



Bet Mitzvah Guide

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Rabbi Kramer - rabbikramer@bnaijehudah.org
Rabbi Brazner- rabbibrazner@bnaijehudah.org
Rabbi Rothstein- rabbirothstein@bnaijehudah.org
Michelle Adler-Wexler - bnaimitzvah@bnaijehudah.org

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Dear Parent(s) of Bet Mitzvah Student:

We are excited that your child is beginning preparations to celebrate becoming a bet mitzvah. The greatest honor our congregation can bestow on an individual is to have them recite the *B'rachot* (blessings) and chant Torah during our Shabbat morning worship services. We look forward to helping your child along their journey to this important and meaningful Jewish milestone.

While this is a time of great excitement, we recognize the fact that it can come with a certain amount of anxiety as well. To help alleviate any concerns and to place this experience in proper perspective, we have prepared this packet of material for you.

Please read all this material carefully. We hope it will lessen some of the natural anxiety associated with bet mitzvah, a phenomenon common to all life-cycle events. More importantly, may this information serve to enhance this significant celebration in your family's life.

If we can be of any assistance in the coming months, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to sharing in your family's joy when your child is called to the Torah as a bet mitzvah.

Rabbi Kramer Rabbi Brazner Rabbi Rothstein

Michelle Adler-Wexler
Bet Mitzvah Coordinator
Bnaimitzvah@bnaijehudah.org

12320 Nall Avenue • Overland Park, KS 66209 • (913) 663-4050 •
Founding Member - Union for Reform Judaism

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Contents

Origins of Bet Mitzvah	5
WHY DO WE CALL OUR PROGRAM “BET MITZVAH”?	5
WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF BET MITZVAH?	5
WHEN DID BAT MITZVAH BEGIN?	5
Preparations and Expectations	6
Pre-Bet Mitzvah Training Program	7
Hebrew Assessment	7
Pre-Tutoring Information (If needed)	7
Policy Regarding Adults and Children On-Premises	8
Tutor Assignments	8
The Bet Mitzvah Training Program	8
Service/Study Guide	8
Study Time	9
<i>Haftarah</i> (optional)	9
What is a <i>d’var Torah</i> ?	10
The Mitzvah Project	11
Bet Mitzvah Service Expectations	11
Honors During the Service	12
Community	12
Parents	12
Other Opportunities for Honors	12
Inclusion of All	12
Photography	14
Videography	14
<i>Oneg Shabbat</i>	14
Bimah Flowers	14
Frequently Asked Questions	15
Attire	15
Timeline of Saturday Morning	15
Scheduling and Logistics	16
Invitations	16
Decorations, Alcohol and Audio/Visual Aids	16
<i>Kiddush</i> Luncheon	16
Afternoon/Evening Party	17

E-News	17
<i>Tzedakah</i> Suggestions	17
Timeline – Bet Mitzvah Process	17
Timeline – Financial	19
Kashrut Policy	20
Facility Use	21
Reservations	21
Kashrut Policy	21
Facility Usage Schedule of Reimbursement Charges	21
<i>Kiddush</i> Luncheon	21
Day Party	21
Evening Dinner/Party	21
Friday Night Family Dinner	21
<i>Oneg Shabbat</i> After Bet Mitzvah	21

Origins of Bet Mitzvah

WHY DO WE CALL OUR PROGRAM “BET MITZVAH”?

In an effort to be more inclusive of all members of our Jewish community, we have opted to use the term “bet mitzvah” to refer to our program. Bet mitzvah refers to the letter ‘bet’ in Hebrew and is derived from the first letter of the traditional name for our Jewish coming-of-age ceremony (Bet Mitzvah). Using the phrase “bet mitzvah” allows people to add whichever additional letters they would like to the ceremony name (bar, bat, b’nai, b’not, etc.), and is more inclusive of all gender identities and expressions. By allowing students and their families to choose the specific term they would like to utilize for their ceremony, we create a more open environment in which all members of our community feel seen and respected by the terminology we use. While we will refer to our *b’nai mitzvah* program in general as “bet mitzvah” moving forward, we invite all students to use the specific term that reflects their identity when speaking about their day.

The term “bet mitzvah” comes to us from the Central Conference of American Rabbis’ (CCAR; our Reform Movement’s professional body of rabbinic leadership) Worship and Practice Committee. After consulting with experts and leaders in the topic of gender identity and expression, as well as referencing our sacred tradition and considering many options, the CCAR has formally recommended that we adopt the term “bet mitzvah.” “*B’nai mitzvah*” is inherently a gendered term, utilizing the masculine plural in Hebrew. “Bet mitzvah” removes the masculine ending from “b’nai” and allows us to simply keep the first letter, “bet,” allowing for a more open-ended word that speaks to the openness with which we endeavor to create our community. This term reflects our movement’s commitment to inclusivity and our desire for our tradition to evolve with the times in which we live.

WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF BET MITZVAH?

The bar mitzvah ceremony was developed as a public recognition of a legal and religious status, attained with or without the ritual. In other words, a Jewish boy of 13 years old one day automatically became a bar mitzvah even if no public ceremony took place. While the beginnings of the modern bar mitzvah ceremony date back to as early as the sixth century C.E., it was not until the Middle Ages that a fully developed ritual emerged. By the 13th or 14th century, the custom of calling a boy up to the Torah had become established as a way of recognizing entry into manhood. The bar mitzvah boy would chant the blessings, all or part of the Torah portion of the week and/or the haftarah section from the prophetic books. The boy's father would then recite a special blessing: "Blessed is He who has freed me from responsibility for this boy." The bar mitzvah boy would often give a scholarly address on the Torah portion or some section of the Talmud. Then followed a gala feast, called *s'udat mitzvah* ("meal of celebrating the performance of a mitzvah"), to which family, friends and sometimes the entire Jewish community would be invited. In short, almost all the elements we associate with the modern bar mitzvah ceremony were present by the Middle Ages.

WHEN DID THE BAT MITZVAH BEGIN?

Starting in the second or third century C.E., Jewish girls at the age of 12 assumed legal responsibility for performing the mitzvot. As with boys at age 13, 12 probably corresponded with their onset of puberty. However, girls were subject to far fewer commandments than boys. Today, liberal Jews affirm the total equality of women in terms of religious privileges and responsibilities. In the 1800s, Reform Judaism abolished bar mitzvah in favor of confirmation for

both boys and girls (bat mitzvah was not considered an option at that time). Within the 19th-century traditional community, some families held a *s'udat mitzvah* for a daughter on her 12th birthday, with the girl sometimes delivering a talk and her father reciting the blessing: "Blessed is He who has freed me from responsibility for this girl."

The first-known bat mitzvah in North America was that of Judith Kaplan, the daughter of Mordecai Kaplan, in 1921. Reform Judaism (which had by this time reintroduced bar mitzvah) and then Conservative congregations quickly adopted bat mitzvah, though in slightly different forms.

<https://reformjudaism.org/bar-and-bat-mitzvah>

Preparations and Expectations

Regular attendance and participation in synagogue worship prior to the bet mitzvah is an important factor in the bet mitzvah process. It shapes the students' relationship to our congregation and our cultural heritage, as well as familiarizing them with the order, patterns and meaning of our Shabbat service.

Another important aspect of preparing to become a bet mitzvah is developing a sense of community and responsibility for each other. The two years leading up to the bet mitzvah provide many opportunities for students and their parents to get to know others in the class and develop friendships. It is our hope and expectation that every child in the class will be fully included in one another's bet mitzvah celebrations and will assist and help each other in preparations along the way. We recommend that families participate in regularly scheduled social activities, allowing students and their families to get to know each other better.

At the end of the fourth-grade year, we will assign your child a bet mitzvah service date. Your child **MUST** be 13 on or a month before the date of the service.

All financial accounts with B'nai Jehudah (membership, tuition, etc.) must be current in order to receive a date assignment. The bet mitzvah training tuition will be collected when you accept your child's date.

At B'nai Jehudah, the student and their family must adhere to the following requirements in order to become bet mitzvah:

- Family membership must be in good standing at B'nai Jehudah for at least three consecutive years prior to the date of the service (Special circumstances will be considered and should be brought to the attention of the bet mitzvah coordinator/executive director). A member in good financial standing at the synagogue is someone who has either paid their full annual terumah upfront or is enrolled in a monthly payment plan and is current on all payments for terumah, classes and applicable fees.
- Child must be enrolled and in good standing with the congregation's religious school for at least three years prior to their service date.
- Before entering the bet mitzvah program, the child must be able to read Hebrew fluidly. If this is not the case during the assessment conducted a year before the service, extra tutoring will be suggested to ensure a smooth process.
- Child is required to participate in religious school during their entire bet

mitzvah year, including Keshet for grade seven.

Each student will be expected to fulfill these basic requirements:

- Possess a general knowledge of the siddur (prayer book) and public prayer
- Have the ability to read, chant and comprehend Shabbat service prayers and selected portions of the Torah
- Complete a mitzvah project
- Complete a *d'var Torah* (sermon)

This knowledge prepares our students for direct participation in the Shabbat services and to become an integral part of congregational life.

