

# FIRST ALIYAH

## B'nai Mitzvah Guidelines and Procedures Revised May 2022



# TEMPLE BETH SHALOM

JOYFUL · PERSONAL · ACCESSIBLE

5089 Johnstown Road  
New Albany, Ohio 43054  
(614) 855-4882  
[www.tbsohio.org](http://www.tbsohio.org)  
[tbs@tbsohio.org](mailto:tbs@tbsohio.org)

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## INTRODUCTION

Mazel tov! Can you believe your child is old enough to begin the process of becoming a B'nai Mitzvah?! The time when a child becomes B'nai Mitzvah is a very significant event in the life of a Jewish young person, and an important day for the entire family. It is a day that comes after years of study and a more recent intensive period of preparation. With the anticipated joy come many questions, and even some anxiety, about the experience.

This booklet is for you. We have prepared it in order to answer as many of your questions as possible. It contains the history and background of what it means to become B'nai Mitzvah, and the guidelines and procedures that are customary in our congregation. Our hope is to make the experience of becoming a B'nai Mitzvah and having a First Aliyah a meaningful, comfortable and joyous family experience.

### **The Bat/Bar Mitzvah History in a Nutshell**

In Jewish tradition, a boy became a Bar Mitzvah automatically at age 13 even without a public ceremony, accepting responsibility for the performance of mitzvot and being recognized as an adult. The actual bar mitzvah ritual began as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE but really developed in the Middle Ages. The ritual included the Bar Mitzvah participating in the service, delivering a teaching on the weekly Torah or Haftarah portion, and a festive meal afterwards. The ritual was only available to boys, yet girls accepted (fewer) commandments at age 12 as early as the second or third century CE. The first known bat mitzvah in North America was Judith Kaplan, daughter of Mordechai Kaplan, in 1921. Today, liberal Jews and the Reform Movement uphold total equality of Jews in ritual practice and all other aspects of Jewish life, regardless of gender identity.

### **Where does "First Aliyah" come from?**

In all Jewish congregations, it is considered a great honor for a participant to be called up to the bimah to recite the blessings for the public reading of the Torah. Being honored in this way is called "having an aliyah," which literally means "going up" (i.e., to the bimah). When a child marks the occasion of becoming a B'nai Mitzvah, that participation usually includes (1) being honored with their first aliyah, (2) reading from the Torah, (3) sharing a d'var Torah, or teaching with the congregation, and (4) leading the congregation in some of the prayers.

Traditionally, a "Bar Mitzvah" is for boys and a "Bat Mitzvah" is for girls. "B'nai Mitzvah" can be rendered as a plural or gender neutral term. Because of the binary nature of Hebrew, "First Aliyah" is another gender neutral term for this milestone. We are happy to use whichever term your student is most comfortable with regarding their gender identity, or even something completely different – just let us know!

### **First Aliyah at Temple Beth Shalom**

At Temple Beth Shalom we believe that there is value in the student rising to the commitment to become a Jewish adult, even if traditionally, a Jewish child becomes a B'nai Mitzvah automatically upon reaching age 13. While a thirteen year old might not be a legal adult in all respects, this is the first step towards affirming his/her own Jewish identity as an individual, which marks not only an internal commitment, but also a commitment to be engaged in the Temple Beth Shalom and wider Jewish community.

For this reason, students at Temple Beth Shalom, in order to have the occasion of becoming a B'nai Mitzvah marked by public participation in services (and, specifically, by having an aliyah), are required to attend formal educational classes at our Kehillat Torah religious school, or at an approved alternate school, for a minimum number of years and meet other standards, including, but not limited to Jewish service attendance and the completion of a mitzvah project.

The Purpose of the B'nai Mitzvah Policy at Temple Beth Shalom is:

- To uphold Jewish law and tradition as expressed by the Reform Movement
- To delineate Jewish educational standards that the student must meet so that they are able to make an intentional commitment as a B'nai Mitzvah
- To assure that each B'nai Mitzvah is an inclusive community event that reflects TBS values
- To standardize process and procedures for Temple Beth Shalom staff

## FIRST ALIYAH REQUIREMENTS

To qualify for B'nai Mitzvah, a student must have fulfilled the following:

- Reached six months before or after the age of 13
- Completed four years of formal religious school at a qualifying religious or Jewish day school and completed four years of formal Hebrew school in a qualifying Hebrew program (*also known as the 4/4 rule*)
- Be currently enrolled and attending TBS Religious School
- Completed an approved mitzvah project.
- Committed to continue formal Jewish education at TBS.

