



Bar/Bat Mitzvah Parent Handbook

White Meadow Temple
Rockaway, New Jersey
973.627.4500
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Dear Parent:

Mazal Tov on your upcoming simcha. You and your child have worked hard to reach this day. The entire White Meadow Temple community takes pride in your child's accomplishments and shares in your joy.

The purpose of this handbook is to answer your questions and help you and your child get the most enjoyment and satisfaction from this occasion. This document will help guide you through the planning process, let you know what will be expected of you and your child, and offer ideas on things you can do to enhance the experience.

No written document can ever answer every question. The Rabbi, Hazzan, officers, teachers, school administration, and office staff are all committed to making this the best possible experience for you and your child. If you have any questions, concerns, or special requests, please do not hesitate to ask.

Rabbi Benjamin Adler

Cantor Matthew Klein

Cantor Ted Prosnitz, Tutor

Noah Krieger, Chairman Bnai Mitzvah Committee

What it Means to Become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah

The bar or bat mitzvah ceremony is a celebration of a rite of passage for your child. Having reached the age of bar or bat mitzvah, your child assumes the responsibilities of a Jewish adult. In the time leading up to the bar or bat mitzvah, we encourage you to explore with your child what this means to him or her. This is a time to discover what it means to be Jewish and to live life in a Jewish way. The more you can help your child focus on and appreciate the process of becoming a bar or bat mitzvah, and not just the event of the bar or bat mitzvah, the more meaningful the experience will be. If you talk to your child about what it means to become a Jewish adult, and to make decisions and commitments, the meaning and significance of this rite of passage will be greatly enhanced. As he or she reflects upon it, your child will be more confident and feel the pride of how much he or she has learned and grown in the process of becoming a bar or bat mitzvah.

There are number of books that are directed at parents who desire to maximize the spiritual and personal dimensions of the bar or bat mitzvah experience. Some examples include:

- *Putting God On The Guest List: How To Reclaim The Spiritual Meaning Of Your Child's Bar Or Bat Mitzvah* by Jeffrey K. Salkin
- *Whose Bar/Bat Mitzvah Is This, Anyway?: A Guide for Parents Through a Family Rite of Passage (Paperback)* by Judith Davis

Prerequisites

Your child is expected *to complete* five years of Jewish education, which is the equivalent of grades Aleph through Hey at our Irving T. Wolfson Religious School. For the year prior to the bar/bat mitzvah service, the student must be attending the Irving T. Wolfson Religious School unless he or she is enrolled in a recognized Hebrew Day School. Each student is expected to continue his/her education through the end of the fifth year. Children who complete the Hey year at the Irving T. Wolfson Religious School are recognized at a graduation ceremony in May of that year.

There is a bar or bat mitzvah fee which covers nine months of weekly, personalized tutoring in your child's Torah and Haftarah portions. It also covers your sponsorship of a basic kiddush following your child's bar or bat mitzvah ceremony. One-half of the bar/bat mitzvah fees must be paid upon receipt of a bar/bat mitzvah date in order to assure that the date is held for you. The balance of the fee must be paid in full before your child begins lessons with the bar/bat mitzvah instructor.

All other financial obligations to White Meadow Temple must be up-to-date: paid in full or being paid off monthly. This includes dues, building fund, religious school tuition, plaques and tribute cards. If you have special arrangements, you must be meeting your obligation. Your account must be current no later than ninety days prior to the bar/bat mitzvah day. If you have any questions about your account, please contact the synagogue office.

Your Child's Role at the Bar or Bat Mitzvah Ceremony

Most bar or bat mitzvah ceremonies are held during regular Shabbat morning services. Under certain circumstances, generally at the request of parents, the bar or bat mitzvah may be held during other services at which the Torah is read.

There are abundant opportunities for your child to participate, both during services on Friday night and during services Saturday morning.

