

# Bar and Bat Mitzvah Handbook



Congregation

## ADAS EMUNO

*A Reform Temple Founded 1871*

254 Broad Avenue

Leonia, New Jersey 07605

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**Rabbi Barry L. Schwartz**  
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## **Introduction**

This document is meant to aid families when planning their children's *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* services. Families are welcome to discuss any of the contents of this document with the Ritual Committee and the Clergy. It is the policy of Adas Emuno to work to help our members experience a meaningful and joyous occasion.

Judaism is both a way of life and a religious heritage worthy of adult understanding. Therefore the learning, experiencing, and identification that we ask of our children ought to lead them to mature linkages with our people and our faith. Participation as a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* for our thirteen year olds is one important step along that road. However, it is not the only step.

While recognizing the importance of *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah*, Judaism recognizes the importance of lifelong Jewish learning, a commitment to continue beyond our formal Religious School program. We encourage all our children to continue their Jewish education after becoming *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*. Our clergy will be happy to provide suggestions for post B'nei Mitzvah educational opportunities. And of course, we welcome our children's participation in the activities of our congregation and in our religious school as mentors supporting the younger children.

## **Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation Yesterday and Today**

Listing the stages in a Jew's life, the *Mishnah* (around 200 CE) tells us that "thirteen is for *Mitzvah*." That is, traditional Jewish law holds that it becomes incumbent upon a thirteen-year-old male to fulfill the 613 commandments thought to be revealed by God. From this time unto the day of his death, the Jewish male is a *Bar Mitzvah*, a "son of the commandments." According to Jewish tradition, each Jewish adult is tied to the moral and ritual laws of Judaism as a son is tied to his parents.

Sometime during the 4<sup>th</sup> century, it became the custom to mark this stage of life by permitting the young man to be one of eight adult males privileged to ascend (*aliyah*) to the reading desk on the *Bimah* on a given *Shabbat* soon after his thirteenth birthday. At this stage, he would read some verses from the *Torah* scroll. Blessings thanking God as author of the *Torah* were recited before and after the reading of those verses. During this period of time, Jewish girls who reached the age of 12 had a responsibility to observe *mitzvot*.

By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it became custom to follow this first public ritual appearance with a party sponsored by the *Bar Mitzvah's* family. This was usually held in the synagogue or at the family home on the *Shabbat* during which the young person ascended to the *Torah*. The very next morning, the *Bar Mitzvah* resumed his seat in his *Talmud* class in the community religious school, where he continued to study for five or more additional years. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, some families had begun to hold festive meals in celebration of a girl's twelfth birthday.

With the advent of Reform Judaism in the 1800's in Germany, the early reformers looked askance at the *bar mitzvah* ceremony. While meant to signal the religious maturation of the young adult, it had actually devolved into a merely "theatrical" experience and had become a "meaningless ceremonial". These reformers developed the service of Confirmation, which was conferred upon both girls and boys as early as 1846 in New York.

The first *bat mitzvah* ceremony in North America, which took place in May of 1922, was that of the late Judith Kaplan Eisenstein, daughter of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism.

Today in Reform Judaism, girls and boys are treated equally in the service and in their preparation. All children read from the *Torah* and all celebrate becoming *bar* or *bat mitzvah* on their thirteenth birthday. At *Adas Emuno* we continue this age-old tradition of marking a young Jew's passage into adult Jewish responsibility through the celebration of *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah*.

Along the road of Jewish education, such privilege is available only to students who have been enrolled in our Religious School for at least three full years and who are enrolled and attending our school at the time during which they become *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*. For older students who transfer to our School, prior participation in an equivalent program of Jewish study is acceptable.

It is the congregation's role to celebrate this rite of passage along with members' families and friends. Services at which students will be called to the *Torah* as *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* are held in our temple sanctuary. We understand that this may cause a hardship for some members with large families; in these cases the family must ask permission, in writing, to seek out an alternate location to hold the services. The Ritual Committee and the Clergy must approve the request. Upon approval, it is the responsibility of the family to provide transportation to and from the services for all members of the congregation who want to attend.

In cases where a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* service is held at an alternate location, it is the family's responsibility to safely and responsibly transport the *Torah*, *Siddurim* and any other ritual objects needed for the service and return them to Adas Emuno within 24 hours after the service. The Ritual Committee will provide guidelines for their transport.

