

# MAZAL TOV

on your child's upcoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The following information will be useful to you in your planning in the months ahead. Although we have tried to anticipate your questions, we know that other questions and issues will arise. Please feel welcome to call us at your convenience. The entire staff of Beth El Temple looks forward to working with you to ensure a meaningful and memorable simcha for you and your family.

James Rosen, Rabbi (jrosen@bethelwh.org)

Ilana Garber, Rabbi (igarber@bethelwh.org)

Joseph Ness, Cantor (jness@bethelwh.org)

Rabbi Howard Rosenbaum, Educational Director  
(hrosenbaum@bethelwh.org)

Rabbi Howard Sowalsky, Ritual and Program Director  
(hsowalsky@bethelwh.org)

## **AN OPENING NOTE**

We are honored to share both in this process and in this special day with you. We hope this will mark a milestone in a long partnership that will help nurture your family's Jewish growth and make Beth El a genuine spiritual home for you. From experience we offer some opening thoughts and suggestions.

- You are creating memories. Your child will remember this day for the rest of his/her life. Do everything possible to make it positive, enriching and meaningful for family harmony and in Jewish ways, as well.
- Kids watch parents closely and they generalize. The manner in which you prepare for the day communicates your values. Therefore, in addition to planning carefully for receptions and new clothing, devote some time and resources to the Jewish celebration that Bar/Bat Mitzvah is. Attend more services than necessary. Make sure that fathers have their own *Tallit* and *Kippah* (mothers can too, of course.) Start having *Challah* on Friday nights with *Hamotzi*. Such actions will broadcast '*my family cares about Judaism. It must be important.*'

- Use this time to deepen your child's appreciation of your family's history. Discuss your child's Hebrew name. For who is he or she named? What kind of person was this ancestor? What qualities would you as parents hope your child might emulate from your family's past?
- For more enriching ideas see ***Putting God on the Guest List: How to Reclaim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah*** by Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin or ***Bar/Bat Mitzvah Basics: A Practical Family Guide to Coming of Age Together*** by Cantor Helen Leneman.

## **STUDENT PREPARATION**

Preparation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah begins the first day that a student learns to read Hebrew. By practicing Hebrew reading diligently throughout the Religious School (and day school) years, a student minimizes pressure leading up to his/her simcha.

Students in the Daled (P.S. Grade 6) class of our Religious School participate in a five-session group workshop with one of our Bar/Bat Mitzvah instructors to learn Torah trop (the system of musical notes used to read Torah) as well as the Torah aliyah blessings and Friday evening Kiddush. Following the conclusion of this workshop, there will be periodic review sessions to help students better remember learned material until the start of their individual lessons. It is important for students to attend class and prepare regularly in order to master these skills before continuing with private lessons. Day school students will have learned this as part of their school curriculum and will review it with their Bar/Bat Mitzvah instructors at the beginning of the individual instructional process.

Individual preparation begins 8 months (exclusive of summer vacation) prior to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. At that time, Rabbi Rosenbaum will call you to arrange for a mutually convenient lesson time with one of our instructors. Lessons take place weekly for one-half hour and meet throughout the school year. Summer lessons may take place contingent on the schedules of student and instructor. At each lesson, students will receive a homework assignment for the next week. While home preparation of 30 minutes at least 3-4 times per week is recommended, students must understand that they are responsible for mastering assigned material for the next lesson. Bar/Bat Mitzvah lessons serve no purpose if a student is not prepared. If a student is unable to be present for a scheduled lesson, your cooperation is appreciated in calling the school office (233-9891) as early as possible so that the instructor can be notified.

## **SHABBAT SERVICE ATTENDANCE**

As a requirement of our Religious School, families are expected to attend Shabbat services at Beth El Temple nine times during each school year. While students are encouraged to attend the Junior Congregation program appropriate for their age, credit is also given for attendance at Friday night services, monthly Shabbat morning family services and services in the Sanctuary. During the twelve-month period preceding the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, families are expected to attend Shabbat morning services in the Sanctuary at least ten times. In this way, you will become familiar with the content, structure and logistics of the service at Beth El in advance of your own simcha. Students must be up-to-date in their Shabbat service attendance in order to serve as *shaliach tsibbur* (leading the congregation in prayer, e.g., *pesukei d'zimra*, *shacharit*, Torah service) at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Serving as *shaliach tsibbur* is a cherished tradition in Jewish life, acting as facilitator for the congregation's deepest wishes and prayers. As such, we feel that this individual should be thoroughly familiar with the service.

