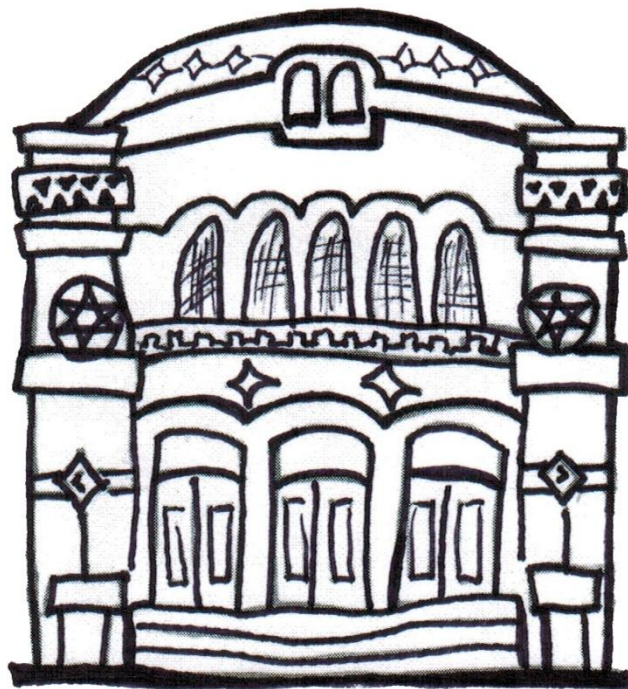


**TOURO SYNAGOGUE
B'NAI MITZVAH HANDBOOK
2016-2017**



**RABBI ALEXIS BERK
CANTOR DAVID MINTZ
RABBI TODD SILVERMAN, DIRECTOR OF LIFELONG LEARNING
KERRY TAPIA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

BAR/BAT MITZVAH TIMELINE & CHECKLIST

Before your child enters 3rd Grade

- Register for Touro Uptown Hebrew Program

During your child's 4th grade year

- Attend B'nai Mitzvah Orientation Meeting, selecting top choices for Bar/Bat Mitzvah date
- Submit deposit of B'nai Mitzvah fee to confirm date on synagogue calendar

10 months before Bar/Bat Mitzvah

- Student meets with Cantor Mintz for Hebrew assessment

9 months before Bar/Bat Mitzvah (no later than 7 months)

- Submit remaining balance of B'nai Mitzvah fee
- Student begins meeting weekly with Cantor Mintz, preparing the Torah and Haftarah readings
- Students meet with Rabbi Silverman to begin exploring options for a Mitzvah Project
- Parents meet with Kerry Tapia to discuss plans for Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration (e.g., Shabbat Dinner, Kiddush luncheon, and/or other use of facilities)

5 months before Bar/Bat Mitzvah

- Student begins meeting with Dr. Bernie Jaffe, studying the Torah portion, gaining a deeper understanding of its meaning, in preparation for writing a D'var Torah

4 months before Bar/Bat Mitzvah

- Parents and student finalize Mitzvah Project and work with Rabbi Silverman to create a plan
- Parents turn in Facility Use Agreement to Kerry Tapia with all details for luncheon reception and/or evening reception at the synagogue with a 50% deposit

2 months before Bar/Bat Mitzvah

- Student begins weekly meetings with Rabbi Berk to prepare their D'var Torah

1-1½ month(s) before Bar/Bat Mitzvah

- Parents turn in Order of Service, photo of student and bulletin information forms to the synagogue office **(Due the 10th of the month before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date)**

Week of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah

- Final rehearsal for student and parents with the Rabbis and the Cantor in Sanctuary – Thursday, 4:00-5:30 pm

INTRODUCTION TO THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH

What Does It Mean to Become Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

Our tradition teaches that at age 13, each of us reaches the age of Bar or Bat Mitzvah (son or daughter of the commandments), marking the time when we take responsibility for our Jewish lives and identities, becoming fully engaged members of the Jewish community. Indeed, one does not *have* a Bar or Bat Mitzvah – one *becomes* Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

In anticipation of this time of transition, students embark on several months of preparation, in which they build on the foundation of their Jewish education by engaging in the study of Torah, emerging as leaders in our prayer community, and discovering that they have the ability to create meaningful change in the world. This process culminates as the students are invited to lead a Shabbat morning service and read and teach from the Torah, taking part in the sacred ritual that sustains the Jewish community each and every week.

