

**B'nai Mitzvah Handbook**  
**Congregation Ohev Shalom**  
**(Updated 02-22-17\*)**

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Welcome to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Process!</b>                  | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>Timeline of the Year</b>                                     | <b>3</b>  |
| Two Years Out   | 3         |
| One Year Out  | 3         |
| Six Months Out  | 3         |
| Three months Out  | 3         |
| One month Out   | 3         |
| The Week of   | 3         |
| <b>Timeline of the (extended) weekend</b>                       | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Opening Conversations and Experiences</b>                    | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Before Lessons Can Begin</b>                                 | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>The Preparation/Learning Process</b>                         | <b>7</b>  |
| Tutoring Sessions with Rabbi Miller                             | 7         |
| Tutoring Sessions with Rabbi Gerber                             | 9         |
| <b>Service Planning</b>   | <b>10</b> |
| <b>Event Planning</b>   | <b>12</b> |
| <b>Who do I talk to about....?</b>                              | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Appendix A - Prayers and Skills</b>                          | <b>14</b> |
| <b>Appendix C - Available Honors (Saturday morning)</b>         | <b>17</b> |
| <b>Appendix D - Mitzvah Project Guidelines &amp; Ideas</b>      | <b>18</b> |
| <b>Appendix E - Ohev Shalom Ritual Participation Guidelines</b> | <b>20</b> |
| <b>Appendix F - Instructions for Taking an Aliyah</b>           | <b>21</b> |
| <b>Appendix G - Glossary</b>                                    | <b>23</b> |
| <b>Appendix H - Additional Resources</b>                        | <b>26</b> |

## Welcome to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Process!

It may seem surreal to be at this point in your child's Jewish journey - you may have been anticipating this moment with excitement, apprehension, confusion, joy, pride, or possibly a combination of all of these feelings! Whether you had a Bar or Bat Mitzvah celebration yourself, whether you loved or hated the experience, whether or not you yourself are Jewish, your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration (and the preparation leading up to it) can be a meaningful experience for the entire family. The professional staff and clergy at Ohev Shalom are here to work with you - and your whole family - to get the most out of your celebration and the year leading up to it.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration itself takes place over several days, usually culminating in a Shabbat morning service, and often involving a festive meal or celebration. In this handbook, you will find information, resources, and checklists that will help you navigate all of the details you will need to prepare. Throughout this process, we hope that you will ask questions and let us know if you have any concerns. Every *simchah* (celebration) is unique, and we want to make sure that everyone's individual needs (including students and families with special needs) are addressed, to help each child and family prepare, celebrate, and be celebrated in a way that is most meaningful.

Take a deep breath, and savor the fact that you have arrived at this moment! We are excited to begin this journey together with you and your child.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Jeremy Gerber  
Rabbi Kelilah Miller  
Missy Lowdermilk, Executive Director

## Timeline of the Year

This is your map as you and your child begin to prepare for this wonderful *simchah* (celebration). We encourage you to use this page as a worksheet, filling in the dates that are relevant/important along your journey. Also, remember to breathe!

### Two Years Out

- \_\_\_ Receive date and this packet
- \_\_\_ Sign and return acceptance form along with \$250 deposit towards B'nai Mitzvah fee

### One Year Out

- \_\_\_ Submit final payment of B'nai Mitzvah fee
- \_\_\_ Initial meeting with Rabbi Gerber and Rabbi Miller together
- \_\_\_ Initial meeting with Missy Lowdermilk, Executive Director
- \_\_\_ Reserve room(s) for your celebration at Ohev Shalom

### Six Months Out

- \_\_\_ Determine Mitzvah Project (See p. 8 and Appendix D, p. 18)
- \_\_\_ Submit completed Event Reservation Form to Missy Lowdermilk

### Three months Out

- \_\_\_ Prepare headshot photo (.jpg format) and a short bio to be published in our monthly newsletter, *L'Chaim*. This must be submitted to [newsletter@ohev.net](mailto:newsletter@ohev.net) before the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah (e.g. for a May date, the editors need the submission by April 1<sup>st</sup>.)
- \_\_\_ Order kippot if desired (These can be ordered through Ohev's Gift Gallery)

### One month Out

- \_\_\_ Prepare flash drive of pictures to submit to Missy Lowdermilk. Contact her at [archives@ohev.net](mailto:archives@ohev.net). You may also leave the flash drive in the Ohev office. This must be submitted no later than 3 weeks prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah. See page 12 for more information.
- \_\_\_ Ensure that any vendors you are bringing into our facility have insurance certificates on file with the office
- \_\_\_ Contact Missy Lowdermilk to discuss final plans for your event including plans for picture-taking, sponsoring breakfast, selecting and ordering linens, your program, and anything related to your celebration that you may need

### The Week of

- \_\_\_ Final floor plan must be provided no later than Tuesday at noon
- \_\_\_ Final program must be provided to Rabbi Gerber no later than Wednesday at noon

## **Timeline of the (extended) weekend**

### **Minyan (Monday/Thursday morning)**

Ohev Shalom's morning minyan (prayer service) begins every weekday at 8:00 a.m. On Mondays and Thursdays, we read a small selection from the Torah. If/when your child chants a Torah reading at our morning minyan, it is the same section s/he will read on Saturday, so it builds confidence to chant it in a "live," but smaller setting. In addition to reading Torah in minyan, students put on a tallit and tefillin, carry the Torah, and lead any parts of the service that they have learned. You may also take pictures at the minyan, which is not permitted on Saturdays. Families are encouraged (but not required or expected) to sponsor breakfast after minyan. Contact the office if interested in sponsoring breakfast.

