

*Mazal Tov!* You are approaching a great occasion! This wonderful happening ushers in a new time in your lives. For the young adult becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, this event puts into practice skills and insights that have been culled not just during the six months of intensive preparation, and not merely during the years of Hebrew School, but during this person's entire life experience, thus far, as a Jew. This is a time to "put it all together" and see how it looks and feels. In this free and pluralistic society, all of us are "Jews-by-Choice" and there are many moments when we stand, again, at the bottom of Mt. Sinai as Moses offers us the *Torah*, with all of its joys and all of its obligations, and we decide to what extent we will engage in this covenant. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, "son/daughter of commandment", is very much undergoing such a "Sinai" moment. Parents, too, are experiencing a transition and along with it a recommitment to their own Jewish identity.

What enables the young person to become a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is the study that s/he has accomplished. *Nothing* that happens on the *Shabbat* on which s/he leads the congregation in prayer qualifies or disqualifies him/her from the title of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. On that day, it is a privilege for both shir sholom as your Jewish community and ours as your Rabbi and Cantor to welcome a new young adult into official status as a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* because of everything they have **already** accomplished.

The goal of our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* program goes a lot further than just preparing and leading a *Shabbat* service. By the time our new young adult steps onto the *Bima* and leads his/her congregation through prayer, we hope that s/he will not just think of us as the Rabbi and Cantor of both shir sholom, but that s/he will think of us as *his/her* Rabbi and Cantor. We hope that the relationship we cultivate together will be a lifelong friendship. We hope that the tools used to achieve this wonderful goal will help our new young adults stay in touch with their growing and changing Jewish identity throughout their entire lives. We also hope that through this process they will learn to feel comfortable participating in any service at any synagogue.

Please remember that we are both here for you at any time to answer any concerns or questions you may have about this most important process. We look forward to our study together and the beginnings of our exploration of what Judaism can mean in an adult life. Again, *Mazal Tov!*

Rabbi Neil Comess-Daniels

Cantor Ken Cohen

## A *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Glossary

***Kipah:*** This head covering (also known in Yiddish as *Yarmulke*) is a sign of modest reverence for God.

***Tallit:*** These are the prayer shawls worn by those who have become *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, in fulfillment of the commandment in the *Torah*, "you shall attach *tzitzit* (fringes) to the four corners of your garments." The *tzitzit* are knotted in such a way as to remind the Jew of all of the commandments (613) of the *Torah*. In a Reform synagogue, the wearing of the *kipah* and *tallit* by Jews is optional. Non-Jews should feel comfortable **not** wearing either one, however we ask that our *B'ney Mitzvah* wear both so they can experience how their prayer can be enhanced by these items.

***Torah:*** *Torah* really has two meanings. In its broadest sense it refers to the entire body of Jewish law, lore and teachings. In its narrowest sense, it refers to the scroll on which is written the Five Books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Every Shabbat, a consecutive portion of the *Torah* is read and studied until the end of the Jewish liturgical year, when the last book is completed and the first book is begun again.

***Parasha:*** Also called the *Sidra*, the *Parasha* is the *Torah* portion read and studied during the service.

***Aliyah:*** During the *Torah* service, certain congregants, pre-selected and notified by the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* family, will be called up to the *bima* (pulpit) to participate and chant or say the blessings before and after each section of the *Parasha* is read. *Aliyah* literally means "going up" and this is intended spiritually as well as literally.

***Haftarah:*** Following the reading from the *Torah*, a passage called the *Haftarah* ("Addition") is read from the portion of the Hebrew Bible called the Prophets. There is usually some literary or thematic connection between the *Torah* portion and the *Haftarah*.

***Hagbah/Gelilah:*** Following the reading/chanting of the *Torah* portion and before the reading/chanting of the *Haftarah* portion, two members of the congregation are honored with the responsibility of lifting the *Torah* Scroll from the reading desk, lifting it high and turning it around for a moment spread open so that the congregation may see the text (*Hagbah*) and re-dressing the *Torah* Scroll (*Gelilah*).

## **Why is There a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Ceremony?**

The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony is a wonderful way for a thirteen year old to demonstrate commitment to the *mitzvot* (commandments). This is accomplished by the young person accepting the privilege of reading from the *Torah* and *Haftarah* and leading worship. In this way, the congregation says to the thirteen year old: "You are now a participating adult in our community, the Jewish community at-large and the world."