Anticipating the Sacred Work Ahead

B'nai Mitzvah, as the old saying goes, is a journey not a destination, and the process of this journey is as sacred as the ceremony itself. In the midst of academic and extra-curricular commitments, it is vital that space and time be created for this process to take place. For some, this may mean not being on a certain sports team this year. For others, it may mean not being in the school play this year. We hope that during this year, you will make room for this process to be a priority (perhaps among many other priorities) in the life of your child and your family.

PREPARING TO BECOME BAR/BAT MITZVAH

Touro Religious School and Uptown Hebrew Programs

The curricula of the Touro Synagogue Religious School and Uptown Hebrew programs are designed so that each student matriculating through them has the skills that will enable them to succeed in preparation for Bar or Bat Mitzvah and in an active life as a Jewish adult. Many of these skills are integrated in the 6th grade year. In Uptown Hebrew on Wednesday afternoons, for instance, after three years of learning to unlock, decode and read the Hebrew language, our 6th graders learn and master the prayers that they will lead during their Bar or Bat Mitzvah service. In Religious School on Sunday mornings, they learn Torah Trope, the crucial skill that will enable them to chant from the Torah. They will also come to understand how the entire Shabbat service is structured and appreciate the meaning of how these prayers link together.

For these reasons, regular attendance at Religious School and Uptown Hebrew is the biggest factor in setting our students up for success as they prepare for Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

Hebrew Assessment

Before formal preparation for becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah begins, each student will meet with Cantor Mintz for a Hebrew reading assessment. This is an opportunity for the cantor to gauge the student's comfort with Hebrew decoding and their familiarity with the prayers of the Shabbat service. If a student has not attended Uptown Hebrew (where Hebrew decoding and Shabbat prayers are taught) or 6th grade religious school (where Torah trope is taught), we will likely require that the student meet with a private Hebrew tutor, in addition to their weekly sessions with Cantor Mintz.

Chanting Torah and Haftarah

For nine months prior to becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah, each student will have weekly 20-minute sessions with Cantor Mintz, in order to prepare the Torah and Haftarah readings. They will prepare approximately 9-15 verses of Torah and 5-8 verses of the Haftarah (readings from the Prophets).

At least one parent will be expected to attend the very first session (all subsequent sessions will be 1-on-1 with the student), when Cantor Mintz will orient you to the overall process, and the ways that parents can best support and assist their children as they engage in this important learning.

These weekly sessions with Cantor Mintz are meant to reinforce all the learning and preparation that each student is doing at home. To that end, it is crucial that they practice with audio recordings, 15-20 minutes a day, at least 4-5 days a week. At Touro Synagogue, all audio recordings are centralized online at www.soundcloud.com/tourosynagogue. Each student will have a designated playlist in their name for easy access. For practicing on the go, they can even download a SoundCloud app for mobile and tablet devices.

Torah Study

Students becoming Bar and Bat Mitzvah are asked not only to read and chant a portion of the Torah, but also to study and grapple with the text. Each student will work with Dr. Bernie Jaffe in studying their Torah portion in context, looking closely at the text itself, as well as some rabbinic interpretations. Through this process, we hope each student can more fully understand the relevance of Torah in our daily lives.

D'var Torah

Taking this study to the next level, each student is asked to offer a *D'var Torah*: an interpretation and teaching about their Torah portion that they will share with the community. The *D'var Torah* consists of four sections: commentary on the portion, an explanation of their mitzvah project, the student's reflections on his or her Jewish experiences, and statements of gratitude towards the

teachers and family. Rabbi Berk works closely with each student in preparing their *D'var Torah* in the 6-8 weeks prior to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

Mitzvah Project

Each student will plan and organize a project focusing on an area of social justice that is meaningful to him or her. This component of preparation of Bar or Bat Mitzvah is meant to instill in each student the very real sense that they can make meaningful change in the world, and that doing so is part of the responsibility of being a Jewish adult. Students will meet and consult with Rabbi Silverman for guidance throughout this process. In the past, students have organized book drives for local schools, engaged in full-day service projects, built ongoing relationships with residents in assisted living facilities, and a multitude of other projects which have directly impacted the lives of those around them.

