



Mazal Tov! You are approaching a great occasion! This wonderful *simchah* ushers in a new time in your lives. For the young adult becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, this event puts into practice skills and insights that have been culled not just during the eight months of intensive preparation, and not merely during the years of Hebrew School, but during this person's entire life experience, thus far, as a Jew. This is a time to "put it all together" and see how it looks and feels.

In this free and pluralistic society, all of us are "Jews-by-Choice" and there are many moments when we stand, again, at the bottom of Mt. Sinai as Moses offers us the *Torah*, with all of its joys and all of its obligations, and we decide to what extent we will engage in this covenant. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, "son/daughter of commandment", is very much undergoing such a "Sinai" moment. Parents, too, are experiencing a transition and along with it a recommitment to their own Jewish identity.

What enables the young person to become a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is the study that s/he has accomplished. **Nothing** that happens on the *Shabbat* on which s/he leads the congregation in prayer qualifies or disqualifies him/her from the title of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. On that day, it is a privilege for Beth Shir Shalom as your Jewish community and ours as your Rabbi and Cantor to welcome a new young adult into official status as a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* because of everything they have **already** accomplished.

The goal of our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* program goes a lot further than just preparing and leading a *Shabbat* service. By the time our new young adult steps onto the *Bima* and leads his/her congregation through prayer, we hope that s/he will not just think of us as the Rabbi and Cantor of Beth Shir Shalom, but that s/he will think of us as **his/her** Rabbi and Cantor. We hope that the relationship we cultivate together will be a lifelong friendship. We hope that the tools used to achieve this wonderful goal will help our new young adults stay in touch with their growing and changing Jewish identity throughout their entire lives. We also hope that through this process they will learn to feel comfortable participating in any service at any synagogue.

Please remember that we are both here for you at any time to answer any concerns or questions you may have about this most important process. We look forward to our study together and the beginnings of our exploration of what Judaism can mean in an adult life. Again, *Mazal Tov!*

Rabbi Neil Comess-Daniels

Cantor Diane Rose

A Bar/Bat Mitzvah Glossary

Kippah: This head covering (also known in Yiddish as *Yarmulke*) is a sign of modest reverence. It is optional for Jewish people to wear (not optional for our B'ney Mitzvah) and not at all expected for non-Jews although they certainly may if they wish.

Tallit: These are the prayer shawls worn by those who have become *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, in fulfillment of the commandment in the *Torah*, "You shall attach *tzitzit* (fringes) to the four corners of your garments." The *tzitzit* are knotted in such a way as to remind the Jew of all of the 613 commandments of the *Torah*. In our Reform synagogue, the wearing of the *tallit* by Jewish adults is optional. Non-Jewish adults should not feel at all obligated to wear a *tallit* since the *tallit* symbolizes a Jew's relationship with Jewish commandments and heritage. Our *B'ney Mitzvah* (girls, too!) will wear both on the day of their service so they can experience how their prayer can be enhanced by these pieces of ritual clothing.

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 until the end of the Jewish liturgical year, when the last book is completed and the first book is begun again.

Parasha: Also called the *Sidra*, the *Parasha* is the *Torah* portion read and studied during the service.

Aliyah: During the *Torah* service, certain congregants, pre-selected and notified by the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* family, will be called up to the *bima* (pulpit) to participate and chant or say the blessings before and after each section of the *Parasha* is read. *Aliyah* literally means "going up" and this is intended spiritually as well as literally.

Haftarah: Following the reading from the *Torah*, a passage called the *Haftarah* ("Addition") is read from the portion of the Hebrew Bible called the Prophets. There is usually some literary or thematic connection between the *Torah* portion and the *Haftarah*.

Hagbah/Gelilah: Following the reading/chanting of the *Torah* portion and before the reading/changing of the *Haftarah* portion, two members of the congregation are honored with the responsibility of lifting the *Torah* Scroll from the reading desk, lifting it high and turning it around for a moment spread open so that the congregation may see the text (*Hagbah*) and re-dressing the *Torah* Scroll (*Gelilah*).

Why is there a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Ceremony?

