



**Temple Emanu-El of Long Beach**

# **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Handbook**



**March 3, 2025**

**Rabbi Jack Zanerhaft and Cantor Lisa Klinger- Kantor**

## **Table of Contents**

- ❖ Letter from the President
- ❖ Letter from the Rabbi
- ❖ Letter from the Cantor
- ❖ Significance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah
- ❖ Pre-requisites to start Bar/Bat Mitzvah training
- ❖ Bar/Bat Mitzvah Process
- ❖ Bar/Bat Mitzvah service schedule
- ❖ Honors/ Aliyot
- ❖ Timeline (from training to service)
- ❖ Bar/Bat Mitzvah Agreement with costs & Letter of Acceptance –signatures required



## **Temple Emanu-El of Long Beach**

455 Neptune Boulevard, Long Beach, New York 11561

(516) 431-4060 [staff@templelb.org](mailto:staff@templelb.org) [www.templeemanuallongbeach.org](http://www.templeemanuallongbeach.org)

Congregation Emanu-El is so happy to be involved with this special milestone in your life.

The officers and trustees of the Board of Directors join Rabbi Jack, Cantor Lisa, Beryl Jackowitz, and the teachers in congratulating you and your family. You have all of our support to achieve this beautiful event.

Your entire family has an opportunity to participate in order to make this a truly meaningful experience, engaging in dialogue about the Torah portion, and how it applies to modern life today. These conversations will enrich your entire family and make this time memorable.

The clergy, teachers, and Religious School director will provide all the materials and guidance you might need to support your child's studies.

We hope that this experience will provide a strong foundation in continuing religious studies and commitment to a Jewish way of life.

We are looking forward to your special day!

Warm Congratulations,

Yvette Oppenheim, President



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This is an exciting milestone moment! We understand that for many this can be a stressful process, both for the student and family. At Emanu-El we strive to make this journey just the opposite--one of happiness, pure joy and meaning.

Every student receives individualized attention and sufficient preparation to shine. It is not a performance, but rather a public acknowledgment of identifying with a community. Being part of a thousand-year-old tradition creates a beautiful and significant life-long memory for all of us. Indeed, the celebration has always been considered a communal one, where the entire congregation joins family and friends in a special occasion that expresses continuity and connection.

Your Rabbi is here for you and your child. Any time during the run up to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah I will answer questions, offer explanations, and can modify any component to meet your specific needs.

At the heart of the custom is the desire to have the Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate and the entire extended family have an experience that endears them to our heritage. I look forward to working with you, and your precious child in making this time just right and full of gladness and delight.

Mazel tov,

Rabbi



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This is the beginning of what I hope will be a very exciting time in your life. As we begin preparing for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah, I hope you will think about what yours means to you. We, here at Temple Emanu-El, consider Bar and Bat Mitzvah to be a family event. The time and process leading up to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is one when the entire family learns together and grows together. This will also be a time when you and I have the opportunity to work together closely and develop a personal relationship. I hope it will be as exciting and meaningful for you as it will be for me.

To the student — As a candidate for becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, this may be the first time that you are completely and totally responsible for accomplishing what is being asked of you. While you are not alone in preparing, no one can do this for you. You are the one who is in charge of getting the preparation done in a timely way; last-minute cramming doesn't work here. You are the one who must stand up in front of family, friends, and the congregation to lead the service and read from the Torah.

To the parents — This may be the first time that you are not able to help your child directly with his or her studies. While you may not be able to help with learning to read from the Torah, you still have a critical function in this process. You have the opportunity to be positive parent role models in teaching commitment, responsibility, and other Jewish values by showing your ongoing interest in your child's progress, by bringing them to their

lessons on time, and by joining with them at Shabbat services on a regular basis.

As your Cantor, I am here to help and support you through every aspect of this “coming of age” life-cycle event. I know you will have questions; please don’t hesitate to ask them all. This entire process and time is about learning and growing, as a young adult and as a family. Please do your parts to make it a wonderful and meaningful experience.

Do take advantage of all that the Temple has to offer to you during the course of this event. Rabbi and I want this to be the best experience possible for you and your family. Together we can create a positive and enriching experience that will influence, guide, and remain with you for the rest of your life.

One of the Rabbis in the Talmud wrote that he learned a lot from his teachers, even more from his colleagues, and most of all he learned was from his students. I am looking forward to learning with and from you.

Mazel Tov,  
Cantor Lisa Klinger-Kantor

## **Significance of Bar/Bat Mitzvah**

“Bar Mitzvah” or “Bat Mitzvah” literally mean “son of” or “daughter of the commandments”. “B’nei Mitzvah” is either the gender-neutral version\*, or the plural (ie., multiple children of any gender or boys specifically); “B’not mitzvah” refers to multiple girls.

When a Jewish child reaches 13, he or she automatically becomes responsible for his or her own actions and earns the right to take on roles of religious leadership in the community. No service, party, speech, or prayer is required to reach this milestone. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony, as observed in the synagogue, provides a framework for family and community to guide children on their journey to becoming Jewish adults. It ensures that they have the skills necessary to take on these responsibilities, making informed Jewish choices as they continue on their religious journeys in the future. Additionally, it provides the community at large an opportunity to celebrate the genuine achievements that come from preparing for this special event.

TELB leadership is committed to working with students and families to remember that the focus of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is on Jewish community.

\*We recognize and affirm that some children identify as non-binary, and we will use appropriate English pronouns and Hebrew language with each child/family to reflect their gender identity throughout their preparation and learning process. In this handbook, the use of “he” or “she” is meant to simplify the flow and conjugation of the text of this handbook.