Pre-Bet Mitzvah Training Program

Hebrew Assessment

Approximately 12 months before the date of your student's bet mitzvah, they will be assessed to evaluate Hebrew fluency and knowledge of prayers. This appointment is to ensure a smooth process during the bet mitzvah training program. After this assessment, you will receive feedback about your student's Hebrew level and a recommendation for preparation before they enter the program.

Pre-Tutoring Information (if needed)

If a student needs pre-tutoring before the 24 sessions or six months of their bet mitzvah preparations have begun, this is an extra cost that the family pays directly to the tutor. This will be determined during the family's 12-month Hebrew assessment. All pre-tutoring should be arranged between the student's parents and the tutor.

If you choose to use a tutor other than the ones we provide on our list of recommendations, it is your responsibility to ensure that the tutor has the required expertise to get the student ready for our bet mitzvah process. All congregations do this differently, so even if your friend/family member is a rabbi or bet mitzvah tutor somewhere else, they will need to be given the list of expectations you receive to ensure this is a smooth process.

- o If you are not using one of our provided tutors, then an additional Hebrew assessment needs to be scheduled with one of the Assistant Rabbis a week before their 6-month meeting with Rabbi Kramer to confirm the student is ready to begin their formal bet mitzvah training. Please schedule using the Calendly meeting link for the "Hebrew Readiness Meeting." This should be scheduled with the same Rabbi who facilitated the 12-month meeting.
- o By the end of pre-tutoring, a student should be able to decode the entire alef-bet, vowels and read the following:
 - *Bar'chu* (page 108 in Mishkan T'filah)
 - *Sh'ma* (page 114-115 in Mishkan T'filah)
 - Blessing for Engaging in the Study of Torah (page 84 in Mishkan T'filah)
 - Friday Night *Kiddush* (page 4 in Mishkan T'filah)
 - *Motzi* (page 302 in Mishkan T'filah)
 - Shabbat Candle Blessing (page 2 in Mishkan T'filah)

- Please do not work on tunes or *minhag* (customs), since they differ between communities.
- Learning to chant Torah will start after the family's 6-month meeting with Rabbi Kramer, when the student receives their Torah portion and when the formal bet mitzvah tutoring begins.
- A document will be emailed after the Hebrew assessment, so the pre-tutor can sign off before the student begins formal training.

Policy regarding adults and children on-premises

B'nai Jehudah staff and clergy (including, but not limited to, religious school teachers, tutors, rabbis, music director, office and maintenance personnel whether employees of B'nai Jehudah, contractors or volunteers) who meet privately with minor children in connection with synagogue or religious school matters, will, at all times, make every reasonable effort to maintain the maximum visibility possible by:

- Leaving doors open when practical
- Raising blinds or other window coverings in offices
- Holding meetings in a public space of the building whenever possible
- Inviting parents or guardians to attend a meeting

This policy is intended to protect the safety and well-being of both children and adults when they are together on the grounds or in buildings at B'nai Jehudah.

Tutor Assignments

We work hard to make the right match between tutor and student. We take into consideration the student's Hebrew fluency and learning style, as well as the tutor's teaching style. Individual tutoring sessions will take place on a (mostly) weekly basis beginning six to seven months prior to the bet mitzvah date.

The Bet Mitzvah Training Program

The Bet Mitzvah Training Program consists of:

- A maximum of 24 individual tutoring sessions (45 minutes each) with one of B'nai Jehudah's excellent tutors
- Four 30-minute meetings to develop the *d'var Torah* with an associate rabbi
- One 60-minute service design meeting
- Four rehearsals in the chapel/social hall
- Three meetings with a rabbi

A parent is expected to attend all *d'var Torah* (sermon) meetings, the service design meeting and all rehearsals.

Service/Study Guide

Each student is provided with a folder, access to music links and a prayer book that contains a wealth of study materials. *Students are meant to bond with this folder!* Materials will be added as the students continue their training.

See the yellow schedule (in your folder) for what to bring to meetings and rehearsals.

Study Time

While learning styles vary, we recommend that students dedicate 20 minutes of daily service work. It is not enough to only practice during tutoring sessions. Try breaking up study time into two sessions of ten minutes each, each session focusing on one area of study: the *t'filot* (prayers), the *parashah* (Torah portion), the *d'var Torah* (sermon), and the haftarah (*optional*, additional readings from the prophets – see “Haftarah”, below).