Your child may participate in the following aspect of the Friday night service:

- Lead the Kabbalat Shabbat service
- Lead the congregation in Kiddush

Your child will have the opportunity to participate in the following aspects of the Shabbat morning service:

- Take part in the procession of the Torah to the *bimah*
- Read from the Torah
- Recite the Torah blessing for the Maftir *aliyah*
- Deliver a Dvar Torah . a short lesson on the day's Torah portion
- Read the Haftarah and its blessings
- Take part in the procession to return the Torah to the Ark
- Lead additional parts of the service . please talk to the Rabbi and instructor if you and your child are interested in leading more

Please consult the Rabbi for additional ideas.

All children who are celebrating their bar or bat mitzvah on Shabbat morning will read the day's Haftorah. Most children will also read some Torah. Children who are celebrating their bar or bat mitzvah at an alternate service at which the Haftorah is not read, will only read from the Torah.

The Parent's Role at the Bar or Bat Mitzvah Ceremony

Parents also have a role. While not as involved as that of your child, it does require some level of preparation.

Parents have the opportunity to participate in the following aspects of the service:

- You will have an *aliyah* (generally the seventh *aliyah* immediately before your child's *aliyah*).
- You will recite a blessing known as the Sheptarani, which gives thanks to God for allowing you to reach this day when you can confer the obligations of adulthood upon your child.
- You will recite the parents' blessing for your child.
- You will recite the Shechecheyanu, the prayer we say upon reaching a momentous occasion.
- You may read Torah. Older siblings or other relatives may also read.
- You may make a brief speech.
- You will be filled with pride and receive the well-deserved mazal tovs of the congregation, your family, and friends.

Preparation

A series of seminars will be held during religious school hours for parents and students beginning in Dalet (6th grade). The purpose of the seminars is to thoroughly acquaint the parents and students with the process of preparing for a bar or bat mitzvah and to engage the family in meaningful thought and discussion about the significance of the event.

The religious school office will contact you approximately ten months prior to your child's bar or bat mitzvah to schedule lessons. Your child will receive regular lessons with the instructor beginning approximately nine months before the bar or bat mitzvah date. You are encouraged to attend the initial meeting with the instructor to discuss your goals and objectives and any special needs or requests your child may have. The instructor will structure your child's lessons to help meet your and your child's needs and goals.

Lessons are usually held weekly and last approximately thirty minutes. Lessons will be given in person, face-to-face. It is important that your child arrive promptly for these lessons, so that he or she does not miss valuable instruction time. The instructor will email a progress report to the parents once a month. You are also encouraged to come into the synagogue to pick up your child at the end of his or her lesson, so that you may get immediate feedback from the instructor. If you have any special concerns or there are special circumstances for your child, do not hesitate to contact the instructor.

We cannot stress enough the importance of you and your child attending Shabbat evening and morning services regularly prior to your child's bar or bat mitzvah ceremony. You are especially encouraged to attend as many bar and bat mitzvahs as possible. This serves a number of purposes:

- Your child will learn the structure and meaning of the Shabbat evening and morning services. Many parents also find this a tremendous learning experience.
- You and your child will become comfortable with the practices and traditions of White Meadow Temple.
- Your child will improve his or her Hebrew reading ability by following along in the Siddur (prayer book) and Chumash (Torah and Haftarah).
- You and your child will get to know the people who make up the White Meadow Temple community of Shabbat regulars.
- Your child will be exposed to the teachings of our tradition, including Torah, ethics, practices, and the wisdom of our sages.
- You will experience other bar or bat mitzvahs at White Meadow Temple, learn what other families do, and, perhaps, generate new ideas of ways to make the bar or bat mitzvah experience more meaningful for you and your child.
- By your presence, you signal to your child that this has meaning for you and is important. For parents who are less familiar with Hebrew and the Shabbat service, it shows your child the Jewish value of life-long learning.

Your child is expected to complete a Mitzvah Project. The Mitzvah Project is a hands-on opportunity for the student to do good in the world. Students are expected to select a meaningful project that benefits those in need or otherwise demonstrates *tikkun olam*, healing the world. Some examples of recent projects include:

- Raising funds for a new ambulance in Israel
- Collecting sporting goods for children in need
- Volunteering at an animal shelter
- Collecting used eyeglasses for those in need

There are numerous sources of ideas on the Internet and the annual Mitzvah Fair at the Whippany JCC. However, the most meaningful projects are those that have a special connection for your child.