## **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Pre-Requisites**

In order to become Bar/Bat Mitzvah at TELB, students/families must:

- Be TELB Members in good standing. All current year dues and financial obligations must be paid in full. There can be no outstanding balances from prior years.
- Have participated in Jewish education for the two consecutive years prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date
- Participate in the TELB Bar/Bat Mitzvah Process

## **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Process**

Rabbi Jack and Cantor Lisa will work with your family to ensure a smooth and meaningful B'nei Mitzvah Experience. Think of them as your co-pilots on this journey. They will ensure your child and the entire family is prepared.

A successful Bar/Bat Mitzvah, regardless of whether it is Friday night, the entire Shabbat weekend, or a Havdallah service includes:

- Leading the congregation in prayer
- Delivering a D'var Torah
- Completing a Mitzvah Project

The Rabbi is available through the entire process to discuss or help identify any items specific to the family (e.g. blended families); help the student

create and initiate a Mitzvah project; and help the student write a D'var Torah, a mini-sermon on living Jewishly and lessons in the Torah reading.

Cantor Lisa is the primary teacher who prepares the B'nei Mitzvah student for their ritual participation. Cantor Lisa teaches students both as a group and in private lessons. She will challenge students without overwhelming them (or their family). Typically, lessons are once a week, 30 minutes, in-person at TELB. Additionally, students are expected weekly to spend at least 3 sittings at home of 15-20 minutes each, learning new material and reviewing previous lessons.

During the year leading up to Bar/Bat Mitzvah, students are required to:

- Meet weekly with Cantor
- Meet with the Rabbi as scheduled
- Participate in Club 455's Chalutzim Program or another approved, weekly, formalized Jewish educational experience
- Attend 6 Shabbat Services – Friday night or Saturday morning services

## **A Typical Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service Schedule**

While all types of Bar/Bat Mitzvah's are welcome, a typical Bar/Bat Mitzvah weekend includes:

7:30pm Friday night service led by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah

8:30pm Friday night Oneg

Following services, there is a congregational Oneg typically sponsored by the B'nei Mitzvah family. Please plan for your guests to remain so that they and you may share the celebration with your congregational family.

11:00am Saturday morning Shabbat service led by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah that includes a Dvar Torah and reading from the Torah.

12:00pm Kiddush Luncheon (Optional)

Following services, there is often a congregational Kiddush meal sponsored by the B'nei Mitzvah family. Should you choose to plan a luncheon, please plan for your guests to remain so that they and you may share the celebration with your congregational family. Because the B'nei Mitzvah ceremony is an experience that happens within the community, the expectation is for the Kiddush to be provided by the B'nei Mitzvah family for both invited guests and temple attendees.

As the date of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah nears, you will work closely with leadership to finalize logistics, including coordinating delivery of rented items, liaising with a caterer, room setup, etc.

Families are also welcome to use the synagogue for a private Friday night dinner for their invited guests, or for a Saturday night or Sunday party. If you are planning to use the synagogue for these celebrations it is essential that you reserve the facilities in advance. Please be in touch with leadership to discuss room rental rates.

### **Honors/Aliyot**

A Bar/Bat Mitzvah is an important event in the life of your family, and it takes place as part of our regular prayer services. As such, we seek to strike a balance between honoring family and friends, and recognizing others who may be observing a special event such as a yahrzeit or a B'nei Mitzvah anniversary. On a Shabbat morning, your family will have the opportunity to assign about 85% of the honors in the service.

The Rabbi and Cantor will reach out to you to help you assign the honors but in general, these are the opportunities (more are available if needed):

- Open/Close Ark
- First Aliyah
- Second Aliyah
- Third Aliyah
- Lift the Torah
- Dress the Torah
- Open/Close Ark for return of Torah
- Open the Ark for Aleiynu

As the date approached, Rabbi and Cantor will share a worksheet to collect this information.

Often, families ALSO provide the following over the Shabbat weekend as well:

- Kippot
- Decorative baskets with candy

Some families like to purchase a special tallit for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student. The Rabbi and Cantor are available to advise.

Other things to consider for the weekend to make it memorable include:

- A Shabbat Program
- Photo/video arrangements

### **Typical Prep Timeline**

10-12 months

Private tutoring with the Cantor begins.

6 months

The Rabbi will discuss with students ideas for their Mitzvah project and the D'var Torah.

### 3-4 months

B'nei Mitzvah students begin meeting with the Rabbi every 2-3 weeks to develop potential topics for the D'var Torah, create an outline, write a rough draft, and write the final version; as well as discuss and report on a mitzvah project.

### 1-2 months

Parents meet with the Rabbi and Cantor to review and designate honors.

Some notes about honors:

- You are responsible for informing your guests as to their respective honors.
- Some honors are reserved for Jews over the age of thirteen, while others may be open to Jewish children as well.
- There are honors that may be assigned to non-Jewish family or friends.
- Any honor not designated will be assigned to a congregant; do not feel obligated to fill all honors which have been made available to you.

### 2-3 weeks

Walkthrough and final family meetings with Rabbi and Cantor

## Letter of Acceptance

This acceptance letter is between Temple Emanu-El of Long Beach and the parent(s)/guardian(s)

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of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah \_\_\_\_\_

We, the undersigned accept the date of \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ for our child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

The service will be on the noted Saturday morning starting at 11:00 AM.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee is **\$1,600.00** - to be paid 90 days prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date noted above. **A deposit of \$250** is required upon signing this agreement allowing lessons to begin. The balance of **\$1,350** may be paid in installments. There is an additional cost of **\$195.00** for security during the Saturday morning service. This payment is due within 45 days of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date noted.

We the parent(s)/ guardian(s) as well as the Bar/Bat Mitzvah participant, understand and accept our obligations in connection with the privilege of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Temple Emanu-El of Long Beach.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian 1 Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian 2 Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
Date of Signed Agreement