



# **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Policies Manual**

*Approved by the Board of Directors*

*January 2016*

## **A. Introduction**

Welcome to a most exciting time in the life of a young congregant--being called to the Torah as a Bat or Bar Mitzvah! Beth Tikvah congratulates you and your child as you approach this milestone and rite of passage. We hope the policies and procedures in this booklet clearly delineate a helpful framework for planning this important life cycle event.

## **B. Philosophy**

Beth Tikvah Synagogue is committed to providing a dignified and memorable service that meets the needs of the Bat/Bar Mitzvah student, the family and the entire Beth Tikvah community.

A Bar or Bat Mitzvah is primarily a religious event, conducted as part of our community's regular Shabbat morning services. It is a time of reflection for the student, who is about to experience the "rite of passage" from childhood to beginning adulthood. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah service itself is a time of joy, togetherness and celebration for your family and our community. It is an opportunity for your child to share his or her Jewish knowledge and help lead services. It is a time of extending to a new generation Jewish religion, history, culture and values, thus ensuring continuity for the Jewish people.

Beth Tikvah believes that the planning of a Bat or Bar Mitzvah is a collaborative effort between the student, the family, the Rabbi, the tutor, and the Ritual Committee. We want each student to have a positive, meaningful and memorable Jewish experience. It is our goal that your child leads as much as her/his own motivation, background and capabilities permit. The joy, happiness and pride of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is its own reward.

## **C. Needs of the Community**

As a Bar/Bat Mitzvah occurs in the context of a regular Beth Tikvah service, our goal is to balance the needs of the family **and** the congregation. While this service is very special to the Bat/Bar Mitzvah family, other members of the community may need to say Kaddish, or a Mi Sheberach for the sick, or simply wish to pray. Additionally, we want to instill in our children a connection to their larger Jewish community and to the Jewish people.

And finally, our congregation has developed certain traditions that encourage the participation of children and adults during services which we strive to maintain during Bar/Bat Mitzvah services, such as parents reading Torah and younger siblings and other children leading a few of the closing prayers.

## **D. Criteria for Agreeing to Accept a Child for Bar/Bat Mitzvah:**

Before the Rabbi, Ritual Committee, or any other official representative (paid or volunteer) of Beth Tikvah makes a commitment to arrange for a Bat/Bar Mitzvah to occur at Beth Tikvah, or even for tutoring to begin toward that goal, certain criteria are to be met:

1. The child's family is to be formally affiliated with Beth Tikvah Synagogue. The family should be in compliance with the responsibilities of full membership: both, financial and volunteer (for example, participating in the rotation of Shabbat Kiddush duties).
2. The child must have fulfilled the appropriate requirements of the Beth Tikvah Religious School, such as regular attendance and reaching a level of Hebrew reading competency prior to beginning Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring. The child must be enrolled in our religious school or in another program that meets our educational requirements, such as a day school.

## **E. Date Selection**

1. ***Advanced Assignment of Date*** - We strive to select dates 1 1/2 to 2 years in advance, preferably closer to 2 years.
2. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah service is most often on a Shabbat morning, so that the child can be called to the Torah and chant a Haftarah.
3. ***Date Selection*** is based on the child's birth date and is decided jointly by the Ritual Committee, Rabbi, and the family. The date of the ceremony should be **after** the Hebrew calendar date of the child's 13th birthday. In situations where there are extenuating circumstances, the date may be slightly before the 13<sup>th</sup> birthday. In these instances, the determination will be made jointly by the Ritual Committee, Rabbi and the family.

## **F. Family Workshops**

As part of the educational process and preparation for both the child and the family, Beth Tikvah provides a series of Bar/Bat Mitzvah family workshops, which are offered during the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade years. The series of workshops each school year touch on a variety of Judaic topics that impact children and families at this juncture in their life. We focus on dimensions of Jewish life through text study, sharing traditions, reading articles, and hands-on activities that provide the opportunity to create ritual objects that may be used in future Jewish celebrations.

By joining together with other families within the class community, students and their parents work collaboratively on projects and study in a supportive environment. The atmosphere allows everyone to share ideas, experiences, and

concerns about this milestone event, and the time leading up to it. Everyone is able to bring their own heritage and personal history to these sessions to create their own process and approach to their service and celebration. These workshops also provide the opportunity for students and parents to connect in a deeper way as they share this unique experience together.