The Ways We Learn

Proverbs teaches: “*Educate each child according to their own way; then when they grow old, they will not depart [from what they have learned].*” Indeed, each one of us has a different learning style. Given that everyone learns best in different ways, one of the greatest benefits of the one-on-one learning that takes place in preparation for Bar and Bat Mitzvah is that the entire process can be specialized for the student. For this reason, there will be an opportunity in your first session with Cantor Mintz (that both the student and at least one parent attend) to discuss how your child learns best and how both the parents and our clergy can work together in supporting them.

Going beyond learning styles, we know that there are some in our community with special needs. In these cases, having a specialized learning program is even more beneficial. Our clergy are eager to have an open, loving, and confidential dialogue with you throughout this process. If your child has an Individualized Education Program in their secular school, we encourage you to share that with our clergy to whatever extent you are comfortable, so that we may create a learning program for your child that meets their needs and helps them to achieve the important goals of becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The more you can enlighten us about your child, the more we can accommodate the unique gifts of each student.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN THE SHABBAT SERVICE

While each Bar or Bat Mitzvah student leads the Shabbat morning service, there are a number of ways that members of your family can actively participate in the service themselves. This begins on Friday night, when members of the family are invited to lead the English readings before Candle Lighting and Kiddush. Later in the service, the Bar or Bat Mitzvah student is invited to lead the congregation in chanting *v'ahavta*.

In the Shabbat morning service, the parents are invited to offer a blessing to their child, following the opening song. This is a wonderful opportunity to frame the moment in the context of your

family's heritage and journey. It has been our experience that the most poignant and beautiful words are offered when parents write them down beforehand and limit themselves to a few minutes. Parents are encouraged to view this as a moment of blessing, rather than a speech to their child.

This is also the moment when the student is presented with a *tallit* (prayer shawl) for the first time. Sometimes families choose to use a special *tallit* that has been in the family for generations. Other families buy their son or daughter a new *tallit* for this tradition.

There are several points in the Torah Service where honors may be handed out to family members and friends:

Aliyot and Torah Blessings – There are typically three *aliyot* (recitations of the Torah blessings) in the Torah Service. While the third *aliyah* is typically reserved for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah student and the second one for the parents, the first blessing may be given out as a way to honor loved ones. These blessings can be found in the Logistical Planning Supplement and recordings of the blessings are on the Touro Synagogue *Sound Cloud* playlist.

Torah passing – We symbolically mark the passing down of Jewish heritage with the physical passing of the Torah from generation to generation. It is common for the family to invite up grandparents, aunts and uncles, and other family members to participate in the powerful moment of passing down the Torah scroll.

Dressing the Torah (*G'lilah*) – After the Torah reading is completed, the Torah is dressed before the congregation before it is returned to the ark. This is a wonderful honor for a younger family member.

Some may have questions about the participation of non-Jewish family members in various elements of Shabbat services. **Please know that Touro Synagogue is 100% committed to the inclusion of all family members, regardless of faith background.** We are eager to speak with you about ways that your entire family may participate in and receive meaningful honors on this special day.

LOGISTICAL PLANNING SUPPLEMENT

Choosing a Date

During the spring of the 4th grade year, families are invited to a B'nai Mitzvah orientation meeting. During the course of that meeting, they will have the chance to submit preferences for a Bar or Bat Mitzvah date. These dates are then assigned on a first come first served basis, once the deposit of the B'nai Mitzvah fee is submitted. Families are encouraged to select a Shabbat morning during the academic year, following your child's 13th birthday. This allows for your celebration to be included in the same year as their Religious School classmates.

Fees

Touro Synagogue will assess your membership account \$675 (subject to change) at the beginning of the fiscal year prior to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. This fee covers all materials, lessons and books that you and your child will need throughout the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process. Half of this fee is due in order to reserve your Bar or Bat Mitzvah date on the synagogue calendar. The balance of this fee is due before sessions with Cantor Mintz may begin.

Should you desire to host a luncheon or evening reception in honor your child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah, additional facility fees will apply. For information on these fees, please refer to the Documents and Forms Supplement.

It is customary to make a donation to the rabbis' or cantor's discretionary funds at the time of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. These funds go towards charitable causes and help support programming at the synagogue.

An inability to pay does not disqualify your son or daughter from celebrating this important milestone. Our Executive Director, Kerry Tapia, is available to discuss any and all special arrangements with you.

