

A GUIDE TO BAR/BAT MITZVAH
AT
TEMPLE SINAI

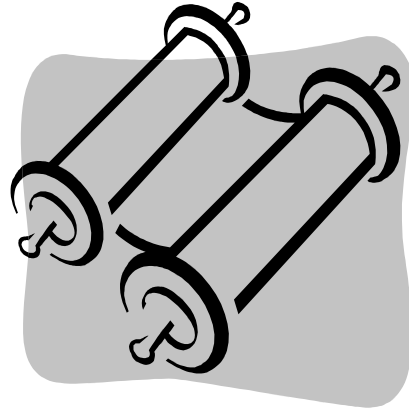


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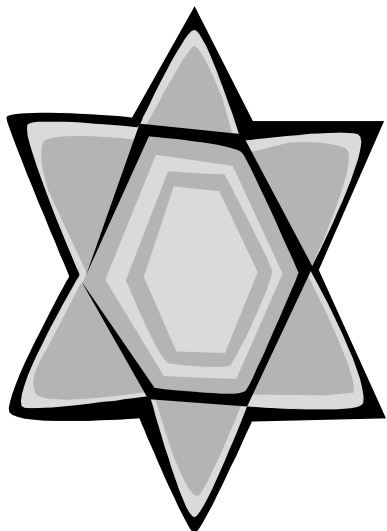
OVERVIEW

PHILOSOPHY OF BAR/BAT MITZVAH

Historically, the ceremony marking Bar Mitzvah appears rather late in Jewish history (later middle ages), and Bat Mitzvah in present-day American Jewish life. It has rightfully taken on a great significance as a major aspect of the life cycle. For a Jewish child, it is most likely the first time s/he takes on the project of preparing a public



act within the Jewish community, demonstrating the desire, ability and willingness to be counted among the responsible active adult members of the community. For parents and relatives, it is a rite of passage, a moment that signals the passage of time and the recognition of changing roles vis-à-vis their son or daughter, or grandchild. For teachers, the ceremony is a validation of their focus on learning and education, while the community is able to enjoy the fact that its traditions and standards are being upheld and transmitted.



In light of Jewish tradition what happens at Bar/Bat Mitzvah is simple, yet far-reaching. When a child reaches the age of puberty, (determined in Talmudic times to be 13 years and one day for boys and 12 years and one day for girls, now 13 for both), two concurrent changes of status take place: s/he becomes "bar da'at" (possessor of knowledge, i.e. able to think and discern well enough to know the difference between right and wrong) and "bar /bat mitzvah" (subject to the commandments, on his/her own responsibility). At Temple Sinai, children become bar/bat mitzvah at age 13 regardless of gender.

At Temple Sinai, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah has been a wonderful occasion for the whole congregation to celebrate together, to re-emphasize our notion that we are a large, extended family, and to "kvell" as our kids do well! Our training program has taught many of our children to pray the service, read Torah and Haftarah, to take an active part in our Temple, and to continue with their Jewish education beyond age 13. At the same time, with everyone's help, we might make our program even stronger by continuing on to Confirmation.

HOW WE LEARN AT TEMPLE SINAI

Many blessings and prayers are best learned in small groups of students of the same age - with adult supervision, of course. Beginning in 5th or 6th grade, your child will be attending a prayer class with the Cantorial Soloist on Sunday mornings for 1 hour. Group sessions have the added bonus of building cohesion within the class of B'nai Mitzvah students and obviating the need for additional tutoring within a strained time budget as the class sizes increase. Individual study with the B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator will be used for those pieces of the service that are specifically individual, like the Torah and Haftarah portion. Every child receives a CD with all of the prayers that they need to know for home study at the beginning of the school year. Home study is a very large part of our curriculum. In just a few minutes a day, with book in hand and the CD playing, your child will be in great shape by the time we start private lessons. Through

home study, families also get involved in the learning process, and this we encourage, as the day will be shared with everyone!



Bar/Bat Mitzvah is not an end in itself, but rather a stepping stone in the education of a young Jewish person. By the time our students are Confirmed, they are fully comfortable with Jewish services, texts and ideas. They are able to read the Torah and Haftarah, lead Shabbat services, able to study and

enjoy Biblical and Rabbinic texts and know how Jewish thought applies to areas within their own lives.

We do not expect children only half-way through their schooling to be fully proficient in subjects that are more advanced; they should, rather, take their place among students from various grades throughout the school as well as adults in leading services.

Family Approach to Bar/Bat Mitzvah

The celebration of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah can be a profound experience in the life of a Jewish family. The year of Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation is a process of spiritual growth, commencing with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony, which highlights the spiritual dimensions of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah year.



