



TEMPLE ALIYAH
CREATING COMMUNITY • CELEBRATING TRADITION

Bar/Bat/B* MITZVAH MANUAL

Revised 2026

*Bar = Boys, Bat = Girls, B = Gender Neutral

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Part 1: INTRODUCTION

MAZAL TOV!

Mazal tov on reaching this important stage in the Jewish life cycle, when your student is poised at the threshold of Jewish adulthood and your family is looking forward to the celebration of their upcoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony. Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah is both an enormously rewarding and soul-satisfying experience and at times one that can be filled with some anxiety.

As a result, Temple Aliyah has developed this manual to help our families plan and experience a beautiful and moving celebration, one that will create a lasting impression on the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah student and family. It is our hope that this *simcha* (joyous occasion) will inspire you and serve as a springboard for increased Jewish communal involvement and meaningful Jewish living.

BECOMING A Bar/Bat/B MITZVAH

What does it mean to become Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah?

The words “Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah” refer more to the person who becomes a Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah than to the ceremony that celebrates the occasion. The ceremony simply celebrates the fact that having entered adolescence, the person involved is now becoming responsible for his/her/their actions and is obligated by Jewish law to observe the tenets of our faith.

A modern Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah celebration offers the family, the student and the community an opportunity to recognize this important milestone in Jewish life. The contemporary Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah enables our students to demonstrate their acquired skills which are necessary for full participation as an adult member of the congregation. The Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah celebration empowers the family to affirm its connection with the Jewish past and to express its commitment to a Jewish future. Through it, we convey our desire to maintain a tradition that we have inherited, and our expectation that the student will carry on that tradition for future generations.

The heart of the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah celebration is the young person’s demonstration of a variety of skills that mark them as ready to assume adult responsibilities. The experience can be transformative for both the student and the entire family.

What is the role of the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah and their family in the service?

At Temple Aliyah, we welcome the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah into the congregation at a communal service. The service is not designed around the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah; instead, the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah assumes a variety of roles within an established, traditional service – roles that they will be able to repeat through participation in future services throughout their life. These roles often include reading from the Torah, chanting the Haftarah, leading the congregation in prayer and delivering a *D'var Torah* (literally “a word of Torah”). In this way, the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah begins a journey directed at lifelong participation in Jewish communal life amongst their congregational family.

Part 2: PREPARING FOR THE Bar/Bat/B MITZVAH CELEBRATION

HOW DATES ARE CHOSEN

Dates are usually assigned during the student's fourth grade year. Families must be members in good standing and students must be enrolled in Mercaz, Jewish Day School, or another formal Jewish Education Program approved by the rabbi in order to have a date assigned.

The Clergy determines the date of your child's celebration. According to the Talmud, a boy becomes a Bar Mitzvah at thirteen years and one day, a girl a Bat Mitzvah at twelve years and one day. The date is calculated on the Hebrew calendar. Since Temple Aliyah is an egalitarian congregation, dates are generally set for age thirteen / the seventh grade year regardless of gender.

Other life cycle events in the congregation, such as an *aufruf* (the celebration of an upcoming wedding) or a baby naming may also take place on the same date as the celebration of a bar/bat/b mitzvah. These multiple *simchas* (joyous occasions) testify to the vibrancy and communal nature of our congregation.

Once a date is assigned to a family, it is automatically reserved on the Temple Aliyah Calendar; you do not need to do anything further in this regard. Any request for a date change must be made in writing to the Clergy.

CELEBRATING IN ISRAEL

Many families consider celebrating a Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah in Israel, even when receiving training with Temple Aliyah. In recent years, well over a dozen of our young people have held their Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah celebration there. This can be an exciting and deeply educational experience for the entire family. The Clergy can recommend several rabbis in Israel who have worked successfully with members of our congregation.

THE B.MITZVAH INSTITUTE

Over the course of the 6th grade academic year, Temple Aliyah will offer a multi-session program for our Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah candidates and their parents. **This program is designed for both public and private school students.** Its objectives are to:

- Situate the Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience within the larger context of Jewish life;
- Provide foundation and scaffolding to add meaning to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience;
- Engage families in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process ritually, communally, socially, and logistically;
- Develop a cohort of Bar/Bat Mitzvah families.

Families will receive information regarding these sessions near the beginning of the 6th grade year.

INDIVIDUAL TUTORING

The Clergy oversees the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah program, including the training of our students, which includes individual Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah instruction over a period of approximately 12 months.