The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony, as part of a *Shabbat* worship service, gives each young person the opportunity to declare publicly, through words and actions, a commitment to a Jewish way of life: a life of compassion, responsibility, study and *mitzvot*. Thus, the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* bears witness to the future continuity of a Judaism embodied in a new generation of committed Jews. For all these reasons, the beginning of a young person's transition from childhood to responsible Jewish adulthood is a time for celebration!

## **What is the Relationship Between the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Ceremony and the School Programs at beth shir sholom?**

As indicated, becoming *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* at beth shir sholom is not viewed as something distinct from Jewish Education; neither in preparation, nor as related to the ceremony itself. In our synagogue, becoming *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is an elective course of study *during* the course of (not at the end of) a student's education.

### **Two points are related to this notion:**

1. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony is not a private affair. It is a ceremony which takes place during the normal course of a public *Shabbat* worship service (both Friday night and Saturday). In fact, it is *Shabbat* which is our major emphasis. It is the *Shabbat* service which "hosts" the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony, not the other way around! Members of the congregation and the community are welcome as always. You may also expect other "special celebrations" to be part of the service - baby naming, a special *Shabbat* theme, guest speaker, etc.

2. The goal of our education program at beth shir sholom is life-long commitment to study and, minimally, Confirmation at the end of 10th grade (even though we have opportunities for continued study beyond 10th grade). When a young person becomes a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, it is not an indication that his/her Jewish education is over! One becomes a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* for the rest of one's life. It is, hopefully,

the first of many milestones in a life of learning. By participating in the process which leads to being *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, it is understood by student and parents that a moral commitment is being made to continue Jewish education at least through Confirmation.

The ability to lead the worship service is a major goal of our Religious school/Hebrew school program.

In order to be considered eligible to become *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, the student must:

1. complete the requirements for at least 2 (two) years of Hebrew School;
2. be enrolled in the beth shir sholom Hebrew/Religious School;
3. make a commitment to study through Confirmation;
4. attend, *with at least one parent or guardian*, 8 (eight) *Shabbat* services *at beth shir sholom* during the six months prior to becoming *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. At least 4 (four) of these services must be on a Saturday when a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony takes place during the service (you may need to start earlier than 6 months prior to fit in four, depending on how many *B'ney Mitzvah* we celebrate in that time period!). This is an experience for the family and at least a parent, if not other family members, must accompany the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* at these services. We ask that the family sit together. Students and their parents must fill out and turn into the Rabbi or Cantor a Shabbat attendance card (given to you by the Cantor) following the service. Students who fulfill the requirement will help conduct the service on the day they become *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

**NOTE: STUDENTS WHO FALL SHORT OF 8 (EIGHT) SERVICES READ TORAH AND HAFTARAH ONLY (I.E., THEY WILL NOT HELP CONDUCT THE REST OF THE SERVICE!)**

5. attend, with a parent, *one Shabbat* morning *Torah Study* (2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month from 8:15 AM until 9:15 AM). Once again, you must turn in a *Torah* study attendance card following *Torah* study;
6. participate in a *tzedakah* project to be worked out with the rabbi and (optional) write an article for the Koleynu at the project's end;

7. engage in a personal, ritual or Jewish practice mitzvah not previously practiced;

8. OPTIONAL: lead or sing solo a special song or prayer Friday night and/or Saturday morning (to be decided in consultation with the Cantor).

### **When and How are *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Dates Scheduled?**

The Rabbi, Cantor, Executive Director and Education Director make every attempt to give out *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* dates at least 2 (two) years prior to the occasion. Because of the varying sizes of our classes, we cannot guarantee a date that coincides with the birthday of our candidate. We also take into consideration the varying ability levels of our students and give them dates that will give them the best chance for a positive, meaningful experience. At beth shir sholom we do not schedule any *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* until a certain level of *Torah* and Synagogue skills are acquired in the fall of 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Therefore, no student has a date scheduled before January of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade year. Notifications are sent out and the families *must* confirm the dates no later than the confirmation date set forth in the letter.

Questions or special requests should be directed to the Rabbi, Cantor, Executive Director or Education Director.

### **How Are Our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Candidates Prepared?**

There are three crucial elements in our candidate's preparation to become a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. These are **communal study**, **private one-on-one study**, and **diligent practice at home**.

1. **Communal study.** By now, you are familiar with our Religious School program. We take very seriously the responsibility to help our students begin to develop their own sense of community and practice how to behave with one another. We try to help them feel a deeper connection to their spiritual home and community, and take an active role in making the world a better place. We help them understand the importance of tolerance and respect in dealing with people and they can begin to see just how their Jewish identity will fit into our pluralistic world.

