



MORRISTOWN JEWISH CENTER

BEIT YISRAEL

B'nai Mitzvah Guide

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Welcome

Mazel Tov on your child becoming a *B'nai Mitzvah* (child of the commandments) at MJCBY! We are thrilled to be celebrating this momentous milestone in your child's life. The preparatory months ahead will be busy, yet meaningful, and it is our hope that the Rabbi, Cantor and all the professional staff of MJCBY can assist you and help bring incredible joy to this very special moment.

Judaism is a religion that understands the need for community. In fact, there are many rituals which are built upon communal activity; the most notable is the requirement of a *minyan* (a quorum of ten Jewish adults) to recite certain prayers and read from the Torah. The *B'nai Mitzvah* signifies the granting of these full rights and responsibilities of adulthood in Judaism. At MJCBY, we use the plural form in order to be gender neutral.

The purpose of this guide is to help you in the preparation for the *B'nai Mitzvah*, which is one of your child's most important religious experiences. It will help augment the conversations and discussions we will have together, and we look forward to beginning this journey together! There is a companion document - the Members' Addendum, that will be given to each family as they begin their *B'nai Mitzvah* journey.

This guide is quite comprehensive, but if you have any remaining questions or concerns, please feel free to consult the Rabbi, the Cantor, the Executive Director and/or the Director of Education. We are here for you and our intent is to give each family individualized guidance. Once you have read this guide, please return the signed *B'nai Mitzvah* commitment that is attached on page 14, no later than two weeks after the *B'nai Mitzvah* retreat which occurs in the winter of your child's *Kitah Vav* (6th grade) religious school year. Thank you in advance for your timely submission.

B'nai Mitzvah Preparation

Jewish Education

MJCBY has established required standards which must be met to prepare your child to become a *B'nai Mitzvah*. At the time a child becomes a *B'nai Mitzvah*, they must be a student in good standing in our Religious School or a Jewish Day School. We expect all our students to complete *Kitah Zayin* (7th grade), regardless of when they celebrate becoming a *B'nai Mitzvah*. Attending religious school or Jewish Day School on a regular basis is an integral part of preparation for *B'nai Mitzvah* and becoming an adult member of our congregation. Furthermore, beginning in *Kitah Gimel* (3rd Grade), we encourage you to meet attendance requirements at our monthly Junior Congregations as well as class Shabbat services. Familiarity with our Shabbat service is essential to a student's ability to successfully lead services on the day they become a *B'nai Mitzvah*.

Preparation with the Cantor

Approximately nine months or more before the *B'nai Mitzvah*, your child will begin lessons with the Cantor to learn how to lead the prayers in the service, *Torah* and *Haftarah* trope (melodies), and the blessings before and after the *Haftarah*. It is a prerequisite for these lessons that your child can satisfactorily read Hebrew. We reserve the right to require private tutoring for students who are not prepared to work with the Cantor because of excessive absence from Religious School or lack of Shabbat attendance in Junior Congregation and class services. For all children, the goal is that they learn as much of the service, *Torah* and *Haftarah* portions as they comfortably can.

Preparation with the Rabbi

Approximately three months before the *B'nai Mitzvah*, the Rabbi will meet with your child to start working on the speeches that they will give, and to address any other questions or issues that have arisen. *The B'nai Mitzvah* can prepare for their sessions with the Rabbi by reading their *Torah* portion and *Haftarah* in English, and answering the following questions:

- What is the *Torah* Portion about?

- What is the *Haftarah* about?
- Is there anything in your *Torah* reading that is particularly important to you?
- Is there anything in your *Torah* reading which teaches you a lesson that you would like to share with your family and friends?
- What does becoming a *B'nai Mitzvah* mean to you and why is it important?
- What does becoming a *B'nai Mitzvah* mean to your family, parents, and grandparents?
- Do you see this event in your life as being the end of your Judaism or the beginning?
- What do you want to do to learn more about your Jewishness?
- Are there any people that you would like to thank for helping you reach this important day (e.g., parents, grandparents, Cantor, teachers, Rabbi, others)?

Mitzvah Project

As part of the *B'nai Mitzvah* celebration, each student will be expected to participate in a Mitzvah Project. In Judaism, when we have a celebration, we extend our joy by helping those who are in need. We teach our children that it is important to observe *mitzvot* (the commandments), give *tzedakah* (religious obligation to do what is right and just), and perform acts of *gemilut hasadim* (acts of loving kindness) towards the greater community. If you need some project inspiration, please visit [Mitzvot of Greater Metrowest](#), which has an amazing program to help facilitate this important volunteer project. Additionally, our Director of Education is available as a resource for all *Mitzvah* Project planning.