*\*We will do our best to provide youth with special educational needs the same accommodations they receive in secular school settings.*

### **Our Prayer Book (Siddur)**

The prayer book (siddur) used by our congregation is Mishkan Tefilah. Students receive their prayer book during the Fourth Grade "Chag HaSiddur" Shabbat service. If your family is not present that evening, please contact the temple office to pick up your child's prayer book. We will also provide a Mishkan Tefilah prayer book for B'nai Mitzvah students whose families joined TBS after fourth grade. Replacement books can be purchased at the temple office for \$45.

### **Alternate Ways of Marking First Aliyah at TBS**

It is sometimes the case that, due to any number of circumstances, a child is not able to fulfill the requirements for the public marking of a call to the Torah as a B'nai Mitzvah at TBS. In such a case, a child might be permitted, at the discretion of the Rabbi, to mark the "coming of age" as a B'nai Mitzvah in an alternate way.

### **First Aliyah in Israel**

Arrangements may be made to mark B'nai Mitzvah by participating in services and being honored with a First Aliyah in Israel. A family may choose to do that in addition to, or instead of, having their child participating in a service at TBS, however we encourage participation at a service here with us, be it on a Friday evening or Saturday morning. Please contact the Rabbis to discuss.

### **The Mitzvah Project**

The Mitzvah Project is a tangible way for the B'nai Mitzvah student to begin their journey towards becoming a responsible member of the Jewish community. One of our central Jewish values is *tikkun olam*, repairing the world. Our goal for a B'nai Mitzvah's Mitzvah Project is that they will engage in some act of healing the world that is personal and meaningful to them, connecting this value with real action and change. We hope they will also internalize the idea that as Jews, we have a responsibility to make the world a better place, and continue that commitment moving forward as they continue their journey towards adulthood.

Here are the general guidelines of the Mitzvah Project:

- The project should take at least 20 hours to complete and needs to be approved by the Rabbi. Students need to complete and present their project to the Rabbi at least 6 weeks prior to the B'nai Mitzvah Date.

- Twenty hours allows the student to engage in meaningful work. They can divide the time however they choose, and may engage in a maximum of two different projects.
- The student chooses their own mitzvah project that is meaningful and personal to them.
- The student can volunteer with any nonprofit organization, agency or service project (examples include but are not limited to: Seeds of Caring, NA Food Pantry, Habitat for Humanity, Humane Society).
- The student's mitzvah project can include an element of donations and fundraising for a project, and they can also work primarily with animals, but it is highly encouraged that it includes some form of human interaction.
- The Miner-Romanoff Fund is an exciting opportunity for students who want to "dream big" with their mitzvah project. Students are encouraged to apply for funds for their mitzvah project via the application form on our website. Please be in touch with the Executive Director for more information.

This last point is very important since it is usually these interactions that provide the most meaning for a mitzvah project – even or especially if said interactions take us out of our comfort zone. For example, a student can collect donations towards an organization, and then deliver said items to the organization or people in need; they could volunteer at an animal shelter, and speak with potential adoptive families about the animals they cared for.

Please remember that these ideas are only suggestions. The Rabbis will be happy to offer additional ideas.

### **Preparation for First Aliyah – Service Attendance**

On the Shabbat of the student's call to the Torah as a B'nai Mitzvah, they will lead the congregation in most of the Shabbat morning service and in some prayers on Erev Shabbat (Friday evening) or an Erev Shabbat on some prior Friday.

Each student is required to attend a minimum of ten (10) Friday and/or Saturday services in the year prior to their own service. Students usually will reach this number by attending Grade Shabbat services for their own grade or for their siblings, as well as attending B'nai Mitzvah ceremonies for peers, friends and family members, either at TBS or at other synagogues.

We have found regularly attending TBS services makes a difference in our students' anxiety about preparing for the B'nai Mitzvah experience – simply put, it takes the mystery out of their responsibilities, and they see their own friends and peers up on the bimah.

### **Preparation for First Aliyah – 6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

While all years of religious school are important, there are two additional important elements to our 6<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum that impacts our B'nai Mitzvah students. The Sixth Grade Retreat takes place every fall, and we highly encourage students to attend this event. Not only is it a lot of fun but also allows our students to bond as a group outside the religious school classroom. Second, during Torah Cantillation Class in religious school, our Cantorial Soloist Gail Rose focuses on teaching our students how to chant Torah Trope, or the specific system by which Torah is chanted. Regular attendance in 6<sup>th</sup> grade will help students become more familiar with Torah chanting, which will significantly aid them in the tutoring process to come.