## **Preparation for Bar or Bat Mitzvah**

### Assignment of Dates

Scheduling of dates for ceremonies of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is done in conjunction with the clergy and the Ritual Committee. Each fall, the Ritual Committee contacts the families whose children will become eligible for *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* within the next two calendar years. Therefore, parents can expect to be contacted approximately 9-18 months before a child's 13th birthday. A family must be in good standing (membership and religious school dues paid) to be assigned a B'Nei Mitzvah date. B'Nei Mitzvah fees must also be paid prior to the assignment of a date.

B'Nei Mitzvah dates are determined by the following factors:

- a. The date of the child's birthday;
- b. The child's Religious School progress and Hebrew reading ability;
- c. The demands of the Temple calendar and clergy availability; and
- d. The preference of the family, when this has been expressed.

### Preparation of Parents

Each year the Congregation holds a meeting with all parents of children who are candidates for *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*. During this session, the Rabbi will examine the meaning of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* in the life of the child and family; clarify the preparation process and responsibilities of the child and the family; discuss *Torah*, *Haftarah* and the elements of the *Shabbat* morning service. We consider this to be an important part of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* experience and, therefore, expect all *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* parents to attend.

## **Preparation for Bar or Bat Mitzvah (cont'd)**

### Participation of Students

As a part of our Religious School curriculum, our students become familiar with the structure of the *Shabbat* service. Students are trained in those portions of the *Shabbat* liturgy which they will be expected to lead during their *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony. They will learn to chant the blessings before and after the reading of *Torah* and *Haftarah*.

Each *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* student will be expected, as a part of his or her training, to participate in a *Mitzvah* project to be agreed upon by the Rabbi and the student at the beginning of the training program. This program will give the student an opportunity to apply the concepts of *Tzdekah* and social responsibility.

Each *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* child will begin meeting with the Rabbi and Cantor for private instruction in his/her *Torah* and *Haftarah* portions approximately **six to nine months** prior to the scheduled date. Each lesson is held for a 20-30 minute duration. During the training, if the child is struggling with Hebrew, the clergy and religious school will be able to help find a tutor to provide additional support.

It is the parent's responsibility to coordinate any weekly session rescheduling required. There may be no more than one unexcused absence during this period.

The following material, which is studied as a part of the Religious School program, is also reviewed in the weekly sessions with the Cantor and bi-weekly with the Rabbi:

The structure of the *Shabbat* service- This includes leading Friday night and Shabbat morning services and reading from the Torah. Additional prayers or passages may be added to the student's review with the Cantor. The Cantor will also work with each child in reviewing the blessings and prayers which he/she will be responsible for leading during Shabbat morning services. A Blessings CD, or website download with all of the material will be provided by the Cantor.

The Cantor prepares each child to chant verses of his/her designated *Sidrah* (*Torah* portion) from the *Torah* scroll, using a *Tikkun Kor'im* for preparation. (The *Tikkun Kor'im* is a book that presents the *Torah* text with vowels on one side of each page and the same text without vowels, as it appears in the *Torah* scroll, on the other side.) **The usual portion is about nine verses representing three aliyot.**

The Cantor prepares each student who satisfactorily completes the *Torah* portion to chant a portion of the *Haftarah* in Hebrew. The student learns to understand the relationship of the assigned *Haftarah* and *Torah* portions. A training CD, or website download for the chanting of the Torah and Haftarah portions is provided by the Cantor.

## **Preparation for Bar or Bat Mitzvah (cont'd)**

The Rabbi will discuss the *Torah* and *Haftarah* portions with each student. The student will prepare a speech (called a *Davar Torah*), which will incorporate the student's reflections on a theme from the portion, description of the Mitzvah project, expressions of thanks, and thoughts about future Jewish commitment. **The *Davar Torah* is generally 2-3 pages long. The Rabbi will make available a suggested outline for the speech.**

### The Last Month

Approximately one month prior to the date of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* the child should have all of his/her preparation completed and should be reviewing materials.

During the week prior to the ceremony, a run-through rehearsal with the Rabbi will be held on the pulpit. During this session, the student will practice his/her service, speech and *Torah/Haftarah* reading from the pulpit. It is the purpose of this session to prepare the student for leading the service in the sanctuary. Attention will be paid to the choreography of the service and proper use of voice in the sanctuary.