Once the student has learned all the material, it is imperative that they continue to review every day. The more prepared they are, the less nervous they will be! While much of the curriculum will have been learned before entering the training program, there is a great deal for each student to master. Ensure that sufficient time is allocated for practice. Athletics, music, dance, etc., require lots of practice, and so does Hebrew. Having set study times and encouragement from you will make all the difference in your child's competency and comfort at their bet mitzvah.

Haftarah (optional)

After a student has completed learning the Torah Portion and all of the required prayers, they will have the opportunity to learn a haftarah portion and the prayers before and after the reading.

Haftarah is an additional selection that corresponds to the appropriate Torah portion. Haftarah comes from the Book of Prophets and can either be chanted/read in Hebrew or English. The haftarah is chanted to a different cantillation system and is sung in a minor key.

Please note that this is an optional addition to the service.

Haftarah is chanted off a piece of paper. Students do not need to memorize all the vowels or cantillation marks. If it is important to you to have a haftarah as part of your service, please ensure you discuss it with your tutor early in the process. Additional tutoring sessions may be necessary to have your student complete a haftarah section, depending on the student's Hebrew skill level.

What is a *d'var Torah*?

D'var Torah means “a word of Torah” and refers to a text-based sermon in Hebrew. On the Saturday morning of your service, through your *d'var Torah*, you will teach the congregation Torah through *your* interpretation of the Torah reading.

There are many different approaches to writing a *d'var Torah* that are acceptable, and you will have help along the way. You will have meetings with a rabbi to help you prepare. Also, unlike school projects where the child operates independently, parents are encouraged to actively participate in this learning process (as long as it is productive for both parent and child).

Some Torah portions are more accessible than others, but the rabbi working with you and your family will guide you through this process. A *d'var Torah* should encourage people to think or feel differently after hearing it. Your *d'var Torah* will start with an aspect of your Torah portion that you find interesting and will develop from there. When complete, your *d'var Torah* should be 4-6 pages long, double-spaced, and in 14-point font.

Below is a simple outline for creating your *d'var Torah* that has been effective for many of our students over the years.

The *d'var Torah* should accomplish the following:

- Gain a grasp of the context and content of your Torah portion
- Teach about the Torah and Judaism
- Explore a theme or aspect of interest - choose one topic which can be developed and used to teach the congregation what you have learned
- Share your personal reflection and part of yourself

What is in a *d'var Torah*?

1. **Summary:** Include the name of the Torah portion, the name of the book you are chanting from, the chapter and verses and a summary of what happens in your reading. **(1-1.5 pages long)**

- Some context may also be helpful. For example, what has happened before and/or after your Torah portion?

2. **Transition/Focus:** The aspect of the portion you are going to focus on. **(1-2 paragraphs)**

- Describe what you think your *parashah* is teaching.
- KEY QUESTION: What kind of message are these ancient words saying to me? "The aspect of this portion I find most interesting/compelling/problematic/fascinating is..."
- Include why you are choosing to focus on this particular topic.

3. **Exploration:** What does Jewish tradition have to say about your focus? **(1-1.5 pages)**

- What other information can you bring to this subject that will bring it alive and make it relevant to the congregation?

4. **Your Opinion:** How do you relate to the issue(s) you raised? **(1-1.5 pages)**

- An illustration from the bet mitzvah's own experience is helpful here. Students may also use examples found in television, books, movies or current events.

5. Conclusion: A summary of what you have learned and taught the congregation, and what you will walk away with as a bet mitzvah. If it is relevant and fits with your message, you may also choose to include information about your mitzvah project. Finally, it is always appropriate to include a few sentences of thanks to family, clergy and synagogue staff.

The Mitzvah Project

The mitzvah project is a family-centered mitzvah program, where families choose a project to accomplish during the bet mitzvah year. Part of becoming a bet mitzvah is being a responsible Jewish adult. Instead of your mitzvot (commandments) counting for or against your parents, you are responsible. Judaism commands Jewish adults to make the world a more fair and just place.

Jewish adulthood does not begin and end with a mitzvah project. Rather, we want you to be a lifelong “mitzvah person.” Choose a project or activity you enjoy or are passionate about. We need you to use your time and talent. We do not want you to solely collect and donate money.

The project should be completed by your bet mitzvah date. All families are required to participate.

Projects can be a short-term volunteer commitment to a program or organization, or anything that enhances the lives of others or protects/preserves the environment. Almost all mitzvah projects are acceptable, and there is no set number of required hours that must be put into the project. Check out the idea list in this folder for inspiration. The more you put into it, the more you will receive!

While we recognize that animals need our support too, we ask you to focus on serving the needs of people and our community.

