcome all who enter the building and direct them to the coat closet or the restroom as necessary, and to hand out the prayer book insert that is on the table in the lobby. Five minutes before services, ushers should invite the gathered crowd to proceed into the sanctuary for service. Once the service begins, the head usher will direct you regarding additional tasks during the service.

Rehearsal

There are two rehearsals. One is usually scheduled two Thursdays before the Shabbat Service. The second is the Thursday before the Shabbat Service. At the rehearsal, the Rabbi and Cantor will take the family through evening and morning services, the customs, choreography and honors. The rehearsal worksheet will be reviewed with the family. The family will need the Hebrew names for everyone receiving the honor of blessing the reading of the Torah (*aliyah*).

The students should bring a copy of their completed d'var Torah to the rehearsal. It should be typed in 14 pt type and should have a 3 ½ inch margin at the bottom of each page. The delivery of the d'var Torah will be practiced with Rabbi Bellush.

Students should bring their prayerbook

Students should bring the copy of their Haftarah that they've been working with.

Students should bring their tallit.

Students should expect to wear their Bar or Bat Mitzvah shoes.

While parents are welcome to call the office and Rabbi Bellush and Cantor Dubin during office hours with their questions, a special effort is made to cover all aspects of the services during the rehearsal. The office telephone number is 593-4004.

Rabbi Bellush's email is amechadrabbi@gmail.com. Cantor Nancy Dubin's email is: amechadcantor@gmail.com.

Bimah Flowers

If you would like fresh flowers on the Bimah they are \$75. Please let Irene Drantch know at least one week before the bar/bat mitzvah service.

Oneg Shabbat

The Oneg Shabbat on Friday evening is part of synagogue Shabbat celebration. The synagogue will take responsibility of all arrangements for this dessert function. However, if you are expecting a large number to attend on Friday evening, please call the office so that more tables will be set in the Ballroom.

Afternoon Kiddush or Evening Party

Temple Am Echad is available for afternoon Kiddush immediately following services on Saturday, as well as for b'nai mitzvah parties. Bookings can be made as soon as a service date is secured. Please contact our Executive Director, Irene Drantch, 593-4004, or at amechadexec@gmail.com for all of the information and booking.

Rehearsal Worksheet

Please insert the full names and relationship to the bar/bat mitzvah of the individuals who will be performing these tasks/receiving these honors.

Friday Night

Candles and Kiddush (The bar/bat mitzvah, accompanied by his/her immediate family will be called to the bimah to lead the congregation in these prayers. Please list these names, as well as any other individuals who will be accompanying them.)

L'dor V'dor: (grandparents and parents) Participants in passing the Torah from generation to generation: (Please let us know if we should conduct this ceremony up on the bima or in front of the bima if anyone has trouble with stairs)

Parent's Words: Please provide name(s) of parent(s) who will give encouraging words on Friday evening.

Saturday Morning

Tallit: _____

Ark Openers for Torah Service: _____

Torah Blessings (aliyah)

English

Hebrew

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The fourth aliyah belongs to bar/bat mitzvah student

4. _____

Hagbah (holds Torah): _____

Galilah (wraps Torah): _____

Ark Openers for Concluding Prayers: _____

Kiddush/Motzi on bimah: (typically immediate family celebrating
with bar/bat mitzvah) _____

Please note below any additional circumstances or information the
Rabbi needs to be aware of during the bar/bat mitzvah service.

BLESSING BEFORE THE READING OF THE TORAH

בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יְיָ הַמְּבָרֵךְ.
בְּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבָרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים,
וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

BLESS ADONAI who is blessed.

Blessed is Adonai who is blessed now and forever.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who has chosen us from among the peoples, and given us the Torah. Blessed are You, Adonai, who gives the Torah.

BLESSING AFTER THE READING OF THE TORAH

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת,
וַחַיֵּי עוֹלָם נָטַע בְּתוֹכָנוּ.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

BLESSED ARE YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who has given us a Torah of truth, implanting within us eternal life.

Blessed are You, Adonai, who gives the Torah.