Our seventh grade program is unique in many ways. First and foremost, unlike many synagogues, our seventh graders are taught by our Rabbi and Cantor for the entire year. This helps to create a strong bond between clergy and student, a bond that is evident on the *Bima* and will hopefully last long after the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* experience is completed.

Cantor Ken begins his time with our students with a *mandatory* summer session for our incoming 7<sup>th</sup> graders. Each student is required to attend one of the two sessions. Each session lasts for 3 (three) consecutive weeks, usually on a Wednesday from 4:00 – 6:00 pm. These summer meetings are designed to give our new *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* class a head start in their preparation as well as give them a chance to get to know what Cantor Ken expects of them and how the 7<sup>th</sup> grade year and *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* process will be structured. It also gives our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* class a chance to begin to really get to know Cantor Ken which will make the transition to 7<sup>th</sup> grade at beth shir sholom easier when the school year begins. You will be notified about our summer sessions via letter and/or phone call as soon as they are scheduled. Schedule conflicts must be worked out with Cantor Ken as soon as possible.

When the school year begins in September Rabbi Neil takes the class through a “Lifelong Lessons of Judaism” curriculum that allows our students to look at the Jewish life through the eyes of young adulthood, experiencing a deeper understanding of Judaism’s spiritual essence and core values.

Cantor Ken teaches our seventh graders the skills necessary to chant the *Torah*. Our students learn about *Torah Tropes* and their origins. By the end of the year the seventh graders are creating their own trope systems for chanting our Holy Scriptures. Cantor Ken also teaches them the synagogue skills necessary to lead a congregation in prayer. Our students begin to look at the liturgy in our prayer books from a different perspective, and they are given the opportunity and encouraged to question what has been put before them to build a personal understanding of what our liturgy can mean to them as individuals.

In addition to this, our seventh graders will take an active role in *tikkun olam*, the perfection of our world through various *mitzvah* projects and acts of *tzedakah* including researching and selecting two worthy charities to

which they will donate some of the money they will undoubtedly receive in honor of becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

2. **Private one-on-one study.** Our one-on-one *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* program is extremely detailed and involved. Its goal is to help our new young adults feel comfortable not only leading a service, but also in their new position in our community. There is a timeline that can give you a visual picture of this process included in this packet. A detailed description is below.

About 7 (seven) months prior to the service, you will get a phone call from Cantor Ken to set up an initial meeting to get our candidate going. At this meeting the Cantor will walk you through the one-on-one process, and give our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* a notebook filled with information and study materials. Our first order of business is to begin choosing which part of the *Torah* portion our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* will chant. As you know, our *Torah* is divided into weekly sections. The section for each week is called a *Parasha*. We allow our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* students to choose from within their *Parasha* the section they would like to chant. Cantor Ken will detail the selection process. He will also go over some study techniques and set up all of your appointments with him. Cantor Ken will give the parents a list of honors (also included in this packet) to be filled out and returned to him one month prior to the service. If you would like to go through the list of honors in more detail, contact Cantor Ken or Rabbi Neil. Cantor Ken will also show the family how to access the student's page on [mitzvahcentral.net](http://mitzvahcentral.net) (Mitzvah Central) which is our online organizational tool that not only gives students their assignments and allows Cantor Ken to contact both students and parents via email, but actually sends an email reminder of every lesson 2 (two) days before that lesson occurs.

Within a week of this meeting, you should get a phone call from our *B'ney Mitzvah* Specialist. S/he will set up 8 (eight) 30 (thirty) minute appointments with our candidate. Those appointments should be held in consecutive weeks, beginning as soon as possible. During these 8 lessons we expect our candidate to master all of the prayers assigned.

Between 4 (four) and 5 (five) months away from the service, our candidate will begin his/her weekly meetings with Cantor Ken. These lessons, each 30 (thirty) minutes, will continue until the day of the service. At these lessons, Cantor Ken will continually review the prayers to make sure the

student remains proficient as well as help our candidate master the chanting of his/her *Torah* and *Haftarah* portions.

During the last 8 (eight) weeks of preparation in addition to continuing weekly meetings with Cantor Ken, the Rabbi will meet with the student regularly (once or twice each week for thirty minutes) to help crystallize thoughts for and review the writing of his/her sermon.