Temple Sinai is committed to making this event a beautiful, meaningful and sacred event in the life of our members. It is essential that each family keep this ceremony in proper focus and perspective. A Bar/Bat Mitzvah is first and foremost a religious ceremony. Through this sacred rite of passage, our children and their families reaffirm their deep connection to Jewish tradition. Thus, everything relating to this ceremony should reflect the wisdom, the philosophy and the spirit of Jewish tradition. These guidelines are offered as essential information for directing each family as they prepare for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

ASSIGNING A BAR/BAT MITZVAH DATE

The process of selecting your date takes into consideration your child's 13th birthday, your family's preferences, major holidays, professional staff availability, the child's ability and special needs. The date will be determined two years prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. All children must be 13 years old to become Bar and Bat Mitzvah at Temple Sinai. *Dates are assigned towards the end of fifth grade, when they have passed a Hebrew reading proficiency examination.* Although every attempt is made to meet the individual needs of our families, Temple Sinai cannot assure that a family will receive a specific date.

GUIDELINES FOR BAR/BAT MITZVAH

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony is celebrated in our congregation during Saturday morning Shabbat services which begin at 10AM. To qualify for a Shabbat morning Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony, each child must satisfy all of the following requirements:

- 1. Complete THREE consecutive years of Jewish education at Temple Sinai Religious School with at least 75% attendance or the equivalent if moving here to Temple Sinai in the 5th grade, unless documentation of attendance at another Temple is provided.**
- 2. Pass their Hebrew reading proficiency exam in the 5th grade.**
- 3. Required family attendance at Shabbat evening and Shabbat morning services within one year prior to B'nai Mitzvah. 6 Friday night services (including attendance at 2 family Friday night services) and 4 Saturday morning services including at least one**



bar/bat mitzvah service.

4. Families are required to be current with fiscal responsibilities to Temple Sinai. This includes a Bar/Bat Mitzvah assessment and materials fee. **All dues, tuition and fees must be paid up and current to proceed.**

5. A (minimum) 13 hour *mitzvah project* must be completed two months before the Bar/Bat mitzvah.

MITZVAH PROJECT

Temple Sinai requires each student to complete 13 hours towards a mitzvah project. What is a mitzvah project? Any project that does not directly benefit your child or your family. The student can raise money for a worthy cause, start a petition, teach, or take a class on something and report it to the school, research and write an article about something, help clean up a playground or a park, help in the religious school or office, organize a sport or an event for underprivileged children, take up a collection or a drive, help out in a food kitchen. **IT MAY NOT BE SOMETHING THAT YOUR CHILD IS DOING ANYWAY, SUCH AS SCOUTING, OR MANDATORY COMMUNITY HOURS FROM SCHOOL.**

The mitzvah project is to be approved by the education director and the Cantor/Cantorial Soloist.

PRAYERS LED BY B'NAI MITZVAH

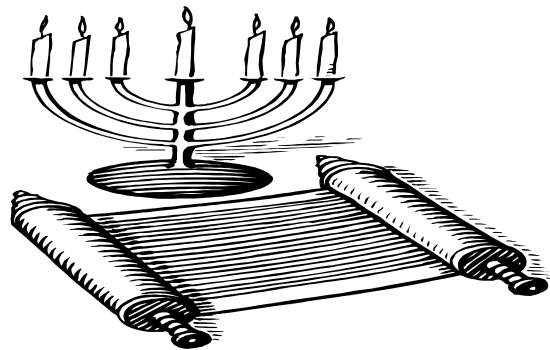
The goal of our program is for students to master as many of the following components of the Shabbat evening and morning services as possible (according to the child's ability and the commitment of the family), beginning with the following:

- Friday Night Candle blessing and Kiddush
- Saturday morning prayers and Torah Service

(Students will receive the specific prayers in Tefillah class with the Cantor.)

The goal for participation in the Shabbat evening and morning services is for the student to master not only the above but to be able to lead the entire service. Additional parts of the Friday night and Shabbat morning service will be assigned as time and circumstances permit, pending mastery of the

aforementioned requirements and upon consultation with the student, family, Rabbi, Education Director and Cantor or Cantorial soloist. Requirements for students with special needs will be addressed on an individual basis.



EDUCATION DURING THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH PREPARATION YEAR

In fifth grade, we will administer a Hebrew reading test to your child.

B'nai Mitzvah preparation begins formally as part of the Temple Sinai Religious School curriculum during sixth grade and includes pre- and post- training throughout that school year, into the seventh and eighth grade and continuing on to Confirmation.

This curriculum is supplemented by private meetings with the Cantor/Cantorial Soloist and Rabbi for UP TO six months preceding B'nai Mitzvah (Holidays/vacations/ sick days are taken into account).

Your child will be meeting with the Rabbi approximately 2 months before to discuss the meaning of the Torah portion and to help your child prepare to speak about it.