### **Post B'nai Mitzvah Education**

At the age of thirteen, a Jewish young person is just beginning to grasp the true importance and significance of Jewish teaching. Therefore, as a pre-requisite for the First Aliyah, an agreement is made between the B'nai Mitzvah candidate, his or her parents, and the Rabbi that the student will continue formal Jewish education and remain in the Religious School at least through Confirmation.

The religious school curriculum for post-B'nai Mitzvah education is structured so that students are able to more deeply mine the stories and values they may have learned at a more elementary level before B'nai

Mitzvah. In previous years, themes and topics have included the “real” version of Torah stories; more adult themes and topics such as the afterlife; and Jews in current pop culture.

As educators, we see the “forest through the trees” when it comes to Jewish education. B’nai Mitzvah is not the end, but the beginning and these lessons allow students to more fully grasp their Jewish identities as an adult – as they eventually prepare for college and creating their own sense of Jewish identity apart from their childhood homes.

### **Parent / Guardian Responsibilities**

At TBS we realize that while the B’nai Mitzvah student is the individual becoming a Jewish adult, and the ritual centers around them, this is also a special time for parents and guardians. We are honored to be your partner in your student’s Jewish education and identity building, as well as this significant milestone in your student’s life.

As partners, we hope that you will help us on your student’s journey by also advocating for the values and meaning of the B’nai Mitzvah ceremony, and following the financial and facility guidelines outlined in this handbook. We also hope that you will help by ensuring that your student:

- attends religious school regularly
- attends required number of Shabbat services (please come as a family)
- practices prayers and Torah portion regularly during the week
- chooses a meaningful mitzvah project and completes the required number of hours
- invites all their 7<sup>th</sup> grade peers to their B’nai Mitzvah ceremony and celebration, per the board policy and value of inclusion

## **SOME LOGISTICS**

### **Setting the Date**

Choosing a date for your student’s B’nai Mitzvah is an important decision that involves many factors. The family’s schedule and preferences, the clergy’s schedule, travel plans for out-of-town guests, and the temple and community calendars all must be taken into account. Some families may also choose a date based on a parent or other family member’s B’nai Mitzvah date or Torah portion. Generally, we do not have B’nai Mitzvah ceremonies in July due to clergy summer schedules, and January, due to Rabbi Benjy’s sabbatical month.

A Temple Beth Shalom staff member will contact each family following the student’s fourth grade year to begin the process of working together to set a date. Children are scheduled based upon their birth dates and generally in birth order. A letter will be mailed to families in early spring, assigning a tentative date. If this date is not acceptable, your family will have the option of requesting other dates, based on availability. A letter confirming your child’s date will be mailed in late spring along with a B’nai Mitzvah Date Confirmation Form.

**The date is not confirmed until the signed Date Confirmation Form and payment is returned to the office.**

Individual study for all First Aliyah candidates with tutors provided by the synagogue will begin approximately 8 months prior to the service. Rabbi Lenette will reach out to your family with details about tutoring and the process. If you would like your student to have more time tutoring, please reach out to Rabbi Lenette or the Temple office.

## **Financial Obligations**

It is the policy of TBS that, in order to enjoy the privileges of the celebration of life-cycle events, including First Aliyah, the family's financial account must remain in good standing. Any questions concerning this matter should be directed to the Executive Director.

A life-cycle event fee for a B'nai Mitzvah celebration at TBS has been set at \$1,000 per child. This fee covers the cost of private tutoring for the B'nai Mitzvah candidate leading up to the service, administrative costs (including custom brochure for your service), and for custodial and staff costs the day of the service. A deposit of one-half of the fee (i.e., \$500) is due at the time the date of the service is selected in order to hold and confirm the date. Please send back the letter and deposit within 30 days of receiving the confirmation letter to hold your date-that guarantees your First Aliyah date selection. The remaining balance of \$500 is due 8 weeks prior to the service.

Rental of the Social Hall/kitchen or other temple facilities for meals or parties is negotiated directly with the temple office and includes social hall rental, catering fee, and security costs if necessary. Please call the office to reserve the social hall and complete the required paperwork.

## **Thank you gifts**

As with all major simchas, it is a mitzvah to show your appreciation by making a donation to the Temple. A monetary donation can be made to any of Temple Beth Shalom's funds (see list attached) to recognize the efforts of all those who helped your child to reach this milestone. Another option is to donate a ceremonial item to the Temple. It is always a pleasure later to see your gift being used by the congregation, and remember that special day! Check with the office staff to see if the Temple has any special needs.

