



**SEPHARDIC TEMPLE TIFERETH ISRAEL**  
**RABBI JACOB M. OTT HEBREW SCHOOL**



# Bar/Bat Mitzvah Handbook

## **BECOMING AN ADULT MEANS JOINING A COMMUNITY**

*The Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a simcha for your family as well as our entire community. It is with great joy and pleasure that we usher a new generation into our congregation, as they are our future.*

Part 1- Eligibility Criteria

Part 2- Ceremony Protocols & Policies

Part 3- Preparation Timeline

Part 4- What Comes After Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Part 5- Forms & Checklist

---

**Dear Parents,**

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony is a most special event in your child's life. Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel feels proud to be a part of this celebration.

A child becomes Bar/Bat Mitzvah when he/she turns 13/12 years old. No special ceremony or preparation is necessary, however, marking this milestone is a joyous custom that Jews have participated in for centuries. A Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony requires dedication and commitment to proper readiness for this momentous day.

In this handbook you will find all the relevant details. It is your responsibility to note all the deadlines, policies, and protocols, and to stay in touch with the office personnel and clergy to ensure all requirements are being met according to our provided timeline.

**Once you have carefully reviewed all the information, please sign the acknowledgement form, and submit it to Freida Rimson, our Hebrew School Director.**

## **PART 1- ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

1. While it is *recommended* that each child begins attending Hebrew School in Kindergarten, Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel *requires* the completion of a minimum of three consecutive years of education in our Hebrew School prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. These three years will allow students to learn about Judaism in depth.
2. The minimum requirement of the three consecutive years in our Hebrew School is satisfied by maintaining an attendance record of at least 80% during these years.
3. Tardy arrivals greatly disrupt academic progress; therefore, punctual arrival must also be maintained by at least 80%.
4. A skills assessment will be administered for students who begin Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel Hebrew School after Kindergarten to ensure that they meet current grade level academic benchmarks. If students lack prior grade level skills, parents will be asked to support their children with additional homework.

- 
5. Periodic skills assessments will be administered to determine progress and readiness for the child's proposed Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.
  6. Classroom lessons are reinforced by active participation in our Shabbat services. In order for you and your child to become familiar with our customs and traditions, we require that you attend Shabbat services. (Refer to the timeline for details.)
  7. It is mandatory that families maintain their temple membership in good standing.
  8. A **MITZVAH PROJECT** is an important part of Bar/Bat Mitzvah requirements and eligibility. (Refer to timeline for details.)

## PART 2- CEREMONY PROTOCOLS & POLICIES

1. **SPEECH** The Bar/Bat Mitzvah shares a message about Torah with the congregation and his/her interpretation as it relates to life. It is customary to thank family, friends, clergy and teachers for their support. In the speech, your child shares his/her Mitzvah project with the community.
2. **TORAH READING** It is the practice at Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel for the Bar Mitzvah to read from the Torah and the Bat Mitzvah to read from the Haftorah.
3. **BAR and BAT MITZVAH PRAYERS** Children will be taught to recite Yim Loch, Ashrei, the complete Shema, Mizmor L'David, Ein K'eloheinu and Adon Olam for Shabbat morning services.
4. **REHEARSAL and TEFILIN SERVICES** An integral part of the preparation for the ceremony is the rehearsal where your immediate family and friends will walk through various aspects of the service. This ensures that everyone is made comfortable in the sanctuary and is familiar with all the procedures. Photographing and videotaping may be done during your rehearsal and Tefillin service that takes place in Candiotty Chapel on the Monday or Thursday prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. **IMPORTANT: Photography and videotaping are not permitted during Shabbat services.**

- 
5. **KABBALAT SERVICES:** Within one month prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, your family must attend a Friday night Kabbalat Service when your Bar/Bat Mitzvah will lead in the prayer service. During these services, your child will be chanting Mizmor Shir Le Yom Hashabbat, Veshameru, Mizmor L'David and Kiddush.
6. **DECORUM** A Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a religious ceremony that is sacred, joyous and meditative. The following pointers are intended to promote this atmosphere:
- All family members and guests are asked to arrive by 9:00 AM when the prayer service begins.
  - Dress with respect for Shabbat. Modest and elegant attire are considered appropriate.
  - Be mindful about showing your respect in the sanctuary at all times.
  - We cannot expect young children to remain quiet in the sanctuary for long periods of time. We ask parents to supervise their children during services.
  - **Cell phones and other electronic devices are not allowed in the synagogue on Shabbat. Please advise your guests of this policy.**
- Remember, no photography or recording is permitted during Shabbat.**
7. **KASHRUT** We will provide candy and basic Kiddush for your simcha. Any additional food needs to be discussed and arranged with Melissa Thompson. **OUTSIDE CANDY AND FOOD ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED.**

