

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Standards

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony traditionally is that occasion at which boys and girls formally attain the status of religious and legal maturity and become obliged to fulfill all the commandments of the Torah. Wishing to preserve the special significance of this occasion, we view the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony not as an end, but rather as a reaffirmation of Jewish commitment. It is expected that students will attend Shabbat services regularly, will pursue their Jewish education to graduation and will actively involve themselves in the activities and concerns of the Jewish community. The following, however, are the minimum requirements that must be fulfilled for a student to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Beth El Temple:

1. A Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate is required to complete five years of educational training, beginning with the third grade, at Beth El Temple, at an approved Jewish day school, or at another synagogue, a minimum of four years having been completed prior to the scheduled date. It is understood that the child will successfully complete the school year during which the Bar/Bat Mitzvah occurs.
2. Bar/Bat Mitzvah families will attend Shabbat morning services in the adult congregation at Beth El Temple at least ten (10) times during the twelve (12) month period preceding the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. In this way, they will become familiar with the content, structure and logistics of the service at Beth El Temple in advance of their own simcha.
3. One year prior to the child's scheduled Bar/Bat Mitzvah, determination will be made by the Educational Director, in consultation with classroom teachers and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah instructor, that the student has the skills necessary to properly engage in this instruction, that is, that he/she has the ability to read Hebrew accurately and smoothly. Hebrew reading is central to Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation and, as such, we take it very seriously in our school. In cases where the decoding skill is not sufficiently developed, the child will be required to engage in tutoring, at the family's expense, as a prerequisite to beginning Bar/Bat Mitzvah training.
4. Students shall begin Bar/Bat Mitzvah training approximately eight months prior to the scheduled date. Students celebrating a Shabbat morning Bar/Bat Mitzvah are minimally expected to learn the following:
 - a. Torah blessings
 - b. System of Haftarah trope
 - c. Haftarah blessings
 - d. Haftarah (selection from the prophets)
 - e. System of Torah trope
 - f. Maftir portion from the Torah

Once these parts have been prepared satisfactorily, students may additionally lead parts of the service as follows:

- a. Torah Service
- b. Additional aliyot from the Torah
- c. Introductory Service
- d. Shacharit Service

Students celebrating their Bar/Bat Mitzvah at the Mincha/Maariv (Shabbat afternoon) service are expected to learn the following:

- a. Torah reading
- b. Havdallah
- c. Maariv Service

Once these parts have been prepared satisfactorily, students may also lead the Mincha service. As the same Torah selections that are read by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah on Shabbat afternoon are also read on the following Monday and Thursday mornings, it is expected that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah will attend services and read from the Torah at these times, as well.

In all cases, students will be encouraged to undertake as much as they are capable of preparing well.

5. Families will participate in four(4) Bar Mitzvah workshops which are scheduled as part of the religious school curriculum. The purpose of these workshops will be to sensitize families to the significance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony as well as to bring each individual to confront, define and refine aspects of his/her own Jewish identity.
6. In order to ensure proper decorum at all Bar/Bat Mitzvah services throughout the year, parents will be expected to serve as ushers at other Bar/Bat Mitzvahs twice during the year of their own child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
7. Students will participate in the Beth El Temple 'Thirteen Mitzvot Program'. Centered around three categories- study, worship and deeds of lovingkindness- students will have the opportunity to choose among various mitzvot to help prepare themselves for the increasing responsibilities a Bar/Bat Mitzvah assumes upon entering Jewish adulthood.
8. All Hai (7th Grade) students will be taught how to put on tefillin and will learn about their meaning and significance. It is recommended that all students own their own set of tefillin.