



BAR/BAT/B'RIT MITZVAH PARENT HANDBOOK

This booklet is divided into three sections:

Section 1: A timeline marking when certain tasks need to be completed.

Section 2: Information you need about your child's Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah.

Section 3: Identifies your role in assisting the Temple and other Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah families.

The purpose of this guide is to describe and explain the philosophy and policies of Temple Isaiah concerning Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah. We suggest that you read this guide carefully because it will answer many of your questions. If after reading this handbook you still have questions, please feel free to call the Temple office and speak with Clergy Executive Assistant, Bea Brodsky.

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“TO DO” TIMELINE

This timeline is a personalized way for you to keep track of when you need to be aware of certain components of preparing for your child's Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah.

_____ **6th Grade logistics meeting** - October/November of 6th grade.

_____ **1 year (approximately)** - Sign up for family assignment as usher for Friday and Saturday Shabbat services.

_____ **1 year (approximately)** - Begin attending Friday night or Saturday Morning Services at Temple Isaiah twice a month.

_____ **9 months (approximately)** - Family meets with the rabbi.

_____ **6 months (approximately)** - Mitzvah Journey Commitment (required) meeting with Rachel Petroff Kessler. Information on website.

_____ **6 months (approximately)** - Tutoring fee due and tutoring begins (24 sessions, plus one family session).

_____ **5 months (approximately)** - D'var Torah Meeting with Rabbi Axler.

_____ **5 months** - Make arrangements with Bea for when professional photos will be taken at the Temple. Date and time must be approved by Bea.

_____ **4 months** – Order kippot. Bea has a discount code for the website www.kippah.com if you choose to use that site.

_____ **5 weeks and 3 weeks before** - On Wednesdays and Thursdays 4:30/5:00pm Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah, will have Torah/Haftarah reading rehearsals on the bimah with Rabbi Weiss. If partnering, both students will rehearse together.

_____ **4 weeks** – Let the Operations Manager, Amy Bittinger, know if you wish to help sponsor the Friday night Oneg Shabbat.

_____ **3 weeks** – Let Bea know if you would like to do the candle blessing and reading(s) at the Friday night Shabbat before your Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah. Please note that only Temple members older than 13 (not the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah Student) may read during Friday night services.

_____ **2 weeks** – Have aliyot and reader forms neatly filled out (forms are editable) with Hebrew names (where appropriate) and give to Bea.

_____ **2 weeks** – Tell Amy approximately how many guests you will have so the sanctuary seating can be set up appropriately. If you are having a kiddush, luncheon or evening affair, all room set ups must be handed in as well as your tablecloth color choices. Caterer Certificate of Insurance and Health Department Certificate, liquor license along with Temples Caterer's Agreement must be received from caterer. Any other outside vendors must send their Certificate of Insurance to Amy.

_____ **1 week** - The student has a rehearsal on a Thursday from 3:45pm to 4:45pm with Rabbi Axler. If partnering, both students will rehearse together.

_____ **Day before** - Rehearsal for student and parent(s) with Rabbi Axler from 9:30am to 11am. If partnering, both families will rehearse together.

_____ **Day before** - Bring into the Temple office: kippot if you have them (with baskets, if desired), Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah pamphlets (with baskets, if desired).

_____ **BAR/BAT/B'RIT MITZVAHDATE! Mazel Tov! ALL SERVICES BEGIN AT PRECISELY 10am.**

TEMPLE ISAIAH'S PHILOSOPHY OF BAR/BAT/B'KIT MITZVAH

Temple Isaiah views a child's Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah as a landmark in their Jewish education and identity. Not only is a Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah a ceremony which marks the religious coming of age, but it recognizes the child's and family's commitment to Judaism and its traditions. To make a difference in the lives of our children and families, the Temple offers a comprehensive program that encompasses the middle and high school years.

Our experience is the older the children, the more they need the continued guidance and nurturing environment of their synagogue. We want the synagogue to become an integral part of the lives of our children and their families. We want our children to continue to grow Jewishly, to be challenged intellectually, and to be supported in their formative years. In our judgment, these goals are best achieved by continued encouragement through Confirmation and beyond. We at Temple Isaiah are convinced that the more our children are with us, the more they will know, and the more committed and connected they will be. We look forward to continuing to be a part of your child's Jewish journey today and for many years to come. **MAZEL TOV!**

REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELINES

EDUCATION: It is the Temple's philosophy and policy to provide a comprehensive educational experience for all our children. Preparing for a Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah at Temple Isaiah includes formal study through regular attendance at Kulanu as well as regularly attending services the year before the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah. We hope that the students make a commitment to continuing a religious education through Confirmation class (10th Grade). When beginning this journey, the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah students, along with their parent(s)/guardian(s), enter into a B'rit (covenant) with the Temple to this effect.