## **SERVICES—WHAT DOES A B'NAI MITZVAH DO?**

There are four areas of participation for a B'nei Mitzvah at a Shabbat morning service: to be a shaliach tzibur (leader of worship), to chant from the Torah and the Haftarah, and to offer a d'var Torah or teaching on the week's Torah portion.

### **Friday Evening Service**

An important part of educating Jewish children to be knowledgeable adult Jews is to teach them to participate fully in all aspects of our religious services, including holiday services, Saturday morning services and Friday evening services. While candidates for First Aliyah are not required to participate in the Friday evening service immediately preceding the Saturday morning service at which the students will be called to the Torah, they are strongly encouraged to do so. In addition, they will have many opportunities throughout their school years to participate in these services.

Not only are they meaningful worship experiences for the students, but they also provide the opportunity for the students to stand in front of the congregation and lead prayers, which may remove a significant part of the possible nervousness and anxiety associated with their First Aliyah, and will enable the young person to feel more comfortable about that occasion.

The B'nai Mitzvah student and their family may lead the Candle Blessing and the Kiddush at the Friday evening service. The student may also lead additional prayers, usually prayers that are identical to some that they will be leading the following morning. These prayers may include: Bar'chu, Shema, V'ahavta, Avot/Imahot, and Chatzi Kaddish.

## **Saturday Morning**

First Aliyah services at Temple Beth Shalom begin at 10:00 am Saturday morning. Please be sure that this time appears on your invitations. Please plan to have your family, ushers and any guests reading honors to arrive at 9:30 am for a talk-through rehearsal with the rabbi; if you would like your family to arrive early with a photographer, this can be arranged – please speak with clergy. The student leads the congregation in prayer, joining the Rabbis and the Cantorial Soloist in this sacred role. The student will chant Torah and possibly Haftarah, and give a short speech regarding his/her Torah portion.

## **Tallit and Kippah: the Reform Choice**

In keeping with the spirit of individual choice that characterizes Reform Judaism, each individual may choose for themselves whether or not wearing of a tallit and/or kippah is meaningful to them. As a Reform synagogue, committed to complete equality in every area of Jewish life, everyone regardless of gender identity is welcome to make these choices.

For those who choose to wear the tallit, the service may begin in front of the ark, where the parents (or grandparents, or other family member) may formally place the tallit on the shoulders of the B'nai Mitzvah.

## **Participation and Honors in the Service**

An Aliyah is considered the highest honor of the service, and it refers to saying the blessings before and after a section of Torah is read. The number of aliyah sections (aliyot) can vary from 3 to 7, with individuals or groups leading the blessings. Generally, the second to last aliyah is reserved for parents or guardians, and the last aliyah is always for the B'nai Mitzvah student, as that is traditionally the moment they become B'nai Mitzvah. Please discuss this with the Rabbi at your family meeting and bring a list of names (in both Hebrew and English) of those to be honored with an aliyah.

Family members are also welcome to read a section of Torah during the Torah service. Please be in touch with the Rabbis if anyone in your family is interested.

Other honors available include opening and closing of the Ark, dressing the Torah, reading English and/or Hebrew parts of the services, reciting Kiddush or Motzi, or lighting the candles Friday night. Please speak to the Rabbi regarding any questions about honors. A list of honors will need to be submitted to the office to be included in the service booklet.

Parents can read a special prayer or say a few words of blessing during the service, along with the shehecheyanu blessing. We encourage the words to focus on a blessing or hopes for your student in the future, now that they have become B'nai Mitzvah.

## **PREPARATION FOR THE B'NAI MITZVAH: a family process**

### **LaBogrut**

In the year to eighteen months prior to the B'nai Mitzvah date, the student will be invited to participate in a program called "LaBogrut" ("towards commencement"). The student attends a Friday evening service, along with their cohort of students who will all begin their First Aliyah tutoring within a few months (usually there are from three to ten students participating at a time). The students are invited up to the bimah during the service, at which time the Rabbi presents each student with his/her individual LaBogrut packet, which includes their specific Torah and Haftarah portions, along with many other materials the student will need as he/she prepares for his/her First Aliyah. The students and parents then join the rest of the congregation for

the Oneg following the service. This is an ideal opportunity for those families present to develop a “support group”. The staff can review with the families the procedures outlined in this booklet, outline the First Aliyah program and tutoring schedule, review the service itself, and answer other questions families may have at that time.

