

# B'NAI MITZVAH HANDBOOK

## TEMPLE KOL TIKVAH



  
KOLTIKVAH

20400 Ventura Boulevard, Woodland Hills, California 91364

818 348 0670 Fax 818 348 1584 [www.koltikvah.org](http://www.koltikvah.org)

A Reform Congregation Affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM THE RABBI .....	2
MESSAGE FROM THE CANTOR .....	2
REQUIREMENTS OF ELIGIBILITY .....	3
FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES .....	4
SCHEDULE OF EVENTS PRIOR TO <i>BAR/BAR MITZVAH</i> .....	5
THE <i>BAR/BAT MITZVAH</i> SERVICE .....	6
HONORS DURING THE SERVICE .....	6
SPEECHES .....	7
DRESS CODE.....	7
PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY .....	8
WHOM SHALL I ASK.....	9
GLOSSARY OF HEBREW AND JUDAIC TERMS .....	10
<i>BAR/BAT MITZVAH: AN EVOLVING RITUAL</i> .....	12
RECOMMENDED READING.....	13

## MESSAGE FROM THE RABBI

*Mazal tov!* As a family you are entering into an exciting time. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* process that your child, and by extension your entire family, is undertaking may seem daunting. Yet it offers a wonderful opportunity for growth and development. When you see your child standing before the congregation, leading a service, it will mark yet another important milestone in life.

Traditionally, upon the completion of the Torah reading, parents stand before their 13 year old child and recite a prayer: ***Baruch she-petarani me-onsho shel zeh*** (“Blessed is the One Who has now freed me from responsibility for this one”). Of course, the blessing doesn’t refer to abandoning our children to the world at large to fend for themselves, but it does speak to the level of maturity that is often gained through the process of study and learning that has been undertaken to reach this important day.

We hope that this is just one of many spiritual milestones in your family’s life at Temple Kol Tikvah. Our staff is always available to discuss any questions or concerns that you may have. We look forward to sharing your special day with you.

B’shalom,

Rabbi Janet Offel

## MESSAGE FROM THE CANTOR

Congratulations on your upcoming *Simcha!* The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is an important stepping stone for traveling on a life long Jewish journey. It is an opportunity for a young person to mature and feel connected to their Judaism. Becoming *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* means accepting responsibility. The intensive studying and preparation for this service teaches our children how much they are truly capable of accomplishing.

The *B’nai Mitzvah* program at Temple Kol Tikvah is unique because the students are encouraged to think deeply about their Torah/Haftorah portion and the prayers. Prayer is an important part of Jewish tradition and a necessary Jewish skill. Once the children know the structure of the service and the prayers they can worship in any synagogue around the world. Prayer is also an important coping method for life, helping our students through times of sorrow and happiness.

Lifecycle events are special moments where our Clergy, staff, and Temple community can get to know and celebrate with your family. *The B’nai Mitzvah* is a sacred time in the life of your family and we look forward to making this event meaningful for your family.

*B’shir* (In Song),

Cantor Tifani Coyot

## REQUIREMENTS FOR ELIGIBILITY

***Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a milestone on the road of Jewish education.***

***It is not an end, but the beginning of deeper learning and observance.***

1. A minimum of four consecutive years (grades 4-7 or their equivalent) of regular attendance at religious school, and satisfactory completion of academic requirements. Notwithstanding the above, parents of children who may experience learning challenges should not be discouraged from planning a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. We work with children of all abilities.
  2. During the 6 months prior to your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date, the student and their parents are required to attend a total of 8 worship services at Temple Kol Tikvah. You may choose from Friday night, Saturday morning, or Saturday afternoon worship services.
  3. Enrollment and completion of the 7<sup>th</sup> and/or 8<sup>th</sup> grade year regardless of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date.
  4. 9 months prior to *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* there is an assessment of Hebrew reading ability. If remedial studies are required, tutoring will be set up.
- \* *If any “life” issues are affecting your child’s ability to study or concentrate, or if he/she becomes anxious about the work, please inform the Cantor as soon as possible.*

We strongly encourage students to continue in our teen education programs through High School.

## FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

1. All Temple dues and fees must be current in order to schedule your bar/bat mitzvah date and to hold the bar/bat mitzvah service. Please be advised that the fiscal year runs from July 1- June 30 (not September – August). Membership forms are due by July 1 of each year.
2. *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* preparation fees will be posted to your account one year in advance of your date. *B'nai Mitzvah* fees are required to be paid, in full, a minimum of 9 months in advance of your event in order for tutoring to begin. Tutoring will not begin until your account is current and *B'nai Mitzvah* fees paid.
3. *B'nai Mitzvah* families are responsible for sponsoring the Oneg Shabbat after Friday night services (the evening before) at a cost of \$200.00\* per family. This fee is due a minimum of 3 months in advance of your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date.
4. Security fees for Saturday, morning or evening, are \$250.00\*. Any additional security requirement (e.g. reception) will be at an additional charge. The \$250.00\* fee is due a minimum of 3 months in advance of your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date.

