

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Manual



B'nai Shalom Reform Congregation

September 2014 - Elul 5774

הוא היה אומר, בן חמש שנים למקרא, בן עשר למשנה, בן שלש עשרה למצות, בן
חמש עשרה לתלמוד, בן שמונה עשרה לחפה, בן עשרים לרדוף, בן שלשים לבת, בן
ארבעים לפינה, בן חמשים לעצה, בן ששים לזקנה, בן שבעים לשיבה, בן שמונים
לגבורה, בן תשעים לשוח, בן מאה כאלו מת ועבר ובטל מן העולם:

HE [Hillel] USED TO SAY
FIVE YEARS FOR [THE STUDY OF] SCRIPTURE;
TEN-FOR [THE STUDY OF] MISHNAH;
THIRTEEN-FOR [BECOMING SUBJECT TO] COMMANDMENTS;
FIFTEEN-FOR [THE STUDY OF] TALMUD;
EIGHTEEN- FOR THE [BRIDAL] CANOPY;
TWENTY — FOR PURSUING [an occupation];
THIRTY-FOR [FULL] STRENGTH;
FORTY — FOR UNDERSTANDING;
FIFTY- FOR [ABILITY TO GIVE] COUNSEL;
SIXTY-FOR MATURE AGE,
SEVENTY-FOR A HOARY HEAD;
EIGHTY [IS A SIGN OF SUPERADDED] STRENGTH;
NINETY [IS THE AGE] FOR [A] BENDING [FIGURE];
AT A HUNDRED, ONE IS AS ONE THAT IS DEAD, HAVING PASSED AND
CEASED FROM THE WORLD.

Mishnah, Pirkei Avot: Chapter 5, Mishnah 21

Under no circumstances should Bar/Bat Mitzvah mark the conclusion of a child's Jewish education. Parents should help their children understand the richness and vastness of the Jewish heritage and the obligation to continue formal Jewish education through confirmation and, where available, through high school.

Gates of Mitzvah (1979)

*Committee on Reform Jewish Practice,
Central Conference of American Rabbis*

The plural of Bar Mitzvah is B'NAI Mitzvah
The plural of Bat Mitzvah is B'NOT Mitzvah
NOT "...MITZVOT"

PREFACE

Mazal Tov! You're getting ready for a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Parents and the student need to read this manual before applying for a Bar or Bat Mitzvah date on the form provided. Many of your questions are answered here, and you will also be alerted to things you may not have thought about. We hope this convenient source of information for parents and students about Bar/Bat Mitzvah, both process and event at B'nai Sholom, will reduce your level of anxiety.

This manual, written by Rabbi Donald P. Cashman and approved by the Ritual Committee in 1987, and revised several times since by the Ritual Committee and approved by our Board of Trustees, strives to provide answers to the most frequently asked questions and to provide other information which needs to be communicated. The Ritual Committee, which is responsible for matters relating to Bar and Bat Mitzvah, frequently reviews topics herein. Your suggestions for additions or clarifications for future editions of this manual are eagerly solicited.

The arrangement of topics is chronological.

Most of what is in this manual applies to everyone. Sometimes there are special circumstances. Please bring all questions and special requests to the rabbi as early as possible. No student will be deprived of the privilege of Bar/Bat Mitzvah due to a learning disability, nor due to a physical disability of any kind. The ceremony will be designed to accommodate the student's needs. The rabbi is responsible for scheduling, training, and the service. Please direct all your questions to the rabbi; if someone else should be consulted, the rabbi will tell you.

INTRODUCTION

BAR MITZVAH—(plural: B'nai Mitzvah) a relatively new ceremony in Judaism, dating from the 13th or 14th century. BAT MITZVAH first took place in the 20th century. It signifies the attainment of majority under Jewish religious and civil law. The age of 13 is given in the Mishnah (c. 200 CE) as the age of reaching majority, i.e., religious responsibility, but the term Bar Mitzvah does not appear until the 15th century. The major feature of the ceremony was and still is the involvement of the young person in the public reading of the Torah.