SERVICE ATTENDANCE: Our policy is that each student, ideally with their family, must attend Shabbat services twice a month for the twelve months prior to their Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah ceremony. This policy was established to help prepare and familiarize the child with Shabbat services and rituals, as well as experience the spiritual joy of Temple Isaiah services. We believe this is necessary and important, so the child is more fully prepared to accept the commitment they are about to undertake. These services include Friday evening and Saturday morning Shabbat, as well as holiday services. These Saturday morning services include our periodic "Shabbat & Schmooze" services. Consult our website (www.templeisaiah.org) for service schedules. Yellow attendance cards are available in a basket on the table outside the sanctuary for the student to fill in and hand to the rabbi at the conclusion of the service to be credited for their attendance. If your child attends a Shabbat service at a different Temple, please notify Bea, so credit can be given. We realize attendance during the summer can be difficult. If your child is away at overnight summer camp, let Bea know so a note can be made for the accepted absence.

TUTORING: Individual tutoring will begin approximately six months (25 sessions) before the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah date. The Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah tutor will contact the family (via email) about

setting up a schedule for tutoring. The Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah tutoring fee is due **before** tutoring begins unless payment arrangements are made with the Executive Director. Tutoring times are scheduled for individual thirty-minute sessions that meet weekly up through the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah week. **Tutoring sessions missed without 24-hour notice given (exceptions for extreme circumstances, of course) will result in an additional fee of \$50 per session/per child, price is subject to change.**

The course of study provided by the tutor, rabbi, and Kulanu for the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah student is designed to teach them the skills necessary for participating in Shabbat services, reading the Torah and Haftarah portions, and analyzing and explaining the significance of their particular portions.

TEMPLE FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS: All fees (e.g., Temple Member Commitment, school tuition, Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah fees) must remain current. Any special arrangements must be made with the Executive Director.

EDUCATIONAL SHABBATONS: Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah students are required to attend Educational Shabbatons (Shabbat retreats) as a part of their program in 4th, 5th, and 6th Grades. The dates will be published in a timely manner. The 4th Grade retreat is a day-long Shabbaton that will generally be held in March. The 5th and 6th grade Shabbatons are overnight (Friday–Saturday). The 5th Grade Shabbaton will be held in the fall (usually November) and the 6th Grade Shabbaton will usually be in January or February of your child's 6th Grade year.

FAMILY MEETING: This initial meeting allows the family to ask any questions and/or voice any concerns they have regarding the B'nai Mitzvah process. It also allows the rabbi and family to get to know each other better and for the B'nai Mitzvah student to better understand the process they are about to begin.

D'VAR TORAH MEETING: About five months before the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah, a D'var Torah meeting needs to be scheduled between your child and Rabbi Axler. All Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah will deliver a D'var (brief talk, interpretation, or explanation) on either the Torah portion or the Haftarah portion for the week. The Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah will then submit **in Word document** the draft to Rabbi Axler at: RabbiAxler@templeisaiah.org as well as Bea Brodsky at Bea@templeisaiah.org

GROUP SESSIONS WITH THE RABBI: In the months before the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah date, the student begins a series of six weekly group sessions with the rabbi. They are held on Thursdays, between 4:45pm and 5:45pm. If the student cannot attend one series of the six sessions, they are welcome to join another series **BEFORE** their B'nai Mitzvah date. These sessions involve a range of significant topics such as: the meaning of the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah, G-d and prayer, modern Israel, the Holocaust, the Torah, and rituals and customs. An additional goal of the class is to provide the students with an opportunity to get to know the rabbi more personally and to explore questions with him. These sessions must be completed **BEFORE** the child's Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah date.

REHEARSALS: As a part of the B'nai Mitzvah process, your child will have a series of rehearsals in the final weeks of preparation to make sure they are comfortable on the bimah and reading directly from the Torah scroll.

The first set of rehearsals will be with Rabbi Weiss and will be held on Wednesdays five weeks before and three weeks before the actual Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah. The first of the two will be at 4:30pm and the second at 5pm. These rehearsals will give the B'nai Mitzvah the opportunity to read or chant their portion from the actual Torah scroll and to practice their Haftarah from the bimah. B'nai Mitzvah students should bring all their tutoring materials with them along with their Mitzvah Journey packet. If partnering, both students will rehearse together.