## **G. Bar/Bat Mitzvah Goals**

Every Bar/Bat Mitzvah will be called to the Torah to chant the blessings before and after the Torah reading as a minimum requirement. Other goals to be pursued are listed below. The selection of these other goals will be decided in collaboration with the tutor, Rabbi, student and family as a result of an ongoing evaluation of the child's progress.

These goals include the following:

1. Chanting from the Torah
2. Chanting the Haftarah
3. Delivering a d'var Torah (a short teaching, usually related to the Torah portion)
4. Leading the congregation in parts of the Shabbat morning service

*Upon the commencement of tutoring, regular attendance by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student and family at Shabbat morning services is strongly encouraged to ensure that everyone is familiar and comfortable with the flow and style of services.*

## **H. Bar/Bat Mitzvah Preparation**

1. **Homework** - It is recommended that each student spend 30 minutes per day, at a MINIMUM OF 3 days per week, preparing and practicing each week's assignment from the tutor in order to make satisfactory progress and for maximum retention.
2. **Tutoring** - The approved minimum BTS B/BM tutoring rate is \$750.00 which reflects 25 half hour lessons. The fee may be more depending on the tutor. Tutors are selected from the BTS Approved Tutoring List. [See **Section Q**]. The Rabbi will contact you approximately 9 months prior to your B/BM date to help set this up. Students generally receive 6 months of tutoring, one session per week. This is **excluding** all vacations, especially summer vacation. Therefore, tutoring often needs to begin as early as 8 months prior to the Bat /Bar Mitzvah date. Payment of the tutoring fee is arranged between the family and the tutor.
3. **Rabbi's guidance** - The Rabbi meets with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and/or family a few times beginning two months prior to the event for the following:

- a. Meetings with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to prepare his/her d'var Torah.
  - b. Meeting with the parents to discuss the ceremony, honors and any additional pertinent issues.
  - c. A full rehearsal, usually on the Wednesday prior to the BB/M date. This generally lasts about an hour.
4. **Accommodations** for students with special needs are arranged with the Rabbi.

## I. Family Participation

1. **Aliyot to the Torah** for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family are reserved as follows: One for the child, and four for the family. The remaining three aliyot are reserved for the congregation. The Rabbi will provide you with an honors list well in advance of your date.
2. **Non-Jewish Relatives** are encouraged to participate in a variety of honors. Please discuss this with the Rabbi.
3. **Honors for Additional Family Members**, including younger siblings, are also encouraged, e.g., open or close the Ark, dress the Torah, lead certain blessings, or do English and/or Hebrew readings from the Siddur. At Beth Tikvah we have a strong tradition of family members reading Torah at the service. Please discuss this with the Rabbi.

Please be sure that all those to be called to the Torah are able to recite the appropriate b'rachot. A copy of the Torah Blessings is included in this packet (see Section S) and will be available on the Beth Tikvah web site [www.bethtikvahsynagogue.org](http://www.bethtikvahsynagogue.org). In addition, a recording of these blessings is available upon request from the Rabbi or your tutor.

**Some families choose to prepare a printed program to be distributed at the service.** The program may include a brief explanation of the parts of the service and a list of Torah readers, aliyot, and other honors. Samples of past programs are available from the Rabbi.

### **In the spirit of Shabbat, we remind you of the following:**

1. Instrumental music, writing and smoking, taking pictures, and using cell phones are not permitted.
2. Please remind your guests to turn their cell phones off.
3. All men and boys must wear a head covering (kippah). It is traditional for Jewish men to wear a tallit.
4. All women and girls may wear a head covering (kippah). Jewish women are welcome to wear a tallit.

5. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah should be dressed in "Shabbat attire" – students should be dressed conservatively, for example suit or jacket with a tie, blouse with skirt, or dress. Shoulders and midriffs should be covered in the sanctuary.

## **J. Family Obligations**

Families are required to stay current in all synagogue financial obligations (including membership, tuition, tutoring fees, special assessments, and **the Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee of \$350.00**) in order to schedule and retain a Bar/Bat Mitzvah date, schedule tutoring, start or continue such tutoring, and to celebrate the Bar/Bat Mitzvah in the synagogue.

