

# B'NEI MITZVAH HANDBOOK

2023-2024 • TOURO SYNAGOGUE



**RABBI KATIE BAUMAN**  
**CANTOR KEVIN MARGOLIUS**  
**RABBI TODD SILVERMAN**  
**KURT JOSTES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



# B'NEI MITZVAH TIMELINE & CHECKLIST

## **11-13 months before Bar/Bat Mitzvah**

- Student and parents meet with Cantor for 1-2 preliminary meetings to go over details of the B'nei Mitzvah preparation process.

## **10 months before Bar/Bat Mitzvah (no later than 8 months)**

- Weekly tutoring begins with Cantor and/or Aaron, preparing Torah, Haftarah, and prayers from the Siddur.
- Submit remaining balance of B'nei Mitzvah fee.
- Parents meet with Annahi Tapia (info@touro-synagogue.com) to discuss plans for Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration (e.g., dinner, luncheon, and/or other use of facilities).

## **8 months before Bar/Bat Mitzvah**

- Student and parents meet with Rabbi Bauman to begin the Tzedek Project. Follow-up meetings happen 4 and 6 months before bar/bat mitzvah.
- Order a tallit. \*\*Beware: there are many vendors, especially on Amazon, that sell a fake tallit. We are happy to recommend vendors and/or take a look before you press order.

## **4 months before Bar/Bat Mitzvah**

- Parents turn in Facility Use Agreement to Annahi Tapia (info@touro-synagogue.com) with all details for synagogue reception/use of facilities with a 50% deposit.
- Send invitations. Make sure to invite the students in the religious school class, and don't forget to include the rabbis and cantor.

## **3 months before Bar/Bat Mitzvah**

- Student begins meeting with Rabbi Silverman to prepare their D'var Torah.

## **1 Month before Bar/Bat Mitzvah**

- Parents meet with Rabbi Bauman for a capstone meeting, finalize honors sheet.

## **Week of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah**

- Final run-through for student and parents with clergy in the Sanctuary: Tuesday or Wednesday, 4:00-5:30pm.

# INTRODUCTION

## **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.

Becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a profound experience for the entire family. What a blessing it is to stand with a young Jewish man or woman as they open the Torah for the first time! Central to the experience of becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Touro Synagogue is a serious and spirited engagement with Torah and the richness of Jewish tradition; a questioning of theology and personal religious commitment; and the privilege and responsibility of leading and teaching the congregation on Shabbat.

## **Anticipating the Sacred Work Ahead**

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.

B'nei 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 extracurricular 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

## **Uptown Hebrew and Yamim Yafim**

The curricula of the Yamim Yafim 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 an active life as a Jewish adult. In Uptown Hebrew, students learn the Hebrew skills that they will depend on to complete their daily practice over the months leading up to the service. At Yamim Yafim, our students participate in services which model Hebrew prayers in particular, and more broadly, the ways Jews come together to pray. Because of this, regular attendance at Yamim Yafim 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, students may meet with the Cantor for a Hebrew reading assessment (except when we are confident students are Hebrew-ready based on Uptown Hebrew assessments). This is an opportunity to gauge the student's comfort with Hebrew decoding and their familiarity with the prayers of the Shabbat service. Students who have difficulty reading Hebrew will need to meet with a private Hebrew tutor to master that skill before Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation can begin.

## **Tutoring**

For eight to ten months prior to becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah, each student will have weekly tutoring with Cantor Margolius and/or Aaron Rothko. This is a time in which our students practice their Torah, Haftarah, and prayers, connect with clergy, teachers, and one another, and build the Hebrew skills they will carry with them throughout their lives. Just like any commitment that builds a life skill, whether a sport or artistic expression or leadership training, Hebrew and Jewish knowledge require nurturing. These weekly sessions, complemented by frequent practicing at home, will help students feel confident on the Bima and in Jewish spaces they will enter in the future.

Normally, students meet in pods of three for an hour to practice Torah, Haftarah, and prayers, to explore the content of the service, and to discuss the “big questions” about Jewish life. These weekly sessions 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 at least 5 days a week. Online resources can be found at [www.cantorkam.com/bnei-mitzvah.html](http://www.cantorkam.com/bnei-mitzvah.html).