B'nai Mitzvah Profile

Please complete the *B'nai Mitzvah* Profile that is in the Members' Addendum and return it to the Rabbi two months prior to your child's *B'nai Mitzvah*.

Column for Newsletter

You are encouraged to write a column for the synagogue's monthly newsletter highlighting your child's upcoming *B'nai Mitzvah*. Please email the text and a photo of your child (.jpg or .png) to the MJCBY office (office@mjcby.org) by the 1st of the month prior to the *B'nai Mitzvah*. For instance, if the *B'nai Mitzvah* is May 10th, the column would be due no later than April 1st.

Write-ups may include the following:

- Name of child (English & Hebrew)
- Date of *B'nai Mitzvah*
- School
- Parent's names
- Sibling's names
- Favorite Subject in School
- Why *B'nai Mitzvah* is proud to be a Jew
- Hobbies, interests, and/or accolades
- What it means to be a *B'nai Mitzvah*
- Mitzvah Project

The B'nai Mitzvah Service

The *B'nai Mitzvah* is a ceremony which welcomes a young Jewish adult into the community. The usual customs and practices of the congregation will be followed during the entire service. As this important milestone is a congregational event, it is expected that all *B'nai Mitzvah* children participate in MJCBY's regular Friday night and Saturday Morning services on the weekend of their *B'nai Mitzvah*.

Shabbat Decorum and Procedure

A principal tenet of Judaism is that Shabbat is a day of rest, and therefore that work is prohibited on Shabbat. As a result, certain things must be done prior to the beginning of Shabbat or must wait until after the conclusion of Shabbat. Cooking, picture taking, writing, and use of most electronic devices are among the types of things that are prohibited on Shabbat. For that reason, MJCBY requires that you and your guests follow these general rules when planning your *B'nai Mitzvah*.

Security

MJCBY has recently revised its security protocols during Shabbat services. Entrance to the synagogue for Shabbat services is ONLY through the eastern entrance (at the back of the building – from the parking lot). These security protocols are periodically re-evaluated, and you should check with the office to determine if there have been further changes before sending instructions to your guests.

Honors

In general, individuals who go up to the *Bimah* during services are Jewish. At the same time, MJCBY recognizes that Jewish families today may include non-Jewish family members; therefore, we offer several opportunities for the parent of a *B'nai Mitzvah* who is not Jewish to come to the *Bimah* and share in the joy of their child's *simcha*. Except for removing the Torah from the Ark, carrying the Torah, reading from the Torah, or having an *aliyah* (although the non-Jewish parent may be present on the *Bimah* for all these honors), the remaining honors are inclusive of both Jewish and non-Jewish family members.

The Ritual Committee continues to study other options, in keeping with the tenets of Conservative Judaism. The Rabbi will review all these options and all the honors with you and your family. If you would like someone specific to have an honor and are not sure what would be appropriate, please discuss it with the Rabbi.

Preparation of Honors List

At least four weeks before the *B'nai Mitzvah*, the Rabbi will meet with you to review the honors list. Please assign the honors and return the final honors list which is attached on page 16 no later than two weeks prior to the *B'nai Mitzvah*. For the Torah service, the *B'nai Mitzvah* family is assigned up to four *aliyot*, including the parents' seventh *Aliyah* and the *Maftir Aliyah* which is taken by the *B'nai Mitzvah*. Three *aliyot* are reserved for the congregation. If you are Kohen or a Levi, or you have family members who are *Kohanim* (Priests) or *Levi'im* (Levites), please let the Rabbi know so that we can arrange the *aliyot* in the correct order. *Aliyot*, other than the first two, may not be given to either a Kohen or a Levi. Special arrangements are made when both parents are *Kohanim* or *Levi'im*. Since the *B'nai Mitzvah* family is limited as to the number of *Aliyot* that it receives, an *Aliyah* may be shared by multiple people (e.g., husband and wife, all aunts and uncles, all grandparents, all siblings of the *B'nai Mitzvah* who have already had their *B'nai Mitzvah*). MJCBY does, however, reserve the right to limit the number of individuals called for a single *Aliyah* or to call a group *Aliyah* that consists of more than 4 individuals by number of the *Aliyah*, rather than the participants' names.

