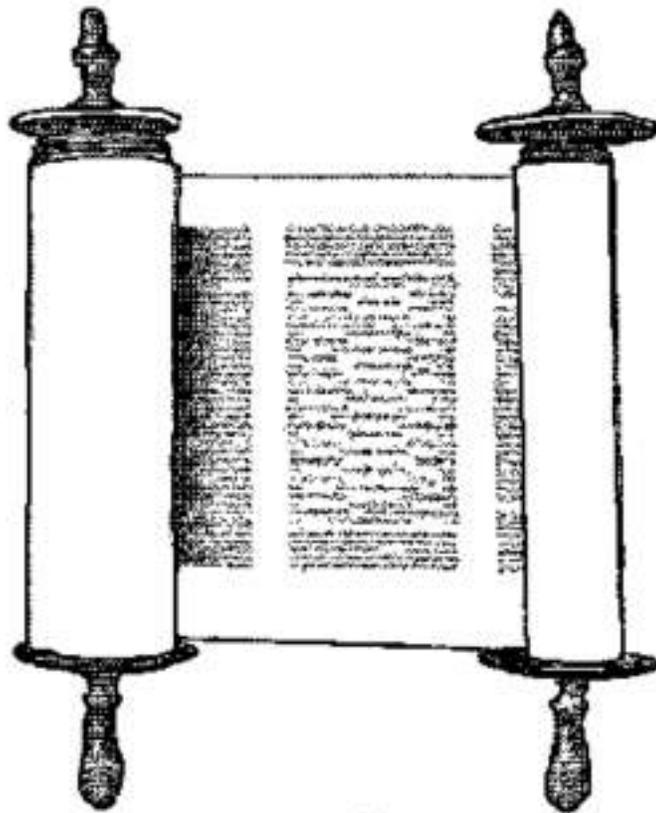


Congregation Kol Shalom

Bar / Bat Mitzvah Program



The Book of the Law.

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March 2016

Adar II 5776

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Dear Students and Parents:

We are excited to celebrate the Simchah and Mitzvah of Bar and Bat Mitzvah with you and your family. The purpose of this document is three-fold: To answer the most frequently asked questions regarding the requirements of a student for B'nai Mitzvah, to lay out the requirements including a time-table, and to provide materials to aid the student in the process of B'nai Mitzvah.

Please read through all included information as a family. Although the Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a life-cycle event and an essential part of the seasons of our joy as Jews, there are also important requirements that make this process a contract between the community and the family, and so all must work and participate in order to make the celebration successful.

L'Shalom,

Rabbi Paul Moses Strasko

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Bar/Bat Mitzvah Glossary

Ark or Aron: The case in the front (usually eastern wall) of the Synagogue that contains one or more Torah Scrolls.

Aliyah: Literally means “going up.” “Making aliyah” means moving to Israel, but “having an aliyah” refers to having the honor of reciting the blessing before a Torah reading.

Bar/Bat/B’nai Mitzvah: Literally means “son/daughter/children of the Law.” In popular culture, a Bar/Bat Mitzvah refers to the ceremony of being called up to Torah for the first time and the accompanying celebrations. The reality is that a Bar/Bat Mitzvah refers to the person themselves, who on their 13th birthday becomes responsible for performing the mitzvot, i.e. interacting with their own Jewishness and Jewish traditions.

Bimah: The often times raised platform where Torah is read. In our community there is no raised platform, but the table where the Torah is read is considered the Bimah.

Beit Keneset: Literally means “house of gathering.” This is the Hebrew word for the Synagogue room where prayer takes place (as opposed to “Sanctuary,” a non-Jewish term).

CKS: Acronym for our community: Congregation **Kol Shalom**. “Kol” means voice and “Shalom” means both peace and completeness.

Daven: A Yiddish word Jews often use meaning “to pray.”

D’var Torah: Literally a “word of Torah.” It’s customary on Shabbat to explain the Torah portion and maybe even relate it to the world today. Bar/bat mitzvah students in many communities deliver a D’var Torah as part of their bar/bat mitzvah ceremony, sharing their knowledge of their Torah portions and relating it to their journey into Jewish adulthood.

Haftarah: Selections from ancient Jewish prophets and writings that are thematically linked to the Torah portion and read after the Torah portion.

Kehillah or Kehillat Kodesh: Hebrew for Community or Holy Community—used as a synonym for Synagogue but refers to the members and not the building.

Kippah: Called a yarmulke in Yiddish, this is a head covering worn in the synagogue and is considered a sign of respect and humility. It also helps us to recognize the sacred space of Jewish prayer.

Minhag: Tradition or custom—usually referring to the varying traditions in a community, including which melodies they customarily sing, which prayers are prayed, which traditions are followed, and so forth.