## **FAMILY ALIYAH**

Beginning 1/1/07, Bar/Bat Mitzvah families are offered a family aliyah one year prior to their simcha, on the Shabbat on which the child's parsha is read. Families who are having a Shabbat morning simcha will be given the aliyah at the Shabbat morning service. Families who are having a Shabbat afternoon (Mincha/Maariv/Havdallah) simcha will be given the aliyah at the Shabbat Mincha service. A special presentation will be made to the family by the one of the Rabbis.

## **THIRTEEN MITZVOT PROGRAM**

Simon the Righteous teaches us in Pirke Avot (Ethics of the Sages): "The world stands on three things – study of Torah, the Temple service, and acts of lovingkindness." What better way for a child to demonstrate a commitment to a life of mitzvot than by performing mitzvot that represent the various dimensions of Jewish life, from ritual observance and learning to service to one's neighbors. In this spirit, candidates for Bar/Bat Mitzvah are asked to complete the "Thirteen Mitzvot Program", a description of which is included in this booklet. Students may choose to create a display to illustrate these accomplishments to the congregation and family guests.

## **DALED FAMILY WORKSHOPS**

During the Daled class (P.S. Grade 6) year, a four-part series of workshops are held on Sunday mornings during Religious School for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student and his/her parents to explore a number of topics relating to Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Topics include: the significance of Bar/Bat Mitzvah, making the Bar/Bat Mitzvah a more meaningful experience, preparing a d'var Torah, and making a tallit.

## **MEETINGS WITH RABBIS**

In the months leading up to your simcha, you and your child will meet with Beth El's rabbis in order that they can get to know you better. On Sunday mornings during the Hai class (P.S. Grade 7) year, beginning in 2007-2008, students will be broken up into 3-4 groups and will meet with each of the synagogue's clergy on a rotating basis, focusing on topics relevant to the class and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process.

In your child's two meetings with Rabbi Garber, the first to take place 3 - 4 months before your simcha, they will discuss the mitzvah projects, review the themes of your child's Torah and/or Haftarah portion and work together to write a *d'var Haftarah* or *d'var Torah* to be delivered at your simcha. Your child will meet with Rabbi Rosen twice, beginning approximately six months prior to your simcha to study together your child's Torah portion and to get to know each other. You and your child together will meet with Rabbi Rosen approximately one month before, to review the service and service protocol. The rabbis' secretary will contact you to schedule these meetings.

## **PRE-BAR/BAT MITZVAH ALIYAH**

During the week prior to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah, (s)he will have an aliyah at the Shabbat afternoon (Mincha) service. This will allow the child to gain the experience of reciting in front of a real congregation as well as the feeling of standing at the Torah. This opportunity is also made available at the Monday or Thursday morning service, when the Torah is also read. At the morning service, students gain the experience of putting on tefillin, as is customary at this time. You will receive a phone call or e-mail from the Religious School office several weeks before your simcha to schedule this aliyah. Please remember that, as your child will be called to the Torah at this time, (s)he should be dressed modestly (including no shorts, please!).

## **DRESS REHEARSAL**

All students meet with Cantor Ness for approximately three weeks before your simcha. During the week before your simcha, Cantor Ness will conduct a full 'run-through' with your child in the Sanctuary. As you plan your last-minute errands for this day, please allot a two-hour block of time for this purpose.

## **POST BAR/BAT MITZVAH PROGRAMMING**

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony provides a framework for the child and, indeed, the family, to reaffirm their commitment to Jewish living and values in a public forum. Within this context, Bar/Bat Mitzvah should be viewed as just one significant milestone along the continuum of the Jewish life cycle. It is our expectation that every child be satisfactorily enrolled in a program of formal Jewish education through the conclusion of seventh grade. It is our hope that every child will take advantage of the post-Bar/Bat Mitzvah programs that our Temple and community have to offer – USY, Kadima and Yachad, the community high school program, to name just a few. As a means of promoting continued involvement in our services, each student will be assigned an additional Torah reading to prepare after the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. We hope that this will be the beginning of a regular pattern of participation in our Beth El community.