The Rabbi will have a minimum of three meetings with your child in the months preceding the bar or bat mitzvah day.

- There will be a family meeting with the Rabbi three months before the date. The Rabbi will review the structure of the service, discuss honors, make sure that the student's preparation is on track, discuss the Dvar Torah (speech), and answer any questions the family may have.
- There will be a meeting with the Rabbi and student one month prior to the event to finalize the Dvar Torah.
- There will be a final rehearsal with the Rabbi approximately one week before the ceremony.

Tallit and Tefillin

Jewish tradition provides not only a text for prayer but a uniform for prayer as well. The *tallit*, a four-cornered garment with special fringes called *tzitzit*, is worn at morning services every day of the week. The Torah instructs us to "look at it [the fringes] and remember all the commandments of the Lord." (Numbers 15:39) The *tefillin*, two black leather boxes attached to leather straps, one worn on the head and the other on the arm, are worn at morning services every day except for Shabbat and holidays. Inside of these boxes are verses from the Torah, including the *Shema*. Wearing these verses allows us to physically place God's words in our hearts and minds.

One begins to wear both the *tallit* and *tefillin* at the age of *bar* mitzvah. There are many types of *tallitot* available at the gift shop, in stores, and online. Finding a pair of *tefillin* can be a challenge. The Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs sells affordable sets of different sizes and quality. For more information, see their website, <http://www.fjmc.org>. The *tallit* and *tefillin* should be purchased at least six months before the date of the bar or bat mitzvah. Your child will learn how to put on these items in Religious School and at the Bar or Bat Mitzvah Seminars. However, learning to put on *tefillin* can be difficult so we suggest scheduling a few sessions with the Rabbi to go over and perfect the process.

Boys must have a *tallit* which they will wear at their bar or bat mitzvah at White Meadow Temple. Girls are strongly encouraged to wear a *tallit*. Boys are also required to have a pair of *tefillin*. While the *mitzvot* of *tallit* and *tefillin* traditionally were restricted to men, in recent decades more and more women are wearing *tallitot* and *tefillin*. We strongly encourage girls to acquire a set of *tefillin* as well so that they can engage in a mitzvah that adds depth and intensity to daily prayer. If you have any questions, please feel free to call the Rabbi.

Honors

Honors provide a way to allow the special people in your child's life to participate in the service. There are up to eighteen official honors, as well as other creative ways to include family and friends.

The official honors consist of:

- Three *aliyot* . reciting the blessing before and after each Torah reading. A husband and wife may be called together for a single *aliyah*. This is in addition to the *aliyah* received by the bar or bat mitzvah child.
- *Hagbah* (raising the Torah) and *Gelilah* (wrapping the Torah). Some of the Torah scrolls are heavy, so be sure to select someone with the strength and stability to lift and carry a heavy object. We recommend that the person given *Hagbah* has prior experience.
- Opening the Ark for the Torah procession. Up to three people may be called for this honor.
- Carrying the Torah for the Torah procession
- Opening the Ark to return the Torah. Up to three people may be called for this honor.
- Carrying the Torah when returning the Torah
- Prayer for the congregation
- Prayer for our country

The above honors are reserved for the family of the bar or bat mitzvah to grant to family and friends. Others may be available, if not required for other members' lifecycle events. The availability of those honors may not be known until the day of the bar or bat mitzvah.

For each person having an *aliyah*, you should provide the Rabbi or Gabbai with the person's Hebrew name, including the name of the person's father, and, if desired, mother. For any male you wish to honor, please ascertain in advance if he is a Kohen, Levi or Yisrael.

Please be sure the individual whom you wish to honor with an *aliyah* knows how to read or chant the blessings fluently, so that there will be no embarrassment for your guest in front of the congregation. The Rabbi will discuss this with you when you meet with him. Please do not promise any honors to relatives or friends until after you have discussed it with the Rabbi.

After you have met with the Rabbi, notify those who will be receiving honors so that they are aware of the honor and the time they should be present.

Do not worry if you cannot or chose not to supply people for the various honors. The Gabbai will offer those honors to members of the congregation.