The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony is a wonderful way for a thirteen year old to demonstrate commitment to the *mitzvot* (commandments). This is accomplished by the young person accepting the privilege of reading from the *Torah* and *Haftarah* and leading worship. In this way, the congregation says to a young adult who is at least thirteen years old: "You are now a participating adult in our community, the Jewish community at-large and the world."

The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony, as part of a *Shabbat* worship service, gives each young person the opportunity to declare publicly, through words and actions, a commitment to a Jewish way of life: a life of compassion, responsibility, study and *mitzvot*. Thus, the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* bears witness to the future continuity of a Judaism embodied in a new generation of committed Jews. For all these reasons, the beginning of a young person's transition from childhood to responsible Jewish adulthood is a time for celebration!

What is the Relationship Between the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Ceremony and the School Programs at Beth Shir Shalom?

As indicated, becoming *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* at Beth Shir Shalom is not viewed as something distinct from Jewish Education; neither in preparation, nor as related to the ceremony itself. In our synagogue, becoming *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is an elective course of study *during* the course of (not at the end of) a student's education.

Two points are related to this notion:

1. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony is not a private affair. It is a ceremony which takes place during the normal course of a public *Shabbat* worship service (both Friday night and Saturday). In fact, *Shabbat* is our major emphasis. It is the *Shabbat* service which "hosts" the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony, not the other way around! Members of the congregation and the community are welcome as always. *You may also expect other "special celebrations" to be part of the service - baby naming, a special Shabbat theme, guest speaker, etc.*
2. The goal of our education program at Beth Shir Shalom is life-long commitment to wrestling with Jewish texts and values, for elevating the level of questions a person asks about the world and him/herself and for experiencing Jewish community. Our program for Confirmation begins immediately post-*B'ney Mitzvah* and continues through the 10th grade, and that's not a conclusion either. We have wonderful opportunities for participation and Jewish living through High School (especially in BeSH²TY, our Youth Group).

When a young person becomes a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, it is not an indication that his/her Jewish education or participation in Jewish life is finished! One becomes a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* for the rest of one's life. It is, hopefully, the first of many milestones in a life of learning and Jewish "doing". At Beth Shir Shalom, becoming *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* constitutes a moral commitment, by the student and his/her parents to continue with Jewish exploration so that Jewish identity keeps growing beyond *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

WE DO HAVE EXPECTATIONS!

The ability to lead the worship service is a major goal of our Religious School program.

Those whom we welcome as *B'ney Mitzvah* at Beth Shir Shalom...

1. Achieve basic knowledge and skill levels including...
 - a. Prayerbook skills, participating knowledgeably, confidently and creatively in Jewish celebrations and commemorations.
 - b. A continually evolving understanding of Jewish Holy Days, Holidays & Life Cycle events
 - c. The ability to wrestle with Torah both as text and a legacy of Jewish inquiry
 - d. The ability to develop a sense of internal mandate (*mitzvot*, commandments)
 - e. Participation in *tikkun olam*, healing the world
 - f. The ability to develop a sense of being part of the Jewish community
 - g. The ability to develop an understanding of being a Reform Jew
 - h. The ability to develop a sense of being a part of the world community
 - i. The ability to discuss and debate Jewish values and ethics
 - j. Have a sense of Jewish history as it informs who we've been, who we are and who we are becoming as individuals and a people.
2. Attend at least 2 years of Hebrew School at Beth Shir Shalom or its equivalent. (Equivalency determined by the Religious School Director, the Cantor and the Rabbi.)
3. Are encouraged to make a commitment, a *b'rit*, a covenant, to be a part of our Beth Shir Shalom community through our Youth Group and High School programming. The contributions of the newest young Jewish adults in our community add to our ability to be an ongoing and vital force for justice, peace and positive change.
4. Attend, ***with at least one parent or guardian***, 8 (eight) *Shabbat* services ***at Beth Shir Shalom*** during the 12 months prior to becoming *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. At least 4 (four) of these services must be on a Saturday when a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony takes place during the service. This is an experience for the family and not just the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* student. At the conclusion of each service the family attends, please come up to the Rabbi or the Cantor so that your personal Shabbat passport can be marked. As an option you may attend ***one Shabbat*** morning *Torah Study* (9 AM whether there is service or not) which will substitute for one of the 4 Friday night services. Here, too, please remember to have your personal Shabbat passport marked.
5. Our cumulative curriculum (K-6th grade) enables your child to lead all the requisite prayers. The specific preparation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah should enhance and polish these skills. If your child begins the 8 month B'ney Mitzvah study with the tutor with gaps in