Fee	Due
<i>B'nai Mitzvah</i> Prep	9 months prior to <i>Bar/Bat Mitzvah</i>
Oneg Shabbat	3 months prior
Security Guard Fee	3 months prior

**If you have any questions, please contact the Business Manager to discuss your fees. All applicable fees are subject to change, but will be finalized one year before the date of your service.**

**\* Fees subject to change**

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS PRIOR TO *BAR/BAT MITZVAH*

<b>Winter of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade year</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select <i>Bar/Bat Mitzvah</i> date</li> <li>• Deposit due</li> </ul>
<b>5<sup>th</sup> grade year</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receipt of <i>B'nai Mitzvah</i> Handbook at 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Family Education Program</li> </ul>
<b>6<sup>th</sup> grade year</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Family Education Program on Torah study</li> </ul>
<b>9 months prior</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hebrew reading assessment</li> <li>• <i>Bar/Bat Mitzvah</i> fees paid in full</li> <li>• All other dues &amp; fees current</li> </ul>
<b>Six months prior</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students begin preparation on an individual basis</li> <li>• Intake meeting scheduled with the Cantor scheduled by Operations Administrator</li> <li>• Parents and <i>Bar/Bat Mitzvah</i> student sign the “study covenant” at the start of the tutoring program</li> <li>• Receive CDs and notebook with entire service including Torah and Haftarah portions</li> <li>• Establish 15-20 minute study periods per day</li> </ul>
<b>Four months prior</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact Operations Administrator if you are using the Social Hall for your event to schedule a walk through for facilities use</li> <li>• If you are not using the Social Hall, contact the Operations Administrator to release the room</li> <li>• Room will be released automatically three months prior if contact is not made by this time</li> </ul>
<b>12 weeks prior</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Business Manager will contact you to confirm that financial obligations are met, logistics of event are in place and that Oneg Shabbat and Security Guard fees paid</li> <li>• All other dues &amp; fees current</li> </ul>
<b>6 weeks prior</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with Rabbi for 5 weeks to work on speech</li> <li>• <i>B'nai Mitzvah</i> rehearsal occurs the week before the <i>Bar/Bat Mitzvah</i></li> </ul>

# THE *BAR/BAT MITZVAH* SERVICE

## Friday Night

The Friday night before the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* service your family will be honored with the lighting of the *Shabbat* candles. *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* leads. **Please arrive at least 15 minutes before services. The front row is reserved for you.**

## Saturday Morning

Our Saturday morning services begin promptly at 10:00 a.m.

## Saturday Evening

Our Saturday evening services (*Havdalah*) begin promptly at 5:00 p.m.

## Honors During the Service

### 1. *Aliyot*

- a) There are 4 *aliyot* given to each family. Two are for family and friends. The third is for the parents. The fourth is for the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.
- b) *Aliyot* may be apportioned to groups of six or fewer.
- c) Anyone who is called for an *aliyah* must be 13 years of age or older. Non-Jewish people who are invited for this honor should be made aware of the English translation of the blessing.
- d) Honorees must practice the blessings so that they can recite them with ease at the Service. The clergy can provide learning materials to assist them.

### 2. Opening and Closing the Ark

There are two times when we open and close the Ark. No more than six people may be involved each time. Ark honors may be given to any appropriate age – Jew or non-Jew.

### 3. Dressing *Torah*/Holding *Torah* (*G'lila*)

- a) Up to two people dress the *Torah* after it is read.
- b) One person sits and holds the *Torah* during the *Haftarah* and speeches. (The scroll is quite heavy.)

## Speeches

1. It is customary that the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* prepare a speech no longer than three double spaced pages.
2. The outline for the speech is as follows:
  - a) Summary of the *Torah* portion
  - b) Interpretation of your *Torah* portion, including metaphors as you see them
  - c) Contemporary relevance of your *Torah* portion
  - d) Acknowledgments and thank yous.
3. The Rabbi assists students with their speeches.
4. Most parents choose to speak to their child on this special occasion. Parent speeches are to be no more than **1 page double-spaced in length**. The parent speeches are meant as a blessing of the child, and not a review of the child's life to date and accomplishments.

## Voluntary contribution

It is customary to make a contribution to the synagogue in honor of this joyous occasion. Listed below are the various funds available:

- Rabbi's Discretionary Fund
- Cantor's Discretionary Fund
- Prayer Book Fund – dedicate a number of prayer books with name plates
- Religious School Scholarship Fund/Campership Fund
- General Fund
- Kol Tikvah Music Fund

## *Tallitot/Kippot*

The wearing of a *kippot* (head covering) or a *tallit* (prayer shawl) is optional in our congregation. We have *kippot* and *tallit* available at the back of the sanctuary as you enter. If you wish to provide your guests with personalized *kippot* for your service, these may be ordered through Shalom House in Woodland Hills.

