

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav



**Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer**

# B'nei Mitzvah Guide

2009-2010

5770

Rabbi Camille Shira Angel

Rebecca Weiner,  
Director of Family and Children's Education



**CONGREGATION SHA'AR ZAHAV**

Member, Union for Reform Judaism and  
World Congress of Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Jewish Organizations

290 Dolores Street, San Francisco, CA 94103-2262  
T: 415-861-6932 F: 415-861-6081 [www.shaarzahav.org](http://www.shaarzahav.org)

Rabbi Camille Shira Angel  
Cantor Sharon Bernstein

Dear B'nei Mitzvah Families,

You are about to embark on one of the most thrilling journeys of your family's life. As much as you eagerly anticipate your Bar/Bat Mitzvah, your feelings during and after the service may be even more wonderful and intense that you ever imagined. As I've come to learn during the many years I've been privileged to participate at B'nei Mitzvah:

1. Your child will walk off the bimah with a renewed sense of self-confidence and maturity.
2. B'nei Mitzvah will feel uniquely linked with our congregation and with extended family, as well as with the history and destiny of the Jewish people.
- 3.
4. Each will have a renewed sense of responsibility as the son or daughter of the commandments.

What continues to surprise me is the way in which our Bar/Bat Mitzvah process engages the entire family and community. We at Congregation Sha'ar Zahav have developed a wonderful program to ensure such engagement. Deepen your involvement with our community. Let it permeate your family's life so that you are more absorbed in the rhythms of Jewish life and more open to mitzvah practices. This may be the year that you attend services more regularly, take that Hebrew course, torah study or Introduction to Judaism. Show how much Judaism matters to you, and chances are, it will matter just as much to your children.

Your party will be a wonderful and legitimate celebration of this spiritual milestone. But make sure it does not dominate your discussions and planning. Bar and Bat Mitzvah represents a wonderful time to teach values and priorities to your children. Find ways to make the Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience an expression of who you are and what you want to teach your children.

As you'll hear me say often, "your child does not become Bar/Bat Mitzvahed"; it's not something which happens in a day and disappears. Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a process of becoming a responsible and involved Jewish adult. Help your child to understand that it is the beginning of his or her Jewish life and education and not the end.

I look forward to sharing this miraculous journey with you and your family.

B'Shalom,

Rabbi Camille Shira Angel

# **BEIT SEFER PHYLLIS MINTZER B'NEI MITZVAH PROGRAM**

## **Overview**

At Sha'ar Zahav, we endeavor to make the process of becoming a bar/bat mitzvah a meaningful and deeply spiritual time for our students and their families. The B'nei Mitzvah program is designed to increase our students' knowledge of Judaism, to deepen their commitment to Tikkun Olam\*, and to begin to connect our students with the larger CSZ community that they are poised to enter as Jewish adults. The program is open to all Sha'ar Zahav member families whose children have been enrolled in Beit Sefer for at least three years.

Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer is dedicated to fostering lifelong learning in our synagogue's children; we view B'nei Mitzvah as a milestone rather than a "graduation." Thus, our educational program is not designed specifically with the sole goal of B'nei Mitzvah in mind. Bar/Bat Mitzvah as a ceremony is a child's and family's option; it does not affect one's standing in Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer. In fact, Jewish tradition says that children automatically become Bar Mitzvah at age 13, Bat Mitzvah at age 12. The ceremony, ritual, and celebration around B'nei Mitzvah is thus a communal way of marking an event that happens with the passage of time. That said, most children and families at Sha'ar Zahav decide to have a ceremony to mark the occasion.

## **Program Components and Policies**

The B'nei Mitzvah program at Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer includes the following components: classroom study, family involvement, individual study with a volunteer mentor, community service projects, and service leading. Each component of the program is described below. Following the description, we provide a timeline of the typical B'nei Mitzvah student:

1. **Hebrew and Religious Education Classes** – Twice weekly classes focus on Jewish texts, liturgy, Hebrew, mitzvot, and personal identity. In the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grade class, the classroom teachers prepare the students for most of the prayers that make up a standard Sha'ar Zahav service and help the students complete their mitzvot projects (see below).
    - a. Students becoming B'nei Mitzvah must have gone through our educational programs for 3 years by the time of their ceremonies. Older students wishing to enroll in the program will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
    - b. Children complete their 7<sup>th</sup> grade year of Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer in which they are enrolled even after the ceremony. This maintains group
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cohesion, fosters continuing Jewish education, and gives the students a chance to finish the designed curriculum.

- c. We expect students to continue in our Beit Sefer program, by joining our Spiritual Quest Class after their B'nei Mitzvah year.
2. **Family Involvement** – At Sha'ar Zahav, we strive to include the entire family in the B'nei Mitzvah process, hoping to make this year a time of spiritual deepening for the family as well as for the child. We recognize also that this can be an intense time in the life of both the child and his/her family, and try to build in support for our families during this year.
    - a. Families should schedule an appointment with the Educator 18 months before their child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. They should be in touch with the Rabbi's assistant at twelve months to schedule a date for their child's B'nei Mitzvah. They should contact the Rabbi's assistant again, four to six months before their child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah in order to schedule two appointments with the Rabbi, each of which take place approximately 1 - 2 months and 2-3 weeks prior to the B'nei Mitzvah respectfully.
    - b. Families of the B'nei Mitzvah students are encouraged to form a chavurah for support and to build connections through this passage. Typically families meet monthly to share a meal, socialize, and participate in Jewish programming related to the B'nei Mitzvah. If you are interested in helping to coordinate the chavurah for your child's B'nei Mitzvah class, please contact the Educator.
  3. **B'nei Mitzvah Mentors** – The individual learning for the B'nei Mitzvah is facilitated by adult congregants who volunteer to mentor the students for more than a year leading up to the ceremony. This process, which is unique to our synagogue, fosters a sense of independence on the part of the student and frequently results in a deep and lasting relationship with the mentor.
    - a. Mentors help students learn their individual Torah and Haftarah portions, coach them in learning the service, and are general motivators.
    - b. Mentors may also coach the student on writing their drash. Alternatively, a second "drash" mentor may take on this role, meeting with the student beginning about six months prior to their ceremony.
  4. **Leading Services** – In keeping with our tradition of lay led services at Sha'ar Zahav, all B'nei Mitzvah students co-lead services four times before they become B'nei Mitzvah, and one or more times afterwards, in addition to co-leading the service the day of their ceremony. Students help lead one Wednesday Ma'ariv service, one Friday night and two Saturday morning services. After students become B'nei Mitzvah, they may lead a Ma'ariv, Shabbat, or holiday service. This process helps them become more

comfortable with the liturgy and with leadership on the bimah. [Listed below is the process for how to schedule the service.\\*](#)

5. **13 Mitzvot Project** - Part of the process of becoming B'nei Mitzvah is taking responsibility for making the world a better place. Social action, therefore, is part of our Jewish identities and is part of our program. The class structures three class mitzvot, that every student will have in common, three family mitzvot that families work on together, and three personal mitzvot that are the students own. Through the B'nei Mitzvah program, students will complete four other mitzvot - reading from the Torah, attending and leading services, reading a Haftarah, and giving a drash. Please see the form attached that the B'nei Mitzvah student can fill out when they have completed all their mitzvot.
  
6. **The B'nei Mitzvah Service** - The student and family will work with the B'nei Mitzvah service coordinator to choose the liturgy for the Shabbat morning service. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah student will co-lead the service, chant (or read) from the Torah and the Haftarah, and give a drash in which s/he interprets the Torah portion s/he just read. In addition to the student, there are two other co-leaders. Rabbi Angel participates in the B'nei Mitzvah services as well, leading the Torah service and giving a drash.

## **Typical B'nei Mitzvah Timeline**

1. At least three years before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah year (i.e., 4<sup>th</sup> grade or earlier): enroll your child in Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer.
2. Eighteen Months Before the B'nei Mitzvah Date- student is paired with a B'nei Mitzvah mentor. The meeting schedule for mentors and students follow this guideline:

### **18-12 Months Meet Once a Month**

*Establishing a personal relationship  
Review service prayers & blessings  
Establish Teaching/Studying methods and schedules (Educator to help)  
Gain and understanding of your student's Hebrew knowledge*

### **12-6 Months**

#### **Twice a month**

*Reinforce Trope  
Begin Torah Portion  
Review Prayers and Blessings*

### **6-4 Months**

#### **Once a week**

*Continue with Torah Portion – study without vowels or trope  
Begin Haftarah  
Review prayers and blessings  
Begin work on drash, start twice monthly meetings with drash mentor, or continue this work with primary mentor.*

### **4-2 Month**

#### **Once a week**

*Polish Torah portion  
Study Haftarah  
Review prayers & blessings  
Continue work on drash, meet as needed with drash mentor  
Choose dates/co-leaders for 4 services before ceremony.  
Draft outline of bar/bat mitzvah service with co-leaders.*

### **1 month**

#### **Once a week, more if necessary**

*Have complete draft of drash, for meeting with Rabbi – for second meeting @ 2-3 weeks  
Continue revising draft  
Review service  
Review Torah portion – look at the portion in the Torah  
Review Haftarah  
Rehearse service during week before*

**3. 12 months: Schedule B'nei Mitzvah date with Rabbi's assistant and cc educator.**

**4. Eight to Six Months before the B'nei Mitzvah Date**

**Drash Mentor-** The Drash mentor will help the B'nei Mitzvah Student with their Drash. They will begin meeting with the student every two weeks and then increase their meeting dates as they get closer to the event. The Drash mentor will be assigned to the student if their primary mentor does not work with the student on their drash.

**5. Eight Months before the B'nei Mitzvah Date**

**Leading services/Scheduling services** - You and your mentor should contact Rebecca and Frank Yellin ([fyellin@gmail.com](mailto:fyellin@gmail.com)) who will schedule the student and confirm the four dates with the Coordinators. Additionally he will provide the names of the adult co-leaders who have been booked at the time of confirmation. The Coordinators will transmit those dates and the names of the adult co-leaders, if known, to the parent(s). If you have co-leaders that you would like to lead services with your child then send their names with your dates. If no adult-co-leaders is booked on the Ritual calendar at the time the student has been scheduled, then the ritual committee will assign co-leaders for that date. The fifth date should be scheduled with Frank after the completion of the B'nei Mitzvah.

**6. Six - Four Months before the B'nei Mitzvah Date**  
**Set up a meeting with the Service Coordinator.**

The service coordinator, Ora Prochovnick will help your family plan out the service, including prayers, aliyot and family roles. Please set up your date with the service coordinator six weeks before the date you prefer.

**7.** Throughout the Seventh Grade year of the B'nei Mitzvah Student should be working on their mitzvah projects.

**8. B'nei Mitzvah Rehearsal**  
**The Wednesday before the service**

The service leaders will meet with your family to run through a practice session of the B'nei Mitzvah. They are scheduled the Wednesday before the B'nei Mitzvah date. They typically run from 5:30-7:30. Rabbi Angel is present for one of those two hours.

**The ceremony** - On the day of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the student will help co-lead Saturday morning services along with lay leaders and Rabbi Angel, chant from the Torah, read the Haftarah, and give a drash in which s/he interprets the Torah portion just read. At the beginning of the service the B'nei Mitzvah is presented with a tallit.

### **Aliyot and Honoring Friends and Family**

It is customary to honor friends and family of the B'nei Mitzvah by letting them participate in the service, such as leading a song, doing a reading, opening the ark, or making an aliyah. There are seven aliyot during the reading of the Torah. An aliyah is the honor of being called up to the Torah, saying the Torah blessing, and supporting the B'nei Mitzvah as s/he reads from the Torah. According to CSZ minhag, ritual mitzvot such as candle lighting and aliyot must be led by Jews. Non-Jewish family members and spouses are invited to accompany Jews in these mitzvot. For each person honored with an aliyah, the rabbi, and her assistant, will need the English and Hebrew name. Here are the honors that typically go to family members:

*Aliyot (number depends on how many verses the bar/bat mitvah is chanting. The final aliyot goes to the bar/bat mitzvah. At least ONE aliyah goes to a non-BM congregation member, assigned either that morning or before hand by the rabbi/service leader. Note also that at least ONE aliyah and ONE OTHER NON-ALIYAH service honor goes to someone not in the BM party.*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

7. *bar/bat mitzvah*

*Hagbah:*

*Galeila/et:*

*Ark openers: Aleinu*

*Torah service*

Readings:

**Ritual Garments:**

1. Tallit - You provide your own tallit. Some possible sources are the synagogue gift shop, Afikomen, Bob and Bob's, Eye of the Needle, Hanging by a Thread, or a tallit handed down within the family. A family member can present the tallit to the student at the beginning of the service, or s/he may do the blessing beforehand and be wearing the tallit when the service starts. It is the minhag at Sha'ar Zahav for everyone who comes up to the Torah to wear a tallit.
2. Kipah - see above sources.

**Printing - What you will need to have printed**

**Personalized Service Program** - CSZ has an evolving written program handed out to everyone in attendance (or one to each family if that is your Green preference) that includes: a personal message from the B'nei Mitzvah family, explanations of elements of the service, identification of those called to the Torah, the Torah and Haftara portions in Hebrew and English. Kadimah members usually help out by handing out these programs with prayer books. You may also arrange with the office to customize your handout beyond the slight obvious changes for each ceremony.

About a month in advance the office will be in touch with you (although you are welcome to be proactive and contact them before then if you wish). At that time they will request the following information from you:

- your child's Hebrew name (which includes parents' Hebrew names)
- loved ones (names and relations) who are no longer with us to share this special occasion with the community
- Chapter:verse – Chapter:verse of Torah and Haftarah Portions
- Service Leaders

Also, at that time, the membership liaison will provide you with several templates off of which to create the program for your child's b'nei mitzvah. Your task is to personalize it where appropriate. The membership liaison will help you to edit and answer any questions that you might have. The final draft is due in the office via soft copy no later than Thursday prior to your child's b'nei mitzvah. The office arranges for the printing of programs, with the only the cover in color.

**Article for temple newsletter** - the month of the B'nei Mitzvah, the Gaily Forward will run an article about the honored student. Contact the office about providing an article more than two months in advance to meet printing deadlines. See prior JGF's for examples.

**Photography and Videotaping:**

There is no photographing during the service and guests with cameras should be informed of this. A fixed video camera may be set up in the back of the sanctuary. Photography is permitted either before or after the service.

**Flowers:**

The Bat/Bar Mitzvah family often sponsors the flowers for the bimah on the Shabbat of their child's service. Contact Regina wurst to arrange this. Flower arrangements are \$130.00.

**Oneg:**

Oneg is the food and drink provided to congregants and guests after the ceremony. It has been a BSPM tradition that the B'nei Mitzvah family following the honored child sponsors the oneg, which runs \$180 - \$280, depending on how many people are expected to attend. Generally, the synagogue provides: Kiddish/Motzi - one challah, wine, grape juice and Kiddush cups and a coffee/tea set up and paper goods, silverware and cups.

## ***B'nei Mitzvah Schedule of Requirements***

<b>Activities with mentor</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>Passable Date</b>	<b>Ready</b>
1. Torah reading: Torah blessings	_____	_____	
_____			
Torah portion	_____	_____	
_____			
2. Haftarah reading: Haftarah blessings	_____	_____	
_____			
Haftarah reading	_____	_____	
_____			
3. Go over Saturday service	_____	_____	
_____			
Choose additional prayers			

### **Activities with rabbi**

3. Drash	_____	_____	
_____			

### **Activities with Ritual Committee and Service Leaders**

4. Lead services (Two Saturday, One Friday night and one Wednesday: List dates

First service \_\_\_\_\_  
 Second service \_\_\_\_\_  
 Third service \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fourth service \_\_\_\_\_

### **Activities in classroom (These will be covered to some extent in the classroom)**

5. Minimum Siddur prayers:

Hinei Ma Tov  
 Elohai Nishama or other song  
 Readers Kaddish  
 Bar'chu  
 Sh'ma  
 V'ahavtah  
 Mi Chamocho  
 Gevurot, Amidah, Avot v'Emahot  
 Kedushah  
 Sim Shalom  
 Torah service: ki mitsion, sh'ma, Torah and Haftarah blessings  
 Aleinu  
 Kaddish  
 Adon Olam  
 Kiddush

**B'nei Mitzvah  
Mitzvot**

57\_\_\_\_\_

**Name:**

**B'nei Mitzvah Date:**

	<b>Mitzvah</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>	<b>Jewish Value</b>
<b>Personal Mitzvah #1</b>			
<b>Personal Mitzvah #2</b>			
<b>Personal Mitzvah #3</b>			
<b>Family Mitzvah #1</b>			
<b>Family Mitzvah #2</b>			
<b>Family Mitzvah #3</b>			
<b>Class Mitzvah #1</b>			
<b>Class Mitzvah #2</b>			
<b>Class Mitzvah #3</b>			

## **Important Contact Information**

**Rebecca Weiner [educator@shaarzahav.org](mailto:educator@shaarzahav.org) , Meet with eighteen months before service and set up Wednesday Ma'ariv service**

**Greg Lawrence, [greg@shaarzahav.org](mailto:greg@shaarzahav.org)- The person to contact to schedule B'nei Mitzvah date, arrange a meeting with the Rabbi, and to arrange service handouts. Greg will provide you with samples of previous handouts a couple of months before your date.**

**Ora Prochovnick, [oprochov@gmail.com](mailto:oprochov@gmail.com)- Service leader-Schedule service outline meeting and rehearsal with her.**

**Frank Yellin, [fyellin@gmail.com](mailto:fyellin@gmail.com) - Service programmer- Set up Friday night and Saturday morning service with**

**Regina Wurst , [regina@shaarzahav.org](mailto:regina@shaarzahav.org)- Logistics for service and administrative support for B'nei Mitzvah**