Students and their parents meet first with the Clergy for an initial orientation and will then be assigned to work one-on-one with our Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah Tutor. Half-hour weekly lessons will be scheduled at a mutually convenient time taking into account your schedule and the Tutor's.

Please note that an adult must remain in the building during the entire lesson.

This instruction typically includes learning the haftarah specific to the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah date, the Maftir and any additional portions from the Torah, and additional parts of the service. Each student is expected to practice regularly and diligently. Please be on time for appointments.

We realize that there are many different learning styles and that each student is unique. If your student has specific learning needs that may impact their Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah studies, please alert the Clergy so that we can make sure their needs are met as best as possible.

D'VAR TORAH

Students will prepare a D'var Torah, a brief speech about the Torah portion or haftarah, with the Rabbi, who will guide each student as they develop their own interpretations of the material. The D'var Torah will be delivered by the student to the congregation at the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah celebration.

PREPARING AS A FAMILY

During the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah year, each student's regular attendance at Shabbat morning services is the best way to become familiar with the service and to develop a feeling of ease and comfort in the synagogue. Shabbat morning services begin at 9:15 A.M at Temple Aliyah. We strongly recommend that each Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah family commit to attending Shabbat morning services regularly during the year prior to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

In keeping with our identity as a Conservative egalitarian congregation, we expect all of our Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah celebrants to wear tallitot.

We invite all Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrants and their families to attend the morning minyan (7:00 AM) on the Monday preceding their simcha. This is a chance for the student to deliver their D'var Torah and, in most cases, read their maftir portion in front of a small and friendly group. It is a wonderful experience and we encourage all families to attend!

FINAL RUN-THROUGH REHEARSAL

Students and clergy will conduct a full final run-through rehearsal during the week prior to the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah celebration. Students and their families will practice the prayers, readings, order and choreography of the service with the Clergy in the Sanctuary.

We recommend that other members of the family who will be participating attend as well. Any participant who will be reading a portion from the Torah must review their portion with the Clergy prior to the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah date.

You may also choose to have formal photos taken just prior to or immediately following this rehearsal. as well. Contact Melissa Rudman, our Executive Director, to schedule.

Part 3: THE Bar/Bat/B MITZVAH SERVICE

THE MORNING OF THE CELEBRATION

On the morning of the celebration, Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah, their parents and immediate family meet in the Rabbi's study for final preparations. Parents may wish to present the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah with a *tallit* at this time.

Most of our Bar and Bat Mitzvah observances are held on Shabbat morning. Services begin at 9:15 AM. We ask that all guests who will be receiving ritual honors come at the beginning of the service so that our usher may meet them.

The Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah family sits in the front of the Sanctuary. Please have your guests join you in the front half of the Sanctuary. This makes it easier for our *gabbaim* as they direct those honored with *aliyot* and other honors to the *bimah* at the appropriate time in the service.

Shabbat morning services may vary in length, but generally conclude by noon. A *Kiddush* luncheon immediately follows services.

FINDING BALANCE

Temple Aliyah religious services are attended by a wide variety of congregants, friends and guests. We strive to be responsive to all of their needs, including those of the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah student and their family, and to make Shabbat services meaningful to all in attendance. Our Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah students are encouraged to assume leadership roles in the service and their families are offered various honors. Because our prayer services are public and for the entire community, Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah families share in service participation, leaving room for other participation by members of the congregation, as well as additional celebrations.

The Ritual Committee has worked hard to find the right balance between the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah celebration and the regular congregational service. Specific honors are available for Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah family participation in our Shabbat morning services, including some Torah reading, *aliyot* (men and women called up to the *bimah* to recite blessings before and after a reading from the Torah), opening and closing the Ark, and leading an English reading. There are some honors that are reserved for Jews, but others that can be given to guests of any religion. An Honors Form is included with this manual, and should be filled out in consultation with the Clergy.

CANDY

It is customary for family and friends to shower the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah with sweetness, symbolized by the *gentle* throwing of soft candies at the conclusion of the service. **Temple Aliyah will provide all candy**, unless families prefer that it is not thrown at all.

SHABBAT BROCHURE

The Ritual Committee has prepared a brochure describing the Shabbat morning service which our ushers distribute on the morning of your Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah celebration. The brochure is updated weekly to note the particular week's *parasha*, Torah and *haftarah* readers, *yahrzeits*, *kiddush* sponsors, and announcement of any congregational celebrations, such as a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, baby naming or *aufruf*. Please understand that this brochure is the only approved handout which may be distributed to the congregation.