### **Kabbalat Shabbat (Friday Evening Services)**

Kabbalat Shabbat services usually begin at 6:00 p.m. every Friday, and conclude by approximately 7:00 p.m. We encourage students and their families to see this musical and intimate prayer service as an integral part of the B'nai Mitzvah weekend. Students will have an opportunity to lead any prayers they may have mastered, including the Friday Night Kiddush.

Families with a large number of out-of-town guests may choose to have a Shabbat dinner in the building after the service. Please contact the office if you are interested.

### **Shabbat Shacharit (Saturday Morning)**

This is the service at which many B'nai Mitzvah students chant from the Torah Scroll, chant a Haftarah text, deliver a D'var Torah (speech), and participate in other ways, depending on each child's ability and comfort level. It is also during this service that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is addressed by Rabbi Gerber, as well as by parents/family members and congregational leaders, and receives a special blessing upon being called up for an Aliyah to the Torah for the first time.

Our Shabbat morning service also includes many opportunities to honor family and friends who are joining you for the weekend. There are parts in Hebrew and English, honors for Jews and non-Jews, and other ways to participate, like opening the Ark or lifting the Torah scroll. Rabbi Gerber will work with you to distribute all these honors to your family and invited guests.

After Saturday services, the community comes together for a celebratory Kiddush. This can be as simple as a dessert plate and as complex as a catered luncheon. Families are encouraged to discuss their various options with Ohev's Executive Director.

If a Saturday morning is not ideal or appropriate for your child/family, please speak with Rabbi Gerber to discuss alternate options.

## Opening Conversations and Experiences

Even before your child begins a formal course of study, there are things you can do to make sure that your family gets the most out of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process and experience. **At its best, this can be a year of deeper connection to community and to family, a time to explore and transmit values, and an opportunity for meaningful Jewish discovery.** Here are some suggestions for making the Bar/Bat Mitzvah year really count, right from the start:

1. **Take some time to reflect** on your own Bar or Bat Mitzvah (or about your experience of young adolescence and any rites of passage you may have celebrated). What do you remember about that time in your life? What about that experience do you hope to pass along? What do you hope NOT to replicate? Prepare to discuss some of these reflections at your first meeting with the rabbis.
2. **Join us for Shabbat.** If you are not already a regular service-goer, pick several weekends over the year and plan to come to synagogue with your child(ren). Team up with other B'nai Mitzvah families. Be open to the experience, without worrying about how much you do or don't know. Read through the *Siddur* (prayerbook). Allow yourself to be a learner. Choose a Shabbat that is a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Shabbat, and also one that isn't. Afterwards, reflect on what did and did not resonate with you. Talk about it as a family.
3. **Make a list** of values that you associate with becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah - a responsible member of the Jewish community. What Jewish ideas and values do you want to express through the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process? What are some concrete choices you can make to express these values? What do *you* wish you knew more about?
4. **Choose (or make) a Tallit.** The Tallit (prayer shawl) can be a deeply personal ritual item, and one that is sometimes passed down through generations. Talk with your child about what kind of tallit s/he would like to use at the Bar/Bat Mitzvah - an heirloom (if there is one)? One from a special place or person? One from Israel? Do you want to make one? This conversation can be a wonderful jumping-off point for talking about the meaning of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Our Gift Gallery offers a large selection of Tallit as well.

## Before Lessons Can Begin

These requirements and responsibilities have been developed to ensure that all students have the opportunity to experience a rite of passage that is Jewishly authentic and meaningful, as well as to ensure that this process is a sustainable one for the community. Please review carefully, and do not hesitate to contact Rabbi Gerber or Rabbi Miller with any questions or concerns.

- 1. AGE OF STUDENT:** According to Jewish tradition, boys come into Jewish adulthood at the age of 13, while girls become Jewish adults at the age of 12. A *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* celebration can only take place after the child has reached the age of adulthood, according to the Jewish calendar. At Ohev Shalom, we typically wait until all students have reached the age of 13; however, families who wish to celebrate the *Bat Mitzvah* of a daughter after her 12<sup>th</sup> birthday may discuss that possibility with Rabbi Gerber. If you do not know your child's Hebrew birthday, feel free to ask Rabbi Gerber or consult one of several online Hebrew date converter tools, e.g. [www.hebcal.com](http://www.hebcal.com).
- 2. JEWISH STATUS ACCORDING TO HALACHAH (JEWISH RITUAL GUIDELINES):** Ohev Shalom is a member of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, and thus follows the guidelines of Conservative synagogues around the world. As such, Jewish status is determined by the mother, what's known as "matrilineal descent." If the Bat/Bar Mitzvah student's biological mother is/was not Jewish, please speak with Rabbi Gerber at your earliest convenience.
- 3. FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:** In order for a Bar or Bat Mitzvah celebration to take place at Ohev Shalom, you must be a member in good standing. In addition, the B'nai Mitzvah fee must be paid in full before tutoring can begin. This fee includes weekly lessons with Rabbi Miller beginning approximately one year before the scheduled date, study materials including a Shabbat Siddur, a chumash, and approximately three months of tutoring with Rabbi Gerber, rehearsal time, candy, and a special B'nai Mitzvah certificate. The fee, currently \$1,000, will be assessed at the same time you receive your date and can be paid in installments. If you have a question or concern about your financial status, please contact our executive director. **Please understand that we will work with all families to make your celebration happen within your means;** however, there are certain fees that cannot be waived. Families experiencing financial challenges are encouraged to make special arrangements, and are invited to speak with Rabbi Gerber, Missy Lowdermilk, or the synagogue president to begin this conversation.