this skill set he/she may need to delay the start of private study until the gaps are filled. *Our tutoring process requires students to master their prayers first, and students will not start meeting with the Cantor or receive their Torah portions until they are able to independently lead those prayers.*

6. Fulfill, during the 12 months preceding the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date, a community *Mitzvah* Project approved by the Rabbi or Cantor and engage in a personal Jewish ritual or mitzvah not previously practiced to be worked out with the Rabbi. (See addendum for suggestions). In addition, students are invited to write an article for the Koleynu (newsletter) at the project's end.
7. If there is no Bar/Bat Mitzvah scheduled on a particular Friday Shabbat night, we will take the opportunity to invite upcoming B'ney Mitzvah to lead sections of the service. Coming to Friday evenings Shabbat celebrations and leading tefillah on Sundays will help your son/daughter prepare for this honor.
Parents: Since your child could be called up to the bima, please be sure your child dresses appropriately for Shabbat.

How Are Our Bar/Bat Mitzvah Candidates Prepared?

There are three crucial elements in our candidate's preparation to become a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. These are **communal study**, **private one-on-one study**, and **diligent practice at home**.

1. Communal Study

JELLI

Our students learn prayers with the Rabbi and Cantor each year of JELLI by attending Tefillah every Sunday. There, not only do students learn how to lead the prayers, but they are also invited to explore a variety of ways to approach them and own them for themselves. By the end of 6th grade, all students should feel comfortable leading most of the required prayers.

Seventh/Eighth Grade

All B'ney Mitzvah students are required to be enrolled in the Religious School program for the entire school year in which they become a Bar/Bat-Mitzvah (seventh or eighth grade). Our Teen Academy program will provide elective classes for seventh and eighth grade students. Students will be encouraged to continue through Confirmation.

2. Individual Study and Progress Sessions

Eight months before your Bar/Bat Mitzvah date, we will schedule a weekly study session with one of our B'ney-Mitzvah tutors. Your child will work with this tutor until he/she is able to demonstrate a mastery of reading/chanting all of the required prayers. This should take approximately two months. When your child has finished learning all of the

prayers, we will schedule weekly sessions with the Cantor for the remainder of the months prior to the Bar/Bat-Mitzvah date.

The study and progress sessions begin with reviewing and polishing *t'fillot* and progress to learning their Torah and Haftarah portions and Torah and Haftarah trope (chanting system). Midway into study with the Cantor students will add weekly sessions with Rabbi Neil to study their Torah portion, create their sermon and practice techniques for delivery.

Two weeks before the service, the parents are responsible for turning in to the Cantor the list of Honors form and the form for the Aliyot (those who will be honored by being called to and blessing the *Torah*). ***Please note: These forms can now be filled out and submitted via email by saving the document after you've filled it out and emailing it to us as an attachment.***

A "Practice Service" for our Bar/Bat Mitzvah and his/her parent(s) is scheduled for the Thursday before the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Shabbat from 1-3pm. On that day please be sure to bring your child's *kippah*, *tallit* and the shoes s/he will be wearing during Shabbat.

3. **Diligent Practice at Home**

This is the most crucial element of our program. No matter how you look at it, our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* students must subscribe to a daily practice routine in order to achieve this goal. We simply do not have enough time with our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* students to teach them everything they need to know. Plus, we try to instill in them the notion that the harder they work toward this goal, the more they will get out of it. Parents, we rely on you to help your child maintain this routine throughout the process. Please use the CD's they've been given (upload them onto everything you've got! Play it while they brush their teeth!) and their printed materials (make a copy for each car, their locker, their backpack and bathroom). All material and recordings are also available on our website. We look to you as our partners in this process of guiding your child towards adulthood.