This sermon will be based on an interpretation of his/her *Torah* and/or *Haftarah* portion. Please, only **assist** your child in writing this sermon at his/her request! **Do not write it for him/her!** It is important that your son/daughter is comfortable speaking these words, so they must feel as natural as possible (i.e., "kid-speak", not "parent-speak"! ). In fact, most of our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* candidates choose not to have his/her parents hear his/her sermon until the actual *Shabbat* Service when they are leading the congregation.

***One month before the service, the parents are responsible for turning into the Cantor the list of Honors form and the form for the Aliyot*** (those who will be honored by being called to and blessing the *Torah*).

During the last 4 (four) weeks the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* candidate and the Cantor will move onto the *Bima* for the remainder of their lessons. At these practices, the candidate will perfect the art of leading a service and master the congregational cues that go along with it. They will have the chance to practice reading from the actual *Torah* scroll at least 3 (three) times.

One month before the service we will schedule a meeting between you (parents and the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* candidate) and the Rabbi. The purpose of this meeting is to brief you on details of the service, to review the information you gave to the Cantor (Hebrew names for those being honored with an *Aliyah*, names of other service participants, etc.) and, of course, to answer any questions you may have. A "Practice Service" for our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* and his/her immediate family is usually scheduled for the Thursday before the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* *Shabbat*. You will receive a detailed description of this practice at a later date.

3. **Diligent Practice at home.** This is the most crucial element of our program. No matter how you look at it, our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* students must

subscribe to a daily practice routine in order to achieve this goal. We simply do not have enough time with our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* students to teach them everything they need to know. Plus, we try to instill in them the notion that the harder they work toward this goal, the more they will get out of it. Parents, we rely on you to help your child maintain this routine throughout the process. If you can show your child that his/her becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is important to you, it will become more important to them. We look to you as our partners in this process of guiding your child towards adulthood.

**PLEASE IMPRESS UPON YOUR CHILD THAT THIS PREPARATION PROCESS IS A SERIOUS COMMITMENT AND THAT IT TAKES A GREAT DEAL OF EFFORT! STUDENTS WILL HAVE, AT A MINIMUM, 30 (THIRTY) MINUTES OF PRACTICE PER DAY FOR THE ENTIRE 6-7 MONTHS! THIS IS NOT THE KIND OF PROCESS IN WHICH ONE CAN "MAKE UP" THE TIME IF A DAY OF STUDY IS MISSED! PRACTICE MUST BE CONSISTENT...AND DAILY!**

Please contact us with any study questions or issues that may come up along the course of our study together. We would rather deal with these kinds of issues sooner rather than later to ensure the most successful and meaningful process possible.

## **Fall Ceremonies**

When a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony occurs from September through January, crucial preparation will occur during the summer months. Please realize that extended periods away from regular sessions with the Rabbi, Cantor or *B'ney Mitzvah* tutor at this point in the preparation can prove extremely difficult. Please consult with the Rabbi and Cantor regarding your summer plans **before** those plans are confirmed.

## **What Occurs During the Service?**

There is no such thing as a "*Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Service." This will be a normal *Shabbat* morning/afternoon service with the honored participation of a young person who, on this day, is officially welcomed as a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. This is not a show or performance. Please encourage your family and friends to not merely

attend but to participate and *never* applaud! It will be so much more meaningful for you and your son or daughter.

There are two *Shabbat* services during which the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* and his/her family will participate: Friday night and Saturday morning/afternoon.

During the *Erev* (evening) *Shabbat* service the family is given the honor of kindling the *Shabbat* candles. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* will lead some of the prayers in Hebrew.

On *Shabbat* morning/afternoon, participation is more involved. At or near the beginning of the service (depending on how much of the service your son/daughter has prepared), the Rabbi will call forward the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* and his/her parents to place upon your child's shoulders his/her *tallit* (His/her *kipah* should already be on). Each *tallit* presenter will read introductory statements in the printed service and, led by the Cantor, all will sing the *Shehecheyanu* (please practice this!), the blessing which offers thanks for reaching this joyous occasion. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* will recite the blessing for putting on the *tallit* before you help him/her with it. Following the presentation of the *tallit*, the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* will begin to lead the congregation in prayer (and the parents are seated).