**Dress Code for the *Bimah*** – Please dress respectfully for participation on the *Bimah*. Blue jeans, bare midriffs or shoulders, and sports attire (i.e. sweats, jogging suits) are **NOT** appropriate.

## CREATING A HOLY SPACE

**A Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a holy experience. While preserving your memories and participating in the service, it is essential that we work together to preserve the holiness of our prayer space.**

### **Photography and Videography**

1. Families may pose for flash pictures before the service. **STILL PHOTOGRAPHY** without flash **IS** allowed during the service from the back of the sanctuary. Please make arrangements with the Operations Administrator.
2. Video cameras must be stationery, and may be set up in the back of the sanctuary only.

### **Ushers**

If you will be handing out programs, and/or personalized *kippot*, it is essential that you select one or two of your guests to perform this task. They must remain at the door for at least one-half hour after the service begins to accommodate late-comers.

### **Noise Control**

Many of our students invite large groups of teenagers to their service. It is important that adults be seated with them to avoid disruptions. Remember, this is your child's special day.

### **Candy**

The custom of throwing candy was meant to shower the young person with sweetness. Unfortunately, it has become a chance for "target practice" instead. **As this could result in serious injury, throwing candy is NOT permitted.**

## WHOM SHALL I ASK?

<b>Rabbi</b>	The Rabbi is available to address any issues regarding your <i>Bar/Bat Mitzvah</i> . Her primary concern is that this be a special moment in time for everyone involved. She works hands on with the students exploring the meaning of their Torah portion and writing their speeches. Please share any questions or concerns regarding special circumstances, for example interfaith, single parent or blended families, separation or divorce with the Rabbi. Her good counsel is available to help resolve any and all difficulties or dilemmas.	<b>Ext. 222</b>	<b>rabbioffel@koltikvah.org</b>
<b>Cantor</b>	The Cantor is the B'nai Mitzvah supervisor, coordinating B'nai Mitzvah training and helping parents throughout the B'nai Mitzvah process. The Cantor is also available to help with any of the concerns mentioned above.	<b>Ext. 212</b>	<b>cantorcoyot@koltikvah.org</b>
<b>Education Director</b>	The Education Director can answer questions regarding Hebrew readiness and religious school.	<b>Ext. 209</b>	<b>rhoffman@koltikvah.org</b>
<b>Business Manager</b>	The Business Manager is available to help with any financial questions.	<b>Ext. 215</b>	<b>mpathman@koltikvah.org</b>
<b>Operations and Membership Administrators</b>	Both of the administrators are available to help with any questions concerning the use of our social hall or other issues regarding facility usage.	<b>Ext. 214</b> <b>Ext. 200</b>	<b>jkessler@koltikvah.org</b> <b>ngilboa@koltikvah.org</b>

## GLOSSARY OF HEBREW AND JUDAIC TERMS

**ALIYAH:** During the *Torah* service certain congregants or their honorees will be called up to the pulpit (*bimah* in Hebrew) to bless the *Torah* before and after its reading. *aliyah* literally means “going up.” It is a special honor to receive an *aliyah*, usually reserved for those especially close to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

**BAR/BAT MITZVAH:** Person of covenantal obligation (literally, “son or daughter of the commandment.”)

**B'NAI MITZVAH:** Plural of the above.

**B'NOT MITZVAH:** Plural of the above, for two or more Jewish females.

**BIMAH:** This refers to the raised platform area in the front of the sanctuary, sometimes referred to as “the pulpit.”

**CONFIRMATION:** Confirmation is a ceremony created by the Reform Movement, in which young Jewish adults confirm their commitment to Judaism and the Jewish people.

**D'RASH:** During the service your child will deliver a short sermon based on the *Torah* portion. In this interpretation of the weekly *Torah* reading, the *bar/bat mitzvah* demonstrates study of the text and an understanding of one of its many messages, with an application to contemporary life.

**HAFTARAH:** Following the reading from the *Torah* a passage called the *Haftarah* is read from the portion of the bible called the Prophets (*Nevi'im* in Hebrew). The *Torah* portion and the *Haftarah* are usually connected by a common theme, law, personality, or event.

**HAVDALAH:** The ritual at the end of *Shabbat* (Saturday evening) which separates *Shabbat* from the rest of the week.

**KIDDUSH:** *Kiddush* is both a prayer and an act. As an act, it is the sanctification of *Shabbat* usually done with wine. *Kiddush* is also the prayer over wine on *Shabbat* and holidays. In an extended sense of the word, it includes the *Shabbat* morning reception which begins with the *Kiddush* prayer over wine.