BIBLIOGRAPHY—Every family will be given Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin's *Putting God on the Guest List* (Jewish Lights, 1992), and the *For Kids* version (1998) when we set the date. This is required reading for all families. There are several practical books available such as *The Organizer for Bar & Bat Mitzvah Parents*, a loose-leaf with many different helpful forms, and *My Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, a volume for your child to inscribe names of participants, tape in Torah portion, copy of invitation, guests, etc. Review copies of these are available from the rabbi.

Information on other aspects of Bar/Bat Mitzvah is available in *Gates of Mitzvah* (CCAR), *The Lifetime of a Jew* (UAHC), *Coming of Age* (UAHC), *The Jewish Home* (UAHC), *The Second Jewish Catalog* (JPS), and in the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Keter). Our library has all these, some of which do circulate.

MORE THAN 1 YEAR PRIOR TO THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH

EXPLAINING OUR PROCEDURES –Each year in late winter or early spring, at a meeting of parents of 5th graders, the rabbi explains procedures, policies, and options regarding Bar/Bat Mitzvah. This will help insure that students fulfill their service attendance requirements, and that they understand the importance of mastering the required material in their Hebrew class.

SETTING THE DATE—Most families apply for a date during 6th grade. Dates may be set up to 24 months in advance, but no sooner than 12 months hence to insure adequate preparation time. When you wish to set a date, send the signed form "*Request for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date*" to the office manager, who will confirm that your child has met the educational and service attendance requirements, and that you are current in your financial obligations to the temple, and will set up an appointment for you to meet with the Rabbi.

Include with the form your non-refundable deposit of \$100 toward the Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee. This will enable us to order and prepare materials.

Please be prepared to select one of our cantorial soloists at the time you set the date with the Rabbi; your date will not be reserved until you choose. You should plan to attend services up to 2 years prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to "audition" our soloists. While every effort will be made to secure the musician(s) of your choice, their availability cannot be guaranteed.

PREREQUISITES - Students generally become Bar/Bat Mitzvah during their 5th or 6th year of Hebrew language study. This level presupposes that students are fluent enough with the mechanics of reading Hebrew to satisfactorily prepare passages in biblical and liturgical Hebrew. Also, most of the prayers each student must learn are part of the curriculum of our Hebrew levels Gimmel, Dalet and Hay (levels 3, 4, and 5).

Our synagogue requires that students must have mastered the Dalet (4th) level of Hebrew readings before beginning Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation, i.e., at least 8 months before the date. Also, students must have completed 4 years of Religious School or its equivalent as determined by the rabbi by the time of Bar/Bat Mitzvah. All our students are required to continue in a formal Jewish educational program through the end of eighth grade. Students and parents must commit to the child's continuation of Jewish studies. B'nai Sholom offers a variety of paths to life-long Jewish learning through our Religious School, Adult Education courses and programs (which are open to all

over age 13), Shabbat morning Torah study, and through regular attendance at services.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidates must be enrolled in and attending our Religious School, or the Hebrew Academy, or a similar institution. Students are also expected to maintain good standing in their program of studies. They must remain current with all homework and reading assignments. A student absent more than 6 times may be required to complete a special assignment before Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation is continued.

All Religious School students are expected to attend Shabbat and festival observances at our synagogue at several times per year as detailed in Religious School manuals and materials.

In order to set a Bar/Bat Mitzvah date, the previous year's attendance requirement must have been met. In addition, the current year's attendance requirement must be fulfilled on a pro-rated basis at the time of setting the date (attendance year begins in September):

by September 1:	0	by January 1:	4	by May 1:	8
by October 1:	1	by February 1:	5	by June 1:	9
by November 1:	2	by March 1:	6	by July 1:	10
by December 1:	3	by April 1:	7		

Students must continue to meet this annual requirement each year, until the 12 month period before Bar/Bat Mitzvah begins, at which time a different requirement takes effect [15 times over 12 months (see ATTENDANCE AT SERVICES)]. Our temple typically has about 75-80 different services and/or holiday celebrations each year.

GO TO ISRAEL - As an alternative, your child can become Bar or Bat Mitzvah in Israel on a family trip or on a congregational trip. The rabbi can arrange with a Reform rabbi in Israel for the student to read from the Torah in a synagogue in one of the cities; or on Masada, the 1st century fortress—plateau. For boys, a ceremony at the Kotel, the Western Wall, is possible.