This is a “support group” because, while each First Aliyah is individual, it is always a support to families to know that they are not the only ones with questions. This is also a great time to get to meet other families engaged in the same process. Please use this time to make arrangements to help each other with First Aliyah Oneg responsibilities. A volunteer First Aliyah Oneg coordinator will help facilitate these arrangements.

### **B’nai Mitzvah Tutoring and Family Meetings**

At the beginning of B’nai Mitzvah tutoring (approximately 8 months before), the family will meet with the Rabbi to discuss this exciting moment in the B’nai Mitzvah process. Together we will discuss formal B’nai Mitzvah tutoring, learning prayers and the Torah portion, which will happen weekly either at TBS or with an individual tutor. We will also discuss the d’var Torah (teaching for the congregation) and mitzvah project, as well as any questions you may have about the process.

The tutoring process creates a great opportunity for students to be responsible for their own learning, in a way perhaps different than in secular school. Verses and prayers will be assigned for students to review and eventually master during the week, so they are prepared to learn more material the following session. Tutors provide a variety of ways for students to learn including color coding melodies and voice recordings. Students learn at different paces and therefore will need different amounts of practice during the week, but we find that often at least three times a week is optimal. The more students practice during the week, the more likely they are to be prepared and therefore less anxious for their ceremony. Please encourage your student to practice as often as they can, including in family spaces such as the car or at the kitchen table before dinner, so you can also gauge their learning. Rabbis and tutors will regularly check in with families regarding their student’s progress, and if they need to practice more often.

There will be a second meeting with the Rabbi about 6 to 8 weeks prior to the service to review honors and other elements of the service, an individual meeting between B’nai Mitzvah student and rabbi for the d’var Torah, and then a final rehearsal walk through the week of the service.

### **Preparation and Learning for Parents**

Parents may have many questions about the background of the prayers, the ceremony, or other aspects of Jewish tradition, that are not answered in the routine course of the First Aliyah training. Parents are encouraged to join our Adult Education classes, both before and after the service. A parent’s studying Judaism at the same time as one’s student is studying for First Aliyah will provide an unparalleled family experience, bringing greater depth and meaning to the experience, and placing all members of the family on a journey towards greater understanding of Judaism and of themselves.

There are many wonderful books available both in the Temple library and the public libraries. Some recommendations are:

- Putting G-d on the Guest List: How to Reclaim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Child’s Bar or Bat Mitzvah, Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin (Jewish Lights Press)
- The B’nai Mitzvah Planbook, Jane Lewit and Ellen Epstein (Scarborough House)
- A Spiritual Journey: The Bar and Bat Mitzvah Handbook, Seymour Rossel (Behrman House)
- The Second Jewish Catalog, Michael and Sharon Strassfeld, Richard Siegel, (Jewish Publication Society)
- The Jewish Home: A Guide for Jewish Living, Rabbi Daniel B. Syme (UAHC Press)
- Living a Jewish Life, Jewish Traditions, Customs and Values for Today’s Families, Anita Diamant and Howard Cooper (Harper Perennial)

- B'nai Mitzvah Basics, Cantor Helen Leneman (Jewish Lights Press)

### **Learning Hebrew for Parents**

Parents who do not yet know how to read Hebrew themselves are encouraged to learn Hebrew. Please speak to the Rabbis for further information. In addition, the Rabbi will be happy to meet with family members and provide recordings of prayers to assist in preparation for the service.

<b>CELEBRATING WITH YOUR TBS FAMILY</b>
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### **Invitations**

**We expect your child's first step into adulthood to be infused with values of inclusiveness, sensitivity, and community that emulates our mission here at Temple Beth Shalom.** We as a Temple family focus not only on Hebrew prayers, and Torah, but also on the value of Kehillah, which in Hebrew means "Community". We want every student in our TBS community to feel connected to other students, to feel included within the group, to feel like their class had become the center of their Temple Community. Inclusion is a central value of Temple Beth Shalom, and this policy was updated in 2014, and re-affirmed in 2019.

**Therefore it is the policy of TBS for B'nai Mitzvah families to formally invite *ALL* grade level classmates from the Religious School to participate and celebrate with them for *both the service and celebration*, which reflects our warm, welcoming, and personal TBS community.**

To facilitate this process:

- A class list with the students' addresses will be given to all 7<sup>th</sup> grade families at the beginning of the school year. This roster is made available as a Dropbox file so it can be updated throughout the year if there are changes due to moving or other circumstances.
- The Temple will work with you if you prefer to send out evites to all the students in the class, which saves you the extra expense of printed invitations.
- Religious School programming, including Grade Breakfasts and the 6<sup>th</sup> grade retreat, help promote a sense of community and inclusion among each grade among parents and students.
- Agreeing to this board policy is included in agreement paperwork.