## **Tzedek Project**

One of the components to becoming B’nei Mitzvah at Touro Synagogue is planning and executing a social justice-oriented tzedek project. Over the course of eight months leading up to their ceremony, each student will work with Rabbi Bauman to devise a plan for addressing an issue, cause, or societal ill that they feel passionately about. At the first meeting, students and parents will meet with Rabbi Bauman to begin mapping out the necessary steps, and then each family will follow up twice with Rabbi Bauman to share and reflect on the progress being made. Examples of past projects include organizing book drives, engaging in full-day service opportunities, and building on-going relationships with residents of assisted-living facilities.

## **D’var Torah**

Using what they glean from their Torah study, 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 their teachers and family. Rabbi Silverman works closely with each student in preparing their D’var Torah prior to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

## **The Ways We Learn**

The book of 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 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 (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.

### **Friday Night**

Members of the family are invited to light candles, lead a reading, and join us for Kiddush. Later in the service, the Bar or Bat Mitzvah student is invited to lead the congregation in chanting v'ahavta.

### **Saturday Morning**

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.

### **Honors**

There are several points in the 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 online and in the Forms & Documents section.



### ***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 grandparents, aunts, 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.

## **LOGISTICAL PLANNING**

### **Choosing a Date**

During the fall of the 5th grade year, families are invited to a B'nei Mitzvah orientation meeting. In the weeks following the meeting, families will each have the chance to choose a date in an order chosen by random lottery. Dates are reserved once the deposit of the B'nei Mitzvah fee is submitted. Please select a date that falls no earlier than 4 months before your child's 13th birthday. This will ensure that s/he has the best intellectual, spiritual, and social experience during B'nei Mitzvah training.

Please note that dates selected far in advance will be guaranteed by Touro Synagogue; the clergy team may rotate leadership in cases of conflicting commitments. In general, dates are listed as available when we anticipate at least two of three clergy can lead the service.

### **Fees**

Touro Synagogue will assess your membership account \$1,200 (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 may begin.

Should you desire to host a luncheon or evening reception in honor of 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 is available to discuss any and all special arrangements with you.***

## **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 Yamim Yafim and Uptown Hebrew class, their secular school class and the Touro Synagogue 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 a flash. Photographers are not permitted in the aisles of the sanctuary during the service.

Engaging a videographer is a wonderful way to capture the entirety of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. While our prayer services are livestreamed and archived through the Touro

Synagogue website, this feature is managed remotely by a livestream provider. We therefore still recommend engaging a videographer if having a video memory is a priority for your family.

### **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. 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/Bar 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, contact 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. The Friday night menu is determined by Touro staff. 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 Annahi Tapia.

**Shabbat Dinner Sponsorship\* Opportunities:**

*In order for us to plan appropriately for the evening in terms of place settings and amount of food, we need an accurate count of invited guests. Wine may be added to the dinner at \$10 per bottle, or you may supply your own.*

- |    |  |                 |
|----|--|-----------------|
| A. | 10 guests or fewer, or not attending               | \$360           |
| B. | 11–29 guests                                       | \$720           |
| C. | No sponsorship, attending dinner or over 30 guests | \$18 per person |

***\*Please note that there is no limit to the number of sponsors for the Friday night Shabbat dinner. Only fully catered dinners have exclusive sponsorship acknowledgment.***

**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 attend 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.

**Touro Synagogue does NOT allow any catfish, shellfish, or pork products on the premises for any function. Please make sure your caterer is aware of our practices. Please review Touro Synagogue’s Caterer Guidelines for more information.**

**PLEASE DO NOT PLAN TO THROW CANDY DURING THE SERVICE.**

## BLESSINGS

Parents and those called up for Aliyot are asked to chant the blessings before and after the Torah Reading. If you need any assistance preparing these blessings, your child will know them very well and will be a wonderful resource. Of course, the clergy are available, as well. In addition, recordings of these blessings can be found at [www.cantorkam.com/bnei-mitzvah.html](http://www.cantorkam.com/bnei-mitzvah.html).

### BLESSING BEFORE THE READING OF THE TORAH

**BAR'CHU** et Adonai ham'vorach.

(Congregation) Baruch Adonai ham'vorach l'olam va-ed.

Baruch Adonai ham'vorach l'olam va-ed.

Baruch atah, Adonai

Eloheinu, Melech haolam,

asher bachar banu mikol haamim,

v'natan lanu et Torato.

Baruch atah, Adonai, notein haTorah.