# The Preparation/Learning Process

## Tutoring Sessions with Rabbi Miller

### (starting 1 year to 10 months before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Celebration)

Beginning roughly a year before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service, students meet with Rabbi Miller to learn prayers and skills. Tutoring sessions last ½ hour, so it is important to arrive on time! At times (secular or Jewish holidays, vacations, illness, etc..) it may be necessary to schedule make-up sessions or remote sessions by phone or video chat. In general, however, lessons should be conducted in-person. Weekly FaceTime lessons are not an option!

The purpose of these tutoring sessions is for Rabbi Miller to introduce new content, check students' progress, and to give them tips for catching mistakes. **Students are expected to practice consistently at home, and to come to tutoring sessions prepared** (based on targets and instructions from the previous session).

### Staying on Track, and the Role of Parents

Perhaps the most challenging part of this process for students is staying on track for a full year. In order to help students stay focused and accountable, Rabbi Miller will work with students to create a *Brit Limmud* (Study Agreement) along with their parents at their first tutoring session. (See Appendix B, p. 16)

**Why do we ask parents to participate in creating the *Brit Limmud*?** It is the rare 12- or 13-year-old who is able to stay committed to a study schedule without any adult help. **Even parents who do not have knowledge of Hebrew or Jewish prayer can make a dramatic difference, simply by helping their children stay accountable to their agreements, or by listening to them chant and providing encouragement.** Including parents in the *Brit Limmud* also keeps parents in the loop, so that you will know if your child needs some redirection or additional support. Students do better when they know the adults in their lives are there to help, and to keep them accountable to their own goals.

## The Mitzvah Project

### (Starting roughly 6 months before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Celebration)

This piece of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah year can be a chance for families to explore shared Jewish values and to consider what it means to serve others as part of the process of becoming a responsible adult. Each child and each family is allowed a great amount of flexibility in choosing both your project and your congregational activities. Nevertheless, all Mitzvah Project involvement must be approved ahead of time by Rabbi Gerber, and completed by the time of your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration.

**There is no one right way to decide on a Mitzvah project, but some families find it useful to consider the following:**

- Is there a cause or issue that is connected to your family or family history?
- Is there something in current local or world events that has grabbed the attention of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student?
- Do you already have a "family project" of some kind - an ongoing relationship with an organization or community that you would like to fold into the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process?
- Are you most drawn to the idea of a hands-on project, or a fundraising campaign?
- What are the resources you have in greatest abundance? - Time? Money? Energy? Creativity? Know-how? Connections to people in a particular field?
- What projects have you seen others do that you admired?
- What priorities do you most want to emphasize in this process - Supporting the Jewish community? Serving the local community? Exploring root causes of issues? Making a personal connection? Learning about the experiences of others?
- For families with multiple children: Might you consider starting a Mitzvah Project with your oldest child, and passing it along to younger siblings? A project that you all engage in together, and over several years, can be particularly meaningful for everyone involved.

We advise that students make a decision about a Mitzvah Project about **6 months from the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date**, and that they check in with Rabbi Gerber at that time. But there is absolutely nothing wrong with beginning earlier! There is a list of resources in Appendix D (p. 19) of this handbook to help you get started.

In addition to executing an independent Mitzvah Project, we also ask our students and their families to choose **two** synagogue-wide efforts to support over the course of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah year. Some activities you might want to consider joining include:

- The High Holiday Food Drive
- The Thanksgiving Turkey Drive (most years, this is conducted on the Sunday before Thanksgiving)
- The Mispallelim Oy Vey 5K (in the fall)
- One of Ohev Shalom's blood drives
- The Martin Luther King Day of Service
- Serving dinner at the Life Center in Upper Darby
- The Anti-Defamation League's Walk Against Hate



## **Tutoring Sessions with Rabbi Gerber**

**(starting 12-14 weeks before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Celebration)**

Approximately twelve weeks before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the child will begin meeting on a regular basis with Rabbi Gerber to discuss the following:

- The D'var Torah (speech) which the child will deliver at his/her ceremony. The D'var Torah will allow the child to absorb the meaning of the Torah/Haftarah portions, to make personal meaning of elements s/he finds interesting in the portions, and to share a related message to the congregation on the Big Day. The support of parents in this endeavor is critically important.
- The meaning of the Torah portion, Haftarah portion, and the prayers that the child will lead, linking all (if possible) to the Mitzvah project.
- The meaning and spirituality of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- The child's Jewish identity and interests, including family origins (family tree) and the meaning and derivation of your child's Hebrew name(s).
- The child's other interests (academic, athletic, etc).
- Other general Jewish skills, like putting on a tallit and tefillin.
- Training your child in the skills of public speaking.

