

temple
שיר shir
shalom



Celebrating a B-Mitzvah at Temple Shir Shalom

Revised and approved by the Ritual Committee
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temple שלום shir shalom

Dear *B-Mitzvah* Families:

Perhaps the strongest memory from my own **B-Mitzvah** many years ago is of stepping out onto the **bima** and seeing so many people in the congregation. I grew up in a large congregation where the custom was to share the **B-Mitzvah** service with another young man or woman. It had occurred to me that a lot my friends and relatives would be there, but I had not considered that a lot of **his** friends and relatives would be there, too.

There was an instant of panic when I saw all those people, at least double the number I had expected. But only an instant. I realized that I had studied hard and practiced well. I was confident in myself and I trusted my rabbi to help me do well. I was prepared, in other words, and the panic turned quickly to excitement and pride in my achievement.

It is exactly these feelings of excitement and pride that we hope our Shir Shalom children will feel at their **B-Mitzvah** and that they will remember forever. We want our children to experience the thrill of competently fulfilling the sacred, adult roles of leading the congregation and teaching Torah.

Our children have to understand and appreciate these roles if they are to understand the thrill of fulfilling them. That is why it is so important that **B-Mitzvah** parent(s) involve their families deeply in the life of the synagogue. Without that history of involvement, the **B-Mitzvah** service itself can become merely a performance.

I am blessed in a small congregation like ours with the opportunity to spend a great deal of time with each individual student and family. Thanks to this, every aspect of preparation can be tailored to the needs of the student and family. I look forward to working closely with you to make the **B-Mitzvah** experience something to remember forever with excitement and pride.

Yours truly,

Rabbi Michael Joseph



Dear Parents:

Becoming a **B-Mitzvah** is a ritual filled with enormous potential for meaning. However, without understanding its deeper significance, this once-in-a-lifetime experience can be reduced to an elaborate birthday party. Meaningful participation in this ceremony by both the student and his/her family is a learning experience for everyone involved. When you, in your role as a Jewish parent, make the synagogue a part of your life, especially as we together prepare your child for a **B-Mitzvah**, you have it within your power to give meaning that will inspire your child for the rest of his/her life.

The Religious School Committee and Ritual Committee of Temple Shir Shalom present you with the following policies and guidelines. These are designed to help parents and students know what is expected and to answer basic questions about the celebration of a **B-Mitzvah**.

Please contact the rabbi or the Religious School Committee chairperson if you have any questions regarding these pages.

Sincerely,

Ritual Committee

Introduction

Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a Hebrew idiom meaning “one responsible for the **mitzvah**.” It refers to a person who has reached the age of personal responsibility for observing and fulfilling the **mitzvot**, the duties that Jews expect of themselves as part of their covenant with God. At Temple Shir Shalom, recognizing the diversity of our population, we use the term **B-Mitzvah** as a generic that includes all gender identifications. The young person preparing for a **B-Mitzvah** will learn to fulfill the **mitzvah** of leading the congregation in prayer, and the **mitzvot** (plural) of blessing, reading, and teaching Torah.

The next section of this booklet will answer the question: “what really happens on the day of my child’s **B-Mitzvah**?” Terms printed in boldface type, as well as other important terms, will be defined in the glossary that follows.

What really happens on the day of your B-Mitzvah?

*On the morning of your **B-Mitzvah**, you will arrive at Temple no later than 9:30am for the 10:30am service—perhaps earlier if you have arranged to have photographs taken that morning before the service. You will need to arrange with the Temple office to have the building open; the rabbi will arrive by 10:00 am unless you have made specific arrangements. No photography is allowed during the service without the express prior consent to the rabbi. On those occasions when the service is being broadcast online, a recording will be made for you.

*Between 9:30 and 10:25 you will want to be greeting family and friends as they arrive. By 10:00 at the latest, the rabbi and a representative of the Temple Board will be present to help make sure your guests receive whatever assistance they require.

*At 10:25 am your immediate family will gather in the rabbi’s office for words of prayer and a personal blessing.

*The Shabbat service will begin promptly at 10:30 am. Your child will serve as the “co-rabbi” for the morning, leading much of the service. For a very good “parent’s eye” view of the Shabbat morning service, see the book ***Putting God on the Guest List***, by Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin.