The cost for your immediate family may favorably compare with the cost of a catered affair with music, invitations, etc. here in the States. Typical airfare/10—14 day land packages are about \$3500 per person; in some cases the student's land arrangements are free. Speak to Rabbi Cashman who can refer you to families who have done this. A 10—14 day trip to Israel will probably have a greater impact on your family than you can imagine, and certainly will make longer—lasting impressions.

GETTING MATERIALS and BEGINNING WORK-Twice a year materials are distributed to those students who have set dates since the last distribution date. Those occasions are Shavuot in May/June, and Simhat Torah in October. The dates of those festivals are in the synagogue calendar. If students are not present, the materials are held until a parent picks them up.

Students are given their Torah and Haftarah portions in Hebrew and English, with instructions on what to do with it; the blessings and prayers in

Hebrew which they must master; and AN INDIVIDUALIZED TIME TABLE OF **TARGET DATES** BY WHICH POINT THEY MUST LEARN SPECIFIED MATERIAL. **Parents should review this time-table immediately upon receipt, and also periodically.** These target dates will change if the student is going to learn considerably more than the expected minimum of Hebrew, or if he/she is going away for the summer. **Target dates include:**

36 weeks— be able to read the Torah and Haftarah blessings, Avot v'imahot, v'ahavta, Kiddush, v'shameru, and the morning blessings in Hebrew;

31 weeks— submit essay with choice of Torah verses;

26 weeks—chant material from 36 weeks and begin learning Torah in Hebrew;

18 weeks— be able to read all of chosen Torah;

12 weeks—be able to chant all of chosen Torah; begin Haftarah;

6 weeks —be able to read Torah script (without vowels and in calligraphy) and chant Haftarah.

The final six weeks are spent polishing, reading the service and from the scroll itself, and rehearsing. While these target dates are not absolute deadlines, students who fall significantly behind may jeopardize their success and possibly their date.

FEES— There is a Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee of \$475 (as of 7/1/11, but subject to change) which includes materials, music, educational, and custodial fees. The full fee will be billed when quarterly bills are next issued after the date is set and is due by the end of the first month of the quarter, as are all quarterly billings. Refunds for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah which is cancelled will be pro-rated (minus the deposit) according to the following schedule: 13-24 mos. prior -- \$250, 10-12 mos. prior -- \$150, 7-9 mos. prior -- \$50, 6 mos. or less -- 0

Throughout the process you must be current in all your financial obligations to the temple (dues, building fund, Religious School tuition, etc.), and you must have a zero balance 30 days prior to the event. Please do not embarrass your child by falling into arrears.

1 YEAR PRIOR TO THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH

FAMILY EDUCATION— Our Religious School program includes a 3 session workshop for Bar/Bat Mitzvah students and their families, usually in November to March. The course explores such areas as rites of passages, Jewish feelings and identity, and changing roles in the family. Many practical issues surrounding the event are dealt with, and the sharing of ideas and concerns by families is an important aspect.

Since Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a synagogue event celebrating the entrance of a young person into the community, rather than a home or private ceremony, parents should intensify their own involvement in the life of the congregation during this period so as to be role models. Bar/Bat Mitzvah can only have an impact if children do sense that they are becoming part of a community.

EXPECTATIONS— Each Bar/Bat Mitzvah is minimally expected to chant the four Hebrew blessings (before and after the Torah and Haftarah), to chant 9—14 or more sentences from the Torah and at least 6 sentences of the Haftarah, to lead the service, including recitation or chanting of certain prayers in Hebrew, and to write and deliver a D'var Torah (speech) based on the Torah portion and/or an issue emanating from it. Students and parents are encouraged to set goals beyond these minimums: more Torah, more Haftarah, more of the service. These additional goals must be decided in consultation with the rabbi 9—12 MONTHS in advance to ensure adequate preparation time. [see ALIYAH, following]. The student's Hebrew skill will be a vital factor in determining what higher goals are appropriate.

ALIYAH—a set of blessings before and after the Torah reading. Each student learns enough Torah for at least three aliyot, one of which he or she will do. If parents want more than two additional aliyot to give a way to family members or friends, the student will have to learn additional verses from the Torah. Three to four weeks are needed to learn each additional aliyah.

