



CONGREGATION
B'NAI TIKVAH

*B'nai Mitzvah
Guidelines*



2021/2022



Mazel Tov on your child's approaching B'nai Mitzvah! We look forward to working together to make this a wonderful life cycle event for everyone in your family. It is a major milestone in your child's life, and we look forward to a joyful journey with you. We know that even with some time to go, you probably have many questions about the B'nai Mitzvah process at B'nai Tikvah. Please read through these FAQs carefully. There will be many opportunities, both individually and as a group, to discuss the process and ask questions. We – the Rabbi, the B'nai Mitzvah tutor, the Executive Director and office staff – are all here to help! You will meet with the Rabbi and B'nai Mitzvah tutor for your first chance to ask questions. You may, or may not, have solidified your top choices for a date, but it will be a great opportunity to learn more about what to think about when choosing.

Once you have your child's B'nai Mitzvah date, then what?

Seeing your child's B'nai Mitzvah date in black and white can be both exciting and overwhelming. Where to start?! While a party and food are not the most important part of this milestone where your child takes their place in the Jewish community, these are some of the details that might need early planning to get on particular vendor calendars.

Here are some suggestions to help you begin the process and a timeline to assist you in preparing for the event.

Once you get your date

- Decide with your B'nai Mitzvah child how you want to celebrate this day.
- Figure out your budget. and what your budget will allow.
- Start talking to people you know who have already planned a B'nai Mitzvah for ideas and tips.

1 year before

- Start a guest list. It will most likely change (as in grow!) before you actually send out the invitations, but it is helpful to have an idea of how many people you plan to invite, and which venue will best fit your needs.
 - How many of your guests are from out of town? Will they be staying with you or will they need hotel rooms?
 - Do you want to send out paper invitations or electronic ones?
- If desired, this the time to research and contact event planners.
- Research and book a venue.

**Are you planning to have your event at CBT? You get first priority for using the Social Hall on the day of your child's B'nai Mitzvah. Talk to the Temple office to make arrangements and get it on the calendar. The Social Hall may also be available if you would like to use it to host Friday night dinner before services.*
- Find out what type of Friday night service is the night before your date (Shir Joy, Family Service, etc.) and whether it starts at 5:00pm, 6:30pm or 7:30pm, as this might affect any Friday night plans your family wants to make.
- Research and hire a photographer
- Research and hire videographer, if needed

10 – 12 months before

- Research food menu ideas.
- Hire a caterer, if needed.

At CBT, food must be kosher style – that means no pork, shellfish, or mixing of dairy and meat. If you have any questions about our Kashrut policy (attached), contact our Executive Director
- Research and hire DJ's, musicians, and entertainment.
- Start collecting guest list information.
- Send out a "Save the Date" announcement. This does not have to be fancy; it can be as simple as a group email. It is extra helpful to those family and friends that are coming from out of town.

7 - 9 months before

- Your child will begin B'nai Mitzvah preparations with Tina Eisenman, our B'nai Mitzvah tutor. She will be in touch with your family to coordinate the first meeting with Rabbi Chabon. Your child will meet weekly with Tina to learn their Torah and Haftarah portions, and then with Rabbi Chabon to write their Dvar Torah.
- Find a tutor, if needed.
- Research invitation designers.
- Research and book decorations

4 – 6 months before

- If you are planning on ordering kippot, do so early to ensure they arrive on time.
- Buy your child's tallit (Consider buying it right here at CBT - we have a beautiful selection!).
- Order invitations.
- Plan the candle lighting ceremony, if having.
- Start researching attire.

- Book hair and makeup professionals, if using.
- Reserve hotel blocks for your guests.
- Finalize food menu with venue or caterer.
- Schedule portrait photo shoot, if wanted.
- Order party favors, especially if they are personalized.
- Make sure the Temple office knows what your plans are for the Kiddush and any on-site events. You are responsible for Kiddush right after B'nai Mitzvah, including challah, wine and juice for the kiddush, and anything else you are serving. Plan for food for that (especially important if you are doing a separate party/event at a different location. This might require separate caterer or food preparation and decorations.)