Just prior to the reading from the *Torah*, the Rabbi will call the parents of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* forward along with his/her to form a line heading from the ark to the front of the *Bima* to hand down the *Torah* from generation to generation. If there are non-Jewish grandparents, we strongly desire and recommend that they have equal participation in this, so long as they are comfortable and you and they feel it is appropriate. In such cases, it may mean that one of the parents is not Jewish, as well. We respectfully request that the Jewish parent be the last in line and be the one to finally hand the *Torah* to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

After the *Hakafah* (carrying the *Torah* around the sanctuary), the *Aliyot* are called up to witness the reading. At beth shir sholom we are able to have up to 5 (five) *Aliyot* at a service. However, there are cases when, for various reasons, a student is not able to prepare 5 (five). Should this come up, the Rabbi and Cantor will, in consultation with the parents and student, decide on an appropriate number of *Aliyot*. Those given the honor of an *Aliyah* recite the blessings before and after each sub-section of the *Torah* portion is read. **Please make certain that those who have been given the honor of reciting these blessings are prepared and well-practiced!** We have seen too many a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* become mortified when friends or relatives (even parents!) are unable to say the blessings smoothly

and with relatively assured pronunciation. The second to last *Aliyah* is usually reserved for a parent or parents (so that they are present on the pulpit when their son/daughter recites the blessings). The last *Aliyah*, called the *maftir*, is always reserved for the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. This means you may have as few as 1 (one) *Aliyah* or as many as 3 (three) *Aliyot* to give away as honors. Please assign no more than 2 (two) people to each *Aliyah*. The final *Aliyah* list should be given to the Rabbi and Cantor one month before the ceremony. It is certainly our hope that each *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* will learn his/her *Torah* portion well enough to do the congregation the honor of reading it in the ensuing years and that s/he will help read *Torah* during the High Holy Days.

After the reading, the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* recites the blessings for and reads the *Haftarah*. Following the reading of the *Haftarah*, the *Torah* is lifted from the podium and redressed (by assigned guests) and carried around for another *Hakafah* by the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. After the *Torah* is placed back in the ark, the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* delivers his/her sermon, after which the parents speak to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

**Your opportunity to publicly address your son/daughter.**

Please be aware this is a highly emotional moments and **not** the best time for extemporaneous speeches or speaking from an outline or sketchy notes (even if you are accustomed to that in other settings). It is **strongly** recommended that you write out what you are going to say completely and **keep your remarks to about two minutes** (longer than you think!). Please, remember, ***this is still part of the service. Therefore:***

- 1. Please do not do an entire review of the life of your son or daughter (a presentation like this is much more appropriate during your reception). Nor is this a time to tell your son/daughter the flood of feelings you are having at this moment. Speak to him/her about him/her.***
- 2. Please do not speak to the congregation. This is not the time to thank everyone for coming, etc. (again, that will be much better done at the reception). Speak to your son or daughter (You may do so into the microphone or step away for a private message -- or a bit of both.).***
- 3. We respectfully suggest that in at least part of what you say, that you express your wishes for the personality of your child's life in the coming years.***

**4. PLEASE NOTE: IF YOU USE MORE THAN THE ALLOTTED TIME, SEVERAL COMPONENTS OF THE SERVICE THAT USUALLY FOLLOW WILL BE ELIMINATED SO THAT WE WILL STILL END ON TIME. THESE COMPONENTS ARE:**

**A. THE CANTOR'S GIFT OF MUSIC TO THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH.**

**B. THE RABBI'S WORDS TO THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH AND THE CONGREGATION.**

**C. THE GIVING OF GIFTS**

**D. THE MUSICAL VERSION OF THE PRIESTLY BLESSING (IT WILL BE SPOKEN QUICKLY).**

**E. THE RABBI'S QUIET TIME IN FRONT OF THE ARK WITH YOUR SON/DAUGHTER.**

Following your words to your child, you *and* the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* will sit in the congregation. Then the Cantor sings from our tradition in the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah's* honor and the Rabbi delivers a short "charge" to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* (both of these will be eliminated if we are short of time. See above.).

### **Gifts From the Temple**

At the service a representative from the Board of Trustees makes a presentation of gifts from the Temple to the student. If you know someone who is a member of the Board, or you have a close personal friend who is a Temple member, you may wish to personally invite one of them to perform this honor. If you have no preference, a member of the Board will volunteer to be in attendance at the service and present the gifts.

### **Immediately Following the Service**

The *Kiddush* and *Motzi* take place on the *Bima* at the end of the service. This makes it much easier to begin your celebration **immediately** without having to try to re-gather the entire congregation in another location.