It is the family's responsibility to organize and meet the following obligations at their own expense:

1. ***Bima Flowers*** - It is customary for each family to order no more than two (2) floral arrangements of a standard size for the Bima. Please call the synagogue for guidelines. While we appreciate the desire for families to beautify the Bima with flowers, we are also sensitive to the expense involved. It is our goal to maintain a uniform level of dignity for all of our congregants.
2. ***Kiddush and Luncheons*** -
  - a. Kiddush -It is customary that the family sponsor the "standard kosher (dairy/pareve) Beth Tikvah Kiddush" for the entire congregation following Shabbat services. Please note that a Kiddush is a shorter, more informal offering for the congregants served only in the back of the sanctuary. A Kiddush includes the following kosher items: wine, grape juice, challah, beverages, pastries and all paper goods. The congregation will provide people to help with set-up and take-down of this Kiddush.
  - b. Luncheon - A luncheon is more formal and may last for several hours with chairs and tables being set up. ***If a luncheon is planned, the family is responsible to hire staff to set up, serve, straighten up and break down the room.*** A fee of \$100 for synagogue cleaning may also be required.
  - c. Please contact the usher assigned to your date to coordinate these efforts.
3. ***You may wish to provide additional coat racks during the cold months.***

## **K. Other Logistics**

1. **Usher:** The synagogue will assign a board member to be the usher for each Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The usher will arrive about a half-hour early to open the

building, turn off the alarm and prepare items for the service. If the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family desires to be in the building earlier (e.g. for flower delivery or photographs) they should arrange to get an extra key from a different board member and **learn how to turn off the alarm.**

2. **Kiddush Helpers:** There will also be two families assigned as Kiddush helpers for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family. The helper list is distributed to the entire congregation. These families are responsible for setting up and putting away the chairs for the service. Chairs should be set up in the late afternoon or evening before the service, after the JCC after-school program is over (usually by 6:00pm). The Bar/Bat Mitzvah family should give the helper families the approximate number of people expected as a guide for how many chairs to set up. The helper families also set out and clean up the Kiddush food and drinks.
3. **Food drop-off and pickup.** The Bar/Bat Mitzvah family may drop off items for the Kiddush (paper goods, drinks, tablecloths, pastry platters, etc) the day prior to the event. Perishables can be stored in the Beth Tikvah refrigerator in the storage room to the right of the lobby (NOT in the JCC refrigerator!) and moved to the JCC kitchen the morning of the service for ease of setting out. If the family is not using a catering service, arrangements must be made to bring home or otherwise dispose of all leftover food, drink and paper goods. **They must not be left in the JCC kitchen.**
4. **Candy.** The policy at Beth Tikvah is that no candy be thrown at the Bar or Bat Mitzvah during the Shabbat service. While we understand that some members have this custom as part of their Synagogue experience during a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, we find the passing out and throwing of candy to be very distracting to the entire congregation. After months of preparation of the young woman or man participating in this important milestone event, we want the focus of the service to be solely on that individual. Thank you for observing this policy.

## L. Summary Timeline of Activities

*24 to 18 months before* - Select date.

*10 months before* - The Rabbi will contact you to discuss tutoring arrangements.

*8 to 6 months before* - Begin tutoring. The child and family are expected to regularly attend Shabbat services.

**2 months to 6 weeks before** - Bar/Bat Mitzvah receives initial assignment to prepare d'var Torah from the Rabbi. Drafts of the d'var Torah are sent to the Rabbi (preferably via email) for feedback and editing. Additional meetings are scheduled as necessary.

**6 to 4 weeks before** - Parents fill out Honor List and meet with the Rabbi. All remaining issues discussed and finalized.

**1 week before** - Bar/Bat Mitzvah rehearsal at Beth Tikvah.

**This timeline has been carefully worked out so that it will adequately respond to the needs of our Bar/Bat Mitzvah families. Please do your best to adhere to this timeline and guidelines.**

## **M. Staff Responsibilities**

**Rabbi:** Preparation of service and d'var Torah; meetings with the family; coordination of honors with the family; final rehearsal.

Please be aware that our Rabbi is not yet "full time" and therefore his availability is limited. The Rabbi is best contacted via email at [michaelswarttz@rcn.com](mailto:michaelswarttz@rcn.com).