## **SCHEDULE OF SERVICES**

Shabbat morning services at Beth El Temple begin at 9:30 AM. The starting time for Shabbat afternoon (Mincha/Maariv/Havdallah) services varies, depending on the time of year. If you are having an afternoon Bar/Bat Mitzvah, please confirm the starting time of services with Rabbi Rosen or Rabbi Sowalsky before you order your invitations. Sunday morning Rosh Chodesh Bar/Bat Mitzvah services as well as Monday morning Bar/Bat Mitzvah services begin at 10:00 AM. The members of your family are requested to be in their seats in the Sanctuary at least 10 minutes prior to the start of services.

## **SERVICE HONORS**

There are several different types of honors that are given to individuals during the service:

1. Peticha – These individuals open the ark gates and curtain.
2. Aliyah (plural: Aliyot)– These individuals recite special Hebrew blessings before and after the reading of a specific portion of Torah.
3. Hagbah – This individual lifts the Torah.

4. Gelilah – This individual dresses the Torah.
5. During the course of the Torah service, several individuals are needed to move the Torah and/or return it to the ark.
6. English Reading – This responsive reading, to be chosen by the Rabbis, is done before the Torah is returned to the Ark and may be read by a person who is not Jewish.

On Shabbat morning, there are a total of eight spoken aliyot. The eighth aliyah, called “Maftir”, is designated for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child. The third, fourth and fifth aliyot as well as Hagbah belong to the congregation and are often given to members who are celebrating special simchas (aufruf-prior to a wedding, baby naming, birthday, anniversary). The other four aliyot are designated for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family in honor of your simcha. Two individuals may share any spoken aliyah.

On Shabbat afternoon (Mincha), there are a total of three spoken aliyot; on Rosh Chodesh, there are four. The last aliyah is designated for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child. The others are designated to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family in honor of your simcha.

Prior to your simcha, you will receive an ‘Aliyot Form’ to complete with the Hebrew and English names of all individuals whom you will honor during your simcha. Please fill it out clearly and completely and return it to Ritual Director Rabbi Howard Sowalsky at least three weeks prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Included in this handbook are copies of the current Aliyot Forms.

Please note that all individuals honored with an Aliyah (spoken or non-spoken, except the English Reading) must be Jewish and at least 13 years of age.

## **DECORUM AND USHERING**

Parents are called upon twice during the year of your child’s Bar/Bat Mitzvah to serve as chaperones in the Sanctuary. Those having a Shabbat morning Bar/Bat Mitzvah usher at the morning service while those having a Mincha/Maariv/Havdallah Bar/Bat Mitzvah usher at the afternoon service. This system helps us to welcome and assist those attending our services as well as to maintain appropriate decorum. There are times when ushers will be asked to intervene with teenage guests. Schedules are issued in December and August for the period that follows. If you are unable to usher on your scheduled date, you are responsible for switching with another family and notifying the school office of that change. Please note that these ushering assignments are obligations for which both the congregation and Bar/Bat Mitzvah family are depending on you.

## **TORAH READINGS**

Beth El Temple is fortunate to have many members who read Torah and truly enjoy it. We hope that you and your family will become part of this special group after your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. In order to facilitate this involvement, effective January 1, 2008, during regular Shabbat morning services, the congregation will have the opportunity to read at least 3 Torah readings, as assigned by the Ritual Director. Families with Bar/Bat Mitzvahs on a given Shabbat morning will have the opportunity to request of the Ritual Director the assignment of up to 5 Torah readings, including the *maftir*, to qualified Jewish adults, ages 13 and older—these 5 readings to include those done by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. If the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, in conjunction with his/her teacher, elects to read more than the 5 allotted readings (6, 7 or 8 readings) additional readings will not be assigned to the family, but will be maintained for the congregation. For a Shabbat Mincha, Rosh Chodesh or Monday morning service, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is expected to read all of the Torah readings. Torah readings are distributed as early as four months in advance of a simcha. At that time, parents will receive a letter from Ritual Director Rabbi Howard Sowalsky inquiring as to whether they or other members of their family wish to read from the Torah and asking for a firm commitment. If needed, Rabbi Sowalsky or Cantor Ness will prepare a tape to help the individual study. To maintain proper quality, one of them will listen to all readers prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.