Bet Mitzvah Service Expectations

At B'nai Jehudah, the young person assumes the role of *Baal T'filah*, the leader of prayer. This begins with Friday night services. The Friday evening before the bet mitzvah, the family will be invited to the bimah to light the Shabbat candles, and the young person will lead *V'ahavtah*, *Kiddush* and *Motzi* afterwards. We will also invite the family to open the ark for *Aleinu*. This may change depending on the venue or type of service on Friday nights.

On Saturday Morning, the bet mitzvah leads most of the service as *sh'liach tzibur* (leader of worship), including chanting from the weekly Torah and (optional) haftarah portions, and delivering a *d'var Torah* (sermon) on the meaning of the portion read. The expectation is that each service will be held in our chapel. If the family chooses to hold services in the social hall (required if more than 250 people are expected), they need to notify the bet mitzvah coordinator at least nine months in advance. A standard rate for use of the social hall will apply to account for additional transition of technology, setups and cleaning. If the social hall is used for the ceremony, a luncheon cannot be held in that space.

Honors During the Service

Honors are an important part of the bet mitzvah service. A variety of opportunities for family and friends exist within the Shabbat morning worship service.

Community

The bet mitzvah service is a community celebration, not a private event. It is customary for all worshippers attending the Shabbat morning service to participate in the *Kiddush* lunch afterward. In addition to those people to whom you sent invitations, generally 5-8 congregants will attend. The *Kiddush* can range from very basic to a full luncheon.

You and your child agree to invite your student's entire bet mitzvah class to their service and any and all celebrations associated with the day. Torah teaches us to treat others as we wish to be treated, and to lead with compassion and kindness; we prize inclusivity and community as a people, and at B'nai Jehudah. Excluding certain students only leads to heartache and disunity in the class. We firmly expect all bet mitzvah families to include one another in their celebrations to contribute to this sense of community and to role-model for our children the Jewish values we hold dear as a people.

Parents

Besides *kvelling* (being really happy), the parental involvement in a bet mitzvah service includes:

- Lighting candles on Friday night
- Participating in the physical passing-down of the Torah Scroll on Saturday morning
- Having the third *aliyah*, which involves reciting the Torah blessings
- Offering a prayer to the bet mitzvah (Guidelines for these prayers must be followed. The offering must not exceed 400 words, must not embarrass your child and must be approved by a rabbi prior to the service)
- Presenting tallit (optional)

Other Opportunities for Honors

An *aliyah* is the act of being called to the Torah. There are two parts to an *aliyah*: the blessing before the reading of the Torah and the blessing after the reading of the Torah. Each bet mitzvah has a total of four *aliyot*:

- The first two *aliyot* for friends and family
- The third *aliyah* for the parent(s)
- The fourth *aliyah* is for the bet mitzvah

During the service, the ark is opened three times and the Torah is passed down from one generation to the next. In addition to *aliyot* and the passing down of the Torah from generation to generation, other honors that can be given include:

- The opening and closing of the ark
- A *hagbah* (Torah lifter)
- A *g'ililah* (Torah dresser)
- Presentation of tallit (optional)

Inclusion of All

B'nai Jehudah welcomes the participation of non-Jewish family and friends. We strive to make the whole family feel at home during the service. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the rabbi or the bet mitzvah coordinator.

Children under the age of 13

Children can help with various rituals, such as dressing the Torah, opening the Ark, reciting *Motzi* or participating in *Kiddush*.

Aliyah

Meaning to “go up” or “ascend,” *Aliyah* implies a spiritual ascent. An *aliyah* is considered to be one of the most sacred privileges in Judaism. The service of bet mitzvah is a celebration of a child’s first *aliyah*. *Each aliyah must include at least one Jewish adult who can say the blessings.*

Hebrew Name

Traditionally, you would be called to the Torah by your Hebrew name. This includes not only your given name but the name(s) of your parents. The formula would thus be:

For men Ya’akov **ben** Avraham v’Sarah

For women Rachel **bat** Avraham v’Sarah

For nonbinary people, Jo **bet** Avraham v’sarah

SPONSORSHIPS

Parent First and Last Name _____

Email _____

Bet Mitzvah Full Name _____

Bet Mitzvah Date _____

Photography

No photography is allowed during the service. Pictures can start as early as 8:15am and must be done by 9:30am. Please check one of the following:

- ☐ We will not have any photography before or after Shabbat morning services.
- ☐ Family members will be taking photographs before and/or after Shabbat morning services.
- ☐ We have hired a photographer to take pictures before or after Shabbat services.
- ☐ We would like to take photos with our rabbis AFTER Shabbat morning services.