ATTENDANCE AT SERVICES- Since our B'nai Mitzvah lead the entire service, they need to become familiar with Jewish worship, especially the details of worship at B'nai Sholom. Through regular attendance at Shabbat and holiday services students will learn how to conduct a service according to our custom, and the melodies that we use. Students and their families are expected to attend at least 15 Shabbat and Festival observances in the year prior to the date of Bar/Bat Mitzvah, of which at least 10 must be at our temple. At least 5 of the 15 must include a Torah service; at least 3 of those must be at B'nai Sholom. Particular effort should be made to attend those services when the Torah is read; these are announced in the Temple Bulletin, in the weekly announcements, and in the Annual Guide. A list of B'nai Mitzvah and scheduled Friday evening Torah services is available from the rabbi. In general, the Torah is read at every Shabbat and Festival morning services, and at all Class Shabbatot. Students are also invited to attend, with a parent, the Shabbat Torah study session for attendance credit. While the educational benefit is quite different, we feel the intensive study of a text will assist the student in preparing his/her D'var Torah, as well as exposing the student to adult Jewish study.

PRACTICING— The Bar/Bat Mitzvah training program is based on independent study. Nine months before the date of Bar/Bat Mitzvah, students are expected to be able to read 8 required prayers. After the liturgical passages are learned, the Torah portion itself is learned. When the student can chant the portion with vowels, the Haftarah is begun and the Torah is practiced without vowels. While students have differing study habits and learning abilities, a rule of thumb is: Once the Torah portion is assigned, until 2 months prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah, a student should spend 1—2 hours weekly on home practice; after that, 2—3

hours. It is highly preferable that practice time be spread over the week, and not crammed into one or two days. Students who do not progress from week to week during the preparation stage may need to have their Bar/Bat Mitzvah postponed.

SUMMER VACATION— If a student with a Bar/Bat Mitzvah date from September through February will be out of town for more than one week during the summer, the rabbi should be told as far in advance as possible.

TWINNING— Prior to 1990 many students linked their B'nai Mitzvah with Soviet Jewish peers to remind us that teenagers in the USSR Union were not permitted to become Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Our efforts to call attention to Soviet Jewry paid off, and we have also helped the 15,000 Jews of Ethiopia who yearned for reunification with family already in Israel. For information on current twinning opportunities contact Rabbi Cashman.

USING OUR FACILITY If you would like to use the temple for lunch or a party, meaning anything more than a stand-up buffet kiddush, you will need to contact the Office Manager. Extra costs may be involved. **All caterers must be approved by the synagogue office. Please check before signing a contract.**

6 MONTHS

APPOINTMENTS— Starting 6 months in advance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the student will have appointments with Rabbi Cashman. Depending on what the student is working on, these appointments will be scheduled from once to 4 times monthly. Telephone appointments have proven to be very convenient and can be substituted at your convenience for face-to-face meetings until rehearsals begin: Students are responsible for keeping their own appointments. A student who misses 3 phone appointments may forfeit that privilege. If a live appointment with the rabbi is scheduled at the temple, a parent or whoever brought the student MUST remain in the temple. [see also REHEARSALS, below].

INVITATIONS—You are strongly urged to check with Rabbi Cashman the wording you choose prior to ordering the invitations, since some of the "standard" wording in printers' books is not appropriate for our service. Please make sure you have the correct address of the temple on your invitation, and note that the service begins at 10:30 AM.

KIPOT (yarmulkes)— Kipot are optional at B'nai Sholom. You may have them available for your guests. If you want specially colored kipot and your printer cannot accommodate you, our Judaica Shop can help.

TALLIT— The wearing of a tallit is optional. There are a few synagogue tallitot available. If you would like to purchase one for your child, our Judaica shop will work with you to choose and special order one. If you would like to shop in Boston or New York, Rabbi Cashman can provide guidance. Please keep in mind that the tallit is a ritual garment and not a costume or cosmetic effect for the day. Those students who choose to wear a tallit at this service should consider wearing it at all occasions when appropriate. The handing down of an "heirloom" tallit should only be done if the donor has more than one.

2-6 MONTHS

During this period your child is actively engaged in learning the Torah portion: reading, then chanting. The Target Date for reading is 18 weeks. About that time, Rabbi Cashman will contact you if your child is not on target. More practice time, retention of a tutor, or a change of date may be suggested.