For certain honors during the *Torah* service, it is important that the honoree know his/her Hebrew name and is familiar with what they will be required to do on the *Bimah*. Hebrew names take the form of the individual's name as well as the name of their parents. Here are some examples:

- For a female: Sarah bat (daughter of) Shimon (father) v' Miriam (mother)
- For a male: Moshe ben (son of) Reuven (father) v' Leah (mother)
- For a nonbinary person: Rani me-bait (from the house of) Aaron (father) v' Miriam (mother)

You will be required to provide the Hebrew Names of these honorees two weeks prior to the *B'nai Mitzvah*. All individuals selected for *Aliyot* must be able to recite the blessings before and after the *Torah* reading in Hebrew. Please let the Cantor know if you would like a sound file to practice.

Torah Reading for Guests

Torah reading by family members (besides an *Aliyah*) is encouraged and is a wonderful opportunity for everyone in the family to become more involved in the *B'nai Mitzvah* process in a deeply meaningful and

spiritual way. If your family member has never read *Torah* at MJCBY before, they may be asked to provide documentation from their synagogue as to their ability to read *Torah* or they may need to review their *Torah* reading with our Rabbi or Cantor prior to the *B'nai Mitzvah*.

Shabbat Evening (Friday) Services

Friday evening services are held at 6:15 pm. The *B'nai Mitzvah* family is expected to arrive at least fifteen minutes prior to the starting time and the *B'nai Mitzvah* is expected to participate in and lead services. An outline of the time frame and content of the Friday evening service is found below. All page references are to the second edition of *Siddur Sim Shalom* which we use at MJCBY. With respect to the service itself:

- Three honors are reserved for the *B'nai Mitzvah* family: (a) opening the doors of the Sanctuary during Lecha Dodi; (b) opening the Ark curtain for Aleinu; and (c) holding the wimple during the wimple presentation. The wimple may be held by family members or friends who are not Jewish.
- Some parents and/or grandparents may elect to present the *B'nai Mitzvah* with a ritual article such as a Tallit, candlesticks, or Kiddush Cup during the Friday evening service.
- Some *B'nai Mitzvah* lead all the prayers listed except for Mourner's Kaddish and the *D'var Torah*, but it is not a requirement. The Rabbi and Cantor will prepare with the *B'nai Mitzvah* what they will lead.

Time	Page	Description
6:15	61	Opening Prayer
	13	<i>Shalom Aleichem</i>
	15	<i>L'Chu N'ranana</i>
	16-20	Selected Psalms
	19	<i>Romemu</i>
6:30	21	<i>L'Cha Dodi</i>
	23	Psalm for Shabbat
	24	<i>Kaddish Yatom</i> (Mourner's Kaddish)
6:35		Rabbi's <i>Dvar Torah</i> (Words of Torah)
	28	<i>Barchu</i>
	28-29	Blessings after <i>Barchu</i>
	30-31	<i>Shema</i>
	32-33	Blessings after <i>Shema</i>
	34	<i>V'Shamru</i>
	34	<i>Chatzi Kaddish</i>
6:50	Back Cover and 35-38	Silent <i>Amidah</i>
	47-48	<i>Vayechulu HaShamaim</i> and following prayers
		Presentation of Ritual Article - Parents or Grandparents of <i>B'nai Mitzvah</i> – Optional
	49	<i>Kiddush</i>
	51	<i>Aleinu</i>
	52	<i>Kaddish Yatom</i> (Mourner's Kaddish)
	53/54	<i>Yigdal</i> or <i>Adon Olam</i>

Shabbat Morning (Saturday) Services

Services begin promptly at 9:30am and the *B'nai Mitzvah* family is expected to arrive at MJCBY no later than 9:00 am. An outline of the time frame and content of the typical Shabbat morning service is provided below. However, there are a variety of reasons why the time frame and content of services will change. In addition, it is possible that MJCBY may celebrate a second *simcha* (*Aufruf*, Baby Naming, etc.) on the morning of the *B'nai Mitzvah* which could affect the timing of services. Services usually end between 12:00 and 12:15pm, followed by a *Kiddush*. Please keep the ending time in mind when making your arrangements, especially if you plan a reception outside of MJCBY.