Rabbi Axler also holds two rehearsals. The first one will be on Thursday afternoon between 3:45pm to 4:45pm, the week before the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah date. The second and final rehearsal will include the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s). This rehearsal typically takes place from 9:30–11am on the Friday morning before the scheduled Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah ceremony. The list of aliyot (those who will say the Torah blessings) and readers are due at the first Thursday rehearsal. If partnering, both students will rehearse together.

For all rehearsals a parent (or responsible adult) must be present. Optimally all parents will attend the final full rehearsal on the day before the service with Rabbi Axler.

If the regular day for any rehearsal is on a holiday or the day before a holiday, for which the Temple office is closed, the day has been shifted either forward or backward as the calendar dictates. Please check your individual schedule. ***In addition, no professional photos or videos can be taken during the rehearsals.***

MITZVAH JOURNEY COMMITMENT (REQUIRED): The Torah provides 613 Mitzvot which are a path to connect with God and your community, and to live a meaningful life with Jewish values and action. Our Mitzvah Journey program is designed to allow you to experience some of these joyful obligations of Jewish life. Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah students will select twelve different mitzvot to try, then after reflecting on their experience and having a conversation with Rachel Petroff Kessler, select a thirteenth mitzvah to take on for an extended “mitzvah commitment.” This meeting should be scheduled for approximately 3 to 6 months before the Bar/Bat/B'rit mitzvah. During this process if there are questions, Rachel can either be reached at the office 301.317.1101 or by email Rachel@templeisaiah.org. Please contact Bea to schedule this meeting.

SHABBAT SERVICES ON THE BAR/BAT/B'RIT MITZVAH WEEKEND

SHABBAT EVE SERVICE — FRIDAY

FAMILY ATTENDANCE AT FRIDAY AND SATURDAY SERVICE: Families and Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah students are expected to be at Friday night services in order to begin the Shabbat of their

Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah together with the community and with the honor of leading the community during the service. The honors taken on by the family vary, but typically involve the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah student leading the extended Friday evening Kiddush (blessing over the wine/juice). Additional honors might include an English reading, lighting the Shabbat candles, the Torah aliyah or even being the Torah reader. Our Friday night services are usually at 7pm, with the third Friday of the month (Family Service) at 6pm. There are exceptions to this so please check the website calendar and/or ask Bea if you need clarification.

READERS: Often families will recite the candle blessing or the Torah blessing. **Only adult Temple Isaiah members may be asked to read during Shabbat evening services.** Siblings over 13 years old may serve as readers, but the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah student does not read. Friday night readings are a way of engaging our members to help lead a service and to foster a sense of community.

ONEG: Many families choose to honor the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah student during the Shabbat evening service the night before their ceremony by sponsoring the Oneg. If you would like to sponsor the Oneg, please contact Amy Bittinger, our Operations Manager at least two weeks in advance. Oneg sponsorship helps subsidize materials and food for Onegs. In addition to the usual array of desserts, sponsored Onegs will also receive a "mazel tov" sheet cake or equivalent dessert.

SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE — BAR/BAT/B'RIT MITZVAH CEREMONY

Much time and preparation has gone into making the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah's participation in the service a memorable and spiritual milestone in their life. All the requirements and guidelines are set up to provide for a well-prepared student and family. This ensures that the service will run smoothly, and the student's experience will be a pleasant and meaningful one.

The service begins on time. All guests should be seated at least five minutes before the service, which is scheduled to begin at 10am. Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah parents should be taking their seats roughly five minutes before the service begins. Generally, guests will follow the lead of the family. This will help the service begin on time. The rabbi will take each Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah student into his office around 9:45am to help them focus and bring peace into their mindset. We encourage Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah families to arrive no later than 9:30am.

At Temple Isaiah it is customary to have the student chant the blessings before and after the Torah and Haftarah portions and recite the portions themselves in Hebrew. The Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah student will have prepared a speech explaining the meaning of the either the Torah or Haftarah portion or its significance. The student will also present personal remarks. We find our students are confident and calm because they have been prepared thoroughly. The speech is intended to reflect the "voice" of the student and their reaction to the material in their portions.