2 – 3 months before

- Address and send your invitations.
- Order cake/dessert, if needed.
- Buy attire.
- Write speeches.
- Assign parts of the service to family and friends (Rabbi Chabon will provide you with a form to fill out and can assist you with this); plan time to get Hebrew names of family and friends if they have an aliyah.
- Book transportation, if needed.
- Meet with DJ, or musicians to plan music playlists.
- Create seating chart.
- Purchase your guest book if using
- CBT has three pots of silk flowers that are always in the sanctuary if you would like to use them in front of the bimah. Or if you prefer, you can order special flowers or plants for your big day. Plants/flowers for the bimah are not only decorative, they hide the fidgeting feet of the B'nai Mitzvah child!
- Find out current COVID guidelines
- Will your service be virtual – livestream/Zoom/YouTube. The cost is \$150.00.
- Will the service be indoor or outdoor?

1 month before

- Finalize guest list.
- Share seating plan with venue.
- Make sure speeches are ready.
- Order challah, wine and juice for Kiddush.
- At your child's rehearsal, consider having them wear the outfit they will wear on the day of their B'nai Mitzvah or at least just the shoes to practice walking around in them.
- Create personalized B'nai Mitzvah program and have it printed. The temple office has a simple template that they can email you.
- CBT will announce your upcoming Simcha and invite the community.

1 week before

- Finalize transportation if needed for out of town guests.
- Finalize itinerary of day/night.
- Confirm details with your vendors.
- Contact CBT office to finalize your kiddush plan.

1 day before

- Drop off any food or decorative items you will need the day of (if you are using CBT) and if you are putting up decorations, please schedule with the office.
- Meet with CBT support person to go over any help you need for Kiddush.
- Place a bag by your front door or in your car with the following items.
 - B'nai Mitzvah booklet with Torah & Haftarah portions used during tutoring.
 - Prayer book/siddur
 - Your child's D'var Torah
 - Tallit and Kippah
 - Copy of Parent(s)' blessings (and tissues!)

THE BIG DAY!

- BREATHE
- Make sure to eat something before you leave the house.
- If you hired servers, bring cash for their tips.
- Remember to take the bag that you put by your front door!
- ENJOY THIS SPECIAL DAY!



BAR/BAT MITZVAH CELEBRATION FAQs

Do we have to have a kiddush if we are having a luncheon elsewhere? What if we are having an evening affair?

At B'nai Tikvah, the B'nai Mitzvah family provides challah, wine, and an oneg like "nosh" for your guests. This can be a very simple light meal such as bagels and cream cheese.

If we want to have a celebration, where should we have the event?

There is no right or wrong way to celebrate your child's B'nai Mitzvah. While, many families do choose to have parties, others celebrate by taking a family vacation, or by having a small gathering at their home.

This decision should be made in consideration of size of guest list, budget, and what works best overall for you. B'nai Mitzvah families have priority booking for the CBT Social Hall and have access to discounted member rental fees. Contact the temple office for more information. The Social Hall can accommodate 100-120 people seated with a dance floor and up to 150 if no dance floor is needed.

How many people can the sanctuary hold?

200 people comfortably. If you have more people attend over that, they just sit a little closer together! COVID guidelines limit capacity. Find out with the office or by visiting www.tikvah.org what our current guidelines are.

Is there anything special we should do for out of town guests?

If your guests are not staying with you, it is appreciated if you can reserve a block of rooms with a local hotel. The hotel will usually give you a discounted rate and it can be fun for the guests to all be staying in one place. A welcome gift bag is not necessary but is a nice gesture. You can include a card with the timeline of events with addresses to the venues, brochures about the area, and some snacks. Often, extra group events are arranged for out-of-town-guests such as a dinner on Friday evening and a brunch Sunday morning.

Do I have to order personalized kippot? If so, how many should I order?

You do not have to order kippot. There is a bin of kippot for guests to use outside of the sanctuary. If you do order them, most companies require you to order a minimum. Check our vendor list for suggestions.

Is there a list of vendors that CBT recommends?

Attached is a list of vendors that have worked at CBT and that congregants and staff recommend.

What are the dimensions of the bimah table so I know what height the flowers/plants should be?

The bimah table is 26.5 inches from the floor to the bottom of the table. And is 55 inches wide from the inside of the legs on the sides.