Time	Page	Description	Person Leading
9:00		Family arrives	
9:20		Family enters sanctuary	
9:30	61, 65	Opening Blessings	B'nai Mitzvah preferred
9:35	72	Preliminary Service	Rabbi/B'nai Mitzvah optional
	83	<i>Baruch Sheamar</i>	B'nai Mitzvah optional
	85	<i>Romemu</i>	B'nai Mitzvah optional
	92	<i>Ki L'olam chasdo</i>	B'nai Mitzvah optional
	96	<i>Ashrei</i>	B'nai Mitzvah optional
9:45	105	<i>Shacharit</i>	B'nai Mitzvah optional (part or all)
	105	<i>Shochain Ad</i>	Cantor
	106	<i>Chatzi Kaddish</i>	B'nai Mitzvah preferred
	107	<i>Barchu</i>	B'nai Mitzvah
	108	<i>El Adon</i>	B'nai Mitzvah
	112-113	<i>Shema</i>	B'nai Mitzvah
	Back Cover and 115 – 116	<i>Amidah</i>	B'nai Mitzvah
10:15	139	<i>Torah</i> Service	
	129	Open Ark for <i>Torah</i> Service	Family honoree
	141	Removal of <i>Torah</i> (s) from Ark	Family honoree
	141	Carry <i>Torah</i>	B'nai Mitzvah or family honoree
		Speech 1 regarding <i>Torah</i> reading	B'nai Mitzvah
10:25	Etz Chayim	<i>Torah</i> Reading	The B'nai Mitzvah generally reads the <i>Torah</i> for at least one <i>Aliyah</i> , usually the last (<i>Maftir</i>) and may do the entire <i>Torah</i> reading.
		1 st <i>Aliyah</i>	Preferably a Kohen honoree
		2 nd <i>Aliyah</i>	Preferably a Levi honoree
		3 rd <i>Aliyah</i>	Family honoree who is not a Kohen or Levi
		4 th <i>Aliyah</i>	Reserved for the Congregation
		5 th <i>Aliyah</i>	Reserved for the Congregation
		6 th <i>Aliyah</i>	Reserved for those observing <i>yahrzeit</i>

		7 th <i>Aliyah</i>	Reserved for Parents
	146	<i>Kaddish</i>	Cantor or Gabbai
		<i>Maftir Aliyah</i>	B'nai Mitzvah
	146	Lifting the <i>Torah</i>	Congregation/Family honoree
		Tying the <i>Torah</i>	Family honoree
		Speech 2 about the <i>Haftarah</i>	B'nai Mitzvah
10:55		Blessings before the <i>Haftarah</i> , the <i>Haftarah</i> and Blessings after the <i>Haftarah</i>	B'nai Mitzvah
		Candy	Passed out by family honoree or ritual committee member
		Personal Speech	B'nai Mitzvah
	151	<i>Ashrei</i>	B'nai Mitzvah or family honoree
11:10	153	Carry <i>Torah</i> for Return	Family honoree
	154	Open Ark for <i>Torah</i> Return	Family honoree
		Return of <i>Torah</i>	Gabbai
11:20		Rabbi's Sermon	Rabbi
		All Synagogue Presentations Except Minyanaires (includes MJCBY, HAMC, Ramah, Holocaust Twinning, etc.)	Rabbi to B'nai Mitzvah
		<i>Chatzi Kaddish</i>	Cantor
11:30		<i>Musaf</i> (Silent)	
	Back Cover, 156-157	<i>Musaf</i> (Repetition)	Cantor
	181	<i>Kaddish Shalem</i>	Cantor
	182	<i>Eyn Kaylohaynu</i>	B'nai Mitzvah and family members or friends
	183	Ark Opening for <i>Aleinu</i>	Family Honoree
	184	<i>Kaddish Yatom</i> (Mourner's Kaddish)	Rabbi
11:50		<i>Shehecheyanu</i>	Parents, Grandparents and Siblings standing in their places
		Parents' Prayer	Optional – See d Parents' Prayer below.
		Minyanaires Presentation	Member of Minyanaires designated by family
12:05	187	<i>Adon Olam</i>	B'nai Mitzvah and family or friends
		Family exits for Kiddush and <i>Motzi</i>	

Parents' Prayer

MJCBY gives parents the option of sharing a short prayer with their child who is celebrating their *B'nai Mitzvah* towards the conclusion of services. Please ask the Rabbi for examples or suggest one you have found for the

Rabbi's approval. **Please Note:** Overly long or personal speeches about your child are not appropriate during the service; they are better left for the reception, or other moments in the *B'nai Mitzvah* celebration.

*Mazel Tov again on your upcoming Simcha and
thank you for choosing MJCBY as your spiritual home!*