### **Family and Guest Participation and Honors**

You will receive a copy of the appropriate *Shabbat* service (morning or afternoon). Please read through it and note the readings that have been designated for you, your family or friends who might wish to read or lead (please discuss this with the Rabbi and pay close attention to our notes on the honors sheets regarding readings

for which we require Jewish participants). Along with this Handbook you have also received a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Honors Sheet. Please note that it is appropriate only for Jews to say blessings before and after the *Torah* reading (the *Aliyot* referred to above) because of its overt statements regarding Jewish peoplehood and its mission. If you wish a non-Jew to participate in an *Aliyah*, they are most welcome, however, it is respectfully requested that they be partnered with a Jew who will recite the blessings with the non-Jewish partner standing by. Non-Jews are also respectfully requested **NOT** to wear a *Tallit* or to touch and kiss the beginning or ending of the *Torah* reading because it indicates a commitment to being a Jew and the 613 commandments. Other honors most appropriate for **Jewish** participants are: dressing, lifting and holding the *Torah*. Thank you for your understanding and please feel free to contact the Rabbi or Cantor if you have any questions or concerns. For those reciting the *Aliyah*, a transliteration sheet is enclosed. ***Please send a copy of the Torah blessings sheet to all who will be so honored so they can practice the Hebrew recitation. As mentioned earlier, it is never comfortable for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah when a relative or friend is not prepared and stumbles over his/her reading!*** Please notify all readers and participants that the Rabbi will be calling them up at the appropriate time by name; they need not anticipate the proper spot on their own. All Jews assigned an *Aliyah* should be wearing a *kippah* and *tallit* for the ***entire service***. Everyone with any kind of an honor at all should sit as far forward as possible and on the inner aisle. Please ask those who are leading a reading ***not*** to bring up only their text on an individual piece of paper or individual page from our prayerbook. Instead, they should bring up their entire prayerbook. However, for those honored with an *Aliyah*, the Cantor has a laminated copy of the enclosed *Aliyah* practice sheet for use during our service.

If there are readings or songs you would like to include in the service, ***you must review them*** with both the Rabbi and the Cantor. Please note readings you bring to the service ***must*** fit appropriately by theme into the liturgy and will ***replace*** readings in the prayerbook. You may wish to include other readings in your booklet for silent meditation. After approval, you are responsible for duplicating enough copies for the congregation, perhaps in the form of a booklet which might include these readings or songs, the Hebrew and English of the *Torah* and *Haftarah* readings, a personal message to the congregation and, perhaps, some explanations of elements of the service (those found at the beginning of this Handbook are already in the prayerbook). We respectfully request that you not adorn your booklet with pictures of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Please make it a *Shabbat* booklet. Thank you for your understanding. The Cantor will provide you with the Hebrew and English for the *Torah* and *Haftarah* readings.

## **A Word About Classmates and Friends Attending the Celebration...**

We strongly encourage you to invite your son/daughter's friends to attend this important moment in his/her life. Sometimes, especially for those friends who do not understand the importance of this milestone nor the hard work and dedication required to achieve this goal, it is hard for them stay focused and supportive during the service. It is the policy of beth shir sholom that all service attendees have two options:

1. Be an active participant in the service. This will help our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* feel the support of the entire community.
2. If they feel the need to talk to friends, we respectfully ask that they do so outside of the synagogue (i.e., completely outside the building, not in the foyer of the synagogue). Our sanctuary resonates sound and the quietest conversation can be a major distraction for our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Our only focus is our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* and his/her experience. We consider it our responsibility to not allow distractions to hurt the experience.

In order that we may do our best to hold the attention of these unaccompanied kids and young adults, we will reserve rows near the front of the congregation specifically for them. Our greeter will escort them to the proper seats before the service begins. So that we may help the friends of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* to remember our policy we ask that you assign at least 4 (four) people to sit both in front of and behind them. These people should be of strong enough character to be able to give these children and young adults our two options (see above). Should these pro-active steps fail to stop disruptive behavior it may become necessary for the Rabbi or Cantor to stop the service, leave the *Bima* and ask them to leave the service. Again, we do not do this to embarrass the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* or his/her friends, we do it to help maintain the focus of our newest young adult. We thank you for your help with this.

### **Will a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date Ever Be Postponed Or Canceled?**

Yes, occasionally, it becomes necessary to postpone or cancel a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date due to insufficient preparation on the student's part. At beth shir sholom, we want this experience to fill our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* students with the pride of accomplishment, the pride that comes with hard work and dedication. This kind of pride will last a lifetime. Should our students choose not to or be unable to invest

the time to work towards this goal or should they *refuse* to practice it may become necessary to either postpone or cancel the scheduled ceremony. Keep in mind that we are not concerned with the quantity of material mastered, but the quality of the effort put into the process. We would never postpone or cancel a date simply because a candidate was unable to learn the entire service. If our candidate shows a lack of effort over the period of several weeks we will schedule a meeting with the Rabbi, Cantor, student and parents to deal with this issue and work for a resolution. If after this meeting and sufficient follow-up the student continues to be insufficiently prepared, postponing or canceling a service may be inevitable. Communication plays an important role in this process. Parents will always be kept informed of the students' preparedness, effort and progress. As soon as we see an issue arising, we will work hard together to resolve it quickly long before we have to make a decision to either postpone or cancel a scheduled ceremony.