### Attendance at Shabbat Services

In order to ensure that parents and children are familiar with *Shabbat* services, especially as conducted at Adas Emuno, students will be required to attend all family services and one additional service per month for the 12 month period prior to their B'Nei Mitzvah. **It is strongly encouraged that students attend the Bar/Bat Mitzvah services of their peers, as well as all Shabbat evening family services when the Torah is read.**

### Final Preparations

In order to make final preparations for the ceremony, the Rabbi will meet with the parents of each *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* student approximately 23 weeks prior to the *Bat/Bat Mitzvah* date. At this time the roles of various family members will be discussed and planned. The family will be asked to provide the Rabbi with the Hebrew and English names of all who will be called to the *Torah* for an *Aliyah* (reciting the *Torah* blessings). A Family Participation Form with the honors list will be supplied.

## **Shabbat Evening Participation for Parents and Child**

### Blessing the *Shabbat* Lights

During the *Shabbat* evening service prior to a child's *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony, parents are normally honored with the blessing of the *Shabbat* lights on the *Bimah*. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* student and family may be asked to participate in additional parts of the service on Friday evening. It is expected that *the Bar/Bat Mitzvah* family will host the *Oneg Shabbat* following the Friday night service.

## **Family Participation in the Shabbat Morning Service**

There are many opportunities for family members to participate in the morning service. Typically, parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts & uncles, cousins and close friends participate. Participation that does not require any speaking includes opening and closing the *aron kodesh* (ark). Speaking parts in English include two poetic readings during the service. Hebrew parts include the blessings before and after the torah reading. There are generally three *aliyot*. Each *aliyah* consists of the blessings before the reading of the *torah*, three verses of the *torah* portion and the blessing after the reading of the *torah*. The order of the *aliyot* generally is generally grandparents or other close relatives, then parents, and finally the *bar/bat mitzvah*.

## Shabbat Morning Customs at Adas Emuno

1. *Shabbat* morning services begin at 10:00 a.m. and last approximately an hour and a half.
2. The Ritual Committee will designate ushers to help seat the congregation. **Two weeks prior to the service, please inform the Ritual Chairperson of the approximate number of guests you will be expecting.**
3. To set the proper tone for the service, parents should not remain in the foyer greeting guests, but should lead the way to *Shabbat* worship by entering the sanctuary by 9:50 a.m. Please cooperate with the ushers to ensure that all guests are seated by the time the service begins. Particular care should be given to insuring that all invitees observe proper decorum during the entire service.
4. *Kipot* (headcoverings) and *tallitot* (prayer shawls) are available at Adas Emuno. Those who wish to wear ritual garments are welcome to do so.
5. Guests who bring gifts into the synagogue should be asked to leave them in the vestry room near the front door.
6. The family may videotape the service. They must ask the Ritual Committee for permission, in writing, at least one month in advance of the service. The taping must be done by someone who is not participating in the service. The video camera must be stationary in the corner of the last row of pews and the entire service will be taped from that location. The camera must not be taken from the tripod, nor may any artificial lighting equipment be employed.
7. Still photography may not be taken in the sanctuary during the service itself. However, arrangements may be made for pictures to be taken in the Temple in advance of the service. Any photography in the Temple on the morning of the designated *Shabbat* must be completed by 9:30 a.m. when the Rabbi and Cantor are happy to bring out the Torah for final pictures.
8. The Service will follow its usual order, including announcements of upcoming events by an officer or trustee. Parents are given an opportunity to acknowledge their child's achievement by making a brief personal remarks or offering a prayer. We encourage you to be short and sweet!

A member of the congregation, usually a Board or Ritual Committee member will present gifts to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* child towards the conclusion of the service.

## Parental Responsibilities

1. In order for a child to participate as a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* at Adas Emuno, the family must be Temple members in good standing with respect to dues, Religious School tuition, and *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* fees prior to the assignment of a date for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Any questions regarding fees and dues should be discussed with the Financial Secretary, who in turn will consult with the Finance Committee.
2. It is a well established Jewish tradition that every worshipper at every *Shabbat* service is entitled to experience the *oneg* "the joy" of *Shabbat* by partaking after the service of wine and bread. In keeping with this tradition, parents of a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* are welcome to provide a simple *Kiddush* of wine and *challah* to all worshippers following the Shabbat morning service.
3. It is our custom at Adas Emuno that the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* family expresses their appreciation to the Temple by making a contribution in honor of this joyous occasion. Opportunities for giving are listed below, and in our temple calendar, or you may discuss with the President if you are interested in making a specific purchase or donation to the Congregation.
4. Dress code: It is important to honor these special occasions. Appropriate attire for both the Friday evening and the Saturday morning services, is expected.
5. General Support: Helping your child reach this wonderful milestone will make the journey more meaningful for you and for him/her. Ask your child to share his/her assignments with you. Attend services twice a month with your child. If you find your child is having difficulty with any step of the process, please contact the Rabbi or Ritual Committee Chair directly. Working as a team, with you leading the way, we can ensure a positive experience for your children.