## Service Planning

As you approach the day of the Bat/Bar Mitzvah celebration, you will be working with Rabbi Gerber and Executive Director Missy Lowdermilk to arrange the details of the service and your arrangements for the use of the synagogue facilities. The following are some guidelines and considerations to include in your planning:

- **Inclusion of the entire 7<sup>th</sup> grade class:** Our Bar and Bat Mitzvah students are part of a learning community. Part of what we try to teach through religious education at Ohev Shalom is the value of inclusivity and kindness among peers. **It is expected that all members of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade class will be invited to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration of each member of the group.** If you have any questions or concerns about this guideline, please contact Rabbi Gerber or Rabbi Miller.
- **Pamphlets and Programs:** Some families choose to make a program, to be distributed to invited guests and congregants on the day of the Bat/Bar Mitzvah. These can be printed in-house at Ohev Shalom at no additional cost to you. If you would like a program to be produced, please speak with Rabbi Gerber and Missy Lowdermilk to include all honorees, select a paper color, and make any other necessary changes.
- **Assigning Honors to Family and Friends:** We encourage you to share the joy of the day with family and friends by inviting special people in your child's life to take a variety of roles in the service. A list of honors can be found in Appendix C, p. 17. (For a complete list of our Ritual Guidelines, see Appendix E, p. 20). Each Jewish man and woman must wear a tallit and a head covering when coming up to the bimah. Honors that are customarily available to family and friends include:
  - **Reading Torah:** This honor should be given to a person who has some experience chanting from the Torah, or who has significant time and motivation to prepare. Study sheets and recordings are available upon request from Rabbi Miller.
  - **Coming up for an Aliyah (Torah blessing):** This requires the ability to read Hebrew (or a transliteration). Please remind those who you are honoring with aliyot to fully prepare the blessings beforehand (see Appendix F, p. 22), so they can chant them properly when called to the Torah. We recommend you mail the blessings to all honorees ahead of time (recorded electronic versions are available from Rabbi Miller upon request).
    - Our custom is to allow one or two individuals to take an aliyah together. We do not permit group aliyot.
    - At Ohev Shalom, a non-Jewish person may go up to the Bimah with a Jewish spouse/partner for an Aliyah. Both individuals would be called up in English, and the Jewish partner would be called up in Hebrew, and would subsequently recite the blessings over the Torah. Only the Jewish honoree would wear a tallit.

- **Hagbah and Gelilah (lifting and dressing the Torah after reading):** The honor of hagbah (lifting the Torah) requires physical strength. Please be sure to give this honor to someone who is physically capable of hoisting the Torah up in the air, and balancing it until seated. PLEASE NOTE: This is not the same as simply carrying the Torah around. Please speak with Rabbi Gerber if you have any questions about this.
  - **Opening/closing the Ark:** This is done twice - once before the Torah service and once after - so you can give the honor out two times. Younger siblings or relatives are permitted to open the Ark.
  - **Reciting an English Reading:** There may be as many as four English readings during the service (Prayers for Community, Country, the State of Israel, and Peace). This is an ideal role for non-Jewish family members or for those who cannot read Hebrew or a transliteration.
  - See Appendix C, p. 17 for full list of available honors.
- **Tossing Candy:** Prior to the Haftarah chanting, our gabbaim (ushers) will provide members of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family and those present in the congregation with soft candy for celebratory tossing after the completion of the Haftarah. This candy is provided, free of charge, by the synagogue. Please note: No other candy may be used other than that which will be distributed by the gabbaim.

## Event Planning

- ***L'Chaim* article/sponsorship:** At least two months prior to your date, please send a headshot photo (.jpg format) and a short bio of your child to [newsletter@ohev.net](mailto:newsletter@ohev.net) for inclusion in our monthly newsletter, *L'Chaim*. Our editors must receive this information by the 1st day of the month prior to the Bar/Bat-Mitzvah (e.g. for an event in May, the editors would need the submission by APRIL 1st). Include favorite achievements and interests and information about the child's mitzvah project if appropriate. If you would like to sponsor an issue of the *L'Chaim* in your child's honor (\$180), it will be acknowledged in a banner on the front cover.
- **Archives Showcase Display:** We would like to honor your child during the week preceding their Bar/Bat Mitzvah by dedicating the archives window case (in the main hallway) in their honor. We will play a slideshow of as many pictures as you would like to give us, as well as dress the case with any other memorabilia that you would like to include to honor them. We ask that the pictures be given on a flash drive at least three weeks before the big day. If you don't have digital pictures, we would be very happy to scan your pictures for you, and put them on a flash drive (that you would provide) so that you will have a digital montage after the big day. You can leave the flash drive and/or pictures in the synagogue office. Please contact Missy Lowdermilk at [exec@ohev.net](mailto:exec@ohev.net) if you have any questions.
- **Use of synagogue Facilities:** We encourage all families to hold their celebrations in the synagogue. Not only is it more convenient for your guests, but we do not charge for the use of our rooms for day-time parties. This also ensures a Kosher, Shabbat-observant affair in keeping with the spiritual meaning of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. You may choose to host a luncheon following the service, and/or a dinner or party in the evening after Shabbat in our beautiful reception room and auditorium. The reception room is also the perfect place to host Shabbat dinner after Friday night services if you have a lot of out-of-town guests. There is a fee for all evening rentals. When you choose to have your celebration in the synagogue, you also gain the support of a group of people who have helped prepare for many B'nai Mitzvah celebrations in the past. Our staff, leadership, and many members can offer suggestions that will enhance your celebration and may even save you money. Congregation Ohev Shalom's Executive Director can suggest many choices for music, flowers, decorators, approved Kosher caterers, or other professionals. Please refer to the Ohev Shalom Celebrations Guide for more information. We recommend that you make your room reservations a year in advance. Although priority is given to our B'nai Mitzvah families, we recommend that you make your room reservations no later than the spring of your child's sixth grade year. The Ohev Shalom calendar is set in May for the forthcoming year.