D'VAR TORAH —You, your child, and the rabbi will meet to discuss the content of the speech he/she will write, and other details of the service at about 12 weeks.

2 MONTHS

HEBREW NAME—Please find out your child's Hebrew name; this includes the Hebrew names of the parents.

PROGRAMS, HANDOUTS - Some families prepare programs for distribution. These must be approved by the rabbi, and it is required that you submit copy 4 weeks in advance. Nothing will be approved less than 2 weeks prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

These handouts usually include the participants in the service. Some people have included the Torah and/or Haftarah readings in Hebrew and/or English. Many people include summaries or descriptions of the parts of the service. Some include behavioral guides for those unfamiliar with Jewish or Reform Jewish worship. A collection of these handouts is available for review in the Library; the collection does not circulate, but you may photocopy selections.

GUESTS— Make sure your guests understand clearly that the service begins at 10:30, lasts for about an hour and quarter, and that your child's part begins at 10:30. Make sure they have good directions; typed directions are available from the office. Mapquest and maps.Yahoo know us, too. Don't forget to make arrangements for transportation of your child's friends who won't be accompanied by their parents.

KIDDUSH— There will be a kiddush after the service on Saturday. You are expected to sponsor this also by supplying food and paper goods, setting up, and cleaning up. We encourage, and facilitate through the family workshops

the exchange of kitchen duties among the parents of the class. When it is your turn to help others, or if you have a caterer helping you, please keep in mind that all kitchen and Social Hall set-up work must cease during the service.

PARTICIPATION BY PARENTS AND OTHERS - Various options are available, which will be discussed at the workshops, and with your family two to three months before the service. Some of these options include doing aliyot, passing the Torah from one generation to the next, offering a prayer, opening the ark, or reading one of the biblical texts in English. Parents are expected to bestow the Priestly blessing in Hebrew and English.

We especially encourage additional Torah reading by older siblings, parents, and others. Rabbi Cashman is eager to assist you with this. Non—Jewish relatives may participate in many parts of the service, although they may not come up for an aliyah.

Please take note of the principle of "*Kavod haTzibbur* — Respect for the Congregation." In the appendix are two copies of the transliteration of the aliyah so that those whom you wish to honor may practice prior to the service. When the process of aliyot flows smoothly the entire ceremony is enhanced. The rabbi may ask to hear your *olim* (those called to an aliyah) prior to the service to insure their competence. [See also GLOSSARY]

PARENTAL SPEECHES—Some parents wish to speak during the service. The Ritual Committee has established guidelines (attached) for this. The rabbi is charged with insuring the guidelines are met.

REHEARSALS— There will be two live rehearsals. A parent (or whoever brings the student) must remain in the temple during the rehearsal . Generally the pre-final rehearsal is on a Monday at 4PM, and the final rehearsal will be on Thursday afternoon at 4PM.

SIBLINGS - Ark openings are especially suitable for young siblings.

ONE MONTH PRIOR

Please make sure the rabbi has, 4 weeks in advance:

—The Pulpit Sheet, with the names of all other participants, and the addresses of the olim.

—Draft of program/handout, if any.

—Publicity form

—Parental speech, if any.

--The *second* draft of the student's Dvar Torah

Check with the office to make sure you have no outstanding balance.

THE WEEK OF

SETTING UP— the Office Manager will contact you to discuss necessary points such as special set-up, entry, and delivery needs. Our sanctuary seats 115. If you are having more guests, additional chairs will be set up in the Social Hall.

FRIDAY NIGHT— The Bar/Bat Mitzvah student has the privilege of lighting candles and leading kiddush, and conducting portions of the service. Your family has the privilege of hosting the Oneg Shabbat the evening before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. A member of the Oneg Shabbat committee will contact you well in advance.

THAT DAY

TIME—Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a public worship service of the congregation, and will start promptly at 10:30.

PHOTOGRAPHS—Absolutely no still photos may be taken during the service. Photos be taken before the service until 10:00, or after the service. You may have the service videotaped by a stationary camera on a tripod in the rear corner of the sanctuary using available light only, as this is not disruptive to the service.

CLEANING UP— You are responsible for returning prayer books to the bookcases, and leaving the kitchen as clean and neat as you found it.