In addition to these official honors, there are a number of other creative ways in which to honor your loved ones. Some examples include:

- Leading the Shacharit service (if able)
- Passing the Torah from generation to generation in the family
- Reading Torah (if able and approved by the Rabbi)
- Assisting with or making the *hamotzi* immediately following services
- Passing out the candy, if the family desires to participate in the tradition of throwing candy. This is ideal for younger children

- Guiding the bar or bat mitzvah in putting on the *tallit* for the first time
- Leading the congregation in Anim Zmirot or Adon Alom (ideal for children below bar or bat mitzvah age)

Please discuss any questions or requests for honors, including the unofficial honors, with the Rabbi. The Rabbi will provide a form (see Appendix 2) to be used to provide the English and, where required, Hebrew names of those receiving honors.

Participation of Non-Jews in the Ceremony

It is not unusual for one parent of the bar or bat mitzvah to be non-Jewish, or for the bar or bat mitzvah family to have relatives who are not Jewish. White Meadow Temple warmly welcomes non-Jewish parents or other family members. We will endeavor to make your family and guests feel welcome and, as much as possible, a part of the ceremony.

In the case of a parent of the bar or bat mitzvah child who is not Jewish, the Rabbi will recognize and congratulate both parents on the *bimah*. Both parents will be asked to stand and recite the parental blessings. A non-Jewish parent may join the Jewish parent for an *aliyah*, but will not recite the blessing.

Only Jewish people may receive Torah honors, including *aliyot*, *Hagbah*, *Gellilah*, carrying the Torah, leading services or prayers, and opening and closing the Ark. Jewish children may lead Anim Zmirot or Adon Alom.

Avoiding Hurt Feelings

Given the small size of our Religious School classes, we urge you to invite every child in the class to the bar or bat mitzvah service and to the reception held in his or her honor. To exclude one or more children may cause hurt feelings.

Invitations

We ask that invitations include the start time of services (9:15AM for Shabbat morning services) and a statement of our dress code and code of conduct. The Rabbi would be happy to suggest appropriate Hebrew text or Biblical verses (in English or Hebrew) for use on the invitation. Should you desire them, printing services are available by contacting the synagogue office.

A sheet with directions to White Meadow Temple as well as our dress code and code of conduct that can be included with invitations is available in the temple office.

The Evening Before

We ask that your family join us for services on the evening before your child's bar or bat mitzvah service. We will acknowledge the child from the *bima*. The bar or bat mitzvah child may lead the Kabbalat Shabbat service, if he/she chooses and/or lead the congregation in Kiddush.

On the Day of the Service

You should be in the building by 9:00 AM on Saturday and be seated in the main sanctuary before the services begin at 9:15. The bar or bat mitzvah will come up to the *bima* when the Torah service begins and join the processional when the Torah is removed. He or she will return to the family after the Torah is returned to the Ark. The front rows of seats are reserved for the family. You should advise your guests to try to arrive at the beginning of services as latecomers disrupt the services and disturb the worshippers. Those having special honors should be encouraged to arrive early in order to maintain the necessary continuity of the service.

In order to be fair to your child who may be somewhat tense as well as to the congregation, no one will be admitted to the sanctuary while the bar or bat mitzvah is chanting the Haftorah or delivering the *D'var Torah*. Worshippers are not permitted to enter the sanctuary during the Rabbi's sermon and during certain other parts of the service.

Kippot (Yarmulkes)

The synagogue provides plain, black *kippot* for all those attending services. Should you desire something else, personalized *kippot* in your choice of colors can be special ordered through the synagogue office. You may also order these on your own through the vendor of your choice.

Throwing Candy

Some families hand out candy to be thrown toward the *bimah* after the bar or bat mitzvah has completed his or her *aliyah*. If you chose to participate in this tradition, please adhere to these rules:

- All candy must be kosher and approved by the Rabbi
- All candy must be soft and individually wrapped
- Chocolate is not permitted since it tends to stain the carpet
- Please arrange to have two to four family members or friends pass out the candy. Please instruct them to keep noise to a minimum when handing out the candy to minimize disruption.
- Candy should be passed out between the fifth and sixth *aliyahs*

Other Celebrations

The family should be aware that it is possible that there will be other congregants celebrating simchas, for example, aufruf, birthdays, anniversaries, baby namings, etc. There also may be synagogue sponsored programming. Please understand that this in no way diminishes the celebration for the bar or bat mitzvah. If you have any questions, please contact the temple office.