## Who do I talk to about....?

### STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

**Rabbi Jeremy Gerber:** Works with students to prepare a D'var Torah (speech). Coordinates Mitzvah Project plans with each family/student. Puts together the service outline, and oversees the distribution of aliyot and other honors at the service. Coordinates the printing of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah program, to be made available at the service. Practices putting on tefillin with each student, and is available to discuss questions/concerns regarding the purchasing of a tallit.

**Rabbi Kelilah Miller:** Teaches liturgical skills to students in the months leading up to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, provides study materials and recordings (as necessary) for both students and their families, and arranges rehearsal sessions in the sanctuary.

**Missy Lowdermilk:** Arranges for use of facilities. Please talk to Missy about approved Kosher caterers and supermarkets. All financial matters can be discussed with her. Missy will order your linens and handle any special requests such as easels or video projector.

**Steve Smith:** Provides breakfast on Thursday mornings if requested. Oversees all deliveries including flowers and food, as well as all events using the kitchen. Steve will coordinate set-up of your room with you and your caterer.

**Janean Clare:** Prints the Program book for the Saturday morning service. All other B'nai Mitzvah-related business should be directed to Missy Lowdermilk or your rabbi of choice (see above).

## Appendix A - Prayers and Skills

An important part of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is gaining the privilege of leading prayers and chanting from our sacred texts on behalf of the whole community. Our students assume these leadership roles for the first time when they lead prayers and chant from the Torah and Haftarah at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. **This requires months of focused effort.** Students who are able to work consistently through their year of study come away with a strong feeling of accomplishment that comes from achieving a long-term goal, and many enjoy the opportunity for one-on-one attention and mentorship from the rabbis who work with them.

While students have different areas of strength, and some may take on more or fewer components of the service, our aim is to help our students learn the following:

### 1. Torah Trope

This is the system of symbols that indicates the melody of the Torah reading. The Torah scroll itself does not contain any vowels or musical notes. These must be learned, and partially memorized, ahead of time, through weekly study and repetition with a rabbi. It is a skill that students can use for the rest of their lives, and will enable them to read from the Torah in any community, wherever they go.

### 2. The Maftir (8<sup>th</sup>) Aliyah of the Torah Reading

This is the final section that is read from the Torah on Shabbat. It is traditional for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah to read this section from the Torah as a “grand finale” to the Torah reading. It is typically between 3-5 verses long. Students who wish to, and who have a good grasp of the technique, may read more than one section of the Torah portion.

### 3. The Aliyah Blessings

These are the blessings before and after the Torah reading that Jews can ONLY say when they become an adult within the Jewish community. In many ways, the entire service centers on the moment when the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is called up to recite these blessings; this is considered the transitional moment when your child achieves the age of maturity in the Jewish community.

### 4. The Haftarah

The Haftarah is a section from the Book of Prophets that is chanted after the Torah reading. Each Torah portion was assigned a unique Haftarah centuries ago. There is always some connection between the Torah portion and the Haftarah, though sometimes it is a bit of a stretch! The Haftarah is chanted according to a melody that is slightly different from the melody of the Torah, but it uses the same system of symbols. There is a different Haftarah for each Shabbat of the year, and they can vary widely in length.

### 5. The Blessings of the Haftarah

The Haftarah, like the Torah reading, is preceded and followed by special blessings, and these too are sung to a particular tune. These blessings focus on the theme of prophecy and the role of the Prophets in our tradition.

### 6. Friday Night Kiddush

This is the blessing over wine that helps to usher in Shabbat. It is recited both as part of the Friday night service in the synagogue, and in the home before the Shabbat meal.

This is a prayer that our B'nai Mitzvah can use in their lives long after the "Big Day", and is an important part of each person's "Jewish prayer toolbox."

**7. Selections from the Service, particularly the Torah Service**

Students who have mastered all of the above may choose to take on additional parts of the Shabbat morning prayers. The Torah service is full of beautiful melodies that are touchstones for many Jewish prayer communities. These are also skills which can be used for decades to come, in Jewish congregations around the world!

**8. The Shema and V'Ahavta**

The Shema and V'Ahavta prayers are the central creed of Jewish religion. Many of our students will already be familiar with these prayers, and may choose to lead them as part of their service. Both are actually directly quoted out of the Torah, and the V'Ahavta is chanted according to the Torah cantillation system.

## **Appendix B - Brit Limmud (Study Agreement) Worksheet:**

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

**When do you feel most alert in the day?**

**Do you like to study in long chunks or in short bursts?**

**What kinds of reminders help you remember the things you need to do? (calendar reminders, sticky notes, alarms?)**

**How will you know if you are on track?**

**How would you like your parents to help you?**

**What do you think will be the hardest part of studying for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah?**

**What do you think will be easiest for you?**



## Appendix C - Available Honors (Saturday morning)

(Honors that can be taken by Jewish or non-Jewish family members and friends are underlined)

### Checklist of Honors for Shabbat Morning Service

1. Open and Close Ark (one or two people)
2. Carry the Torah (unless the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student is carrying it)
3. First aliyah (Kohen or Bat Kohen)
4. Second aliyah (Levi or Bat Levi)
5. Third aliyah
  - 3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> are not for Kohanim or Levi'im
6. Fourth aliyah
7. Fifth aliyah
8. Sixth aliyah
9. Seventh aliyah
10. Maftir aliyah/Haftarah (Bat/Bar Mitzvah student)
11. Hagbah (Lifting the Torah)
12. Gelilah (Dressing the Torah)
13. Prayer for those who serve the community (read by honoree)
  - May be given to someone who is not Jewish.
14. Prayer for our country (read responsively with congregation)
  - May be given to someone who is not Jewish.
15. Prayer for Israel (read out loud WITH congregation)
  - May be given to someone who is not Jewish.
16. Prayer for Peace (optional) (read responsively with congregation)
  - May be given to someone who is not Jewish.
17. Open and Close Ark (one or two people).
18. Carry the Torah (unless the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student is carrying it).
19. Person to present gifts on behalf of Sisterhood and Men's Club. Preferably an Ohev member.