AFTERWARDS

DONATIONS— It is a time-honored Jewish tradition to make donations in honor of their happy event. The temple has a number of funds which are suitable recipients for contributions in honor of a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The congregation also has a "Wish List" of items. The rabbi has names and addresses of other worthy organizations.

MAZON— In times of joy, Jews have always remembered those less fortunate. B'nai Sholom, through a resolution [see APPENDIX] of our Board of Trustees, was one of the first "Partners" of Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger. MAZON seeks donations of 3% of the cost of food at our meals of celebration. In its first 18 months of operation, MAZON distributed over a quarter of a million dollars; a list of grant recipients is available. Please mail your 3% directly to MAZON, 2940 Westwood Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90064.

CONFIRMATION—Reform Judaism, since the early 19th century, has emphasized the importance of mature Jewish thinking. To this end, it created the ceremony of Confirmation, which is a class exercise now held on Shavuot [late May or June] for 10th graders. In many older Reform temples Bar/Bat Mitzvah was de-emphasized or discouraged in favor of Confirmation. The past generation has seen the universal resurgence of Bar/Bat Mitzvah in Reform

synagogues. Unfortunately, many students and their families seem to regard Bar/Bat Mitzvah as an end to formal Jewish education. Instead, Bar/Bat Mitzvah should be seen only as a milestone on the path to Confirmation and adult Jewish study, which is the main focus of adult Jewish religious life. To that end, students and parents should realize that in long-standing Reform Jewish tradition, Bar/Bat Mitzvah is granted with the expectation that the student will continue in the temple's program through Confirmation and will hold Jewish study as one of life's important activities. The Committee on Reform Jewish Practice of the Central Conference of American Rabbis states:

Under no circumstances should Bar/Bat Mitzvah mark the conclusion of a child's Jewish education. Parents should help their children understand the richness and vastness of the Jewish heritage and the obligation to continue formal Jewish education through confirmation and, where available, through high school." [Gates of Mitzvah, CCAR,1979, p. 21.]

Students study toward Confirmation by attending through 8th grade at our Religious School (B'Yachad) , the Hebrew Academy, or at another available program, plus two additional years in Mifgash. Students who continue post—Confirmation studies are eligible for substantial incentive scholarships toward summer and winter programs in Israel through the United Jewish Federation. Stipends are also available for Jewish summer camps and programs on the basis of need

APPENDIX

Mazon Resolution (text as passed by our Board) :

Affirming the fundamental Jewish commitment to tzedakah, and recognizing hunger as one of the most tragic and scandalous of crises, the Board of Trustees of B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation welcomes the efforts of MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger as an exemplary expression of Jewish values—in—action, and resolves To recognize support for the ideals of MAZON as an important part of our social action commitment; and To recommend participation in MAZON by all of our congregants.

Attached to this manual are some items you may want or need, and some other helpful information:

1.Glossary; 2.Aliyah in transliteration 3. Guidelines for Parental Blessing

YOUR COMMENTS ON THIS MANUAL ARE EAGERLY SOLICITED!

Version 1.0: 10/87 VERS2.0:11/92 Vers 3.0 :9/94 3.1:1/96 3.2:10/96
3.3:1/98 3.4:12/98 3.41 :11/99 Version 4.0 11/05 4.1 11/06 4.2 6/08 & 8/08
5.0 4/2012 5.1 9/2014

GLOSSARY OF BAR/BAT MITZVAH TERMS

Torah literally means "Instruction, Teaching"

- 1) The first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.
- 2) The parchment scroll containing those books.
- 3) The sum—total of Jewish knowledge.

Torah portion: Hebrew sedrah, or parashah

Over the course of one year, the entire Torah scroll is read. It is divided into 54 weekly sections, and one section is read each Shabbat. Each portion is named after the first important word in it. There are special and/or additional readings for holidays which are read out of order.

Aliyah: Hebrew Ah—lee—YAH; Yiddish Ah—LEE—yah.

Plural Aliyot; Aliyas.

Literally "going up"; moving to Israel is "to make aliyah."

The Torah portion is subdivided into smaller sections, each of which is preceded and followed by prayers known as the Torah blessings (b'rachot, broches). To be called on to utter these blessings is "to have/do an aliyah." The number of aliyot varies with the occasion (weekdays, holidays, Shabbat).