### **Is Photography/Video Taping Permitted During the Service?**

Photography is not permitted during any service at Beth Sholom. It is permitted to video tape from the Temple balcony. You may wish to use a remote microphone for the video camera because the audio portion of your tape may not be very loud or distinct from that distance. Should your videographer have any audio questions, feel free to have them contact Cantor Ken. We recommend that family members not be asked to do the video taping so they can participate fully in the service along with everyone else.

The Temple is open 1 1/2 - 2 hours before the service. That is ample time for you to meet with your photographer, and you may take pictures up to 30 (thirty) minutes before the service begins. The Rabbi and Cantor will be available for pictures either immediately prior to or following the service. The Rabbi and Cantor do not wear Shabbat dress for the practice service and are, as a result, not able to accommodate photographs on that day.

We ask that you instruct your photographer to follow the guidelines listed below.

1. No one may stand on any furniture in the Sanctuary. This includes the benches and chairs on the *Bima*. Should your photographer wish to take pictures from an elevated position they must provide their own ladder. Because of liability issues the Temple cannot provide a ladder for you to use.

2. No *Bima* furniture may be moved under any circumstances! This includes the *Torah* Table and chairs on the *Bima*. We will move the microphones out of the way during pictures, and will put them into place for the service 30 (thirty) minutes before the service begins.

3. We encourage you to consider taking pictures with our *Torah*. Should you decide to do so, we ask that either Rabbi Neil or Cantor Ken be there to facilitate this. We ask this to ensure that the *Torah* is treated properly and that it remains rolled to the appropriate position for the upcoming service.

## A Word About Invitations

### 1. *Whom to Invite*

Beth shir sholom is blessed by your membership and participation. This also means that our *B'ney Mitzvah* classes are growing larger. We know that inviting the entire class can be financially difficult. Still, if it is at all possible, please do so. Being twelve and thirteen is a challenging and often fragile experience. To be one of the "uninvited" can be devastatingly painful. Please follow through on what Hillel taught us, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor." If you would not want your child to be among the "uninvited" at a given occasion then invite the *entire* class to your reception. Teach your child the fine art of diplomacy and protecting the feelings of others.

As an alternative, invite only *one or two people* from the class and hold a class party either on a class day or at some other time in some other venue. These are not merely suggestions. These are *policies* of our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* year. We thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

### 2. *The Invitations Themselves*

We know that invitations are very important to you in planning your simcha. We ask you to show your invitations to the Rabbi or Cantor before printing so that any unnecessary problems [like incorrect starting time or the incorrect spelling of our Temple's name (we spell "*Sholom*" the Yiddish way with two "o's" and no "a!")] can be avoided.

The following are examples of wording for your invitation:

*It is our pleasure to invite you to attend Shabbat services with us as our  
son/daughter  
**Name of Bar/Bat Mitzvah**  
is called to the Torah as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah  
Saturday, the sixth of January  
two-thousand and five  
at 4:00 PM,  
at Beth Shir Sholom, 1827 California Avenue, Santa Monica, California.*

**Name of Family**

\*\*\*\*\*

*It is our pleasure to invite you to worship with us  
on Saturday, the sixth of January two-thousand and five  
at 9:30 AM  
as our son/daughter, **Name of Bar/Bat Mitzvah**  
is called to the Torah as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah,  
at Beth Shir Sholom, 1827 California Ave., Santa Monica, California.*

**Name of Family**

\*\*\*\*\*

*We take pleasure in inviting you  
to worship with us at  
Beth Shir Sholom  
1827 California Avenue  
Santa Monica, California  
and share our happiness as our son/daughter  
**Name of Bar/Bat Mitzvah**  
is called to the Torah  
as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah  
on Shabbat Yitro  
20 Shevat 5762  
Saturday, the sixth of January  
two-thousand and five  
at four o'clock in the evening.*