B'NAI MITZVAH SERVICE FAQs

When will my child start preparing for their B'nai Mitzvah or begin Hebrew tutoring?

Approximately 9-10 months before the service date, the B'nai Tikvah tutor will contact your family to set up a meeting with both parent(s), your child, the tutor, and Rabbi Chabon. At that meeting you can expect to receive:

- An overview of the service.
- A chance for the B'nai Mitzvah tutor to spend some time alone with your child to listen to them read Hebrew, while parents spend time with the Rabbi.
- An opportunity to go over any questions that any family member may have.
- A discussion regarding setting up regular tutoring meeting times.
- What to expect from the process over the next few months.

If it is determined that your child needs additional Hebrew tutoring at this time, we will provide you with the names of tutors to help your child polish their Hebrew so they are ready to dive into their Torah learning.

Who will be my child's B'nai Mitzvah tutor, and how often will these meetings be?

Tutoring takes place once a week for half an hour per session at a mutually convenient time. During the course of their tutoring, your child will be studying with both the B'nai Mitzvah tutor and the Rabbi. About 6 weeks before your child's B'nai Mitzvah, they will meet with the Rabbi to write their D'var Torah (personal interpretation of an aspect of their Torah portion they find meaningful).

Will my child read the Torah & Haftarah portions or chant them?

We encourage all students to chant both the Torah and Haftarah, not only because the cantillation is our beautiful musical inheritance, but also because it actually makes learning the text easier.

Wait... you mean my child doesn't get a recording?!

Of course they do! The B'nai Mitzvah tutor will provide a recording of all the tropes, or cantillation symbols, and if necessary, a recording of your child's section of Torah or haftarah. But we don't think they will need it!

My child is nervous about chanting the Torah portion because they are worried that they are not great at singing. Should they just read it?

Not necessarily. While being musical makes chanting Torah easier, it's not a requirement. There are beautiful Torah chanters who aren't necessarily the best singers ever. All it takes is an interest in chanting and willingness to try.

How long is the service?

The service starts at 10:00am and typically conclude between 11:40-11:50am. Every service is unique so we can't give an exact ending time.

Will there be opportunities for our relatives and friends to participate in the service?

What if some of these individuals aren't Jewish?

Absolutely. There are a range of ways that family and friends can participate in the service. There are speaking roles – like English readings or chanting the Hebrew blessings for one of the Torah aliyot – and non-speaking ones like opening/closing the ark doors or helping to dress the Torah scroll after the reading. When your B'nai Mitzvah date is just a few weeks away, you will receive a packet from the rabbi which includes a list of these honors and copies of the readings available.

We joyfully welcome the non-Jewish members of your family to participate in almost any part of our services. The only ritual moment that is reserved for the Jewish members of your family is when someone is called up to the Torah for an aliyah. Just as your child does not wear a tallit or recite the blessings over an aliyah of Torah until they are a Jewish adult in our community, so too do we reserve those two honors—wearing a tallit and reciting the blessings—for other Jewish adults in their life.

This is supposed to be a joyous occasion, but I am already feeling a bit overwhelmed! As I think of more questions, who is the best person to ask?

Please know that you are not in this alone! This can all seem intimidating at the beginning, but just as with your child's studies, things really do fall into place. The Rabbi and B'nai Mitzvah tutor are here throughout your family's B'nai Mitzvah journey for additional conversations and to answer any further questions as they come up. You can also contact our Executive Director or the temple office to discuss any other logistical questions you may have. Parents who have already been through this process can be another great resource.

What is the B'nai Mitzvah fee and what does it pay for?

B'nai Tikvah charges a \$1,200 B'nai Mitzvah fee that is billed about eight months prior to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah date and is due three months prior, paid in full before the big day. The fee covers your child's individual preparations with the Rabbi and B'nai Mitzvah tutor, as well as staffing and other associated hard costs. You will need to pay separately for any necessary Hebrew tutoring.

How can I show my appreciation to CBT for guiding my family through this beautiful rite of passage?

It is customary to make a donation to the synagogue in honor of your child's simcha after the B'nai Mitzvah. There are several special funds that you can choose to contribute to, or you can donate to the general fund, which is used to address the most pressing needs. Please contact the office for more details.