Maftir: Lit. "conclusion"

Traditionally, the Bar Mitzvah reads the conclusion of the Torah portion, i.e. the last aliyah, which is usually 3—5 verses.

Haftarah : Lit. "conclusion"

Following the Torah reading on Shabbat and holidays, a portion is read from one of the Prophetic books of the Bible: (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel; Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.) Each Torah portion has its own assigned Haftarah, though there are some "special" Haftarot, such as the Shabbatot during festivals, preceding Purim and Pesah, coinciding with the new moon, etc.

Notes on Reform practice

Torah portion: The entire weekly portion is seldom, if ever, read. The rabbi or Torah reader determines what passage or passages will be read. There may be a difference between Reform and non—Reform synagogues in the weekly sedrah if the 8th day of Passover or the second day of Shavuot falls on Shabbat, which happens more often than not.

Aliyah: Usually fewer than traditional 7.

Maftir: Bar/Bat Mitzvah students do not necessarily read the maftir.

Haftarah: It may or may not be read in its entirety.

Guidelines For Parents: Bar/Bat Mitzvah Blessing Or Charge

Near the end of the service, parents have an opportunity to give a short blessing¹ or charge to their children on the occasion of the Bar or Bat mitzvah. This is a time to share some of your pride and love for your child with the congregation, and to point the way to your child becoming a good Jewish adult. It is not appropriate to tell your life story or that of your child, or to attempt to map out the rest of his or her life. It can be a moment to emphasize some of the essential values you want to pass on to the next generation. It is not necessary to give a speech. You may wish to say the Shehecheyanu. If you want to add something more specific, please keep these suggestions in mind.

- Write it down. Even the most eloquent of parents can forget what they had wanted to say at such an emotional time as this.
 - Remember the context. This is a religious service to celebrate your child's status as a Jewish adult. It may be tempting to praise all of his or her talents and accomplishments, but dwelling on unrelated subjects (such as sports or music) may detract from the religious nature of the event. Such a speech may be more appropriate at a reception after the service.
 - Remember the congregation. This is not just a gathering of your family and friends, but of the community, and some things are better said in private. Thirteen-year-olds are notoriously sensitive to embarrassment, and funny stories about their early childhood can be perceived as cruel when they're retold in public.
 - Keep it short. Try to stay under two or three minutes.
- You can and should tell your child how proud you are at other times, and you don't need to explain all the details in this rather hectic setting.

If what you wish to say doesn't fit with these guidelines, then perhaps the service isn't the right place for your words. Perhaps a toast at your s'udat mitzvah/reception is more of what you'd like. By all means, take advantage of that opportunity.

Please leave your text with the Rabbi four weeks before the ceremony. He is charged with overseeing the appropriateness of remarks, and will insure that your words are up on the lectern for you to read when you need them.

RITUAL COMMITTEE 1995-96; Affirmed by Board of Trustees May 1999

¹Minimally, all Jewish parents are expected to bless their children with the Priestly Blessing in Hebrew. All parents may also use the English if they wish.

TORAH BLESSINGS "An Aliyah"

Before the reading

בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יְיָ הַמְּבֹרָךְ:

YOU

בְּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבֹרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

CONGREGATION

בְּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבֹרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

YOU REPEAT

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

YOU CONTINUE

אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בְּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים וַיִּנָּתֶן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה:

YOU: Ba-re-chu et A-do-nai ha-me-vo-rach!

Cong responds: Ba-ruch A-do-nai ha-me-vo-rach le-o-lam va-ed!

YOU REPEAT: Ba-ruch A-do-nai ha-me-vo-rach le-o-lam va-ed!

and continue Ba-ruch a-ta A-do-nai, E-lo-hei-nu, me-lech ha-o-lam,
a-scher ba-char ba-nu mi-kol ha-a-mim,
ve-na-tan la-nu et To-ra-to.

Ba-ruch a-ta, A-do-nai, no-tein ha-to-rah.

After the reading

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

Ba-ruch a-ta, A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-olam
a-scher na-tan la-nu To-rat e-met,
ve-cha-yel o-lam na-ta be-to-cheinu.
Ba-ruch a-ta, A-do-naI, no-tein ha-to-rah.