

Dear B'nai Mitzvah Families,

Mazel Tov on your upcoming celebration! Becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is one of the greatest events in the life cycle of a Jewish family, and we are honored to share this special milestone with you. We are available to be of help in any way we can, and look forward to working with you and your children over the coming months.

The information included in this manual is designed to help make preparing for a Bar or Bat Mitzvah as smooth and meaningful as possible, and we hope you will read it carefully. Please call any time with questions or concerns.

Again, Mazel Tov and all our best wishes at this exciting time.

The BHCBE B'nai Mitzvah Team

## **Introduction and Who's Who in the BMP (B'nai Mitzvah Programming)**

B'nai Mitzvah planning at BHCBE is truly a collaborative effort between our clergy, the synagogue's administrative staff, and our B'nai Mitzvah families working together to ensure preparations are smooth, effective, and tailored to the individual needs of each student. Below are key members of the BMP team:

- **Cantor Pavel Roytman**, coordinator of the B'nai Mitzvah Program and point person for any questions or concerns you might have. Working closely with Rabbi Tucker and Rabbi Cohen, the Cantor will assign a B'nai Mitzvah date for each family. The date assignments usually take place three years prior to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Once the date is scheduled, Cantor will set up annual B'nai Mitzvah meetings for families to attend.

A year before the Bar or Bat Mitzvah, Cantor will contact each family to set up tutoring sessions. From there on the Cantor oversees preparation of your child until the actual day of their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Our goal is for each child to take a leadership role that is meaningful and to feel confident and well-prepared on his or her special day. Cantor Roytman ensures this occurs, providing guidance and support and can be contacted at [cantorroytman@bhce.org](mailto:cantorroytman@bhce.org) or by phone at 847-256-1213 x13.

- **Rabbi Annie Tucker**, works with Bar or Bat Mitzvah students, teaching in the BMP program and meeting with students individually to prepare their D'var Torah. Rabbi conducts the Bar or Bat Mitzvah service and has the privilege of speaking to each child from the Bimah. Our goal is for students to understand their Torah portion well and to be able to find meaning in it, demonstrating how the text is personally relevant.

Rabbi Tucker is excited to meet B'nai Mitzvah families and to begin getting to know one another. Rabbi will contact you individually to set up personal meetings, but you should feel free to be in touch with her at any time. Rabbi Tucker can be reached at [rabiannietucker@bhce.org](mailto:rabiannietucker@bhce.org) or by phone at 847-256-1213 x12.

- **Rabbi Michael Cohen**, involved with the educational component of the BMP and is responsible for working with students on their Mitzvah projects. Our goal is for each child to combine learning with action, giving back to the community in a way that speaks to his or her individual interests and talents. Rabbi Cohen helps to guide students in the appropriate direction and meets with each student a year in advance of their Bat or Bat Mitzvah. Rabbi Cohen can be reached at [rabbicohen@bhcbe.org](mailto:rabbicohen@bhcbe.org) or by phone at 847-256-0755 x28.
- **Executive Director**, manages logistical aspects of each B'nai Mitzvah celebration including room reservations, Bimah decorations, financial arrangements, picture taking and everything else. The executive director can be reached by phone at 847-256-1213 ext. 15.
- **The Catering Director**, responsible for all of the kiddush menu-planning and food related elements of the day. The director can be reached at [catering@bhcbe.org](mailto:catering@bhcbe.org) or phone at 847-256-1213 ext. 16

## Policies and suggestions for Bar/Bat Mitzvah

### ADVANCE PREPARATION

#### A) Setting Date and Time

The date of Bar/Bat Mitzvah is set by Cantor in coordination with the synagogue calendar, and in accordance with the student's abilities. All is conditioned upon your child's successful participation in our regular five-year Hebrew Division program or its equivalent.

#### B) Religious/Educational Requirements

Five years of attendance at the BHCBE Academy or the equivalent (day school) is required. Students must successfully complete each year of the Academy and demonstrate good attendance. In extenuating circumstances whereby a student joins the Academy less than 5 years before their Bar or Bat Mitzvah date additional outside tutoring might be required.

During the year of Bar/Bat Mitzvah instruction, students are encouraged to attend Shabbat services on a regular basis. We also hope that parents will attend services along with their children in order to support them.

All B'nai Mitzvah receptions at Beth Hillel Congregation Bnai Emunah must be kosher and we encourage outside celebrations to similarly observe Jewish dietary customs. This policy reflects religious values of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

#### C) Tutoring

During the year before Bar/Bat Mitzvah, your child will meet individually with Cantor. Usually lessons begin seven to nine months in advance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date and focus on skills necessary for the celebration. Based on individual circumstances, it is often possible to begin lessons after families are initially contacted by the Cantor. Cantor is open to discuss your particular situation in order to set up a schedule that fits your family's needs.