**Name of family**

\*\*\*\*\*

*Please join me and my family  
for Shabbat services  
when I am called to the Torah  
as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah  
on Shabbat Yitro  
20 Shevat 5765  
Saturday, the sixth of January  
two-thousand and five  
at nine-thirty in the morning.  
at  
Beth Shir Sholom  
1827 California Avenue  
Santa Monica, California*

***Name of Bar/Bat Mitzvah***  
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### **The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Fee**

Temple policy requires that your account with the Temple not be in arrears in order for your son/daughter to become *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Additionally, there is also a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Fee which helps defray some to the costs of the occasion. Some of the items covered by this fee are:

- *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* supplies, materials, etc.
- 8 weeks of private study sessions with *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Specialist.
- 4 to 5 months of private study with Cantor Ken and all attendant materials (booklets, cd's, copies, etc.).
- 6 to 8 weeks of private study with Rabbi Neil.
- Professional Greeter to help seat people during the service.
- Flowers on the *Bima* Friday night and *Shabbat* morning, with a note in the *Shabbat* Handout that your family has sponsored the flowers and *Oneg*.
- *Oneg Shabbat* [reception following Friday service (*Challah*, wine, grape juice, cookies and cakes)]. Contact the Temple Office for details about sponsoring a more elaborate *Oneg*.
- *Kiddush* following *Shabbat* morning or afternoon service (*Challah* and grape juice ONLY!).
- Professional musical services at the ceremony.

## The Reception

We hope that you will consider holding your reception at beth shir sholom. It adds a dimension of affiliation with the Jewish community and it supports the Temple. Please contact the Temple office as soon as possible to reserve Brewer Hall and to find out what else the Temple has available for your reception.

## Tzedakah

There used to be a saying regarding *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, "Today I am a **fountain pen!**," a parody on "Today I am an adult!" since it seemed that many *B'nai Mitzvah* received so many pens as gifts. One thing your son or daughter will almost certainly receive is money. As part of the adult experience, it is strongly encouraged that the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* set aside a **small** amount of his/her gift money as *tzedakah*. This is an important *mitzvah* to make part of their adult lives. A good percentage to set aside would be between one and two percent of what s/he receives. This translates to about one-sixtieth, a traditional amount of a farmer's field set aside for the poor. It is encouraged that the donation be divided between a Jewish cause/recipient (you may wish to consider beth shir sholom and any of our "funds" listed below) and a non-Jewish or secular cause/recipient. In this way the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is also responding to Hillel's injunction, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And yet, if I am only for myself, what am I?" (*Pirkey Avot 1:14*)

It is also appropriate for the **family** to give *tzedakah* in honor of this occasion. Once again, we hope that you will consider beth shir sholom as a recipient. If you do, a nice way to both give to the Temple and to create a **permanent** record of this event would be to purchase a leaf on our "**Tree of Life**" engraved in honor of your son/daughter and the date s/he became *Bat/Bar Mitzvah*. You can also purchase a tile that you can design and place in our new **Gan Shalom**. Contact the Temple office for information about these permanent reminders of your special event.

If you are interested in contributing to one of the many funds at beth shir sholom, here is a list of possibilities. Contact the Temple office for more details.

- Youth Group Fund
- Gan Shalom
- Sanctuary Fund
- Sound System Fund

- ECC Scholarship Fund
- Religious School Scholarship Fund
- Music Resource Fund
- Dues Scholarship Fund
- Mann Scholarship - Panim (10th Grade Confirmation Washington DC Trip)
- Cantor's Discretionary Fund
- Rabbi's Discretionary Fund
- Jewish Summer Camp Scholarship Fund

You may also wish to add 3% to the budget of your reception and give it to *Mazon*, an organization that distributes funds to those helping the poor and hungry. They do their work very well. Contact the Rabbi for details.

### **In Conclusion**

It is the sincere desire of your Rabbi, Cantor, Education Director, staff, faculty and Temple Board of Trustees that your son/daughter's becoming *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* helps you rejoice in his/her coming of age. It is our prayer that the preparation for this event will permanently enrich his/her knowledge of Judaism and motivate him/her to pursue Jewish studies enthusiastically throughout life. We hope that each *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, and your whole family, will be drawn closer to Jewish tradition and experience a wonderful spirituality through this event. Your continued affiliation with beth shir sholom will demonstrate to your son or daughter that Judaism is a lifelong involvement that will continue to enrich his/her life.

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All of us at beth shir sholom extend a warm "*Mazal tov!*" to you on the occasion of your son/daughter becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. We want you to know that we will be available to you, as we always have been, to address your concerns and questions. Please feel free to call or stop by.