## Bar/Bat Mitzvah Timeline

Date (you may fill in)		Begun/Completed
Prior to assignment of date	Temple account must be in good standing. To confirm your balance, please contact the current Financial Secretary. Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee paid.	
12 months prior	Work on <i>mitzvah</i> project ideas.	
	Children should attend Shabbat services at least twice monthly.	
6-9 months prior	Begin meeting with Rabbi and Cantor.	
	Read through <i>Torah</i> portion in English and begin essay.	
	Hand in mitzvah project form & begin mitzvah project work.	
4 months prior	Complete Bar/Bat Mitzvah Profile form.	
1 month prior	Hand in videotaping request form.	
	Hand in still photography request form.	
	Student should be reviewing all blessings, <i>torah</i> & <i>haftarah</i> .	
2 weeks prior	Inform Ritual Committee of number of guests expected	
1 week prior	Hand in Family Participation form.	
	Run-through rehearsal.	

**Fees (subject to change)**

*Bar or Bat Mitzvah* fee .....\$1250.00

In accordance with Item 1 on page 11, B'nei mitzvah fees must be paid in full prior to the assignment of a date for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Any questions regarding fees and dues should be discussed with the Financial Secretary, who in turn will consult with the Finance Committee.

It is customary to make a donation to the Congregation in honor of the special occasion of your child becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. If you prefer, you may designate your donation to a specific fund, including but not limited to: Rabbi's Discretionary Fund, Religious School Fund, Building Fund, Musical Programming Fund, Social Action Programming.

**B'nei Mitzvah Shabbat Service**

**Family Participation Form**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Candle lighting (Friday) \_\_\_\_\_

Ark Opener (Friday) \_\_\_\_\_

Reader (p.135) \_\_\_\_\_

Reader (p.139) \_\_\_\_\_

Passing Torah \_\_\_\_\_(grandparents, great  
grandparents)

\_\_\_\_\_ (parents)

Unwrapping Torah \_\_\_\_\_

Wrapping Torah \_\_\_\_\_

Ark Openers (2) \_\_\_\_\_

Aliyah 1 \_\_\_\_\_ (English  
Names)

Names) \_\_\_\_\_(Hebrew

Aliyah 2 (parents) \_\_\_\_\_(English  
Names)

Names) \_\_\_\_\_(Hebrew

Aliyah 3 (bar/bat mitzvah) \_\_\_\_\_ (English  
Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Hebrew Name)

Parents Words/Blessing \_\_\_\_\_

Board Member \_\_\_\_\_

### SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE OUTLINE (Mishkan T'filah)

Welcome

Tallit presentation

Mah Tovu p. 74

Reading I p. 66

Reading II p. 67

Daily Blessings p.80-84

Halleluyah p.100

Aleinu p.282-287

Reading p.288-293

Kaddish p.294

Adon Olam p. 321

Barechu p.108

Yotzer p.110

Ahavah Rabah p.112

Shema p.114

V'ahavtah p.116

Reading III p.123

Mi Camocha p.122

Amidah p.124

Avot	p.126
Gevurot	p.128
K'dusha	p.130
Reading IV	p.135
R'tzeh	p.134
Reading V	p.139
Sim Shalom	p.140
Silent Prayer	
Oseh Shalom	p.142
Torah Service	p.244-248
Torah Blessings	p.250
Mi Sheberach	
Haftarah	p.254
Prayer for Country	p.258
Torah Return	p.256
Davar Torah	
Gift Presentation	
Parents Words	
Parents Blessing	p.262
Rabbi's Words	

*Please submit this form to the Rabbi when lessons begin.*

**Mitzvah Project Form**

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Bar/Bat Mitzvah: \_\_\_\_\_

I will be doing my ongoing volunteer service with the following organization:

Name of organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number of organization: \_\_\_\_\_

This is what I will be doing: \_\_\_\_\_

***AND/OR***

I will be collecting the following items : \_\_\_\_\_

The items will be donated to the following organization:

\_\_\_\_\_

The collection will take place on: \_\_\_\_\_

The collection will take place at: \_\_\_\_\_

**Sample insert for your invitation**

Dear Family and Friends,

As part of my bar/bat mitzvah, I am conducting a Mitzvah Project Collection. On the day of my bar/bat mitzvah, I will be collecting \_\_\_\_\_. These will be donated to \_\_\_\_\_. I chose this collection because \_\_\_\_\_. I'm asking you to help make this collection a success by bringing \_\_\_\_\_ with you to my bar/bat mitzvah. Thank you!