**Tutor:** Preparation of the child for Bar/Bat Mitzvah, which includes Torah and Haftarah blessings, Torah reading, chanting of Haftarah, leading various prayers such as Torah service.

**Ritual Committee:** Date assignment, assistance in assignment of Aliyot, explanation of various aspects of Service, parent and family participation and questions about Kiddush. The Ritual Committee aims to see that your service runs as smoothly as possible.

## **N. Photography**

Some families of Bar/Bat Mitzvah students may desire to have photographic recordings taken before and/or after the service. This section is included in an effort to make photography possible at some level, while maintaining the desired sense of the sacredness of Shabbat and of the service.

**Prior to the service**, still photos may be taken of the student with family, the Rabbi and Hazzan, Sefer Torah, and the Ark. This must be arranged in advance. Taking of these photos *must* finish by 9:15am. Video may also be taken at this time (see next paragraph). Additionally, families are welcome to take appropriate photographs during the dress rehearsal for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah a few days in advance.



**During the service, still photography is not permitted.** Video photography will, however, be permitted from one tripod-mounted camera in the back of the sanctuary. The camera and other equipment will be set up by 9:20am, at a location approved by the Ritual Committee chairperson or his/her designee. **No camera lighting is to be used.** **During the service the camera is left running and unattended.**

**Photography during Kiddush and Luncheon:** Both still and video photography are a matter of personal choice once the Kiddush has ended. There can be no still or video photography during a Kiddush.

## **O. Overview of Fees:**

- Tutoring Fee – A range of \$750-\$1,000, as described in section H.
- Bar Mitzvah fee - \$350, as described in section J.
- Cleaning fee - \$100, may be charged for a luncheon Kiddush, as described in section J.

## **P. Miscellaneous Suggestions:**

1. Tzedakah: Beth Tikvah suggests that all Simchas be shared with those who are less fortunate by making a contribution to an organization such as **Mazon ([www.mazon.org](http://www.mazon.org))**, a Jewish organization committed to fighting world hunger. Additionally, please consider donating leftovers to **Rachel's Table ([www.rachelstable.org](http://www.rachelstable.org))**, a local Jewish organization that feeds the hungry. Congregants will also often make a donation to the synagogue honoring the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and/or the Rabbi and teachers. Contact the synagogue treasurer for information on adding your child's name to our Tree of Life wall hanging.
2. Families are welcome to provide special Kippot for the service. Baskets will be provided.
3. When writing your invitations, we suggest a short note explaining that proper attire is required at our services. Please- no jeans or overly revealing outfits.
4. It has been our experience that non-Jewish guests, both adults and children, appreciate knowing that it is permissible to arrive for Shabbat morning services at 10:00 a.m. – in time for the Torah Service. Many people choose to insert a small note into their invitation packet informing their guests about this.
5. A new facebook group has been created for families planning their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Please contact the Bar/Bat Mitzvah coordinator, Lori Chastanet, to be added to this group.

## Q. BTS Approved Tutor List

*For the past several years, most of our bar/bat mitzvah have been tutored by either Michael Smith or Rabbi Swartz. We are including other tutors in the area who have worked with Beth Tikvah students in the past:*

Michael Smith	508 - 366-6069	<a href="mailto:mpsmith89@verizon.net">mpsmith89@verizon.net</a>
Debbie Fruchtman	508- 829-7271	<a href="mailto:debfruch@yahoo.com">debfruch@yahoo.com</a>
Rhonda Magier	508 - 879-1953	<a href="mailto:rhonmagier@yahoo.com">rhonmagier@yahoo.com</a>
Barbara Rennert	978- 635-0233	<a href="mailto:brennert@comcast.net">brennert@comcast.net</a>

## R. Glossary of Hebrew Terms in this Manual

**Adon Olam**- “Lord of the Universe” a traditional hymn praising and adoring God.

**Aliyah, Aliyot (pl.)** - “Ascent, going up” - Term traditionally used when someone is called up to the Torah. Also, going (up) to the land of Israel.