## PART 3- PREPARATION TIMELINE

### 36 Months Prior

1. Review this Bar/Bat Mitzvah Handbook THOROUGHLY.
2. Meet with Melissa Thompson to choose your Bar/Bat Mitzvah date and determine membership status.
3. Within 30 days of reserving your date, sign the contract and submit a non-refundable fee of \$1,350 to reserve your date.
4. Once this payment has been made, reserve Candiotty Chapel for rehearsal and Tefillin Service for the Monday or Thursday before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Additionally, choose your Kabbalat Shabbat date.
5. Check in with Freida Rimson, Director of our Hebrew School, to ensure your child is on track.

- 
6. It is strongly encouraged that your family attends **THREE** Shabbat services during this time period.

#### **24 – 12 Months Prior**

1. Meet with Hazan Mizrahi for readiness assessment and pre-evaluation.
2. At home, use the Hazan Prayer Studio on our website for practicing prayers and songs. <https://sephardictemple.org/bar-mitzvah-prayers/>.
3. Your child's Mitzvah Project Proposal must be submitted to Freida Rimson.
4. During this time period, it is strongly encouraged that your family attends **FOUR** Shabbat Services.

#### **12 – 9 Months Prior**

1. All dues, donations and fees must be paid in full prior to tutoring with Hazan Mizrahi.
2. Arrange a meeting with Hazan Mizrahi to begin practicing prayers and learning your Parasha or Haftorah.
3. Begin the Mitzvah Project.
4. During this time period, it is strongly encouraged that your family attends **FIVE** Shabbat Services.
5. If you want to host a Kiddush luncheon, let Melissa know so she can put you in touch with Pat's Catering.

#### **9 – 6 Months Prior**

1. Make sure Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate begin individual tutoring if this has been recommended.
2. Arrange to meet with Rabbi Cohen in order to have a better understanding of your Parasha or Haftorah.

#### **3 Months Prior**

1. Begin writing the Bar/Bat Mitzvah speech.
2. Be sure to have the speech proofread.
3. Complete your Mitzvah project.

#### **2 Months Prior**

1. Rehearsal with Rabbi Cohen and/or Hazan Mizrahi in Candiotty Chapel.
2. Meet with Melissa Thompson to discuss the Shabbat Kiddush.
3. Make final arrangements for the Kabbalat Shabbat services.

#### **2 weeks Prior**

1. Final list of aliyot needs to be given to Melissa Thompson. (See attached)

---

## **PART 4- WHAT COMES AFTER BAR/BAT MITZVAH?**

1. After the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony, we encourage students to continue their Jewish education and participate in different programs offered by Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel.
2. A Bar/Bat Mitzvah is given the gift of a free membership at Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel through the age of 21.

## **PART 5- FORMS & CHECKLIST**

1. Commitment Agreement (see website)
2. Honors for Shabbat Morning Services (see website)
3. Mitzvah Project Form (see website)
4. Checklist (see following page)

---

## BAR/BAT MITZVAH CHECKLIST

- ✓ Review all requirements in this handbook thoroughly. Submit a physical copy of your signed **Commitment** page of this handbook to the **Hebrew School Director, Freida Rimson.**
- ✓ Meet with Melissa Thompson to reserve a Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.
- ✓ Pay the Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee of \$1,350 to the temple office.
- ✓ Reserve Candiotty Chapel for rehearsal, Tefillin services and Kabbalat Shabbat services.
- ✓ Meet Hazan Mizrahi for assessment and preparation.
- ✓ Check with office to make sure all dues, donations and other fees are fully paid.
- ✓ Submit the Mitzvah Project Proposal to Freida Rimson.
- ✓ Start attending Shabbat and Bar/Bat Mitzvah services to become familiar with temple traditions and procedures.
- ✓ Meet with Rabbi Cohen to begin working on Bar/Bat Mitzvah speech.
- ✓ Start practicing speech.
- ✓ Give Melissa Thompson your aliyot list.
- ✓ Remind family members and guests that electronics are not allowed on Shabbat.
- ✓ Remind family members and guests of appropriate Shabbat attire.
- ✓ Remind family members and guests to arrive by 9:00 AM when your child is called up to chant the Shema.
- ✓ NO OUTSIDE CANDY OR FOOD IS PERMITTED IN OUR TEMPLE.

**MAZEL TOV!**