There are prayers/readings and aliyot that the student's family and close friends can participate in during the service. Each family may have several readings which can be assigned to family and/or friends. There are some readings that are particularly appropriate to be recited by non-

Jewish family members or friends. In addition, you may invite family members/friends to share the special honor (aliyah) of blessing the Torah before the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah student does. Each family has a number of aliyot; the last aliyah is chanted by the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah student. Grandparents (when applicable) usually receive the first honor(s), then family members and/or friends. The parent(s)/guardian(s) recite the next to last blessing and the child goes last. The Hebrew names for those who are blessing the Torah are needed (if available) and should be given to the rabbi two weeks before your date (at the Thursday rehearsal with Rabbi Axler).

HONORS: During the Shabbat morning service, in addition to the aliyot and English readings, each family may participate in the following honors:

- Presentation of Tallit — the tallit is typically presented to the child by the parent(s)/guardian(s) although the honor is sometimes given to a grandparent or other relative. The tallit is handed to the child, the presenter gives the child a kiss and/or a hug, and then the presenter sits down. The child recites the blessing and then puts on the tallit.
- Lifting and holding the Torah (Hagbah) — one person from each family may be given this Honor.
- TORAH HOLDER/PASSER — (13 or older. Must be Jewish). There can only be 1 Torah Holder & 1 Torah Passer. Please coordinate with your partner.
- Dressing the Torah (Gelilah) — up to two people from each family assist the rabbi in replacing the Torah cover, yad and crowns, (this is a popular choice to honor children).
- Opening and closing the Ark — May be done by anyone. (Another popular choice for children.)
- The reading sheet has alternative readings that are appropriate to be assigned to non-Jewish family or friends you wish to honor in this way. If you need further guidance in this question, feel free to consult with Rabbi Axler.

TRADITIONS AND ETIQUETTE: There are several traditions and etiquette guidelines that are important for guests to be aware of to safeguard the sanctity of the ceremony and to reduce distractions for the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah student, family and worshippers. As tempting as it may be to applaud the student, congratulations are reserved for after the service. Leaving the sanctuary should only be done when absolutely necessary, preferably not when the Torah is out of the ark or during the Mourner's Kaddish. **Cell phones must be turned off. Texting during the service is not allowed. No photos or videos may be taken.**

Many families have asked about what type of dress is appropriate for attending a Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah ceremony. All those who wish are encouraged to wear a kippah/tallit as a sign of reverence. Appropriate and modest dress honors the occasion of Shabbat.

IMPORTANT DETAILS TO PREPARE FOR THE BAR/BAT/B'RIT MITZVAH

TALLIT: It is customary for each family to provide their Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah with a tallit. The tallit is presented to the student by the parents or other adult of choice at the beginning of the service. The tallit could have the blessing on it so the student can recite the prayer before putting it on, though this is not a requirement. If the tallit does have a blessing, make sure the blessing is as follows:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו,
וְצִוָּנוּ לְהִתְעַטֵּף בְּצִיצִית.

English transliteration: Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hitateif batzitzit.

If you are not sure this is the blessing on the tallit, before you purchase it, please make a copy and send it to Bea for proofing.

Online sites such as Amazon often feature something that looks like a tallit, but which is a "Messianic Tallit" — that is, a tallit used by Christians. **These are not appropriate under any circumstances.**

FLOWERS/FOOD BASKETS: Some families have found it a nice addition to decorate the front of the bimah with flowers. If you choose to do so, please have them delivered before 1:30pm on the Friday before the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah. Families who share a Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah coordinate the ordering and payment for the flowers or baskets themselves.

KIPPOT: Many families like to order custom kippot (yarmulkas) for their guests. You may order from anywhere, but the Temple does receive a discount through www.kippah.com. To receive the TI discount, YOU MUST PAY IN FULL AT THE TIME OF ORDER. YOU **CANNOT** CHOOSE THE "BILL ME LATER OPTION." Enter the **username: ISA122** and the **password: TI200** in the "Wholesale Login" section at the bottom left of the page. We do receive notification of orders made, please **DO NOT** share our username or password with anyone else. Prices subject to change.

If you provide kippot, we suggest you put them in a basket placed on a table outside the sanctuary. You may want to arrange the child's name or invitation on the basket to guide your guests to the correct kippot.

BAR/BAT/B'RIT MITZVAH PROGRAM: Some families choose to provide a printed program describing the purpose of the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah ceremony, the Torah, and other Jewish traditions. Families who share a Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah often choose to write the program together

and have enough copies made for all their guests. This is optional and at the families' expense. For samples, please consult with Bea.