The Ark may be opened for photography before or after the service, but the family must obtain assistance from a designated staff member before removing the Torah from the Ark.

Once the service is over, photographers are free to take footage, with or without flash, and from any location in the sanctuary or adjoining areas.

Videography

- ☐ We wish to receive the download link for the Shabbat service, which will be livestreamed.
- ☐ We will donate to support the technology that makes this possible.

Oneg Shabbat

On Friday evening, we invite families to sponsor the *Oneg Shabbat* (light snacks we provide after services). You will be observing the important mitzvah of *hachnasat or'chim*, welcoming guests with refreshing food.

- ☐ We would like to sponsor the *Oneg Shabbat*.
- ☐ We do not wish to participate.

Bimah Flowers

You may sponsor a flower arrangement on the bimah for the weekend your child celebrates becoming a bet mitzvah. We will acknowledge your donation.

- ☐ We would like to sponsor the bimah flowers.
- ☐ We do not wish to participate.

Frequently Asked Questions

Attire

Since this is a religious service, please wear clothing that shows respect for yourself, others, and the house of worship. Clothes that are neat, clean and on the modest side are appropriate. The bet mitzvah should wear more formal clothing to reflect their leadership position in the service.

Additionally, the bet mitzvah will be wearing an over-the-ear microphone, as well as a microphone battery pack. This pack needs to be worn on the outside of the bet mitzvah's clothing (so as not to interfere with its antenna), ideally clipped to their belt/pants or in an outer pocket. **If the bet mitzvah is wearing clothing that does not have pockets/a belt (such as a dress), families should plan on acquiring a belt that can be worn over the bet mitzvah's outfit just for the duration of the service.** Finally, there are two ritual items the bet mitzvah is invited to wear:

1. Tallit: A tallit is a fringed prayer shawl that Jewish adults are invited to wear once they have become a bet mitzvah. This prayer shawl serves as a symbol of one's commitment to their Jewish tradition; the fringes (tzitzit) represent the 613 commandments contained in our Torah. Tallitot can be purchased in our Sisterhood gift shop. If you do not find one in our shop that you like, please ask the Sisterhood gift shop staff for assistance in ordering one.

2. *Kippah*: A *kippah* (pronounced 'kee-pah') is a small, round head covering that serves as a symbol of the respect one holds for their Jewish tradition, community and/or God.

Timeline of Saturday Morning

8:30am Pictures can start as early as 8:15am, but need to be done by 9:30am.

9:45am Rehearsal with rabbis and anyone who will have an honor.

10:00am Family and rabbis' special blessing.

10:30am Service Begins.

12:00pm Service Ends.

Optional *Oneg Shabbat* until 1:00pm in the Kikar or luncheon in the social hall until 2:00pm.

Scheduling and Logistics

Invitations

It is expected that all members of the bet mitzvah class will be invited to every bet mitzvah service and that either all or none of the class will be invited to a party after the service if one is held.

- Order invitations at least three months in advance.
- Mail/Email invitations to guests 1-2 months before bet mitzvah.

The invitation should reflect the significance of the moment.

Example: “With pride, (parent’s name) and (parent’s name) invite you to share in our *simchah* as (student’s name) becomes a bet mitzvah on (day), at (time). Please join us at the Temple, Congregation B’nai Jehudah, 12320 Nall Ave, Overland Park, Kansas. A *Kiddush* lunch will be held immediately after the service.”

Alternatively, you can set up a bet mitzvah website, such as that found on <https://mitzvahs.myevent.com/>. Make your design personal. You can even include information about your mitzvah project!

Please refer to the “Sponsorship” section of this guide for information about:

- Friday night *Oneg Shabbat*
- Flowers
- Photography and videography

Decorations, Alcohol and Audio/Visual Aids

Prior to your service, you will be given a blank facility use contract. However, please note in advance the following summary of rules relating to decorations, alcohol and a/v aids:

Decorations may not be affixed to the walls; only stand-alone decorations are allowed. All decorations must maintain the dignity of the synagogue.

During certain times of the year, the synagogue may already be decorated for a specific holiday. Holiday decorations and ritual items must remain in place during your event.

B’nai Jehudah’s alcohol policy is the following for large group rentals or events:

1. If charging for alcohol, a licensed and insured bartender is required.
2. If a caterer is used, we strongly recommend that they provide a bartender.
3. Beer and wine must be served from a supervised location onsite and a licensed bartender is needed (this person does not need insurance unless they are a vendor/caterer).
4. Hard alcohol requires the use of a licensed/insured bartender for more than 50 people.
5. A Kansas bartender’s license can be obtained for under \$10.