The President(s) of TBS or another Board member will join you at the service. During the service they will give a short welcome speech, and present a congregational gift to your child. If there is a special friend or family member on the Board whom you would like to make the congregational presentation, please contact the TBS staff.

It is customary to invite the Rabbis and Cantorial Soloist (and spouses), musicians, your child's B'nai Mitzvah tutor, and Religious School teachers to your celebratory events. Sometimes, however, they may not be able to attend, or will have to leave early due to other commitments.

### **Friday Evening Oneg and Saturday Kiddish**

First Aliyah services are not only special family events, but they are also Temple Beth Shalom community events. To continue in the spirit of community, the family of the B'nai Mitzvah will also provide an opportunity to share its simcha with the TBS community.

The First Aliyah family is suggested to host Friday evening Oneg. For the evening oneg families typically provide sweets, cheese, vegetable and/or fruit platters and punch for approximately 50 people (not including

your invited guests). The Temple will provide the coffee/tea and paper goods for Friday evening oneg. In lieu of preparing the Friday evening oneg personally, the Temple will be happy to shop for the oneg for a \$125 contribution (Appendix).

We encourage each class of First Aliyah candidates to network and help each other with preparing for Friday Oneg. Ideally this would involve every family helping another for every Friday Oneg.

The Kiddush on Saturday can be as simple as wine and grape juice, challah and a few other finger foods (i.e., fruit plate, cheese and crackers, vegetables and dip, or sweets) for everyone to a full course sit-down meal in the Social Hall. Most families provide something in between, depending on their plans for entertaining out-of-town guests later in the day. If you are planning lunch in the Social Hall following the service, a simple challah-and-wine Kiddush is often done on the bimah.

It is important to schedule the luncheon with the temple office. Having a First Aliyah date does not insure the room reservation. Please contact the temple office to discuss the social hall rental and to complete required paperwork.

If you have rented the Social Hall, our Office Staff will reach out to you two weeks prior to the service to discuss your final headcount and set up of the room.

### **Using our Facilities**

In addition to the use of the Social Hall for a Kiddush immediately after the morning service, we also encourage your family to consider using Temple Beth Shalom's kitchen and Social Hall facilities for your Saturday evening family celebration. To reserve the Social Hall, please complete the Room Rental Contract and send back to the office with your deposit. The Social Hall is not automatically reserved for your family for Saturday night (unless you so request), but we will tentatively hold the date open for you. If another group expresses an interest in using the Social Hall that evening and you have not confirmed your request for the space, we will contact your family to give you the first opportunity to officially reserve the room. If you choose to have an evening party at the Temple, speak to the Executive Director as soon as a service date has been selected.

Please note: the First Friday of each month is a Temple Beth Shalom event. The Social Hall will not be available for private parties on the First Friday of each month. The TBS staff will be happy to help you take part in the First Friday event as a part of your celebration, if desired.

### **Social Hall Rental**

- The use of the building and its facilities for any event must be contracted with the temple office in advance. Families who choose to use the TBS facilities should contact the office to discuss the rental fee related to their specific needs. Only approved caterers with Liability Insurance on file can be used for your event.
- At the Executive Director's discretion, TBS may require the presence of an off-duty police officer at an evening party held at TBS. This can be arranged approximately 6 weeks prior to the party with New Albany Police Department. The cost of the off duty officer is an expense the family will assume.
- It is expected that the family of the B'nai Mitzvah will be responsible for making sure that the condition of the building after an afternoon or evening celebration will not necessitate extreme clean-up measures. If excessive additional clean-up is needed, the family will be charged per hour for any extra housekeeping.

### **Kashrut Policy**

The following is a list of guidelines for events at which food is being served within the Temple:

- Foods designated “treif” or forbidden in kashrut for general consumption should not be served, i.e. pork products or shellfish.
- Milk and meat for general consumption cannot be served in the same dish (no meat lasagna).
- Wines for Kiddush must be kosher with grape juice available for children and adults.
- Food brought into the temple for individual consumption is acceptable as long as there are no forbidden foods (pepperoni pizza, for example).