LIVE-STREAMING

All Shabbat morning services in the Sanctuary are live-streamed online. If you have family and friends who are unable to join us in person, they can still be a part of your celebration by watching live on a computer, tablet or smartphone. The live-stream is easily found at our website (www.templealiyah.com), or at this [link](#). It is not password protected. A recording from the live-stream will be made available to Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah families upon request at no charge.

SHABBAT DECORUM

Although our ushers do their best to maintain decorum during Shabbat services, we ask your help in assisting us in this matter. All children (our own at Temple Aliyah as well as guests) who are attending a Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah celebration are expected, while in the Sanctuary, to sit quietly, to follow the service in their prayer book and *chumash*, not to roam the halls, and to behave respectfully as they would wish others to behave on the day of their *simcha*.

It is permissible for your guests, especially youngsters with shorter attention spans, to leave the service for brief periods of time. Please be sure they are appropriately supervised. Ushers at the Sanctuary doors will inform them when it is appropriate to reenter the Sanctuary.

Please also remember that in order to maintain the spirit of the day, **no electronic devices – for talking, texting or photos – may be used anywhere in the synagogue on Shabbat**. All mobile phones should be kept silent and out of sight. In the case of health care professionals on-call who must be accessible at all times, cell phones/beepers should be turned to vibrate so as not to disturb fellow worshippers.

A limited number of focus tools, or fidgets, are available for borrowing and located at the entrance of the Sanctuary.

RITUAL GARMENTS, DRESS & CUSTOMS

Guests of all religious backgrounds are welcome at Temple Aliyah's services. Whether or not they are Jewish, your guest may be unfamiliar with Temple Aliyah's customs and requirements and may appreciate some advance information. Please consult Rabbi Poirier for any detailed information or questions, she is happy to assist you in preparing information to share with your guests ahead of time.

Anyone who goes onto the *bimah* for any honor is requested to wear a head covering. All adult Jewish men are also requested to wear a headcovering while in the building. *Kippot* and lace head coverings are available at all services. Many families choose to purchase new *kippot* for the congregation and their guests in honor of their student becoming Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah.

All Jewish congregants and guests age 13 and older are encouraged to wear a *tallit* at morning services. Most families purchase a new *tallit* for the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah student to wear during their celebration and at services afterwards. *Tallitot* are available at all services.

Congregants and guests should dress in a manner that is respectful of the sanctity of Shabbat and religious services. **Food, including chewing gum, is not permitted in the Sanctuary during services.**

Part 4: Bar/Bat/B MITZVAH CELEBRATION LOGISTICS

INVITATIONS

When planning the wording of your invitations, please remember that our Shabbat services begin at 9:15 AM. This is the time that should be written on your invitation. When possible and appropriate, please include directions to Temple Aliyah with your invitation (available in our synagogue office).

WHO TO INVITE

In many ways, preparing to celebrate becoming a Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah is a group experience for your student and their classmates. In our religious school, as at each of our local day schools, children share with one another the challenges and the excitement of pursuing this significant milestone.

In preparing lists for your celebration, please be sensitive to your student's peers. In the spirit of building community, please try to be inclusive. **If you are intending to invite more than half of the children in your student's grade, we suggest that you invite them all.** (If you are planning to invite only boys or only girls, the same guideline should apply.) This avoids the hurt feelings that may be caused when a few students are not invited along with the rest of the class, and can prevent tension among friends. In most cases, these students have grown up and studied together. It is therefore most appropriate for them to share this milestone together as well.

HOME HOSPITALITY

Temple Aliyah maintains a database of families who live within walking distance of the synagogue. If you have out-of-town guests who require a place to stay within walking distance, please contact Melissa Rudman, Executive Director.

FLOWERS/BIMAH BASKET

It is customary for the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah family to decorate the Sanctuary *bimah* by sponsoring either flowers or a *bimah* basket. If you choose flowers, in order to ensure uniformity for all our *simchas*, flowers for the *bimah* are ordered through Melissa Rudman, Executive Director. All flowers remain on the *bimah* until Shabbat is over. You may order other flowers for table centerpieces or decorations as you desire, from any source. Alternatively, choosing a *bimah* basket (which includes a basket of food boxes wrapped in plastic) represents a donation made in your student's honor to Jewish Family and Children's Services Family Table.