Kiddush Luncheon

Many families opt to have a full *Kiddush* luncheon in the social hall. Generally, there are about 10-20 congregants who attend the Saturday morning service; therefore, we kindly request that you plan to provide food for any additional congregants who may stay for your *Kiddush* luncheon.

It is the bet mitzvah family's responsibility to retain a caterer and provide food for the *Kiddush* luncheon.

Afternoon/Evening Party

Many families also choose to have a party to celebrate their child's accomplishment on Saturday afternoon or evening. B'nai Jehudah's social hall is a great venue for your celebration, and we have the perfect spot for your event! Please see the "House Rules" in the addendum and reserve with the office at least nine months in advance.

E-News

B'nai Jehudah would like to publish your child's photograph in the e-newsletter for the month of their bet mitzvah. Please provide the bet mitzvah coordinator with a photo of your child two months prior to your child's bet mitzvah. The picture should be a close-up of your child's face and shoulders. The announcement should include a one-sentence invitation from the parents to the congregation that will accompany the photograph in our newsletter.

***Tzedakah* Suggestions**

It is customary to celebrate life events by giving *tzedakah* to a charity of your choice. It might be meaningful for your child to give a percentage of their gifts to a charity of their choice.

Donations in Honor of the bet mitzvah:

As part of Jewish life, a traditional way to give thanks to God for a joyous event is to make a donation to the community in the name of the one being honored, as well as a donation from the honored individual, serving as a way of showing appreciation.

Many families also make donations to show their gratitude to the rabbis' discretionary fund in appreciation of the role they play in their child's Jewish education. These donations can come in any size and are sometimes in denominations of \$18 to symbolize "chai" life.

Timeline – Bet Mitzvah Process

To assist you, we have included a checklist of the deadlines relating to your bet mitzvah that will help you understand the bet mitzvah process. Because each student is unique, this is a general timeline, and you can expect the exact timing to be slightly different.

Three Years Before Entering the Program

Meet minimum membership and enrollment requirements by keeping membership and enrollment current.

End of Fourth Grade Year

If membership and enrollment are current, a bet mitzvah service date is assigned. Your deposit must be paid in full to secure your date.

12-11 Months Before Bet Mitzvah Service

The student's Hebrew proficiency level is assessed (Additional tutoring may be recommended. This

will be worked out with the tutor directly.). Hire a caterer for your *Kiddush* luncheon and a photographer for your service. Reserve facilities and sign the facility use contract for your Shabbat dinner, *Kiddush* lunch or day or evening party.

10 Months Before Bet Mitzvah Service

Schedule all meetings and rehearsals using the yellow meeting schedule

7-6 Months Before Bet Mitzvah Service

6-month meeting with Rabbi Kramer

Student begins individual tutoring

Choose and devise an action plan for your mitzvah project

Students should be practicing 15-30 minutes daily

5-3 Months Before Bet Mitzvah Service

D'var Torah meetings with an assistant rabbi begin

Begin rehearsals

Finalize plans for your *Kiddush* luncheon/caterer/florist/photographer, etc.

2-1 Months Before Bet Mitzvah Service

Submit a photo and a short article for the e-news

Submit a photo and an announcement to the *Jewish Chronicle*

Send out your invitations

6-2 Weeks Before Bet Mitzvah Service

Continue rehearsals

Parent blessings are due

Turn in completed honors and sponsorship forms to the bet mitzvah coordinator

Meet with the bet mitzvah coordinator to pay the balance of your rental fee

Complete arrangements with the caterer/florist/photographer, etc.

Finalize plans and start shopping for your *Kiddush* luncheon

Please refer to page 23 for our Policies and House Rules.

Timeline – Financial

End of Fourth Grade Year

Bet mitzvah service date assigned: The bet mitzvah training program tuition is collected (to secure the service date). All other financial accounts, including membership and tuition, must be fully paid or on a scheduled payment plan with a credit card or e-check to a service date.

Before Student Enters Sixth Grade

Enroll in 6th/7th Grade: Your student must be enrolled in sixth grade or Kesher (Seventh Grade) during the bet mitzvah year. You must be a synagogue member in good standing.

Ten Months Before Service

Rental of synagogue facilities is requested, and a credit card on file for all charges.

Three Months Before Service

Bet mitzvah training program and all other bet mitzvah costs, including refundable facility rental deposit, must be paid. Membership and religious school tuition must be current and in good standing.

After the service

Consider making the contributions mentioned in *tzedakah* suggestions above.

If you have any questions about payment plans, charges, logistics or anything else, please contact the bet mitzvah coordinator.