Minyan: A quorum of 10 people necessary to pray together. This is made up of Jewish men and women over the age of 13 in egalitarian communities such as Kol Shalom.

Siddur: The Jewish prayer book. These books come in all shapes and sizes, and often include English translations or transliterations (Hebrew words in English writing). The prayerbook for our congregation is the Central Conference of American Rabbis' "Mishkan T'filah," or the Tabernacle of Prayer.

Shuckle: A Yiddish term for the forward/back or side to side body motion some Jews engage in while davening.

Tallit: The traditional prayer shawl worn during morning services to represent the commandments in the Torah or to symbolize being wrapped in universal love and peace.

Tanach: The acronym for Torah (Bible), Nevi'im (Prophets) and Ketuvim (Writings). Many of the prayers and readings in our service come from this collection.

Tefillin: Or phylacteries. Tefillin are leather boxes that contain small parchments of specific verses from the Torah. Leather straps attached to the box are used to affix the Tefillin to arm/hand, and forehead. This is a practice not often seen in Reform communities, but is considered a requirement of daily morning prayer in certain communities.

Some families include a weekday service to allow the B'nai Mitzvah to fulfill this mitzvah which is not performed on Shabbat.

Torah: Sometimes called the five books of Moses, this is the scroll of stories, laws and history of the Jewish people that we read weekly as a cycle each year. Each week is a new parshah, or portion, of the Torah. It's a two-spindle scroll of parchment paper with black Hebrew letters.

B'nai Mitzvah Guidelines and Requirements

Bar and Bat Mitzvah are celebratory congregational events held in our Congregation Kol Shalom (CKS) Sanctuary as part of regular Shabbat services. The guidelines listed below reflect the expectations of the Congregation Kol Shalom Religious School, the Religious Practices Committee, the Board of Directors, and the congregational Rabbi.

Education and Religious School

- 1) The minimum age for Bar and Bat Mitzvah is 13 years.
- 2) The student should have attended three years at the CKS Religious School or an equivalent. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the Rabbi.
- 3) The student and parent should be committed to continuing Jewish education post b'nai mitzvah.
- 4) The student is required to attend at least two Shabbat services per month during the twelve months preceding the bar or bat mitzvah date.
- 5) The Bar or Bat Mitzvah will be encouraged to perform a community service project during the year prior to observance.

Initial Process and Requirements

- 1) The Bar/Bat Mitzvah observance will occur as part of a regularly scheduled Shabbat service.
- 2) The Bar/Bat Mitzvah date will be agreed upon by the family and the B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator and then set by the Rabbi and the Temple Administrator. (See Appendix C: Timeline)
- 3) The B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator will assign each student a tutor to help prepare for the ceremony. Payment for tutoring services should be made directly to the tutor. If the family wishes to use a tutor other than the one assigned, that tutor must contact the Rabbi for coordination and instructions.
- 4) The siddur (prayerbook) to be used for all B'nai Mitzvah services is the Mishkan T'filah (MT).

Working with the Rabbi

- 1) After scheduling the date of the observance, the student and family will arrange a series of at least six to seven meetings with the Rabbi, scheduled through the Temple Administrator.
 - a. First meeting: The family meets to discuss the Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation process at our congregation, the Torah portion and any other topics that need attention including Jewish status, special needs or financial concerns.

- b. Second meeting: The student and Rabbi read through and discuss all texts that are required, including Torah, Haftarah, and the prayers in the siddur.
- c. Third meeting: Initial discussion on the D'var Torah
- d. Fourth meeting: Draft D'var Torah presented and discussed and process for Aliyah is taught with the Torah scroll. (The meeting may be repeated depending on progress of the D'var Torah.) The fourth meeting will also include a discussion about the parents' blessings.
- e. Fifth meeting: Final draft D'var Torah discussed, and Rabbi assesses progress on Hebrew texts.
- f. Sixth meeting: Run-through with student, family, Rabbi and B'nai Mitzvah Tutor. Learn how to wear a Tallit and the blessing (in addition to Tefillin if so desired by the family and student).
- g. Seventh meeting: Second run-through if necessary.

The Rabbi or the family may request additional meetings to review the student's progress and provide further assistance as necessary. The Rabbi, in consultation with the student's teachers, will make the final decision as to the number and frequency of meetings.

Requirements for B'nai Mitzvah Ceremony

Please note that it is highly recommended that the student learn to lead the prayers without the use of transliteration. If wished, the community can provide a Mishkan T'filah Siddur without transliterated texts. The family may also choose to add an optional weekday morning ceremony the week of the B'nai Mitzvah if the family wishes for Tefillin to be part of the B'nai Mitzvah education and celebration. If this is the case, the family is responsible for acquiring Tefillin (it is recommended they consult beforehand with the Rabbi) and the Rabbi will ensure the presence of a Minyan.