## Appendix D - Mitzvah Project Guidelines & Ideas

On page 8 of this Handbook, you can read about the purpose of the Mitzvah Project, and the general guidelines. In short, we ask you to:

- Pick an individual project with your child around SIX MONTHS before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.
- Approve this project with Rabbi Gerber.
- Participate in TWO additional Ohev projects, either through our Social Action Committee or our Chesed Committee.

### Online Resources:

[www.themitzvahbowl.com](http://www.themitzvahbowl.com)

[www.mitzvahmarket.com](http://www.mitzvahmarket.com)

### Ohev Project Ideas:

- Reading Program through the Chester Charter School for the Arts (Social Action)
- Participate in our Martin Luther King Day of Unity (Social Action)
- Participate in supply drives, e.g. school supplies, swimsuits, sports equipment, etc. for local kids (Social Action)
- Visit elderly congregants (Chesed)
- Interview elderly congregants about Ohev history, the Holocaust, previous decades, etc. (Chesed)
- Make and deliver food to shut-ins (Chesed)

### Mitzvah Project Ideas:

#### Arts

- Organize an art show using original student artwork and donate the proceeds to a cause.
- Become the historian for a community organization and take pictures at their events. Collect the photos and organize them into scrapbooks.

#### Baking

- Bake desserts and sell them to raise funds for the poor.

#### Books

- Help a library purchase new materials by organizing your own used book sale.
- Help the Ohev library create its online catalog

#### Bullying

- Start an Anti-Bullying campaign in your school or community by creating flyers, presenting to an audience, and getting in touch with the local newspapers to help you spread the word. Have your friends sign a petition and see how many anti-bullying pledges you can obtain.

#### Community

- Organize a car wash at a school. Donate the proceeds to your favorite charity.
- Arrange a rollerskating party. Have each friend attending bring a non-perishable snack to donate for a food pantry.
- Host a sleepover party. Stay up all night baking cookies and bring them to a shelter.

## **Dance**

- Collect old dance shoes and leotards to donate to kids who can't afford them.
- Hold a dance marathon at a studio to raise money for a charity.

## **Education**

- Collect school supplies and donate them to a classroom in need.
- Conduct a "read-a-thon" in your school. Challenge the students to read an hour each day after school. The winning student will log the most reading hours.

## **Environmental**

- Organize a recycling program in your school or synagogue.

## **Food**

- Organize a bake sale as a fundraiser for a cause.
- Begin a healthy eating campaign at school. Enlist the help of the physical education teacher and guidance counselor.

## **Games**

- Have your school sponsor a chess tournament for local students. By charging a registration fee, you may raise funds for a local charity of your choice.

## **Ornithology**

- Become a birder and educate the public about birds. Learn more by volunteering at a local zoo or at local non-profits like the Rattlebox Nature Center or the Tyler Arboretum.

## **Recycling**

- Put together a drive to recycle electronics. Promote it through your synagogue, school, and neighborhood with flyers. Ask the recycling company to donate a portion of their proceeds to the charity of your choice.

## **Technology**

- Design a website for a cause.
- Designate a "no cell phone" area near your school. Promote safe driving and the use of hand-free devices.
- Teach email, surfing the web, and document creation to the elderly.

## **Winter**

- Start a Hat, Coat or Gloves/Mittens drive for the homeless and needy.

## **Writing**

- Write letters to politicians about your cause or political views.
- Record and write the life story of an elderly friend or family member for example, a Holocaust survivor!
- Design & create a recipe book that can be sold through your synagogue's sisterhood or at a school event, where the proceeds benefit a charity of your choice.

## **Appendix E - Ohev Shalom Ritual Participation Guidelines**

### **Everyone Can:**

- Stand/sit on the bimah
- Lead a congregational reading (in English OR Hebrew)
- Wear a kippah
- Recite the Mourner's Kaddish
- Dedicate a Memorial Plaque
- Touch the Torah during the processional/recessional
- Participate in dancing and singing, even in ritual settings where the Torah is present (e.g., Simchat Torah)
- Ascend the bimah with a Jewish spouse/partner for an aliyah. Both individuals are called up for the honor in English, only the Jewish person is called in Hebrew, and only the Jewish person recites the Torah blessings
- Participate in all adult education-oriented classes (e.g., Bible study class)
- Participate in (add a name to) the Mishebeirach, prayer of healing list (and CAN say a name out loud during the service)
- Participate in a Hebrew learning/Torah trope learning class
- Share life cycle events in community announcements

### **Only Jewish Individuals Can:**

- Wear a Tallit
- Recite the blessings over a Torah reading
- Read from the Torah
- Open/close the Ark
- Lead a prayer service
- Carry/lift/dress the Torah
- Carry and hold the Torah during processions and/or dancing

## **Life Cycle Events**

### **Everyone Can:**

- Participate in the life cycle events of their children, following the guidelines, including having an Aufruf (pre-wedding) celebration
- Be buried in the Interfaith section of the Ohev Shalom Cemetery
- Have Ohev Shalom Clergy officiate at a graveside funeral or unveiling
- Have a funeral in the synagogue

### **Only Jewish Individuals Can:**

- Be married in the synagogue

# Appendix F - Instructions for Taking an Aliyah

## **How to Take an Aliyah:**

We are very pleased to be honoring you with an aliyah, an opportunity to bless the Torah during our services on Shabbat at Ohev Shalom. We would like to provide you with a few guidelines to help familiarize you with the ritual of the aliyah, so that you can practice reciting the blessing aloud prior to the occasion, if the blessing is not familiar to you. Here you will find a complete description to help you. There are many variations in custom in different congregations. This document will give you a better sense of the minhag ha-makom (the custom of the place in which you are) at Ohev Shalom. Please note that the term “aliyah” refers not only to the honor you will have, of being called to bless the Torah, but also to the section of text which is read by someone else between the blessings you will recite.