Providing Ushers

In order to ensure that all guests are adequately welcomed, the family of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is expected to designate two adult members of the Touro community to serve as ushers for the morning service. The simple duties include welcoming guests from the St. Charles Avenue doors and helping distribute prayer books. The usher can also be asked to reserve the forward rows of the sanctuary for family members.

Please provide Annahi Tapia with the names of your ushers no later than one week before the service. The ushers will be asked to introduce him/herself to Annahi at least 25 minutes prior to the beginning of the service (10:05 a.m.) near the St. Charles Avenue entrance. They will be asked to remain in the rear of the sanctuary until fifteen minutes after the service has begun.

The Invite List

During the process of determining your guest list, it can be challenging to remember all the various social circles and micro-communities to which you and your child are connected. When putting together your guest list, be sure to consider your child's religious school and Uptown Hebrew class, their secular school class and the Touro Synagogue religious school faculty and clergy.

Please keep in mind that the Touro community is invited to every Shabbat service. In turn, the congregation is also invited to join in any family-sponsored luncheon celebration that may follow the service.

Vendors

Photographers/Videographers

For those who wish to take posed photographs before the Shabbat morning service, doing so must begin at 9:30 a.m. and be completed no later than 10:15 a.m. Any photographers and/or videographers are asked to position themselves in the choir loft during the service and to refrain from using flashes. Photographers are not permitted in the aisles of the sanctuary during the service.

Flowers

Families are encouraged to arrange for flowers for Friday night and Saturday morning. Many families purchase one arrangement that is used for both services. This is completely appropriate. As Touro Synagogue has a wonderful tradition of flower sponsorships in honor of yahrtzeits and other occasions, please note that other donors to the Touro Synagogue Flower Fund may also be named as flower sponsors on the Shabbat of your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Flowers should be delivered no later than 4:00 p.m. on Friday; for Saturday morning, no later than 9:30 a.m. The total height from the base of the container to the top of the tallest flower can be no greater than 30 inches.

Additional Vendors

Some families choose to engage additional vendors such as musical entertainment, or custom-made invitations or *kippot*. Should you choose to do so, we recommend planning in advance, making arrangements no later than six months prior to your celebration.

Food

Caterers

Each caterer is different and therefore each may require different lead times. It is recommended that families be in touch with caterers one year before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date to ensure availability. (Some holiday periods and/or convention weekends may require more lead time, do not hesitate to call your caterer when you schedule your Bar/Bat Mitzvah date to get your name

on their calendar.) You may use any caterer that meets our insurance and kitchen requirements. For a list of caterers who are familiar with our requirements and facilities, see Annahi Tapia.

Friday Evening Community Shabbat Dinner

Immediately following Friday evening services, the congregation gathers in the Garden Pavilion for a community Shabbat Dinner. It is a custom to sponsor this dinner in honor of your child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah for a fee of \$250. This dinner frequently consists of an entrée, side dish, salad, desserts and beverages. Should you have particular dietary needs (vegetarian, vegan, dairy-free), we are happy to speak with you about accommodating those needs. If you would like something more elaborate for a Shabbat dinner, you are welcome to use a caterer. Please see the Forms and Documents supplement for more information about coordinating a caterer for Shabbat dinner. Any questions should be directed to Kerry Tapia.

Saturday Morning Kiddush Luncheon

Many families choose to host a *kiddush* luncheon in honor of their child in the Grant Meyer Garden Pavilion and/or Jacobs Social Hall. It is our practice to invite the members of the congregation who attended the Shabbat service to the luncheon. The decoration/preparation of the Garden Pavilion and Social Hall can begin on Saturday morning. All decorations must conform to guidelines that protect wallpaper and paint. Exits cannot be blocked under any circumstances. Questions about these guidelines can be answered by Annahi Tapia.

It is Touro Synagogue's policy to NOT permit any shellfish or pork products on the premises for any function. Please make sure your caterer is aware of our practices.

FORMS AND DOCUMENTS SUPPLEMENT

On the following pages you will find:

- **BAR/BAT MITZVAH INFORMATION & ORDER OF SERVICE INFORMATION FORMS**
This form provides our staff with various pieces of logistical information so that we may make all the necessary arrangements for your child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah. In completing these forms, you'll want to give some thought to who you would like to include for special honors in the service. This form will be e-mailed to you 8 weeks before the Bar or Bat Mitzvah, but is included here so that you can give some thought to these choices.
- **SCHEDULE OF FACILITY CHARGES FORM**
The fees associated with the luncheon and evening reception will be assessed to your family's congregational account, with a 50% deposit due four months prior to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The remaining balance is due the week prior.