## **Tree of Life Form**

We would like to sponsor a medallion on the *Tree of Life* in honor of our son's/daughter's bar/bat mitzvah. The wording should be as follows:

In honor of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah of:

---

Date:

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Enclosed is a check for \$180

Please mail the form to  
Congregation Adas Emuno  
Attn: Ritual Committee  
254 Broad Avenue  
Leonia, NJ 07605

## Videotaping Request Form

*To be submitted to the Ritual Committee one month prior to the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony.*

We request to videotape our child's bar/bat mitzvah ceremony. The taping will be done by someone who will not be participating in the service and the camera will be stationary and placed in the corner of the last row of pews. The entire service will be taped from that location. We understand that the camera will not be moved from the tripod, nor will any artificial lighting equipment be employed.

Thank you,

---

name

---

phone

## Still Photography Request Form

*To be submitted to the Ritual Committee one month prior to the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony.*

While still photography may not be taken in the sanctuary during the service, arrangements may be made for pictures to be taken in the Temple in advance of the service, preferably on a different day. Any photography in the Temple on the morning of the designated *Shabbat* must be completed and all equipment removed from the sanctuary no later than 9:30 a.m.

We request to use the sanctuary for still photography on

\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm.

\_\_\_ We would like clergy to join us for pictures if available.

## Bar/Bat Mitzvah Parent Checklist

*This checklist was created by a parent. It is not comprehensive and many of the items on it are optional! We hope it is useful.*

- ❑ Determine desired date for *Bar/Bar Mitzvah*
- ❑ Confirm date with Temple
- ❑ Create guest list (determine number of adults, children)
- ❑ Book "party"/festive meal

### Temple

*Kippot*

*Tallit* (For Bar/Bat Mitzvah)

Program

*Bar/Bat Mitzvah* project

Friday night *Oneg*\*

Saturday *Kiddush* (*optional*)

### Party

Music

Photographer

Videographer

Centerpieces

Menu

Cake

Candle lighting

Place cards/seating

Bathroom Amenities

Mints/candies

Favors

Sign-in board/book

### Other

Invitations

Thank you notes

Directions to Temple

Party

Hotel

Home

Cocktail napkins

Guest Towels

Hotel rate for out-

of-town guests

Hotel arrival basket

Flowers: Please note that we have two beautiful silk flower arrangements to be used on the bimah, in lieu of fresh flowers (which can often cause allergic reactions to clergy and/or guests.)

\*Friday Night Oneg: Please provide one *challah*, one bottle of grape juice, one small bottle of kosher wine, baked goods and fruit. Milk for coffee.

Optional: Other beverages; cheese and crackers, nuts, etc.

Set *challah* on a nice plate & cover with *challah* cover or napkin. Pour wine and juice into small cups and set out. Set treats on a plate or platter and set out. There are paper goods which may be used. Plastic tablecloths are available.

Please arrive at least one-half hour before services to help set up your oneg. Help will be provided. The usual number of congregants is 20-25, plus whatever family and friends you might be expecting.

## RABBI'S B'NEI MITZVAH CLASS MEETING OUTLINE

CONGREGATION ADAS EMUNO      RABBI BARRY L. SCHWARTZ

Introduction: The significance of this day; expectations

1. Tutoring and homework
2. Cantor and rabbi meetings
3. Time slots: Thursday and Sunday afternoons
4. Practice and Rehearsal
5. Hebrew Torah chanting: three *aliyot* (nine verses) and blessings
6. Hebrew Haftarah chanting: 6-9 verses and blessings
7. Speech (*davar torah*): 2-3 pages- see outline from rabbi
8. Prayers
9. Mitzvah project
10. Service attendance
11. Family Participation Issues
12. Confirmation

### CONTACTS:

Rabbi Barry L. Schwartz 856-313-8750      [rabbiblschwartz@gmail.com](mailto:rabbiblschwartz@gmail.com)  
Cantor Ron Broden      [adasschool@gmail.com](mailto:adasschool@gmail.com)

Ritual Committee Chair: Marilyn Katz 201 214-8777      [noorily@optonline.net](mailto:noorily@optonline.net)  
Financial Secretary: Mark Rosenberg      [markrosenberg@nj.rr.com](mailto:markrosenberg@nj.rr.com)  
Temple President: Michael Fishbein      [michael.r.fishbein@gmail.com](mailto:michael.r.fishbein@gmail.com)