If there are any questions or concerns regarding food, the Rabbis or Executive Director will be happy to help.

### **Accessibility**

Please let us know if you anticipate any guests with special needs not addressed here.

- Our Bimah is wheelchair accessible. The sanctuary seating area is very flexible. Let the office staff know of any special seating needs you might have.
- An elevator located off the main lobby services the building. There are no barriers (steps) between the parking lot and the main entrances.
- We have some support for the hearing impaired, and there are large print prayer books for those who need them. You may want to make copies of the song sheet with larger print. One week prior to the service, please advise the office staff if these or other accommodations would be helpful.
- If you are planning a stand-up Kiddush or Oneg, remember to have a few chairs placed around the perimeter of the room for those who cannot stand for any length of time.

## MISCELLANEOUS DETAILS

### **B'nai Mitzvah in the TBS Window Newsletter**

It is customary for candidates for First Aliyah to be published in The Window the same month as your First Aliyah date. The interview form and photograph are due at the temple office 8 weeks prior to the date of the service.

### **Music and Service Booklets for the Shabbat services**

Temple Beth Shalom prepares special custom service booklets for the Shabbat morning service. Some families who are particularly fond of singing may request some of their favorites; the Rabbis and Cantorial Soloist are usually able to work them in. If you have some favorite tunes for the prayers or some songs you especially like, talk to them at least three weeks in advance about including your special selections in the service that day.

A few paragraphs explaining the service and elements of a First Aliyah is included in the service booklet, and parents are welcome to make additions or include their own personal message.

Included in the service is a vocalist with an accompaniment. The family may engage with additional musicians. Please contact Cantorial Soloist Gail Rose to discuss cost and scheduling,

### **Flowers**

Though not required, many families choose to provide floral arrangements on the Bimah for the Friday night and Saturday morning services. If you plan to have flower arrangements planned, there are a few things to remember:

- Arrangements must be small enough or low enough that they do not block the congregants' view of any part of the Bimah.
- Flowers for the Bimah should be delivered on Friday by noon. Please let the Temple office know of your plans.
- You may choose to leave your flowers in the sanctuary after services on Saturday. However please feel free to take them home or give them to Heritage House or another organization.
- Green plants are always a nice option.
- Alternatively, food baskets or items to be donated to the shelter or other community needs may be displayed.

### **Photography and Videography during the service**

So as not to disturb or distract from the service, flash photography may not be taken during services. Frequently, families will arrange for photographs to be taken either prior to the service or afterwards. A photography session prior to the service must end on Saturday by 9:25 am. Please ask your photographer to speak with the Rabbis beforehand to make sure they are aware of appropriate placement of photographers and equipment during the service.

Video cameras may be used to tape the service. The equipment must be set up on a stationary stand at the rear of the sanctuary, or off to the right side. Only available lighting may be used. Video camera operators must meet with the Executive Director in the week prior to the service to confirm special arrangements.

TBS must be provided with duly executed certificates of insurance indicating that vendors are fully protected by Workman's Compensation Insurance and General Liability Insurance.

### **Dress at a Shabbat service**

We ask that our B'nai Mitzvah, families and guests dress in a manner that reflects attending a sacred space and participating in a worship service. As long as a student is respectful to the space and the occasion, they are welcome to dress in any manner they choose that reflects their personality, gender identity, and celebrates this milestone. In addition, the temperature in our Sanctuary fluctuates depending on the season, so bringing a shawl, cardigan or light jacket is also recommended.

We encourage students when choosing clothing to keep in mind that they will be standing for a significant part of the service as well as carrying the Torah, and to therefore be sure their clothing and especially footwear is comfortable! Students are encouraged to bring their service footwear to the final rehearsal to practice carrying the Torah in them.

All students are encouraged to wear a kippah and a tallit during the service. Some families choose to pass down tallitot and others may allow the student to find their own tallit for the occasion. If you have any questions about where to find tallitot and kippot please be in touch with the Rabbis or Executive Director.

### **Cell Phone and Text Messaging**

The use of cell phones and text messaging is not permitted in the sanctuary during Shabbat services. If you find it necessary to use your cell phone, kindly leave the sanctuary to do so.

The temple office suggests you inform your invited guests on the dress and cell phone policies above!

### **Behavior at B'nai Mitzvah Parties**

B'nai Mitzvah parties are often a big highlight of the B'nai Mitzvah experience, and while we hope they have a lot of fun at these events, we also expect that our students are just as respectful at their celebrations in the TBS social hall as they were during the ceremony.