**Ark** - Vessel or cabinet that houses the Torah in front of the sanctuary.

**Bar Mitzvah** - Bar - (Aramaic) “Son (of)”; Mitzvah - “duty or commandment” - term used to mark the age of adulthood at age 13, as well as the event when a boy is called to the Torah to symbolize the attainment of adulthood.

**Bat** - “Daughter (of)”.

**Ben** - “Son (of)” (Hebrew).

**Bima** - “Stage” - the platform in front of the sanctuary where the ark and Torah are located. Please note that while in most synagogue buildings the bima is elevated, ours is not.

**Challah** - Braided bread used on Shabbat and holidays.

**D’var Torah** “A word of Torah”-remarks interpreting the Torah portion.

**Haftarah** - Supplementary and appropriate reading from Prophets, read after the Torah portion on Shabbat and festivals.

**Halacha** - Jewish law (*halachic* means “in accordance with Jewish law”)

**Hebrew calendar** - the Jewish calendar consists of 354 days of 12 or 13 months, each month 29 or 30 days, based on the lunar cycle.

**Kaddish** - (Aramaic) “Holy” - prayer used to glorify the Holy Name, also recited after the death of immediate family relatives.

**Kiddush** - “sanctification” - blessing over wine during Shabbat and festivals. Also used to describe light refreshments served after chanting kiddush following services.

**Kippah, kippot (pl.)** - (also “yarmulke” in Yiddish) - skullcap worn by observant Jews; in Conservative congregations usually worn by all males during Synagogue functions, in studying Torah, festivals, Shabbat, etc. Optional for females to wear head coverings.

**Kosher** - “ritually proper” - refers to food prepared according to Jewish law.

***Mi Sheberach*** “he who blessed” - a prayer traditionally said for someone who is ill.

***Shabbat*** - Hebrew for Sabbath, meaning “rest” - seventh day of the week. Considered among the most holy of almost any holiday during the year, it is a day of rest and a reminder of divine justice on earth.

***Siddur*** - “order of prayers” - daily prayer book, which follows a specific, traditional order of psalms, prayers and reading Torah.

***Simcha*** - “joy” - refers to joyous life cycle events, such as weddings, Brit, Bar or Bat Mitzvah, etc.

***Tallit, tallitot (pl.)*** - prayer shawl, customary for men to wear during Shabbat services, optional for women.

***Torah*** - “instruction, or guidance” - The five books of Moses. In the Synagogue, this refers to the rolled scroll containing the five books of Moses.

***Torah service*** - The central part of the Shabbat (Saturday) morning service, in which the Torah is brought out of the ark and a specified portion is chanted in Hebrew.

## S. Aliyah Blessings

### FIRST BLESSING (BEFORE TORAH READING)

בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יְיָ הַמְּבָרָךְ:  
בְּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבָרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בְּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים  
וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה:

You say: **BAR-CHU ET A-DO-NAI HA-ME-VO-RACH.**

Congregation responds: **BA-RUCH A-DO-NAI HA-ME-VO-RACH L'O-LAM VA-ED.**

You say: **BA-RUCH A-DO-NAI HA-ME-VO-RACH L'O-LAM VA-ED.**

**BA-RUCH A-TA A-DO-NAI, E-LO-HAY-NU ME-LECH HA-O-LAM, A-SHER BA-CHAR BA-NU MI-KOL HA-A-MIM V'NA-TAN LA-NU ET TO-RA-TO. BA-RUCH A-TA A-DO-NAI NO-TAYN HA-TO-RAH.**

Praise the Lord, to whom our praise is due!

Praise be the Lord, to whom our praise is due now and forever!

Blessed is the Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who has chosen us from all peoples by giving us the Torah. Blessed is the Lord, Giver of the Torah.

### SECOND BLESSING (AFTER TORAH READING)

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת,  
וְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם נָטַע בְּתוֹכֵנוּ:  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה:

**BA-RUCH A-TA A-DO-NAI E-LO-HAY-NU ME-LECH HA-O-LAM, A-SHER NA-TAN LA-NU TO-RAT E-MET V'CHA-YAI O-LAM NA-TA B'TO-CHAY-NU. BA-RUCH A-TA A-DO-NAI NO-TAYN HA-TO-RAH.**

Blessed is the Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who has given us a Torah of truth, implanting within us eternal life. Blessed is the Lord, Giver of the Torah.