Please contact us with any study questions or issues that may come up along the course of our study together. We would rather deal with these kinds of issues sooner rather than later to ensure the most successful and meaningful process possible.

Fall Ceremonies

When a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony occurs from September through January, crucial preparation will occur during the summer months. Please realize that extended periods away from regular sessions with the Rabbi and Cantor at this point in the preparation process can lead to unnecessary challenges for the student and you. Please consult with the Rabbi and Cantor regarding your summer plans **before** those plans are confirmed.

What Occurs During the Service?

Our Bar/Bat Mitzvah students lead the great majority of our service. This is not a show or performance. Please encourage your family and friends to not merely attend but to participate! It will be so much more meaningful for you and your son or daughter.

There are two *Shabbat* services during which the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* and his/her family will participate: Friday night and Saturday morning/afternoon.

During the *Erev* (evening) *Shabbat* service the family is given the honor of lighting the *Shabbat* candles. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* will lead some of the prayers in Hebrew.

At the Friday evening celebration a representative from the Board of Trustees makes a presentation of gifts from the Temple to the student. If you know someone who is a member of the Board, or you have a close personal friend who is a Temple member, you may wish to personally invite one of them to perform this honor. If you have no preference, a member of the Board will volunteer to be in attendance at the service and present the gifts.

On *Shabbat* morning/afternoon, participation is more involved. Early in the service, the Rabbi will call forward the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* and his/her parents to place upon the child's shoulders his/her *tallit* (His/her *kippah* should already be on). Each *tallit* presenter will read introductory statements in the printed service and, led by the Cantor, all will sing the *Shehecheyanu* (please practice this!), the blessing which offers thanks for reaching this joyous occasion. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* will recite the blessing for putting on the *tallit* before you help him/her with it. Following the presentation of the *tallit*, the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* will begin to lead the congregation in prayer (and the parents are seated).

Handing Down the Torah from Generation to Generation

Just prior to the reading from the *Torah*, the Rabbi will call the parents of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* forward along with his/her generational representatives to form a line heading from the ark to the front of the *Bima* to hand down the *Torah* from generation to generation. Those participating should be any great-grandparents, grandparents and the parents. **Note:** Since aunts and uncles are of the same generation as the parents and siblings are of the same generation of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, for ease of logistics, we respectfully request that you give honors other than this one to aunts, uncles and siblings.*(see "Special Circumstances" below)

For families in which **one of the parents is not Jewish**, his/her participation in handing down the Torah should be **the same as the Jewish parent**. It makes **no difference** which parent is the last in line and finally hands the *Torah* to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Both parents have raised this young man/woman with a Jewish identity. Both "handed the Torah", figuratively, to their son/daughter for many years. Now, on the day of their son/daughter becoming a Bar/Bat

Mitzvah at Beth Shir Shalom, each will have an equal and honored role in *literally* giving the Torah to him/her.

Likewise, if there are non-Jewish grandparents, we strongly desire and recommend that they have equal participation in this ritual. Non-Jewish grandparents have played an important role in their grandchild's Jewish identity. At Beth Shir Shalom, **we honor their support no differently than that of Jewish grandparents**. Most crucially, it is often deeply symbolic for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah that all of his/her family participates. Please discuss this ceremony with all who will be involved to help everyone feel comfortable and positively about their involvement. Please don't hesitate to call the Rabbi or Cantor with any questions or concerns.

Special circumstances:

- **Divorced/separated parents** – It is important to remember that this day is about your child. Even if it's difficult it is imperative for you to put aside *all* conflicts in order to eliminate external stresses on this most special occasion. Remember this is a day about ***your child's entire*** family.
- Even if the parents of Bar/Bat Mitzvah are divorced or separated, they are still his/her parents and at Beth Shir Shalom, both will participate in handing down the Torah.
 - **Partners of divorced/separated parents** – To avoid burdening a thirteen year-old with what are often complex and delicate decisions regarding diplomacy, feelings and symbolism, we find that it is usually more comfortable if partners (by marriage or not) of divorced or separated parents *not be involved* in passing the Torah. Since individual circumstances will be different, please discuss this with the Rabbi if you have questions or concerns.
 - **With the understanding that comes from decades of experience and with great respect for your situation, we recommend that you do not initiate a conversation about who passes the Torah with your son/daughter until the Rabbi has an opportunity to glean your son/daughter's perspective. Afterward, he will meet with both of you together or each of you individually to help make final decisions.**
- **A grandparent, great-grandparent or other with limited mobility** –
 - Please inform us if a ramp would be helpful.
 - The Rabbi can facilitate the participation of a person with limited mobility by bringing the Torah to him/her in his/her. Please make sure this person situates him/herself for the service in the front, cutout row (or at the end of one of the other cutout rows) on the south side of the sanctuary.
- **A deceased or non-attending grandparent on one or both sides of the family** – Rather than leaving that position empty, we have suggestions for surrogate participants. You might consider:
 - A sibling of the deceased or infirm person
 - A person of that generation (family or not) who fills a parental role parents of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and/or a grandparental role for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

- *** (The following is an exception to the previous comment about aunts and uncles):** Aunts and/or Uncles of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah might stand in for deceased or infirm grandparent.
- *** (The following is an exception to the previous comment about siblings)** Especially in “blended families”, but in other circumstances as well, siblings can often be quite a bit older than the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and are, therefore, not exactly in the same generation as him/her. In such cases, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah might see a significantly older sibling as having played a role in “handing down of the Torah” and Jewish identity to him/her. Since, chronology would dictate that this sibling(s) would come after the parents, and “replace” the parents as the ones to literally hand on the Torah, please discuss with the Rabbi options as to where an older sibling might be placed in the line.
- Please don’t hesitate to call the Rabbi with any questions or concerns.

ALIYOT: BEING CALLED UP TO SAY BLESSINGS DURING THE TORAH READING

After the *Hakafah* (carrying the *Torah* around the sanctuary), there are up to five opportunities for family or friends to be honored with an *Aliyah*, reciting the blessings before and after the reading of each sub-section of the *Torah* portion. **Please make certain that those who have been given the honor of reciting these blessings are prepared and well-practiced!(An MP3 of the blessing and it’s text are available on our website.)** We have seen too many a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* become embarrassed and flustered when friends or relatives (even parents!) are unable to say the blessings smoothly and with relatively assured pronunciation.

The second to last *Aliyah* is usually reserved for a parent or parents (so that they are present on the pulpit when their son/daughter recites the blessings). The last *Aliyah*, called the *maftir*, is always reserved for the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. This means you have three *Aliyot* to give as honors. Please assign no more than two people to each *Aliyah*. (Special circumstances please consult with the Cantor and/or the Rabbi).

After the reading of the *Torah*, the *Torah* scroll is lifted from the podium and redressed (by assigned guests). Then the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* reads the *Haftarah*. After the *Torah* is placed back in the ark, the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* delivers his/her sermon, after which the parents speak to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

Your opportunity to speak to your son/daughter on this special occasion.

This is a highly emotional moment and **not** the best time for extemporaneous speeches or speaking from an outline or sketchy notes (even if you are accustomed to that in other settings). We **strongly** recommend that you write out what you are going to say completely and **keep your remarks to about two and one-half minutes** (longer than you think!). Please, remember, ***this is still part of the service. Therefore:***

1. *Please do not do an entire review of the life of your son or daughter; which is much more appropriate during your reception. Nor is this the time to tell them the flood of feelings you are having at this moment. Speak to him/her about him/her.*
2. *Please do not speak to the congregation. This is not the time to thank everyone for coming, etc. (Again, much better done at the reception.) Speak to your son or daughter. (You may do so into the microphone or step away for a private message -- or a bit of both.)*

Immediately Following the Service

The *Kiddush* and *Motzi* take place on the *Bima* at the end of the service. This makes it much easier to begin your celebration **immediately** without having to try to re-gather the entire congregation in another location.

We invite you to consider readings or songs you would like to include in the service. *Please review them first* with both the Rabbi and the Cantor.

A Word About Classmates and Friends Attending the Celebration...

We strongly encourage you to invite your son/daughter's friends to attend this important moment in his/her life. Sometimes, especially for those friends who do not understand the importance of this milestone nor the hard work and dedication required to achieve this goal, it is hard for them stay focused and supportive during the service. It is the policy of Beth Shir Shalom that all service attendees have two options:

1. Be an active participant in the service. This will help our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* feel the support of the entire community.
2. If they feel the need to talk to friends, we respectfully ask that they do so outside of the synagogue (i.e., completely outside the building, not in the foyer of the synagogue). Our sanctuary resonates sound and the quietest conversation can be a major distraction for our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Our only focus is our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* and his/her experience. We consider it our responsibility to not allow distractions to hurt the experience.

In order that we may do our best to hold the attention of these unaccompanied kids and young adults, we will reserve rows near the front of the congregation specifically for them. Our greeter will escort them to the proper seats before the service begins. So that we may help the friends of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* to remember our policy we ask that you assign at least four people to sit both in front of and behind them. These people should be of strong enough character to be able to give these children and young adults our two options (see above).

Will a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date Ever Be Postponed Or Canceled?

Yes, occasionally, it becomes necessary to postpone or cancel a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date due to insufficient preparation on the student's part. At Beth Shir Shalom, we want this experience to fill our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* students with the pride of accomplishment, the pride that comes with hard work and dedication. This kind of pride will last a lifetime. Should our students choose not to or be unable to invest the time to work towards this goal, or should they *refuse* to practice, it may become necessary to either postpone or cancel the scheduled ceremony. Keep in mind that we are not concerned with the quantity of material mastered, but the quality of the effort put into the process. We would never postpone or cancel a date simply because a candidate was unable to learn the entire service. If our candidate shows a lack of effort over the period of several weeks we will schedule a meeting with the Rabbi, Cantor, student and parents to deal with this issue and work for a resolution. If after this meeting, and sufficient follow-up, the student continues to be insufficiently prepared, postponing or canceling a service may be inevitable. Communication plays an important role in this process. Parents will always be kept informed of the students' preparedness, effort and progress. As soon as we see an issue arising, we will work hard together to resolve it quickly, long before we have to make a decision to either postpone or cancel a scheduled ceremony.

Is Photography/Video Taping Permitted During the Service?

Photography and/or videography are permitted only from the windows of the upstairs offices. You may wish to use a remote microphone for the video camera because the audio portion of your tape may not be very loud or distinct from that distance. Should your videographer have any audio questions, feel free to have them contact the Temple Manager. We recommend that family members not be asked to do the video taping so they can participate fully in the service along with everyone else.

The Temple is open 1 1/2 - 2 hours before the service. That is ample time for you to meet with your photographer, and you may take pictures up to 30 (thirty) minutes before the service begins. The Rabbi and Cantor will be available for pictures immediately prior to the service. The Rabbi and Cantor do not wear Shabbat dress for the practice service and are, as a result, not able to accommodate photographs on that day.

We ask that you instruct your photographer to follow the guidelines listed below.

1. No one may stand on any furniture in the Sanctuary. This includes the benches and chairs on the *Bima*. Should your photographer wish to take pictures from an elevated position they must provide their own ladder. Because of liability issues the Temple cannot provide a ladder for you to use.

2. No *Bima* furniture may be moved under any circumstances! This includes the *Torah* Table and chairs on the *Bima*. We will move the microphones out of the way during pictures, and will put them into place for the service 30 (thirty) minutes before the service begins.

3. We encourage you to consider taking pictures with our *Torah*. Should you decide to do so, we ask that either the Rabbi or Cantor be there to facilitate this. We ask this to ensure that the *Torah* is treated properly and that it remains rolled to the appropriate position for the upcoming service.