D) Derech Eretz (Considerate Behavior)

Beth Hillel Congregation Bnai Emunah nurtures a sense of caring, kindness and sensitivity. We encourage families to invite all students in their child's Academy class to their celebrations. When this is not possible, we strongly urge you to consider the following guidelines; if fifty percent or more of the class is invited to the celebration, the rest of the class is to be invited as well. If you do not plan on inviting the entire Academy class to your Simcha, please send invitations by mail rather than handing them out at school.

E) Aliyot and Other Honors

We look forward to having your family members and friends participate in your celebration. You can expect the Ritual Chair to contact your family about a month in advance of the B'nai Mitzvah to help you assign honors; please see the Ritual Committee insert for contact info and details. Feel free to reach out earlier if you would like.

Those relatives and guests designated to read Torah or to lead T'filah on the day of Bar/Bat Mitzvah are required to contact Cantor in advance. Cantor will provide guidance to those in need of help in preparing for the event. He will also make sure the appropriate reading is adequately prepared.

## **Mitzvah Project**

One of the most profound ways of growing is through helping change the lives of others. We believe by taking the "Mitzvah" part of "B'nai Mitzvah" seriously, we give our participants the chance to better experience what it really means to be a full member of the Jewish community. The Jewish people have a long history of being generous with their time and resources to make the world a better place and we would like your child to take his or her place in that longstanding noble tradition.

Each B'nai Mitzvah student is expected to choose a Mitzvah project that is both personally meaningful and helpful to the community. The more the project is your child's idea, the more likely he or she will find it meaningful. Part of the experience of being a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is growing independence. This is a way for your child to exercise his or her independence productively.

Rabbi Cohen supervises the projects and is a resource for choosing the right project for your child. He will also check in periodically to see how the project is progressing. We require each B'nai Mitzvah student to participate in at least 13 hours of social justice related work - the majority of which should be in their chosen Mitzvah project.

We look forward to partnering with you and your child in putting the "Mitzvah" back in B'nai Mitzvah!

## **Model B'nai Mitzvah Preparation Timeline**

### **3 Years**

- Attending the "three -year out " meeting where the initial introductions are made and the B'nai Mitzvah Packet is received
- Setting up/finalizing Bar or Bat Mitzvah Date with the Cantor

### **2 Years**

- Attending the "two- year out " meeting for additional info and details

## **1 Year**

- Contact photographer and or videographer, sign venue contracts
- Touch base with catering. Feel free to contact our catering manager via e-mail [catering@bhcbe.org](mailto:catering@bhcbe.org) or phone 847-256-1213 ext. 16
- Connect with Rabbi Cohen regarding your child's B'nai Mitzvah Project.
- Connect with Cantor Roytman regarding tutoring.

## **7 Months**

- Connect with BHCBE regarding Kiddush

## **3 Months**

- Email picture of child for the BHCBE Bulletin
- Contact florist
- Order kippot
- Purchase tallit and tefillin (these items are available for purchase through the sisterhood gift shop)

## **2 Months**

- Connect with Rabbi Tucker regarding D'var Torah

## **1 Month**

- Schedule pictures with synagogue and rehearsal day with the Cantor
- Connect with Ritual Chairperson regarding assigning honors (aliyot, ark openings, etc...)
- Finalize all catering

## **The Week Before**

- The Saturday before, each Bar/Bat Mitzvah and their family are invited to serve as greeters at Shabbat morning services
- If the child is preparing the first three readings of the Torah they are encouraged to read those during Saturday night (Mincha) and Monday and Thursday morning (Shacharit) services of the week leading up to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The family is encouraged to attend as well. It is a good time to take pictures or videos during the actual service.

## **The Day Of**

The day of Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a very exciting but understandably stressful day for all those involved. So, here are some guidelines and tips on how to go through it successfully.

- Get a good nights sleep
- Before leaving the house check and make sure to bring all B'nai Mitzvah materials (D'var Torah, copies of the blessings, etc...) with you
- Be at the synagogue at the beginning of the services at 9:30 AM
- Sit on the right (cantor) side of the Bimah
- Participate in the service to the best of your ability
- If unsure feel free to ask questions. Everyone is there to help you and to cheer you on
- Relax and enjoy!

*Mazel Tov*

*From all of us at BHCBE!*



Beth Hillel Congregation Bnai Emunah

# **Bnai Mitzvah Guide**