As a way to encourage B'nai Mitzvah to continue their ritual involvement in the synagogue after Bar/Bat Mitzvah, they will be asked to do another Torah reading 2-3 months following the Bar/Bat Mitzvah as well as on the one year anniversary of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

## **SHABBAT ETIQUETTE**

In order to preserve the spirit and laws of Shabbat and Jewish Holidays (Passover, Shavuot, Sukkot, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur), the following policies are in effect, both in the building and on Temple grounds, from the time that the Temple office closes on Friday (or before a holiday), until Havdallah is conducted on Saturday (or after the holiday):

1. Flowers, food, trays and other items may not be delivered to or removed from the Temple.
2. Handling and/or use of video and/or photographic equipment is prohibited.

3. A maximum of 3 instruments (no percussion or electric) may be used to play (at a volume that will not interfere with table conversation) Israeli/Jewish or classical background music.
4. To preserve the spirit of Shabbat, please no electrical or battery-operated equipment. This includes cell-phones, pagers, and beepers (except, of course, for emergencies, on silent/vibrate).
5. Smoking is not permitted on synagogue grounds.
6. Bringing gifts and envelopes to the synagogue is inappropriate.

Questions should be directed to one of our rabbis or Ritual Director Rabbi Howard Sowalsky.

### **VIDEOTAPING THE SERVICE**

Arrangements for taping your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah service in the Sanctuary may be made by contacting the Temple office. There is a charge for this service. Only the Temple's existing automatic video camera system may be used for this purpose. Videotaping and still photography are not allowed either at the service or on the grounds of the Temple at any time during Shabbat and festivals.

### **MUSIC ON SHABBAT**

Music may be incorporated into your Shabbat reception with the following guidelines: Israeli/Jewish or classical background music may be played by no more than three instruments (no percussion or electric) at a volume that will not interfere with table conversation. In keeping with the spirit of Shabbat, families may provide "a cappella" music and opportunities for Israeli dancing.

### **BAR/BAT MITZVAH COMMEMORATIVE BOOKLETS**

Many families choose to print special booklets for their guests commemorating their child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. These booklets customarily discuss the significance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony and the symbolism of Beth El's Sanctuary and its adornments. They also list the individuals whom the family wishes to honor during the service and may contain a copy of the parents' Bar/Bat Mitzvah prayer and the child's Haftarah introduction. Your cooperation is appreciated in sharing a draft of the booklet with Rabbi Rosen or Rabbi Garber at least two weeks before it is printed. Sample copies of booklets may be obtained in the Temple office.

## **APPROPRIATE DRESS**

Your simcha is held in a synagogue, and a sanctuary is a holy place. For that reason, we require modest and appropriate dress. Clothing worn by all who attend should reflect the sanctity of the occasion. Males are expected to wear suits (sport jackets) and ties. It is not appropriate for men or boys to wear a tuxedo at services. Females are expected to wear clothing that completely covers shoulders, backs, chests, and thighs. It is not appropriate for women or girls to wear strapless, sleeveless, or spaghetti strap dresses. It is not appropriate for women or girls to wear such dresses with a sheer shawl “covering” their bodies. If you are unsure about the appropriateness of an outfit, please consult with our Rabbis. Otherwise, you may be given a synagogue-owned cotton shawl to cover inappropriate outfits on the day of your simcha. Please help us show respect for the sanctuary and Jewish values.

## **KIPPOT AND HEAD COVERINGS**

Beth El Temple makes available to worshippers black kippot and white head coverings upon entering the Sanctuary. Men of all ages and women of Bat Mitzvah age and above must wear head coverings when on the bimah. You may choose to order knitted, suede or satin kippot for your simcha. Be sure to order them several months before your simcha so that they are sure to arrive on time. Kippot should be brought into the Temple no later than the Friday before your simcha so they can be put out on the table outside the Sanctuary.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

All presentations to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah are made by one of the Rabbis. This includes a kiddush cup from Beth El Sisterhood and Mens' Club and a Bar/Bat Mitzvah certificate on behalf of the Religious School. Solomon Schechter Day School, the Hebrew Academy and Camp Ramah also provide gifts for Beth El students who attend these learning centers. Please confirm that such gifts have been received by Laurea Esau, the Rabbis' secretary, at least one week in advance of your simcha.