Kashrut Policy

Rules Governing Food

As Reform Jews, members hold a wide range of attitudes towards traditional Jewish practices, including the laws of kashrut. As a Reform Congregation, B'nai Jehudah seeks to facilitate the ability of our members to make informed choices with respect to religious practice and to balance personal choice with a fidelity to Jewish tradition while creating an environment as inclusive and welcoming as possible to all people, regardless of their choices relating to observance of religious practices.

Food is essential to life. Not surprisingly, Jewish law and tradition place a great emphasis on food. In fact, the basics of kashrut can be found in the Torah, which lists forbidden foods and the source of the prohibition against mixing milk with meat. Since the Torah was codified some 2,000 years ago, Judaism has developed various laws around those original commandments, which comprise the entirety of the laws of kashrut today.

As a Reform congregation, we are not bound to the full array of laws pertaining to kashrut. We do, however, find value in embracing the spirit of those laws, recognizing both the importance of food and the benefit of a heightened awareness of what we consume. We recognize the value of connecting authentically to our Jewish heritage, which reminds us that the sanctity of life and discipline are important Jewish values.

Kashrut:

The Jewish laws pertaining to forbidden and permissible foods, slaughtering and cooking practices.

Forbidden Foods:

Foods forbidden from consumption by the Torah include, but are not limited to the following: Pork, ham, bacon, lard, bear, rabbit, venison (and any other meat from animals without split hooves or those that do not chew their cud), shellfish, shrimp, scallops, oysters, clams, prawns, lobster, shark, monkfish, calamari, catfish (and any other fish that do not have scales and fins).

Pareve:

Foods that do not fit into either the dairy or meat category like fruits, vegetables, eggs, fish, mayonnaise, etc. "Pareve" foods can be served at either "dairy" or "meat" meals.

Policy For All Events:

- None of the "Forbidden Foods" listed above may be served.
- A vegetarian option must be provided.
- Meat and dairy shall not be served on the same platter or mixed together in a casserole.
- Items of meat and dairy can be served if on separate dishes.
- Pareve (see definition above) ingredients may be served with either meat or dairy items.

Facility Use

Reservations

To ensure the availability of our facilities for your *Kiddush* luncheon, Shabbat dinner or evening party, the bet mitzvah family has priority for reservations up to nine months in advance of the bet mitzvah date. At that time, if not reserved, the facilities will be open for other rentals. Contact Michelle Adler-Wexler to make your reservations.

Kashrut Policy

Please familiarize yourself and your caterers with the policy described above. Any caterers are acceptable, but no pork or shellfish.

Facility Usage Schedule of Reimbursement Charges

A 50% deposit and a fully refundable \$300 breakage and accidental fee are required at reservation. All fees must be paid in full two weeks before the event.

Kiddush Luncheon (2 hours, includes security, ends by 2:00pm)

This is any meal (or heavy appetizers). Includes full use of the social hall or pod, tables and kitchen areas. Outside vendors/caterers are OK.

Day Party (4 hours, includes security, ends by 4:00pm)

Same as the standard *Kiddush* luncheon above, but extending for 2 hours for entertainment. Note: the dance floor is an additional rental.

Evening Dinner/Party (4 hours, includes security, does not begin before 6:00pm)

Full use of social hall and kitchen. Outside vendors/caterers are OK. Note: the dance floor is an additional rental.

Friday Night Family Dinner (includes security, ends by 9:00pm)

This includes the use of the room for up to 70 people. Limited use of the kitchen and pod. Outside vendors/caterers are OK. Subject to availability.

Oneg Shabbat after Bet Mitzvah (finished by 1:00pm)

If you are not planning to host a luncheon, consider offering this simple "grab-and-go" style *Oneg Shabbat* in the Kikar as guests exit. This can include items like finger food desserts, pre-sliced and bagged bagels or small bags of candy. The idea is to keep it light and convenient, with no expectation for guests to linger, prepare plates or remain standing in the space.

Please note that setup for this type of *Oneg Shabbat* is not handled by synagogue staff. We recommend designating someone from your party to set up food and linens approximately 10–15 minutes before the end of the service (right after the parent blessing).

You will be responsible for cleaning up in the Kikar of any food left, taking the trash can to the kitchen hallway along with the linen.

Social Hall for ceremony use

The expectation is that each service will be held in our chapel. If the family chooses to hold services in the social hall (required if more than 250 are expected), the family needs to let the bet

mitzvah coordinator know 9 months in advance. A standard rate for use of the social hall will apply to account for additional transition of technology, setups and cleaning. If the social hall is used for the ceremony, a luncheon cannot be held in that space.