Handicap Access

If you have a guest who requires handicap ramp access to the synagogue, please advise the office during the week immediately prior to the bar/bat mitzvah service so that our ramp door can be open on that Saturday morning. Access to the ramp is via the driveway on White Meadow Road. This area should be used for drop-off only. If you need to make special arrangements, please contact the office in advance.

Information for Your Guests and Dress Code

Your guests should be advised that:

- Women's knees, back, and shoulders must be covered. If not, your guest will be asked to put on a shawl to remain in the sanctuary. Men must be in at least slacks and a collared shirt. Formal wear and sportswear are not in the spirit of Shabbat services.
- Married women must wear head coverings. Head coverings are available at the temple entrance.
- All men must wear kippot.
- Jewish men are expected to wear a *tallit*. Non-Jews do NOT wear a *tallit*.
- There are no congratulatory greetings or applause while the service is in progress.
- It is not proper to bring gifts or envelopes+ (i.e. cards with money) to the synagogue. Please remind your guests.
- Smoking is prohibited anywhere on the synagogue premises.
- Photography (still and video) is prohibited on the Sabbath anywhere on the synagogue premises, including outside.
- If chartering a bus for the reception, please have it park in the parking lot, and not in front of the temple.
- Personal electronic devices (cell phones, Blackberries, MP3 players, electronic games, etc) may not be used in or on synagogue grounds during the Sabbath. Please tell your guests to turn off their phones.

Kiddush

Your sponsorship of Kiddush following your Shabbat morning bar or bat mitzvah service is included in the bar/bat mitzvah fee and will be announced at the end of the service.

Reception

You are urged to hold your *seudat mitzvah* (meal celebrating your special occasion) in the synagogue social hall. Few events can serve better to strengthen your child's ties to White Meadow Temple than to have the entire bar/bat mitzvah celebration within the building. To reserve the social hall, please contact the synagogue office as soon as possible. The Rabbi is ready to assist you in any way that he/she can to assure you a successful and meaningful event.

Food and Caterers

No food may be brought into the synagogue without prior verification of its *kashrut* by the Rabbi. A current list of acceptable caterers and bakeries is available in the synagogue office.

Deliveries

Flowers, decorations, *kippot* (yarmulkes), centerpieces, balloons and all food and drink must be brought to the synagogue before noon on Friday. No items can be brought to the synagogue after Shabbat has begun. Also, please note that nothing can be removed from the synagogue until after the end of Shabbat. This includes centerpieces and leftover food and beverages.

Photographs

Since photography is not permitted on Shabbat, please call the temple office to make arrangements for your photographer to come and take photographs during the week prior to the bar or bat mitzvah service. If you desire the Ark to be opened and/or the Torah taken out for pictures, the Rabbi must be present. Should this be your desire, please let the office know when you call. If you wish your child to have a photograph taken with the Rabbi, speak with him directly.

Tree of Life

You may wish to have your child's name and bar or bat mitzvah date on our Tree of Life in the lobby outside the sanctuary. For information on the minimum donation required for this purpose, contact the synagogue office.

Next Shabbat

Please join us in services the week following your child's bar or bat mitzvah in recognition of his/her or her new obligations as a Jewish adult. It is a White Meadow Temple tradition to offer an *aliyah* to the child on the Shabbat following his or her bar or bat mitzvah celebration.