## **RENTAL OF FACILITIES**

There is a charge for use of our reception areas (Kessler Hall, East Wing, Community Room, Sanctuary Hall) as outlined in the enclosed schedule. As a rule, Bar/Bat Mitzvah families are given the first option for use of these spaces. In order that other programming can be scheduled by the congregation as desired, please notify the Executive Director in the Temple office of your plans as soon as they are known.

## **SECURITY**

Beth El Temple requires a minimum of two security guards to be present at all evening parties. The cost is currently \$22.50 per guard per hour. Arrangements for the security guards will be made by the Executive Director and you will be billed accordingly.

## **FUNCTION SET-UP**

Families are requested to submit a “Bar/Bat Mitzvah Form” (Copy enclosed) as well as your detailed function set-up needs to the Temple office at least 10 days prior to your reception in order to assure the proper set-up for your reception.

Caterers are asked to skirt tables on Friday, before the beginning of Shabbat, whenever “pinning” is necessary. If Kessler Hall must be used on the Friday evening prior to your simcha, tables may be set in the rear of Kessler Hall and then moved into place. If the Friday *Oneg Shabbat* can be held in another room, complete set-up of your function may take place a day or two before. All set-up arrangements should be cleared with the Executive Director.

## **KIDDUSH**

The *kiddush* following Shabbat morning services, consisting of wine/grape juice and cake, is sponsored by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family in honor of its simcha. When ordering, please plan for 175 congregants plus your guests. Families may choose to augment the *kiddush* with fruit and other appropriate foods or to sponsor a *kiddush* luncheon to which the entire congregation is invited. Please notify the Executive Director of your plans as soon as possible.

Beth El’s “House Rules” are attached. Please review them as they outline protocol for serving food in the synagogue at all times, but especially on the Sabbath. Beth El Temple employs custodial-janitorial help. These individuals maintain our buildings, but are not “kitchen help” in any way, i.e. waiters, dishwashers, preparers of food. They will show the people you bring in for these services how to use our equipment, if necessary. They will prepare the building for your use, seeing to it that the kitchen is available and clean and that the tables and chairs you require (to the extent of our supply) are available and set up in accordance with your completed function form.

## **FAMILY PICTURES**

If you wish to take family pictures in the Sanctuary, please contact the Rabbis' secretary Laorea Esau (233-9696 x105) in advance so that it can be readied for your use. Torahs may only be taken from the ark for use in pictures if arrangements are made with a member of the professional staff or Ritual Committee. The rabbis and cantor are available to appear in your pictures as their schedules permit. Please arrange this with them on an individual basis, giving as much advance notice as possible.

## **COAT CHECKING**

If you are having a Saturday evening or Sunday reception for your guests at Beth El, coat checking can be arranged through U.S.Y. for a charge of \$125. If you wish to avail yourself of this service, please contact Rabbi Rosenbaum at least one month in advance so arrangements may be made. U.S.Y.ers do not accept gratuities.

## **FLOWERS**

Ordering *bimah* flowers is the responsibility of Bar/Bat Mitzvah family. If you are providing live floral arrangements, we ask that you order arrangements with no significant scent. Many people who come to the bimah during the service have allergies pertaining to fragrance. To ensure everyone's comfort, we ask for your cooperation in this regard.

## **BAR/BAT MITZVAH FEES AND CONTRIBUTIONS**

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah family must hold a current family membership at Beth El Temple. All synagogue financial responsibilities must be current. This includes membership dues, building fund obligations, Religious School tuition and Bar/Bat Mitzvah fees.

For each fiscal year (July 1 to June 30), the Board of Trustees establishes dues rates and fees, including the Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee. For 2007-2008 (FY '08), the Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee is \$750 per child, which covers instruction as well as the siddur and Haftarah book given to each child. This fee must be paid before your child begins individual instruction. This fee is subject to change in subsequent years. Your family will be billed for the fee that is in effect in the fiscal year when your child begins Bar/Bat Mitzvah lessons.

It is appropriate when celebrating a simcha to make a special contribution to Beth El in honor of your child's important religious milestone and as an expression of appreciation to our staff. These voluntary contributions help us to deepen our Temple programs.