**KIPPAH:** This head covering (also known in Yiddish as *yarmulka*) is a sign of reverence for God. In a Reform synagogue the wearing of the *kippah* and the *tallit* is optional.

**MITZVAH:** Sometimes thought of as a “good deed.” In actuality, a *mitzvah* is a commandment, an obligation stated in the Torah. Jewish tradition enumerates 613 commandments handed down at Mount Sinai.

**ONEG SHABBAT:** Literal translation is “pleasure of Shabbat.” In practice, it refers to the company and refreshments we savor after *Shabbat* services on Friday evening.

**PARASHA:** Also called the *sidra*, the *parasha* is the *Torah* portion read and studied on a particular *Shabbat* or Festival (special holiday).

**SE’UDAT MITZVAH:** Sharing a meal with the community as a way to celebrate is rooted in Jewish tradition. The Bar or Bat *Mitzvah* feast was declared a *Se’udat Mitzvah*, a meal celebrating a commandment, in the sixteenth century. The *Se’udat Mitzvah* is a traditional way to celebrate the completion of a religious obligation. The feast is a joyous way of emphasizing the significance of the Bar/Bat *Mitzvah* event in the life of one Jewish family.

**SIDDUR:** The Hebrew word *siddur* means “order” and is applied to the weekday and *Shabbat* prayer book, as the prayer book contains a specific order of the prayers. In the Reform Movement the official *siddur* is the *Mishkan Tefilah*.

**SIMCHA:** A joyous occasion (literally means “happiness” or “joy.”)

**TALLIT:** This is the prayer shawl worn by Jewish adults in fulfillment of the commandment in the *Torah*, “You shall attach *tzitzit* (fringes) to the four corners of your garments.” The fringes are knotted in such a way that they remind us of all the commandments in the *Torah*.

**TALMUD:** A multi - volume Jewish text containing explanations and commentaries on *Torah* law, lore, and life composed in the early centuries of the Common Era in Galilee and Babylonia.

**TORAH:** *Torah* really has two meanings. In its broadest sense it refers to the entire body of Jewish law, lore, and teachings. In its narrowest sense, it refers to the scroll on which is written the five books of Moses (*Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.*) Every *Shabbat* a consecutive portion of the *Torah* is read and studied.

**TZEDAKAH:** The giving of money or goods to those in need. *Tzedakah* translates to “justice or fairness.”

## BAR/BAT MITZVAH: AN EVOLVING RITUAL

*A sage who taught in the Land of Israel during the second century, Judah ben Tema, could be called the “inventor” of B’nai mitzvah: for it was he who declared that, at age thirteen, one is ready to do mitzvot – the commandments handed down at Sinai and explained by rabbinic tradition. A child younger than thirteen was permitted to perform mitzvot as a option. Once the child entered puberty, the 613 laws of the Torah became obligatory. With the growth of talmudic Judaism, thirteen became the age of spiritual and moral choices, religious achievement and legal majority.*

*All religions and cultures – have their moments of “becoming” – the time for the entry into the community and its requirements of adult behavior. The bar/bat mitzvah accomplishes precisely what anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff once insisted such a ritual must: “It provides a great moment of spiritual transformation strong enough to carry an adolescent across the chasm of chaos and fear.”*

*Reform Judaism, which began in Germany during the early 1800’s, was partly a reaction to the unequal role of women in religious life. Yet, it is only as recently as the past forty years that women began to celebrate coming- of- age religiously along with their thirteen- year- old male counterparts.*

*The first Jewish woman on record to be called to the Torah as a bat mitzvah did so in 1922 in New York City. Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, had his own daughter, Judith, simply recite the blessings over the Torah and read her portion from a book. Since that modest introduction to women’s equality in the synagogue, hundreds of thousands of Jewish girls have taken their place alongside their male peers in leading worship and study.*

*In modern interpretation, as children become B’nai mitzvah, they accept the responsibilities and privileges that come with Jewish adulthood. According to Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin, B’nai Mitzvah is about ritual maturity. It is about growing up as a Jew. It is about becoming a full-fledged member of the Jewish community.” Most importantly, it is about connecting to Torah and to the covenantal traditions of the Jewish people. It is sacred and deserves celebration.*

## RECOMMENDED READING

Salkin, Jeffrey - *Putting God On The Guest List* -Jewish Lights Publishing. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1996)

Leneman, Helen – *Bar/Bat Mitzvah Basics* -Jewish Lights Publishing. (1996)

Kushner, Lawrence – *Book of Miracles-A Young Person's Guide To Jewish Spirituality* UAHC. (1987)

Rossel, Seymour – *A Spiritual Journey: Bar and Bat Mitzvah Handbook* –Behrman House. (1993)