KIDDUSH LUNCHEON

As part of the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah celebration, it is customary at Temple Aliyah for families to sponsor the *kiddush* luncheon immediately following the service for our congregants and all invited guests. Even if you are planning to celebrate at a separate, private function thereafter, it is appropriate for your family to attend *kiddush* with your guests before leaving the synagogue for your own affair. This provides a wonderful opportunity for congregants to offer congratulations to the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah family. Please contact Melissa Rudman, Executive Director, for more information.

CATERERS

Only caterers who are certified as kosher by the Va'ad HaRabonim as of the date of your *simcha* are permitted to serve food in our synagogue. Please consult the Temple rules for detailed provisions regarding the preparation and serving of food in our synagogue.

PHOTOS

The taking of photographs is not permitted anywhere in or about the synagogue on Shabbat. If you would like photos of your child at the *bimah*, please be in touch with Melissa Rudman, Executive Director, to schedule a convenient time when you and your family will not be disturbed by other events going on at the Temple.

FRIDAY NIGHT DINNER

Many families choose to host a private Friday night dinner at the synagogue for their out-of-town guests. Because this is the start of Shabbat, dinner is preceded by a brief Shabbat evening service at 6:15 PM (lasting approximately one hour), conducted by the clergy. If you are interested in hosting a dinner, please contact Melissa Rudman, Executive Director.

PARTY

All Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah families who plan to have a party after the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah celebration are encouraged to utilize Temple Aliyah's facilities. Before any other programs or events at the synagogue are scheduled on your celebration day, you have the right of first refusal. If you choose to have your party elsewhere, we urge you to have a celebration in honor of your Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah that does not violate Shabbat or the Jewish dietary laws. As mentioned in the introduction, the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah ceremony marks an adolescent's acceptance of the commandments. It is only fitting that this be reflected in a celebration that takes the commandments into account. Any assistance that the synagogue can provide in helping you to achieve this goal will be happily given.

COORDINATION AND ASSISTANCE

Many lay and professional leaders in our community are eager to be of assistance to you as you prepare for this wonderful family milestone.

Important Contacts include:

Rabbi Allison Poirier	rabbipoirier@templealiyah.com
Executive Director, Melissa Rudman	melissa@templealiyah.com
President, Laurie Rubin	laurie.rubin@templealiyah.com
Treasurer, Fred Haber	fred.haber@templealiyah.com
Temple Aliyah Office	781-444-8522

FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS

A schedule of current fees for rentals and Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah preparation is included with this manual. All Temple obligations shall be paid in full prior to the Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah celebration. Any financial problems, questions, or concerns should be discussed confidentially with the Temple President or Financial Secretary and resolved prior to your celebration.

MITZVAH PROJECTS

We have long encouraged our Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah students to choose one or more projects in which they can “give back” or “pay it forward.” Students have typically chosen a wide variety of initiatives ranging from raising funds for under-funded charitable organizations, to donating children’s books to a homeless shelter, to raising awareness and promoting increased recycling within our synagogue. Some families choose to create centerpieces for their tables out of books or supplies that they intend to donate. The Rabbi is available to help Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah students and their families select and pursue such projects.

Part 6: CONCLUSION

ENJOY!

This Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah manual contains a lot of information, and although it is all important, we understand that it can be overwhelming. We are here to help you; you are not alone. Please do not hesitate to be in touch with the Rabbi, Clergy, or Melissa Rudman, our Executive Director, with any questions or concerns.

Make sure to take some time to relax and enjoy this very special and momentous occasion in the life of your Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah student and your family. We at Temple Aliyah celebrate right along with you. May we all be privileged to spend many *simchas* together in good health and happiness! ***MAZAL TOV!***

GLOSSARY OF 13 IMPORTANT Bar/Bat/B MITZVAH TERMS

Aliyah (plural: **aliyot**) – Literally, “going up” – The ascent to the *bimah* to say the blessings over the Torah scroll.

Amidah – Literally, the “standing” prayer, the prayer which along with the *Shema*, is the central prayer in Jewish liturgy. The *Amidah* is also referred to as *HaTefilah*, “the” prayer and as *Shmoneh Esrei* (“18,” referring to the 18 blessings originally recited in the weekday *Amidah*).

Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah – One who has attained the age of responsibility to observe the commandments as an adult Jew. Plural is *B’nai Mitzvah*. Also referred to as B.Mitzvah.