- Drugs and smoking are not permitted.
- Your child and guests must stay in the designated area at all times.
- Your child and guests must respect all property. Vandalism of any kind is not permitted. Parents of the B'nai Mitzvah will be responsible for any damage to Temple property.

### **Small Children and Babysitting**

Small children are always welcome to participate in services. We are a warm and welcoming temple community. If children create a disruption by crying or talking loudly, we kindly ask you to step out of the sanctuary until the child settles down and can return to the service.

Babysitting is not provided by TBS on Friday nights. However, if requested, Temple Beth Shalom can make a room available for babysitting. In such cases the B'nai Mitzvah family is responsible for providing a sitter and covering any fees. Please check with the Executive Director for details.

For safety concerns children under 10 may not be left unattended in other parts of the Temple building.

### **Social Action - Tzedakah**

No simcha is complete without remembering those who are less fortunate. The time of B'nai Mitzvah is one of the best times to consider social action and advocacy because it sets the tone for a whole life of Jewish concern. **Each child participating at services as a B'nai Mitzvah at TBS is required to complete a Mitzvah Project.**

The word "Mitzvah" in B'nai Mitzvah indicates that this time is an opportunity to consider the needs of others. Throughout Jewish history, we have deliberately linked our good fortune with those around us who are less fortunate. These charitable practices continue to this day, and are encouraged for families celebrating all simchas.

- Families may choose to make a donation to the Temple.
- Families may choose to donate 3% of the total food bill during the entire B'nai Mitzvah celebration to Mazon (to feed those in need) or to a local food bank.
- In lieu of table arrangements, package up canned/boxed food or toiletry articles to donate to a homeless shelter or food bank.
- You can deliver and donate extra food to a homeless shelter.
- The family participates in a longer term social action project as part of the young person's mitzvah project; this could include tutoring, recycling, visiting the sick or aged, working with an agency such as Habitat for Humanity, charitable fundraising organizations, etc.).
- The child may choose to donate a portion of the monetary gifts he/she receives to some charity of his/her choice.

## A FINAL NOTE

Although this document attempts to answer many of the common questions and concerns that all families have about First Aliyah procedures, no doubt more questions will arise during the planning and preparation for the special day. The Rabbi and staff want you to know that help is always available to you: please feel free to contact us. We want to do everything possible to make this day easy and pleasurable for your family.

### **...AND REMEMBER WHAT IT IS ALL ABOUT!**

*“Why do Bar and Bat Mitzvah continue to exercise such influence on us today... In a time when faith is questioned on every side, there is an urgency to a Jew’s affirming the covenant that binds the Jewish people to G-d and G-d to us. In a time when rites of passage may be disparaged as primitive, there is a yearning for a milestone event to separate the early years of childhood from the years of adolescence and adulthood. In a time when mobility has spread families out across America... there is a need for a ceremony to bring families together with shared traditions. In a time when we seek the meaning of our Jewish identity, the Bat Mitzvah and Bar Mitzvah provide challenges and opportunities for creating meaning in our lives.*

*“Bat and Bar Mitzvah observance helps to ensure the continuation of Jewish learning. It marks the acquisition of Jewish skills. It is the moment when the Jewish community grows by one member ... it trains children to achieve what is expected of adults, so it prepares them to be adults. It sets Jewish children on a lifelong path toward wisdom, faith, justice and peace.”*

~From A Spiritual Journey: The Bar and Bat Mitzvah Handbook

This day can touch us as almost no other. This day can be a life-affirming, life-transforming experience. This day alone can bind us to our past...and prepare us for our future. Let us work together to let this day be all that it can be for each one of our B’nai Mitzvah!

Other questions you may have/forms that might be needed:

- GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A D’VAR TORAH
- WHAT TO BRING TO YOUR FIRST ALIYAH MEETING
- PRAYERS AND LITURGY STUDY GUIDE
- GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS’ BLESSING
- REQUIRED SHABBAT ATTENDANCE FORM
- HONORS AND ALIYOT PLANNING FORM
- BNEI MITZVAH INFORMATION FOR THE WINDOW
- SERVICE SUPPLEMENTS PLANNING FORM
- GLOSSARY OF JEWISH TERMS
- ONEG SHABBAT INSTRUCTIONS
- FACILITY USE FEES
- AGREEMENT FOR USE OF FACILITIES
- RULES GOVERNING THE USE OF FACILITIES
- VENDOR INFORMATION
- TEMPLE BETH SHALOM CONTACT INFORMATION