**בְּרַכּוּ** אֶת יְיָ הַמְּבָרָךְ.

ברוך יְיָ הַמְּבָרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. (Congregation)

ברוך יְיָ הַמְּבָרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. ← You resume

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ

אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בְּנוֹ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים,

וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

**BLESS ADONAI** who is blessed.

Blessed is Adonai who is blessed now and forever.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who has chosen us from among the peoples, and given us the Torah. Blessed are You, Adonai, who gives the Torah.

### BLESSING AFTER THE READING OF THE TORAH

**BARUCH** atah, Adonai

Eloheinu, Melech haolam,

asher natan lanu Torat emet,

v'chayei olam nata b'tocheinu.

Baruch atah, Adonai, notein haTorah.

**בְּרוּךְ** אַתָּה, יְיָ

אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת,

וְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם נָטַע בְּתוֹכֵנוּ.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

**BLESSED ARE YOU**, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who has given us a Torah of truth, implanting within us eternal life.

Blessed are You, Adonai, who gives the Torah.

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## **PARENTS' BLESSING FOR BAR OR BAT MITZVAH**

Our hearts are one on this joyous day  
as you commit yourself to a life of Torah:  
a life, we pray, filled with  
wisdom, caring and right action.

We pray that you will grow each day  
in compassion for the needy,  
in concern for the stranger,  
in love of all people.

May the One who blessed our ancestors,  
Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca,  
Jacob and Rachel and Leah,  
bless you on your becoming a Bar/t Mitzvah.

May you grow with strength and courage,  
with vision and sensitivity.  
And may you always be certain of our love.  
Amen.

## BASIC INFORMATION FOR SYNAGOGUE OFFICE

Submit this form online at [touro-synagogue.com/bnei-mitzvah-honors-form/](http://touro-synagogue.com/bnei-mitzvah-honors-form/)

Please complete the following information and email or return a hard copy to the Synagogue office 2-3 months prior to your bar/bat mitzvah month.

**Full Name of Student:**

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**Sponsor Shabbat Dinner on Friday Night?**     • YES   • NO

*If yes, please circle sponsorship level (contact office for more information).*

### **Shabbat Dinner Sponsorship\* Opportunities:**

*In order for us to plan appropriately for the evening in terms of place settings and amount of food, we need an accurate count of invited guests. Wine may be added to the dinner at \$10 per bottle, or you may supply your own.*

- |    |  |                 |
|----|--|-----------------|
| A. | 10 guests or less, or not attending                | \$360           |
| B. | 11–29 guests                                       | \$720           |
| C. | No sponsorship, attending dinner or over 30 guests | \$18 per person |

**\* Please note that there is no limit to the number of sponsors for the Friday night Shabbat dinner. Only fully catered dinners have exclusive sponsorship acknowledgment.**

**How shall we list the sponsors?**

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**Caterer? If so, who?**

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**Saturday Luncheon:**   • YES   • NO

**How shall we list the sponsors?**

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**Caterer:**

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Flowers for Event:    • YES        • NO

How shall we list the sponsors?

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Florist: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Evening Reception:   • YES        • NO

At Touro Synagogue? • YES        • NO

Vendors: \_\_\_\_\_



## FACILITY CHARGES

ROOM	SQ. FT	MEMBER/NON PROFIT PRICING	
		AFTER HOURS	OPEN HOURS
Jacobs Social Hall	2643	675.00	395.00
Grant Meyer Garden Pavilion	1926	500.00	290.00
Shushan Assembly	1300	325.00	195.00
All other rooms incl. Mautner* (635sqft)	each	75.00	50.00
Social Hall/Grant Meyer Garden Pavilion	4569	915.00	500.00
Grant Meyer Garden Pavilion/Shushan Assembly	3226	650.00	375.00
Social Hall/Garden Pavilion/Shushan Assembly	5869	1,175.00	600.00
Bowsky Garden		200.00	
Main Sanctuary/Bowsky Garden		375.00/2 hours	(\$100 each add. hr)
Forgotston Chapel (1464sqft)/Bowksy 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 open 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

**Manager Fee** \$50 per hour (after hours event only)

**Fees are subject to change.**

For any questions regarding the facility fees, please consult with Annahi Tapia at 504.895.4843 or [info@touro-synagogue.com](mailto:info@touro-synagogue.com).