A Word About Invitations

1. Whom to Invite

Beth Shir Shalom is blessed by your membership and participation. This also means that our *B'ney Mitzvah* classes are growing larger. We know that inviting the entire class can be financially difficult. Still, if it is at all possible, please do so. Being twelve and thirteen is a challenging and often fragile experience. To be one of the "uninvited" can be devastatingly painful. Please follow through on what Hillel taught us, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor." If you would not want your child to be among the "uninvited" at a given occasion then invite the *entire* class to your reception. Teach your child the fine art of diplomacy and protecting the feelings of others.

As an alternative, invite only *one or two people* from the class and hold a class party either on a class day or at some other time in some other venue. These are not merely suggestions. These are *policies* of our *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* year. We thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Fee

Temple policy requires that your account with the Temple be current in order for your son/daughter to become *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Also, there is a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Fee which helps defray some of the costs of the occasion. Some of the items covered by this fee are:

- *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* supplies, materials, etc.
- Study with the Cantor and all attendant materials. (booklets, cd's, copies, etc.)
- Study with the Rabbi.
- Flowers on the *Bima* Friday night and *Shabbat* morning, with a note in the *Shabbat* Handout that your family has sponsored the flowers and *Oneg*.
- *Oneg Shabbat* [reception following Friday service (*Challah*, grape juice, cookies and cakes)]. Contact the Temple Office for details about sponsoring a more elaborate *Oneg*.
- *Kiddush* following *Shabbat* service. (*Challah* and grape juice ONLY!)
- Professional musical services at the ceremony.

The Reception

We hope that you will consider holding your reception at Beth Shir Shalom. It adds a dimension of affiliation with the Jewish community and it supports the Temple. Please contact the Temple office as soon as possible to reserve the Social Hall and to find out what else the Temple has available for your reception.

Tzedakah

As part of the adult experience, it is strongly encouraged that the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* set aside a **small** amount of his/her gift money as *tzedakah*. This is an important *mitzvah* to make part of their adult lives. A good percentage to set aside would be between one and two percent of what s/he receives. This translates to about one-sixtieth, a traditional amount of a farmer's field set aside for the poor. It is encouraged that the donation be divided between a Jewish cause/recipient (you may wish to consider Beth Shir Shalom and any of our "funds" listed below) and a non-Jewish or secular cause/recipient. In this way the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is also responding to Hillel's injunction, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And yet, if I am only for myself, what am I?" (*Pirkey Avot 1:14*)

It is also appropriate for the **family** to give *tzedakah* in honor of this occasion. We hope that you will consider Beth Shir Shalom as a recipient. If you do, a nice way to both give to the Temple and to create a **permanent** record of this event would be to purchase a leaf on our "**Tree of Life**" engraved in honor of your son/daughter and the date s/he became *Bat/Bar Mitzvah*. Please contact the Temple office for information about these permanent reminders of your special event.

If you are interested in contributing to one of the many funds at Beth Shir Shalom, here is a list of possibilities. Contact the Temple office for more details.

- Youth Group Fund
- Yizkor (building) Fund
- ECC Scholarship Fund
- Religious School Scholarship Fund
- Music Resource Fund
- Dues Scholarship Fund
- Stearn Memorial Fund (Confirmation trip, camp & retreat scholarships, etc.)
- Cantor's Discretionary Fund
- Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

You may also wish to add 3% to the budget of your reception and give it to *Mazon*, an organization that distributes funds to those helping the poor and hungry. They do their work very well. Contact the Rabbi or the Cantor for details.

In Conclusion

It is the sincere desire of your Rabbi, Cantor, Education Director, staff, faculty and Temple Board of Trustees that your son/daughter's becoming *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* helps you rejoice in his/her coming of age. It is our prayer that the preparation for this event will permanently enrich his/her knowledge of Judaism and motivate him/her to pursue Jewish studies enthusiastically throughout life. We hope that each *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, and your whole family, will be drawn closer to Jewish tradition and experience a wonderful spirituality through this event. Your continued affiliation with Beth Shir Shalom will demonstrate to your son or daughter that Judaism is a lifelong involvement that will continue to enrich his/her life.

All of us at Beth Shir Shalom extend a warm "*Mazal tov!*" to you on the occasion of your son/daughter becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. We want you to know that we will be available to you, as we always have been, to address your concerns and questions. Please feel free to call or stop by.