Please contact Annahi Tapia with any questions about these materials.

BULLETIN INFORMATION

Please complete the following information and email or return a hard copy to the Synagogue office **by the 10th of the month prior** to your event date **ALONG WITH** a recent photo of your child for publication in the Synagogue Bulletin.

THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT

DATE OF BAR/BAT MITZVAH: _____

TORAH PORTION: _____

FULL NAME OF BAR/BAT MITZVAH STUDENT: _____

STUDENT'S HEBREW NAME: _____

PARENT NAMES: _____

PARENT HEBREW NAMES: _____

NAMES OF ANY SIBLINGS: _____

GRANDPARENTS' NAMES: *(living and deceased - please notate those deceased as "the late")*

ENROLLED IN GIFT OF ISRAEL PROGRAM: YES NO

PERSONAL STATEMENT:

Please write a short statement (about your Mitzvah Project and what it means to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah and email it to Annahi Tapia (annahi@touroynagogue.com) by the 10th of the month prior to your Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

BASIC INFORMATION FOR SYNAGOGUE OFFICE

FULL NAME OF STUDENT: _____

WILL YOU SPONSOR THE SHABBAT DINNER ON FRIDAY NIGHT? YES NO

Sponsoring a Touro Synagogue Shabbat Dinner costs \$250. Alternatively, if you'd like something more elaborate, you are welcome to use a caterer.

How shall we list the sponsors? _____

Caterer? If so, whom? _____

WILL YOU HAVE A LUNCHEON ON SATURDAY? YES NO

How shall we list the sponsors? _____

Caterer: _____

FLOWERS FOR EVENT: YES NO

How shall we list the sponsors? _____

Florist: _____ Phone # _____

ARE YOU PLANNING AN EVENING RECEPTION? YES NO

At Touro Synagogue? _____

Vendors: _____

ORDER OF SERVICE INFORMATION

Return to Synagogue office one month prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah

FULL NAME OF STUDENT: _____

FRIDAY NIGHT:

Names of those reciting:

ENGLISH READING AT CANDLE LIGHTING: _____

ENGLISH READING AT KIDDUSH: _____

SATURDAY MORNING:

PULPIT GUESTS: _____

ALIYOT:

This is a nice opportunity to honor parents and grandparents, or extended family and friends.

#1 _____

#2 _____

#3 (STUDENT) _____

Additional Honors available:

Dressing the Torah _____

Our custom is to include younger family members for *Kiddush* and *Hamotzi*.

USHERS: (adult members of the Touro community) _____

FLOWERS (if different arrangement from Friday):

Sponsors: _____

Florist: _____

FACILITY CHARGES:

		MEMBER PRICING	
ROOM	SQ. FT	After Hours	Open Hours
Jacobs Social Hall	2643	500.00	235.00
Grant Meyer Garden Pavilion	1926	375.00	180.00
Shushan Assembly	1300	235.00	130.00
All other rooms incl. Mautner *	each	50.00	25.00
Social Hall/Grant Meyer Garden Pavilion	4569	700.00	350.00
Grant Meyer Garden Pavilion/Shushan Assembly	3226	500.00	240.00
Social Hall/Garden Pavilion/Shushan Assembly	5869	925.00	410.00
Bowsky Garden		150.00	
Main Sanctuary/Bowsky Garden		375.00/2 hours (\$100 each add. Hr)	
Forgotson Chapel/Bowsky Garden		250.00/2 hours (\$75 each add. Hr)	

OPEN HOURS is during normal service times or office hours which the building would already be opened and staffed. Requesting use of the facility at any other time would be considered as AFTER HOURS.

Custodial Support Fee is \$45 per hour

Security Fee* is \$50 per hour (4 hr. min)

- * 1 officer is required at any event with more than 50 people
- * 2 officers are required for events with more than 150 people
- * Security is required at all evening events

Fees are subject to change.

For any questions regarding the facility fees, please consult with Kerry Tapia at 504.895.4843 or Kerry@tourosynagogue.com.