D’var Torah – Literally a “word of Torah”; a brief commentary on the Torah or *Haftarah* portion for the week.

Haftarah – Literally, “completion”; the reading of a selection from the Prophets for a particular Shabbat or festival. The *haftarah* reading is connected thematically to the weekly Torah reading.

Chumash – The Hebrew name for the Five Books of Moses. The word *chumash* means five, referring to *Bereisheet* (Genesis), *Shemot* (Exodus), *Vayikra* (Leviticus), *Bamidbar* (Numbers), and *Devarim* (Deuteronomy).

Maftir – The last section of the weekly Torah portion. The person receiving the *Maftir aliyah* chants the *Haftarah*.

Mitzvah (plural: **mitzvot**) – A commandment or obligation placed upon all *B’nai Mitzvah*.

Parasha – The Torah portion of the week, sometimes referred to as the *sedra*.

Shacharit – The morning service for Shabbat, festivals, and weekdays. It is followed by **Musaf**, the “additional” service in traditional liturgy of Shabbat, festivals, and the New Moon. In the days of the Jerusalem Temple, there was an additional sacrifice offered—on Shabbat, festivals and the New Moon – which followed the daily sacrifice.

Torah – Literally, “teaching” or instruction. Narrowly, Torah refers to the Five Books of Moses. Broadly, Torah includes all Jewish sacred literature and by implication, all of Judaism.

Trope – The notes and cantillation for Torah, *Haftarah* and *Megillot*, which enable a student to read any section of these texts throughout the year.



Bar/Bat/B MITZVAH CELEBRATION TIMELINE

FOURTH GRADE YEAR

- Fill out online form and receive official Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah date letter from the Clergy. Contact the Clergy to discuss any potential date changes as soon as possible.
- Bring dues current.
- Attend Shabbat morning services as a family on a regular basis.

SIXTH GRADE YEAR

- Student and parents attend B.Mitzvah Institute sessions throughout the year.

ONE YEAR BEFORE DATE

- The Clergy will contact you to schedule individual Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah sessions. Parents and student are invited to the first session together. Afterwards, the student will begin meeting weekly with our Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah tutor.
- Speak with Melissa Rudman, Executive Director, regarding reserving spaces for a reception and/or evening affair, as well as Shabbat morning *Kiddush* luncheon.
- Hire caterer, photographer, entertainment, etc.
- Reserve block of hotel rooms for guests, if needed.

SIX TO EIGHT MONTHS BEFORE DATE

- Meet with Melissa Rudman, Executive Director, to review paperwork for Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah.
- Purchase *tallit* and head covering for Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah.
- Contact the Clergy regarding any family or friends who would like to read from the Torah.
- Contact the Clergy to schedule run-through Rehearsal.

THREE MONTHS BEFORE DATE

- Finalize event details (including *Kiddush* luncheon, floral arrangements, etc.) with Melissa Rudman, Executive Director.
- Finalize guest list. When inviting classmates, be sensitive to the feelings of your child's peers, and if inviting over 50% of the class, please include the others as well. If you are planning to invite only boys or only girls, the same guideline should apply.
- Order invitations.

ONE TO TWO MONTHS BEFORE DATE

- Student writes *D'var Torah* with Rabbi Poirier.
- Parents meet with the Clergy to discuss honors.
- Parents and student meet with Rabbi.
- Contact Melissa Rudman, Executive Director, to schedule photo session.

ONE WEEK BEFORE DATE

- Make final payments for Kiddush.
- Attend Shabbat morning services with entire family, serving as greeters at the Sanctuary door. Please plan to be there from the beginning of the service (9:15 AM).

THE WEEK OF THE DATE

- Attend Monday morning *minyán* (7:00 AM) where the student may read from the Torah and will deliver their *d'var Torah*.
- Bring all supplies, such as *kippot*, centerpieces, etc. to the synagogue. Please label with your name. All items must be delivered to the synagogue by 2:00 PM on Friday.
- Photos with family (previously scheduled with Melissa Rudman, Executive Director)
- Run-through Rehearsal with the Clergy and those with honors (if possible).
- Join the congregation for Friday evening services (if they are being held that week).

Bar/Bat/B MITZVAH CELEBRATION DAY

- Bar/Bat/B Mitzvah student and their immediate family meet with the Rabbi in the Rabbi's Study prior to the service, at 9:00 A.M.
- Shep Nachas!*