HONORING HOLOCAUST VICTIMS: REMEMBER A CHILD: It is customary for us to remember bitter times even during times of joy. Some families choose to remember a child/relative who perished during the Holocaust. The Generation After organization will give you the name of a child who perished in the Holocaust. You will receive a certificate as well as key information about the life of the matched child, and when possible, bibliographic/references, citations, or links to enable families to conduct even more in-depth independent research. The generations can thereby “communicate” with each other and perhaps the tragically curtailed lives of those one-and-a-half million children will inform the lives of subsequent generations. You can request a particular gender and/or location as well as a specific person, to make it more personalized for your child and family.

The Survivors organization needs at least eight weeks to make a match and get you the certificate. It is proper to send them a donation for their efforts. To participate in the Remember a Child program, be matched with a child Shoah victim, and receive a Scroll of Remembrance for your Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah, please submit your completed information via the Remember A Child/Program Participation Form (<http://genafterdc.com/remember-a-child/program-participation-form/>) on their webpage at: <http://genafterdc.com>.

TABLE OUTSIDE OF SANCTUARY: If you choose to have kippot, program, or Holocaust memorial certificates, they may be displayed on this table.

HONORING YOUR SIMCHA: Most families choose to mark their special simcha by making a donation to one of the Temple's funds as a way of giving thanks for one's blessings. The Rabbis' Discretionary Funds, Life Cycle Fund, or the Kulanu Fund are particularly appropriate. One lovely way to honor this special day is with a leaf or rock added to our “Tree of Life,” inside the sanctuary. Some families also use a leaf to honor and thank the tutors and clergy who worked with the student to help them achieve this meaningful milestone. A list of the funds and leaf order form can be found on our temple website.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Whenever photography is going to be done at the Temple, the date/time MUST be approved by Bea. Photographs may **not** be taken during the service under any circumstance or during rehearsals with Rabbi Axler. On the morning of the Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah service photographs may be taken from 8–9:30am. Only one family can have photographs taken on the morning of the B'nai Mitzvah. Please note that the availability of the sanctuary can vary depending on what is happening at the Temple, so there must be coordination between the family and Bea. No photos can be taken on Fridays before 11:30am. The rabbi is always happy to be in your photographs if you so desire and he is available. We MUST receive your photographer's Certificate of Insurance before any photographs are taken. The photographer and family must leave the sanctuary and bimah in good order.

Photographs may not be taken during the actual Saturday Shabbat service under any circumstance. Temple Isaiah will be sending you a Live Stream Video the next week.

LIVE STREAMING/VIDEOGRAPHY: All Saturday morning B'nai Mitzvah services will be streamed online via StreamSpot. The stream may be watched live via Temple Isaiah's service and as an archive for a month following the original date of the service. The link is: <https://venue.streamspot.com/07482aca>. Additionally, each family will be provided with a direct download link the week following the service, allowing them to download a permanent digital file in the MP4 format. If a family is concerned about the public availability of LiveStream, contact Bea and we will password protect the LiveStream.

If you would like to have your own professional videographer at the service to video, please remember that this individual would only be able to stand in one place, must use a tripod and will not have the authority to direct the rabbi, cantor, Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah and or family during the service. No other recording of Shabbat morning services at Temple Isaiah, by guests, is permitted.

CONGREGATIONAL INVOLVEMENT AND THE BAR/BAT/B'RIT MITZVAH FAMILY

Temple Isaiah is dependent on the collective efforts of its congregants. Congregants are actively involved in services, both behind the scenes and up front. For all services, congregants assist in setting up and supervising the sanctuary.

Each family will volunteer as ushers twice at a Friday night Shabbat service and twice at a Saturday Shabbat morning service, during the year before/of their Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah. You will have the opportunity to choose the dates that you serve. Detailed instructions will be provided. There may be times that families are asked to volunteer for more.

WHAT TO BRING FOR SATURDAY SERVICE

BAR/BAT/B'RIT MITZVAH PARENTS PROVIDE

Please bring these in no later than the Friday before Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah.

- OPTIONAL:** ●Kippot ●Basket for Kipot ●Holocaust Certificate ●Programs
●Basket for programs ●Directions to party ● If having a double Bar/Bat/B'rit Mitzvah,
please identify your individual basket.

WEBSITE RESOURCES

You can find the Parent Handbook, Aliyot & Readings, Mitzvah Project Advice, and many other resources on our website (<https://templeisaiah.org/> * Learning * Religious School * B'nai Mitzvah Resources)

The numbers below are to links that are actual chanting blessings (turn on your speakers). You can find other prayers there as well. **Go to (<https://templeisaiah.org/> * Learning * Religious School * Prayers**

Specific prayers you (BAR/BAT/B'RIT Mitzvah) will lead include:

#9	#35
#10	#41
#27	#42
#28	