Minimally, the student shall prepare:

(Optional: If including Friday Evening as part of the ceremony.)

- 1) Blessings over Shabbat Candles (MT Pg. 120)
- 2) Kiddush for Erev Shabbat (MT pg. 122-123)

(Required for all on Saturday morning.)

- 3) Leading Community in the Prayer "Nisim B'Chol Yom" (MT Pg. 198-204 - Hebrew).
- 4) Leading Community in the Ashrei (MT Pg. 215 - Hebrew).
- 5) Leading Community in Chetzi Kaddish (MT Pg 224 – Aramaic.)
- 6) Leading Community in Barchu (MT Pg. 226 - Hebrew).
- 7) Leading Community in Shema / V'avavta ((MT Pg. 232-234 - Hebrew).

- 8) Leading Community in one of the three readings for Emet v'Yatziv (MT Pg. 238-239 - English).
- 9) Presentation of a D'var Torah on the B'nai Mitzvah's Torah portion or Haftarah reading. (5-7 minutes) SEE APPENDIX B: D'VAR TORAH GUIDELINES AND FORMAT
- 10) Reading from the Torah. This includes:
 - a. Blessings before the Torah reading (MT Pg. 368 - Hebrew).
 - b. Reading from the Torah Scroll. The general requirement is 21 verses in total, 7 Aliyot at 3 verses (minimum) per Aliyah.
 - c. Blessings after the Torah reading (MT Pg. 368 - Hebrew).
- 11) Reading from the Haftarah. This includes:
 - a. Blessings before the Haftarah reading (MT Pg. 372 - Hebrew)
 - b. Reading of the Haftarah (7 – 10 verses in Hebrew.)
 - c. Blessings after the Haftarah reading (MT Pg. 372 - Hebrew)
- 12) Additional Prayer of choice including Iyun Tefillah (small teaching.) The student must choose one other prayer from Friday evening (if participating in a Friday evening service) or Saturday morning, and teach something about the prayer to the community (not longer than a minute). The prayer may be any required or additional prayer from the Shabbat Liturgy, and the prayer may be led in either Hebrew or English.

Other Requirements/Information

- 1) All requests for exceptions to these guidelines should be made to the Rabbi (regarding religious and service requirements) and/or the President (for facilities and community questions).
- 2) Any participant (this includes anyone receiving Torah honors) must be dressed modestly. That is: Shoulders, backs and bellies should be covered; hands and arms may be uncovered. No jeans, shorts, sweats, tank tops, flip flops, or sneakers. Skirts should be of modest length.
- 3) During the service no hand-held video or still cameras are allowed. One stationary video camera, with no additional lighting, may be placed at the back of the sanctuary if desired. Guests will be asked to silence their cell phones before the service begins.
- 4) It is NOT obligatory to invite the Clergy to private celebrations.
- 5) Families will attend 1-2 meetings during the pre-b'nai mitzvah year with their K'vutzah, or group of families in the same B'nai Mitzvah year.
- 6) Families will attend all b'nai mitzvah ceremonies of K'vutzah members, and are expected to help with set-up and clean-up.

Family Roles and Torah Honors

Our community is made up of an exciting and vibrant mixture of backgrounds. As we try to respect all types of families, there are also important elements to note when organizing Torah and service honors.

- 1) In the case of families with both Jewish and non-Jewish partners, BOTH parents will be honored in the ceremony and shall, if they wish, participate in various portions of the ceremony.
- 2) ALL family members, regardless of religious background may:
 - a. Stand on the bimah (gather at the front of the community).
 - b. Open the Torah ark.
 - c. Offer blessings to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah.
 - d. Be included in blessings for the family by the rabbi.
- 3) Jewish family members may:
 - a. Be called up to Torah for an Aliyah (Please note that couples may come up together, but the blessing should be said by the Jewish partner.)
 - b. Lift the Torah scroll (Hagbah).
 - c. Dress/Wrap the Torah scroll (Golel).
- 4) The community reserves three (3) Aliyot for family members and one (1) for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah; up to three (3) are reserved for community members. If more honors are needed for visiting family, the family may also be assigned the honors of lifting and dressing the Torah, opening the ark (2 opportunities for 4 people total). SEE APPENDIX A FOR TORAH HONORS WORKSHEET
- 5) Immediate family shall meet with the Rabbi 2-3 months before the ceremony to talk over their duties in the ceremony and give the family a chance to ask questions.
- 6) Parents should be prepared to offer a blessing for their child as part of the ceremony. This can include Hebrew and/or English components to the blessings. The family and Rabbi will discuss the blessings as part of their fourth meeting.