In our congregation, we ask that you please wear a [tallit](#) (prayer shawl) and kippah (head covering) when called to the Torah. Both are available in the lobby for your use.

## **1. YOU ARE CALLED TO THE TORAH**

You will be told in advance what number your aliyah is. There are generally seven aliyot on Shabbat morning. We invite you to come forward to the Torah reading table as soon as you are called, using the shortest route possible.

## **2. YOUR HEBREW NAME**

Please give your Hebrew name to the gabbai (attendant) standing on the left side of the table, facing the congregation. Your Hebrew name should be given in the form: [Your name] ben/bat [your father's name] and [your mother's name]. If you are not sure of your Hebrew name, please speak to Rabbi Gerber before the service, or mention this to the person who gave you your honor. Please note: If you are a Kohen or a Levite, you can only take the 1<sup>st</sup> (Kohen) or 2<sup>nd</sup> (Levite) aliyah.

## **3. FIND THE PLACE AND HOLD THE EITZ CHAYIM (wooden rollers)**

The reader will open the scroll and show you where s/he will begin reading. Take the tzitzit (corner fringes of the [tallit](#)) and touch them to the word the reader points out and kiss the tzitzit. The reader may close the scroll at this time. When reciting the blessings over the Torah, it is customary to hold the bottom ends of the wooden rollers, one in each hand.

#### 4. RECITE THE FIRST BLESSINGS

You say:

.BARECHU ET ADONAI HAM'VORACH

בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יי המְבַרֵךְ

Congregation responds:

בְּרוּךְ יי המְבַרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

BARUCH ADONAI HAM'VORACH LE-OLAM VA-ED.

You say:

בְּרוּךְ יי המְבַרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בְּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

BARUCH ADONAI HAM'VORACH LE-OLAM VA-ED.

BARUCH ATA ADONAI, ELOHAYNU MELECH HA-OLAM, ASHER BACHAR BANU MI-KOL HA-AMIM VE-NATAN LANU ET TORATO. BARUCH ATA ADONAI, NOTAYN HA-TORAH.

#### 5. THE READER CHANTS

While the reader is chanting from the Torah, you may be asked to hold one of the wooden rollers, to keep the scroll open, and to maintain the connection between you and the text that you just blessed! You are invited to look into the scroll while the reader is chanting.

#### 6. THE FINAL BLESSING

When the reader finishes reading the aliyah, s/he will point out the last word with the yad (pointer). Take the tzitzit in your hand, touch them to this word, and kiss them. Then recite this blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת, וְחַיִּי עוֹלָם נָטַע בְּתוֹכָנוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

BARUCH ATA ADONAI ELOHAYNU MELECH HA-OLAM, ASHER NATAN LANU TORAT EMET VE-CHAYEI OLAM NATA BE-TOCHAYNU. BARUCH ATA ADONAI, NOTAYN HA-TORAH.

#### 7. AFTER THE BLESSINGS

When you have completed the second blessing, move over to the right, to make room for the next person called to the Torah. It is the custom to remain at the reading table for the duration of the next person's aliyah. When that person has completed his/her aliyah, you may return to your

seat. It is customary to take a longer route back to your seat than that which you took to ascend the bimah (podium), signifying your reluctance to leave the Torah.

## Appendix G - Glossary

**Aliyah** (pl. Aliyot) Going-up. The honor of reciting the blessings before and after reading Torah. On Shabbat morning there are seven aliyot, and in the afternoon service there are three.

**Ark, or Aron Hakodesh** (The Holy Ark) The repository of the Torah scrolls, on the bima.

**Bima** (Pulpit) High place. The bima is the focus of most ritual activities in the synagogue.

**B'nai Mitzvah** (sing. Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah) At the age of 13, a young Jewish man or woman becomes obligated to observe the commandments (mitzvot) of Judaism. The celebration signifies that the young adult is beginning and will continue to function as an active and responsible Jew in the Jewish community. Bar Mitzvah refers to a male; Bat Mitzvah, to a female.

**Cantor** Leads congregation in chanting services and teaching Bar/ Bat Mitzvah students.

**Chesed** The Hebrew word for loving-kindness.

**Chumash** (pl. Chumashim) A Hebrew name given to the Pentateuch in Judaism. The word comes from chamesh, the Hebrew word for five, because of the Five Books of Moses that make up the Torah. The word chumash refers to the book we use to follow along with the Torah reading, and it includes the entire Torah broken up into portions, with relevant passages from the Prophets which are chanted as accompanying Haftarah each Shabbat.

**D'var Torah** The preparation and delivery of a talk on the Torah portion by the B'nai Mitzvah. This encounter of each child with his or her Torah portion is unique and personal, and the process of deriving meaning from this text and sharing it with others is a serious undertaking.