*The very heart of the Shabbat morning service and the essence of the **B-Mitzvah** is your child’s reading of the **Torah** and **Haftarah**, and your child’s **d’var Torah** (speech). During this and other portions of the service, many opportunities will be offered for family participation. The rabbi will consult with you in detail about these opportunities.

*Toward the conclusion of the service, the rabbi will speak personally and directly to your child, and offer a special blessing for your family. Parents will also have the opportunity to speak publicly and briefly to their child in front to the congregation.

*The service will conclude at approximately 12:15 pm after a number of presentations to your child from the congregation, and concluding prayers. The last prayers are the Shabbat **kiddush** and **motzi**, brief blessings that precede your celebration.

*From earliest times, **B-Mitzvah** has been an occasion for celebration. The celebration following a **B-Mitzvah** has a special name and meaning. It is a **seudat mitzvah**, “a celebration of the fulfillment of a commandment,” and as such, it has a religious significance of its own. It is primarily a family gathering to celebrate the change in religious status of a member of the family. You may choose to host your celebration at Temple Shir Shalom or elsewhere—the Temple’s minimal requirement is a simple **kiddush** (blessings with a taste of grape juice/wine and challah for the congregation). The professional and lay leaders of Temple Shir Shalom are happy to share their own family **B-Mitzvah** experiences with you and will help you as much as they can.

Preparation for B-Mitzvah

The **B-Mitzvah** date will be arranged in consultation with the rabbi and Ritual Committee. The Temple will contact you to begin the process of choosing a date approximately two years before your child's 13th birthday.

The actual preparation for a **B-Mitzvah** begins with the earliest exposure of a young person to the life of the congregation, and continues through Religious School and all the worship experiences of a young lifetime.

When a date is set for your child's **B-Mitzvah**, approximately two years before the event, you will meet with the rabbi to discuss and customize the further course of preparation. Elements in the process will almost certainly include:

- * Regular attendance at Shabbat and holiday services at Temple Shir Shalom – this is very important!
- * Continuation of studies in the Temple Shir Shalom Religious School
- * Private and/or semi private learning sessions with the rabbi
- * Private tutoring with teachers other than the rabbi

Elements of the celebration

It is expected that the **B-Mitzvah** family provide flowers (or plants) on the **bima** for the Friday night and Saturday morning services of the **B-Mitzvah** Shabbat. Please consult in a timely manner with the office manager.

It is expected that the **B-Mitzvah** family host the Oneg Shabbat on the Friday evening of the **B-Mitzvah**. Some families have chosen to switch the evening of hosting the Oneg with another **B-Mitzvah** family, thereby making it easier for them on the Friday evening of their own child's **B-Mitzvah**. The Oneg is the perfect setting through which we can express the hospitality and warmth of Temple Shir Shalom and extend a welcome to our members and guests. Your gracious contribution to congregational life is much appreciated.

Policies, customs, and requirements for B-Mitzvah

1. Any Temple Shir Shalom member in good standing may have their eligible child study to become a **B-Mitzvah** (see below for student eligibility requirements). To be in good standing, all dues and fees must be current 90 days prior to the date of the **B-Mitzvah** service (including Religious School fees). In addition, the entire Building Assessment must be paid in full 90 days prior to the date of **B-Mitzvah** service. Parents will be contacted by Temple Shir Shalom's Treasurer if dues and fees are not current or if Building Assessment has not been paid in full.
2. The minimum age for **B-Mitzvah** is 12.5 years. Current enrollment and good standing in Temple Shir Shalom's Religious School or in a Hebrew Day School is required to be eligible for **B-Mitzvah**. All students must have attended at least three (3) years of Religious School prior to becoming a **B-Mitzvah**. If the student transfers to our school from another congregation, the rabbi will determine the student's Hebrew level prior to assigning a ceremony date. It is expected that students celebrating their **B-Mitzvah** will remain students in good standing of our Religious School at least until the end of the current academic year.
3. **B-Mitzvah** candidates are required to attend Shabbat services regularly during the year leading up to the service. Without regular experience and participation in the worship life of the congregation, the **B-Mitzvah** service will be lacking in context, a performance rather than a meaningful exercise of adult responsibility. If the rabbi and Ritual Committee believe that a student's Shabbat service attendance is deficient, they will consult with the family about a delay in the ceremony. It is expected that parent(s) will accompany their **B-Mitzvah** age child to services. We urge you to remember the sanctity of the Shabbat experience and to dress accordingly, and to remind your guests to do likewise.