Kiddush for B'nai Mitzvah

It is customary for the family of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to organize a festive celebration in the Synagogue following the ceremony. Please remember that ideally the focus should be on the student and their accomplishments within their religion and less on the actual party. The guidelines include:

- 1) Any food brought into the Beit Keneset or Synagogue grounds must comply with the CKS dietary policy, meaning vegetarian with dairy products and Kosher fish allowed.

- 2) Families under financial constraints should feel no concern. Simply let the rabbi know that the cost of a Kiddush would be prohibitive, and we will organize a festive pot-luck, something CKS does well and happily!
- 3) Celebrations in the Synagogue should be appropriate for a house of worship where non-family members of the Synagogue of all ages and backgrounds will feel welcome and included. More “party” like atmospheres should be reserved for private celebrations away from the religious community. If there are any questions as to what might be appropriate please consult with the Rabbi or Kol Shalom’s president.

Expectations and Minhagim

Congregation Kol Shalom is an egalitarian, inclusive Synagogue affiliated with the Union of Reform Judaism. Our membership comes from all Jewish backgrounds and our services include elements of Reform, Reconstructionist and Conservative Judaism. Musical instruments are an integral part of our worship experience.

Appendix 1. Bar/Bat Mitzvah Torah and Community Honors

Hebrew name of Bar/Bat Mitzvah	Hebrew Name of Father (if applicable)	Hebrew Name of Mother (if applicable)

Aliyot	Name (English)	Name (Hebrew)
1		
2		
3	Reserved for Community	
4	Reserved for Community	
5	Reserved for Community	
6		
7	Reserved for Bar/Bat Mitzvah	

Honor	Name (English)	Name (Hebrew)
Open Ark (After Torah Service)		
Open Ark (for Aleinu)		
Hagbah (Lifting Torah)		
Gelilah (Dressing Torah)		

Appendix 2. D'var Torah Format / Construction Sheet

Element/Part of D'var Torah	Order in which you should write this	Description
Story / Joke / Poem / Article	6	The sermon starts best with something related to the topic of the text. This can be a news story, something that happened at school, a famous sports story, a story of Jewish history such as a Chassidic tale, etc. This is written towards the end, so that the direction of the sermon is clear so that the opening story will appropriately relate. This should be no longer than a paragraph.
Summary of central idea of the text	2	This should NOT be a summary of the entire Parshah, rather a concise description of the part of the text that leads to the central question. This should be no longer than a paragraph.
Question(s)	1	This is a concise question that arises from the text. Why did s/he do that? What does it mean? How can I understand this ancient thing today? Why is this important?
What do the experts say?	3	After the question is articulated, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah should research with the help of Rabbi (and parents, if they wish) what other people, either contemporary or in Jewish history, have said on this topic. Opinions from other religions or philosophies may be used, but only if respectful of the other belief.
What is my opinion?	4	Body of the D'var Torah. After everything I have read, how do I answer the question? This can include elements of the "experts'" answers, but should contain a personal element.
How can I relate this answer/opinion to my everyday life/world?	5	How can I use my answer to transport the ancient text into my every day experience? Even if the text doesn't seem relevant on the surface, how can we understand the text as being related to our lives?
Statement(s) of gratitude (optional based on family tradition and expectations)	7	Who would you like to thank for getting you to this point in your life?

Appendix 3. Timeline of Bar/Bat Mitzvah Preparation

When?	What?
2 Years Prior to 13 th Birthday:	Initial meeting with Rabbi to discuss Bar/Bat Mitzvah and set date in CKS calendar.
12 Months prior to B'nai Mitzvah	Rabbi sends family this documentation including Torah portion and Haftarah texts. Family reads documentation together, signs and returns commitment form to Rabbi.
6-9 Months prior to B'nai Mitzvah	Second meeting with Rabbi – look through all texts.
6-9 Months prior to B'nai Mitzvah	Student begins working with tutor.
4 Months prior to B'nai Mitzvah	Third meeting with Rabbi, beginning of D'var Torah preparation.
3 Months prior to B'nai Mitzvah	Fourth meeting with Rabbi, D'var Torah draft and Aliyah choreography.
2-3 Months prior to B'nai Mitzvah	Parents' meeting with Rabbi to discuss honors, blessings, etc.
2 Months prior to B'nai Mitzvah	Fifth meeting with Rabbi. Rabbi assesses state of Hebrew preparation—determination made if extra meetings/sessions are needed. Final draft of D'var Torah presented.
1 Month prior to B'nai Mitzvah	Full walkthrough with parents, student, Rabbi and tutor. Determination made if extra sessions are needed.
Week of B'nai Mitzvah	Quick walkthrough with Rabbi and/or tutor and final rehearsal with Torah scroll.