**Gabbai** (pl. Gabbaim) A person who assists the Torah reader and makes sure that the Torah service runs smoothly. There are two Gabbaim on the bima during the Torah service, and their job is to call people to the Torah for their aliyot, check that the reader makes no mistakes while reading the Torah and provide correction if a mistake is made, and see to the mechanics of covering and uncovering the Torah scroll at the appropriate times. Usually, the Gabbaim are congregants who possess the skills to fulfill these tasks. A third gabbai (the Shamash) hands out the aliyot. This gabbai will coordinate with the family to identify honorees at the service.

**G'lilah** The honor of rolling and dressing the Torah scroll. After the congregation has had an opportunity to see the scroll, the Magbihah (Torah lifter) sits in a chair on the bima while the person honored with G'lilah rolls the scroll, ties the belt around it, places the mantle (fabric cover) over it, and puts on the decorations.

**Haftarah** A text selected from the books of Nevi'im (The Prophets) that is read by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah after the reading of the Torah. The Haftarah usually has a thematic link to the Torah

reading that precedes it. The Haftarah is sung with cantillations (tropes), preceded and followed by its related blessings.

**Hagbah** The honor of lifting the Torah. After the Torah has been read, the congregation is asked to stand, and someone lifts the scroll above his/her head. This person then turns around to make the writing visible to everyone assembled. (Otherwise, only those honored with an aliyah would be able to view it.) It is traditional to show a minimum of three columns of writing, including the portion read that morning.

**Halakha** Jewish law.

**Kaddish** (Sanctification) refers to an important and central blessing in the Jewish prayer service. The central theme of the Kaddish is the magnification and sanctification of God's name. In the liturgy, several variations of the Kaddish are used functionally as separators between various sections of the service. The most known is the short version (Chatzi Kaddish), which literally means half Kaddish.

**Kiddush** A prayer of praise used in the home and in the synagogue on Shabbat and holidays. The Kiddush is recited over a cup of wine. The meaning of the Kiddush is to praise God for God's presence in the holidays and between people.

**Kippah** (pl. Kippot) Lit. dome or cupola. The Hebrew name for the small round head covering worn out of respect for God and as a sign of recognition that there is something greater and above us. The Yiddish word is yarmulke. The kippah also serves as a symbol of Jewish identity and loyalty. A kippah may be worn by men and women.

**Maftir**, informally, refers to the final section of the weekly Parasha read on Shabbat and holiday mornings in synagogue from a Torah. Technically, it means the person who is called to read that section. That person then reads the Haftarah from a related section of the Nevi'im (Prophets).

**Mincha Service** The afternoon service. A B'nai Mitzvah can take place at a Shabbat Mincha service because the Torah is read.

**Mitzvah** (pl. Mitzvot) A commandment of the Jewish law.

**Mourner's Kaddish** A prayer that expresses love of God and acceptance of God's will, even while the mourner is feeling sorrow over the death of a loved one.

**Musaf** Additional service after Shacharit, the morning service, on Shabbat and holidays.

**Oneg or Oneg Shabbat** Lit. "Joy of Shabbat" At Ohev, this sometimes refers to a sponsored dessert reception that takes place after services on Friday evening. We do not often host an Oneg Shabbat, but it is an option available to B'nai Mitzvah families. Please speak to the office for more information.

**Parashah** (pl. Parshiot) Lit. "portion." The weekly Torah portion read in Hebrew. It is also known as the Parashat Ha-Shavua ("Weekly Portion") or the Sidra.



**Pareve** Food or food product that does not contain either meat or dairy products, and that has not come in contact with either.

**Rabbi** The title of a Jewish spiritual leader—a person trained in Jewish law, ritual and tradition, and ordained for leadership of a Jewish Community.

**Shehecheyanu** (Who has sustained us) The blessing said for special times, usually a first or recurring event that has not happened for while. Recited towards the end of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service by the parents.

**Simcha** A happy occasion such as when a child becomes a B'nai Mitzvah.

**Tallit** (pl. Tallitot) The tallit is a prayer shawl. It is a rectangular piece of linen or silk with special fringes called tzitzit on each of the four corners. The purpose of the garment is to hold the tzitzit, which are a reminder of the 613 mitzvot.

**Tefillin** - As part of preparing for the ritual responsibilities of Jewish adulthood, students in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade will learn about tefillin, the leather phylacteries (straps) that Jews have worn for centuries at weekday morning services. We strongly encourage, as part of the general expenses spent on Bar/Bat Mitzvah, that parents purchase tefillin for their child's use. They can be obtained (relatively) inexpensively from the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs ([www.fjmc.org](http://www.fjmc.org)) for about \$150. Supplementary funding is available for parents for whom this is a financial difficulty.

**T'filah** (pl. t'fillot) Prayer.

**Trope** The system of cantillation marks and their music, used to chant sacred books. There are trope systems for Torah and Haftarah that differ musically from one another.

## Appendix H - Additional Resources

Books (some available in our library):

Putting God on the Guest List (edition for parents, and edition for kids)

Whose Bar Mitzvah is It Anyway?

Celebration and Renewal (section on Bar/Bat Mitzvah)

Living a Jewish Life (section on Bar/Bat Mitzvah) (also, a must-have for your home library)

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Planbook

Becoming a Bar Mitzvah: A Treasury of Stories

Internet sites:

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/lifecycle/BarBatMitzvah.htm> -- everything from history of bar/bat mitzvah to a planning guide

Jewish calendar and Shabbat times: [www.hebcal.com](http://www.hebcal.com)