It is expected that the **B-Mitzvah** family will provide a Kiddush following the service that includes, at the least, challah and Kosher wine and/or grape juice. Please consult with the rabbi, Ritual Committee, and office manager while making your decision and arrangements for a luncheon or dinner. Certain fees will apply for building usage and cleanup. The Temple Shir Shalom Food Policy is attached.

Additional Information

All Saturday morning **B-Mitzvah** services will be held at Temple Shir Shalom starting at 10:30 am

No photography is allowed during the service except by express, prior arrangement with the rabbi. Videography may be allowed, provided that the camera remains on a tripod in the back of the room. Photographs may be taken at Temple prior to and after the service.

The family is expected to invite all of the students of the **B-Mitzvah** class to the service and celebration. A class list will be provided by the Temple Office.

It is customary to make a contribution to one of the Synagogue funds in honor of your child's **B-Mitzvah**. A list of funds is available from the Temple Shir Shalom office. Such gifts are greatly appreciated by the congregation. The rabbi will not accept gifts of money for personal use for facilitating a **B-Mitzvah** but is happy to receive a gift to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund which is used for purposes of tzedakah and for unbudgeted items that benefit the congregation.

It is customary to put a picture of the **B-Mitzvah** student, along with a brief article, in the Temple Shir Shalom *Shofar*. The rabbi and/or office manager will send you a timely reminder to send a photograph for this purpose.

Glossary

Aliyah: the honor of “coming up” to the **bima** during the Torah reading.

Bima: pulpit (literally, “high place”).

Cantillation: ancient musical form of chanting verses from the Bible. Your child will have the option of learning to chant. Also referred to as “trope.”

Chumash: Literally, “the Five” – i.e., the Five Books of Moses.

D’var Torah: Literally, “word of Torah.” This is the short sermon teaching about the Torah reading that your child will write with the rabbi’s help and deliver to the congregation.

Haftarah: reading from the prophetic books of the Bible associated with each weekly portion from the Five Books of Moses.

Kiddush: blessing over wine or grape juice that marks the transition from the religious service to the meal of celebration.

Kaddish: mourner’s prayer, near the conclusion of the Shabbat service

Kippa: Head covering (yarmulke). *Kippah* is optional for both men and women at Temple Shir Shalom. *Kippot* (plural) are provided by Temple, though you may want to order *kippot* that are customized for your **b-mitzvah**.

Mazal Tov: Literally, “good luck.” A traditional expression of congratulations.

Mitzvah: commandment, good deed.

Oneg: reception after the Friday night Shabbat service. Literally, “joy.”

Parashah: weekly portion from the Five Books of Moses.

Sefer Torah: scroll of Torah. The sacred format of the Five Books of Moses housed in the Ark in the Sanctuary.

Siddur: prayerbook.

Tallit: prayer shawl. Temple Shir Shalom provides a tallit for men and women who are honored with an **aliyah**.

Torah: a general term for all of Hebrew scripture, or, more specifically, the Five Books of Moses alone.

Tzedakah: the mitzvah of giving to support righteous causes

Temple Shir Shalom Food Policy

Temple Shir Shalom, as a Reform Jewish congregation, is committed to helping its members make educated Jewish choices in their lives. In the area of kashrut (kosher eating), the Ritual Committee feels it appropriate to maintain a modest level of observance within the Temple that will respect the decision of those who do keep kosher, and gently educate those who do not, as to the nature and value of such observance. Therefore, the following guidelines have been established. The rabbi and/or Ritual Committee should be consulted when further direction is required.

No pork or shellfish is to be served.

All set menus shall be either meat or dairy, including appetizer, dessert, etc.

Reasonable effort shall be made to ensure the meat or dairy character of pot luck meals.

All menus shall include a vegetarian option that is dairy or pareve according to the character of the menu.

The Kiddush wine must be kosher.

If an event falls during Passover, food requirements shall be discussed with the rabbi and/or Ritual Committee.

No foods containing peanuts should be served at Temple Shir Shalom out of consideration for members who suffer from this very serious allergy.

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