After the Bar or Bat Mitzvah

Here are some ideas on how your child can embrace his or her new responsibilities in a positive and fulfilling way:

- Continue to study Torah and Judaism at Central Hebrew High School
- Commit to support those who are in mourning or commemorating *yahrzeits* by helping to make minyan on a regular basis
- Offer to read Torah or Haftarah at upcoming services
- Learn a new service, such as *Kabbalat Shabbat* or *Musaf*, and lead the congregation in prayer

- Give tzedaka to support the causes in which your child believes
- Volunteer time in support of causes that make the world a better place
- Be active in Kadima and USY
- Attend a Jewish camp such as Camp Ramah

In Conclusion

This guidance is offered in the hope that it provides enough information to help you plan a simcha that is meaningful and spiritually fulfilling to you, your child and the congregation.

If there are any questions or any kind of help you need, please inquire at the synagogue office.

Upon becoming a bar or bat mitzvah, your child becomes a full-fledged member of the congregation. This is epitomized by being called to the Torah for the first time, but that is just the beginning. Your son or daughter counts toward a minyan and should be encouraged to continue to participate in services. The Rabbi would be delighted to have your child participate in future services and to extend to him/her a Torah honor. We look forward to your child's continued involvement, together with you, in our congregational community.

Shalom and Mazal Tov!

BECOMING A BAR AND BAT MITZVAH:

A Chronology

White Meadow Temple

The following is based on a typical student. Your exact dates may vary.

Late Winter of 5th Grade	Dates for B'nai Mitzvah are mailed out (approximately 2 years in advance)
Early Spring of 5th Grade	Orientation meeting for parents: Bar/Bat Mitzvah Handbook is distributed
6th Grade – 7th Grade	Junior Congregation Requirement: Children must attend 8 services per year
Spring Semester of 6th Grade: 2 Sundays	Family B'nai Mitzvah Seminars: Learn about the Shabbat Service, D'var Torah, Tefillin, Mitzvah Projects, etc. Parents and children required to attend
Fall Semester of 7th Grade: 1 Sunday	Family B'nai Mitzvah Seminar Continuation of 6 th Grade Spring Seminars
12 months before Bar/Bat Mitzvah	Choose a Mitzvah Project With the guidance and assistance of the Rabbi and/or Religious School Principal
10 months before	Set up a schedule for tutoring with the B'nai Mitzvah instructor
9 months before	Begin weekly tutoring with the B'nai Mitzvah instructor
3 months before	Family meeting with the Rabbi: Ask any questions Go over details Preparation of the D'var Torah Schedule follow-up meetings
1 month before	Student will have completed studies preparing for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah
1 month before	Meeting with Student and Rabbi to finalize the D'var Torah
1 week before	Final Rehearsal with the Rabbi and instructor
1 week before	Pictures in the Sanctuary with the Torah
Your Bar or Bat Mitzvah Date	MAZAL TOV!!!

Please remember that all dates are approximate. Your chronology may be different based upon the holiday calendar, school vacations, summer scheduling, synagogue events, etc.

White Meadow Temple – Honors Sheet for Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Bar/Bat Mitzvah’s English Name:

Hebrew Name (plus father and mother’s Hebrew name):

3 people to open the Ark when the Torah is taken out:

1 person to carry the Torah:

3 Aliyot (Could go to parents, grandparents, other family or friends; please indicate COHEN or LEVI):
Couples can be called up together

1. _____
English Name

_____ Hebrew Name (plus father and mother’s Hebrew name)

_____ English Name

_____ Hebrew Name (plus father and mother’s Hebrew name)

2. _____
English Name

_____ Hebrew Name (plus father and mother’s Hebrew name)

_____ English Name

_____ Hebrew Name (plus father and mother’s Hebrew name)

3. _____
English Name

_____ Hebrew Name (plus father and mother’s Hebrew name)

_____ English Name

_____ Hebrew Name (plus father and mother’s Hebrew name)

1 person for Hagbah (lifting the Torah - should be someone who has had lifted before):

_____ English Name

_____ Hebrew Name (plus father and mother’s Hebrew name)

1 person for Gelilah (dressing the Torah):

_____ English Name

_____ Hebrew Name (plus father and mother’s Hebrew name)

1 person to read the Prayer for the Congregation (in English):

1 person to read the Prayer for the Country (in English):

Temple rep who will present gifts from the Synagogue:

3 people to open the Ark when the Torah is brought back:

1 person to carry the Torah:

