



The Reform Temple of Hunterdon County

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Parent Handbook

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Or Chadash-The Reform Temple of Hunterdon County
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Or Chadash

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Parent Handbook

Preparing for your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah is exciting! We wish you a hearty mazal tov as you begin this journey.

CEREMONY DATE ASSIGNMENTS

Or Chadash creates a calendar of available dates to hold Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremonies. In order to create the Or Chadash calendar, we take into account the calendar of Jewish and secular holidays, special events, vacations conventions and the academic calendar of our student cantor. The most common date for the service/ceremony is the Shabbat closest to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's thirteenth birthday. Any day after the birthday is acceptable, as long as it is available. A date before the birthday is possible, but generally should not be more than one month before the birthday. Priority will be given to a Bar/Bat Mitzvah with a birthday closest to the Shabbat requested.

REQUIREMENTS

1) Religious School Attendance

Lifelong learning is a core Jewish value. While tutoring can prepare a Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate to lead a worship service, ongoing religious education is essential for the development of a mature religious identity. Enrollment and regular attendance in religious school leading up to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony is required. It is expected that attendance at religious school will continue through Confirmation and Jewish studies will be an ongoing part of every Jewish person's life.

2) Service Attendance

Te'fillah (prayer/worship) is a central part of our Jewish heritage. Attending

services at Or Chadash is, accordingly, not only part of Jewish living, it is also an important part of the educational curriculum for our religious school students. Attending services here helps our students to become familiar with the practices and customs of Reform Jewish worship, and helps prepare them to lead a service.

3) Ushering/Greeters

At Or Chadash our congregation is a family in which we support one another both in times of need and during moments of joy. Your involvement in Shabbat services as a Usher/Greeter is a critical part of helping our members and their guest feel welcome and a part of our family.

Each Bar/Bat Mitzvah family is responsible for Ushering/Greeting at Shabbat services (Friday evenings, Saturday mornings, and/or Saturday afternoons during the two years prior to the ceremony. The congregation is reliant on you to Usher on the dates you have chosen. If you cannot fulfill your obligation, please let the office know of the change. At that time you will need to make arrangements for another service at which to be an Usher/Greeter.

As an usher you will be asked to greet guests and congregants, invite people into the sanctuary, show them the appropriate prayer books and help people (especially latecomers) find a seat and direct them to the appropriate page. Families with young children should be made aware of the quiet room should they wish to use it. On some Friday

evenings ushers are asked to distribute cups of wine and grape juice near the end of the service for Kiddush. As important, you will want to observe carefully the Shabbat service so that you can become more familiar with the service.

4) Financial Obligations

The Talmud teaches: *Ayn kemach, ayn Torah*; without financial support, learning ceases.

The current Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee is distributed over three payments. In January, when your son/daughter is in 5th grade, you will be billed the first installment.

This fee must be paid before you can receive a date. The second payment is billed in June of 5th grade. The receipt of this second payment will guarantee that ceremony date for your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. The balance is to be paid in January when your child is in 6th grade. If you have any questions about your financial responsibilities please contact our Treasurer. (treasurer@orchadash-nj.org)

What the fee covers:

- Bar/Bat Mitzvah "Blue Book" containing materials to assist your child prepare for his/her ceremony
- Vouchers for Torah, Haftarah and Prayer tutoring
- mp3 file
- Trope Class
- Operational costs which the congregation incurs on the day of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service
- Student Cantor at the service

What the fee does not cover:

- Vouchers for extra tutoring sessions. Extra vouchers may be purchased from the temple office at the current rate. (Please see

the section on Tutoring in this handbook.)

- Replacement Blue Book (a replacement may be purchased for \$36)
- Ceremony flowers
- Friday Oneg Shabbat
- Facilities Rental (if desired)

5) Mitzvah of Tzedakah

Jewish tradition places great emphasis on fulfilling the mitzvah of *tzeddakah* – righteous giving. It is most appropriate to consider the needs of our congregation and our community at our times of greatest joy. Among the many different ways to do this are the following suggestions:

- a) Contribution to Or Chadash or one of its funds in honor of the occasion
- b) Purchase a leaf for the "Tree of Life" located in our entry hall. Forms are available on the website.
- c) A contribution to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund in honor of the occasion. The Rabbi uses this fund to respond to the needs of people in our congregation and community, as well as Jewish and general charitable concerns.
- d) MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, which provides funding to feed the hungry and homeless here in Hunterdon County and around the world.
- e) Giving a percentage of gifts received to a tzeddakah cause or asking guests to make such a contribution in honor of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Q. What are ways in which our family or our extended family can make donations?

A. There are many ways you and your family can contribute to Or Chadash or one of its funds in honor of the occasion.

Key Temple Funds include:

- *Building Fund – for capital improvement to the facility
- *Interiors Fund – for art, interior beautification, etc.
- *Religious Education Enrichment Fund – for the special programs of the Religious School
- *General Fund – everything under the sun
- *Rabbi's Discretionary Fund - The Rabbi uses this fund to respond to the needs of people in our congregation and community, as well as Jewish and general charitable concerns
- * High Holy Day Fund
- *Gillian Kulp Music Fund
- *Jenny Weller Library Fund
- *Prayerbook Fund

CLERGY

The congregation will have a rabbi and music in place for all B'nai Mitzvah ceremonies. If you have a personal relationship with outside clergy and wish them to participate in your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony, please contact the rabbi who can make these arrangements.

THE OR CHADASH PROGRAM

1) Attendance at a service

You and your child must attend together as a family (yes, all of you!) an Or Chadash Bar/Bat Mitzvah Shabbat Morning or Afternoon service led by Rabbi Forman and our student cantor. The benefits of experiencing this as a family unit are plentiful as you will familiarize yourself with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony at Or Chadash, you will learn the opportunities for family involvement and appreciate the role of the child and the parent on the

bimah, you will hear a D'var Torah (speech) delivered by a Bar or Bat Mitzvah and brief remarks delivered by parents to their child, and you will set the framework for your child that this is a lifecycle event for your entire family. You can find a calendar of the Shabbat Morning and Afternoon Services on our website.

2) Diagnostic Test

Your child must complete a Hebrew Reading and Diagnostic Test and score in an acceptable range. The objective of the test is to identify any areas of improvement that need to be addressed prior to the Torah and Haftarah tutoring program, as well as provide assistance in determining the breadth of the Torah portion. It is important that our children have the basic reading skills prior to beginning their formal preparations. If your child requires Hebrew remediation, we will provide you with a list of tutors to assist your child. A satisfactory score on this diagnostic test is required before Rabbi Forman will select the verses of your child's Torah portion.

Students are responsible for knowing all their letters and vowels as well as the following prayers.

Candle Blessing
Kiddush (Shabbat evening (long) and morning (short) (sung)
Motzi (sung)
Tallit Blessing (read)
Eilu D'varim (read)
Yotzer Or (read)
V'ahvata (read)
Shehecheyanu (read)
Hatzi Kaddish
Avot and Gevurot (chanted)
Blessings before and after Torah (chanted)
Blessings before and after Haftarah (chanted)
Kaddish
Havdalah Blessings

Please note that all of these prayers and blessings can be found on our website <http://www.orchadashnj.org/study/prayers/>

3) Mitzvah Project

During the 6th grade, you should begin to explore possible Mitzvah Project opportunities that are appropriate for your child. Our website features extensive information about [Mitzvah projects](#).

4) Meeting with the Rabbi

Your family will meet with the rabbi to discuss your child's ceremony and the process of assigning the Torah portion. This meeting will include a discussion of:

- The meaning and the religious significance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony and preparation for you and your child
- The tutoring process
- An explanation of your role in the Friday evening service leading candle, wine and challah blessings
- Torah passing from generation to generation
- Aliyot assignments (Torah Blessing honors)
- The role of family members during the ceremony including the participation of non-Jewish family members
- Salkin prayer (suitable for non-Jewish family members wishing to participate)
- The Bar/Bat Mitzvah's D'var Torah (speech)
- An opportunity for your personal remarks to your child
- Tikkun Olam Mitzvah Project (Social Action)
- An opportunity for you to ask the rabbi any questions you may have

Things that you should consider prior to attending this meeting are:

1. Family members you wish to include in the service.
2. Whether or not your child will be receiving a tallit and who will be presenting it.
3. Names you would like to include on the Kaddish list.

When your child is ready to begin formal preparations for his/her service, you will be sent an e-mail with an Intake Form to be filled out PRIOR to your meeting with Rabbi Forman.

This meeting will occur 7-8 months prior to the date of the ceremony assuming you have met the previous obligations.

5. D'var Torah meetings

Each Bar/Bat Mitzvah student will meet with Rabbi Forman for five or six 30 minute meetings to prepare a D'var Torah. At these meetings they will discuss the Torah portions and how its message relates to their becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The last meeting will be an opportunity to deliver the D'var Torah in the sanctuary.

TUTORING: TORAH, HAFTARAH AND PRAYERS

We recognize that children have different learning styles. Please share with us ANY information that might assist us as we work with your child to prepare him/her to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

1) Torah Trope Class

In the 6th grade your child will attend Torah Trope (chanting) classes. These group classes will introduce the basics of

Torah Trope chanting. At the conclusion of the class, the student cantor together with the student and parents will discuss with the rabbi if the student will chant as part of his/her service.

2) Torah, Haftarah and Prayer Tutoring

To successfully prepare your child for this *Simcha* (joyous occasion), he/she will begin meeting with the student cantor approximately 6-7 months prior to the ceremony. The 30 minute tutoring sessions will include opportunities to practice the Hebrew and English components of the Shabbat morning service and prepare the chanting of the Torah.

Q: How does tutoring work?

A: Tutoring begins at about eight months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. These sessions will allow students to prepare and execute parts of their service in front of the congregation. It is a great way to get over nervousness and to share with each other all things Jewish.

Q: How much Hebrew will I have to prepare?

A: Each student is required to do the best that they can, no more, no less. The amount of Hebrew is standard between students (about 10-15 verses of Torah, and several blessings during the service), but is then modified based on each student's ability. Students should not compare themselves to each other, but should ask themselves, "Am I doing the best job that I can?"

Q: How much should I be studying at home?

A: When you begin your Bar/Bat Mitzvah studies, you should try to commit to 1/2 hour per day. It

might sound like a lot, but considering Hebrew is a foreign language, it needs to be studied daily. You don't have to study for 1/2 hour straight, but instead you can break it up into several study periods (5 minutes here, 10 minutes there, etc.).

Q. Who will teach me my Torah portion and prepare me for leading the Shabbat morning service?

A. Our cantor will be your child's tutor and he/she will receive 10 tutoring vouchers (30 minutes each) plus one for a rehearsal with the tutor. Meeting times are established between you and the tutor. If you need more tutoring vouchers they are available for purchase (\$18/voucher).

Q. What is Torah trope?

A. Trope is the term for cantillation or chanting.

Q. Do I have to chant my Torah portion?

A. All students will attend Torah trope class so they learn the fundamentals of trope. At the conclusion of the class, you, your parents and the student cantor can discuss with the Rabbi your interest in chanting Torah.

Q: What if my child has special needs or a different learning style?

A: We are here not only to challenge you, but to accommodate you. Each such special situation will be addressed individually. Never be shy about asking anything of Or Chadash. Communication is the key! Furthermore, please bring any questions or concerns you have along the way to Rabbi Forman or Betsy Zalaznick as soon as possible.

THE REHEARSAL

During the week prior to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony the rabbi will guide you and your family through a rehearsal of the relevant parts of the Shabbat service. Feel free to dress casually, and please bring any questions you have.

THE SERVICE: Shabbat Mornings and Afternoons

The Shabbat morning services begin promptly at 10:00 AM and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family should plan on arriving no later than 9:15 AM, but can arrive anytime earlier that morning. Shabbat afternoon/Havdalah services begin promptly at 5:00 PM and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family should plan on arriving no later than 4:15 PM but can arrive any time earlier that afternoon. You will be given information on how to access the building. Please reserve the front row seats in the sanctuary for your family.

During the Shabbat service, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah will lead the congregation in worship, teach the congregation about his/her Torah Portion and its relevance to becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, chant or read from the Torah and Prophetic writings, and recite the blessings before and after those Biblical passages, and have an opportunity to thank those individuals who assisted him/her in reaching this milestone.

Parents are given the opportunity to share some *brief* (one – three minutes, maximum) personal remarks to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child. Please consider your remarks in the form of a blessing for your child and what you hope for him

or her in the future. It is helpful for families to remember that this is a Shabbat service and some remarks are more appropriate for more intimate family celebrations.

FAMILY HONORS

Friday evening

The family celebrating a Bar/Bat Mitzvah in the morning receives the honor of lighting the candles. The family celebrating a Bar/Bat Mitzvah in the afternoon receives the honor of reciting Kiddush and Motzi.

Saturday morning

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah child will lead the congregation in Kiddush and Motzi surrounded by members of their family.

Saturday afternoon

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah child (along with members of their family whom they wish to honor) will lead the congregation in the blessings for the Havdalah service.

Q: What is an *Aliyah* exactly?

A: *Aliyah* literally means to go up in a physical and spiritual sense. An Aliyah is the time at which people are invited up to the Bimah to recite blessings before and after the Torah reading.

Q: How many Aliyot (plural of Aliyah) are there?

A: Three is typical: Grandparents, Parents and Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Other arrangements, though, can be made.

Q: Who may have an Aliyah?

A: Any family member or guest who is at least 13 years old may participate in this honor. Non-

Jewish participants may read the Salkin Prayer, a beautiful reading for individuals supporting the Jewish identity of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Jewish participants who are not familiar with Hebrew, may choose to recite the Torah blessings in English or read the Salkin Prayer.

Q: What other honors are there?

A: It is an honor to undress and dress the Torah. There are three blessings as part of the Havdalah service and Kiddush and Motzi at the conclusion of the morning service. Lastly, regardless of the religion of either parent, they are encouraged to help celebrate their child become Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Q: Do you have to speak/read Hebrew to receive an honor?

A: No. We provide transliteration of Hebrew prayers. You might want to practice before the service, and Rabbi Forman is more than willing to help you.

Q: Are there honors on Friday evening?

A: Your family may be asked to read the blessing after lighting the Shabbat candles, make *Kiddush* (Shabbat blessing over the wine) and recite the *Motzi* (blessing over the bread.) You should plan on being in the sanctuary the Friday evening prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony 15 minutes earlier than the service begins.

Q: When do we decide who gets what honors?

A: At your first family meeting with Rabbi you will go over many details regarding the day.

Q: We have a "different" family situation (divorce, medical

problem, etc.) that requires some special accommodations. Can you help us?

A: Of course! Please bring such situations as soon as possible to the attention of Rabbi Forman. We are here to help and to ensure that you have a rewarding Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience.

Q: Many members of my family have never been to a Bar/Bat Mitzvah or to synagogue. What do they need to know?

A: Everyone is welcome to worship with us at Or Chadash. If they have been to a church or mosque our customs are generally similar and there is no special knowledge required nor should they be apprehensive about making a faux pas. We ask of the entire congregation please no applause (this is a religious ceremony), and that cell phones and pagers be turned off. Please do not enter or exit the sanctuary when the congregation is standing. At the conclusion of the service, during the reading of the Kaddish and the names of the deceased members of our community, we ask everyone to please refrain from unnecessary conversation and to neither enter nor exit the sanctuary. If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact Rabbi Forman.

KIDDUSH/ONEG SHABBAT

One of the responsibilities of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah family is sponsoring an *Oneg* (Reception) Shabbat following the Friday evening Shabbat Service. These refreshments may be catered by family, friends or professionals. If you would like Or Chadash to make arrangements for your Friday evening Shabbat Oneg,

please contact the office to discuss the current fees and necessary preparations.

MISCELLANEOUS

Invitations: Your invitation should reflect that our Shabbat Morning Service begins at 10:00 AM and our Afternoon/Havdalah service begins at 5:00 PM. If you are concerned about your guests arriving on time for the service, you may want to consider adding language on the invitation or an insert, e.g. "Please plan to arrive at the synagogue at 9:45/4:45 PM. The service begins promptly at 10:00 AM/5:00 PM."

Q: How long is the service?

A: 80 – 90 minutes.

FACILITY RENTAL

Or Chadash is pleased to be able to enable your family to rent our facility. If you are interested in having your celebration at Or Chadash following the service, please go to our website to find a copy of our [Facilities Rental Agreements](#). Our Temple administrator will be happy to help you make these arrangements.

Photography/Video: In order to preserve the dignity of the prayer service, still photography is not permitted during the service. Video equipment may be mounted on a tripod in the rear of the sanctuary just outside the sanctuary in Room 1 so the service can be recorded. Please conclude all photography by 9:40 AM on the day of or 4:40 PM on the evening of the ceremony so we can establish the appropriate setting of *Kedusha* (holiness) in our sanctuary.

Q: Can I take photos with the Torah?

A: You can take photographs with the Torah, and you may take the Torah out of the ark yourself. You

may take photographs after the service, too.

You may also choose to have photographs taken the week of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah as opposed to the actual day. Please make those special arrangements with the Temple office.

Q: Can we take pictures during the service?

A: In order to preserve the dignity of the prayer service, still photography is not permitted during the service. Video equipment may be mounted on a tripod in the rear of the sanctuary just outside the sanctuary in Room 1 so the service can be recorded.

Guests: It is Or Chadash's minhag (custom) to invite the entire Religious School grade to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's Shabbat morning service and celebration. We ask that you support this tradition. Please call the Temple office at least 10 days prior to the ceremony with the number of guests you are expecting to attend the service.

Q: Isn't the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service a private affair?

A: All worship services Or Chadash, including all Bar/Bat Mitzvah services, are public. As such, even though it is a big day for you and your family, the prayer service is open to the general public. Similarly, you and your family are welcome at all Bar/Bat Mitzvah services.

Flowers: Since the time of the building of the first temple in Jerusalem, beautifying *mitzvot* has been an important part of our tradition. One way

we do this during your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony is with a flower arrangement placed in the front of the podium on the Bimah. Please call the synagogue to arrange for delivery of flowers. It is important that the flowers you order from the florist be unscented. Please speak to your florist about this important request.

Quiet Room: Or Chadash is fortunate to have a dedicated space featuring a window looking out to the sanctuary with a sound system. We encourage you to inform your guests that the room is available to them if they wish to use it.

Kippot: The congregation provides kippot for those worshippers who choose to wear them. If you would like additional *kippot*, please feel free to bring them and place them in our *kippah* basket. At the end of the service, we ask that you please take the remaining *kippot* home with you.

Q: What about a kippah or a tallit?

A: No one is required in our synagogue to wear ritual garments; however, everyone is permitted. You and your guests may wish to bring and/or wear head coverings. The synagogue has a limited amount of head coverings available to you and your guests. We do not provide tallitot (prayer shawls). Should the Bar/Bat Mitzvah wish to wear either or both, he/she should feel comfortable doing so.

Booklets: Or Chadash provides a guide to the service for our congregation.

What else? If you have any questions not answered in this handbook, please do not hesitate to contact the rabbi or the synagogue. And *mazal tov* from all of us at Or Chadash on your upcoming *simcha*.