VERY IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER:

****The determination for the time it will take to train your child in the Torah and Haftarah portion will depend on your child's demonstration of ability in prayer class. ***

These meetings last for UP TO 45 minutes, depending on the student's progress in doing the week's assignments and are scheduled in addition to regular Religious School hours.

Parents are requested and strongly encouraged to stay and participate in the weekly lessons with the Cantor/Cantorial Soloist, since 90% of the progress is done as home assignments.



PARENTS AS ROLE MODELS

Inherent in our understanding of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation and Jewish education, is parental participation. To participate fully, and ensure that each child grows into a committed Jewish adult, parents should:

- Ensure that your child finds study time for Bar/Bat Mitzvah as well as other religious school materials
- Include your child in planning for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Se'udah Mitzvah (party), Kiddush and Oneg
- Be involved in Religious School activities
- Provide positive encouragement of your child's progress in Bar/Bat Mitzvah and religious school studies
- Become involved in your child's Mitzvah Project(s)
- Attend synagogue services and programs regularly, as a family
- Make an act of tzedakah in honor of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah
- Provide support for the Mazon program (see page 13) through your celebration
- Make sure that the date assigned is workable.
- Coordinate schedules for meetings with the Rabbi and Cantor/Cantorial Soloist



THE FAMILY AND THE SYNAGOGUE PROFESSIONALS: WHAT IS THEIR ROLE IN THE PROCESS?

Parents

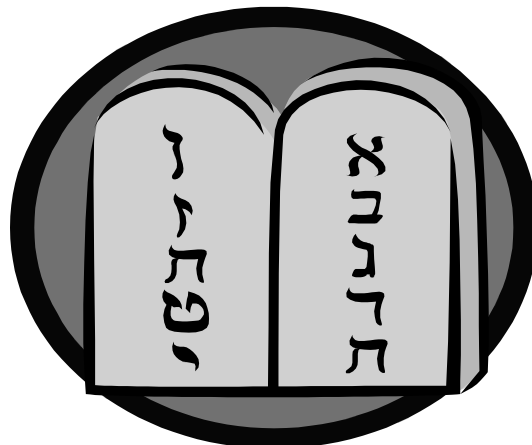
- Ensure, far in advance, that the date is workable
 - Coordinate lessons, meetings, etc. (make sure that appointments are made and written on calendars) with the Cantor/Cantorila soloist
 - Keep their son/daughter on track and practicing
 - Make sure you are meeting your service attendance requirements
 - Prepare and coordinate the Party /Oneg/Kiddush.
 - Make sure you have all of the honors that you would like to give out to your friends and relatives. Keep within Temple Sinai requirements.
-
- **AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, *Kvell, Shep Nachas*, and bask in the glow of your child's moment!**

CANTOR/RABBI/EDUCATOR:

- Prepare and support student and family as much as possible and in every way!
- Provide enriching and rewarding Bar/Bat mitzvah experience for the entire family to cherish forever.

Student

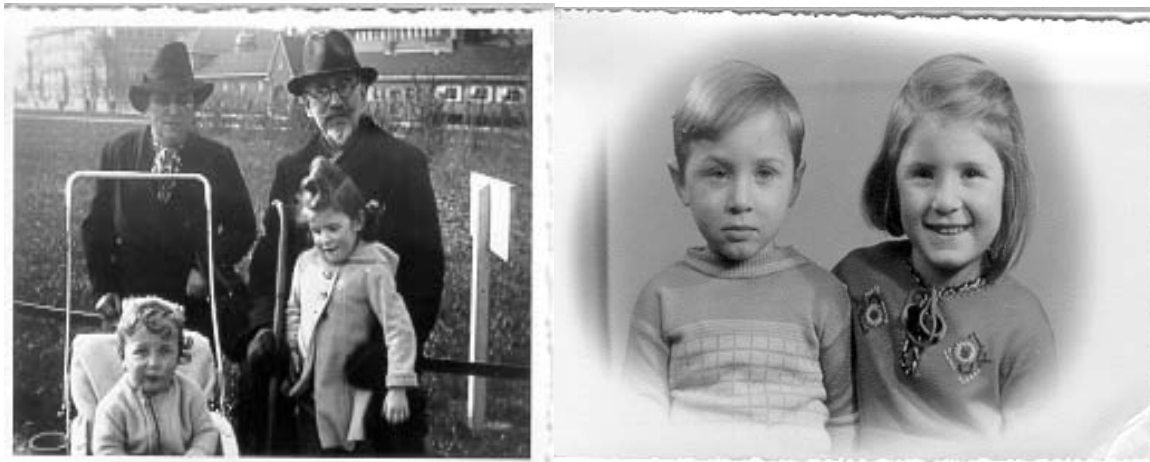
- Study well, think well, and practice well! **Do all of your assignments!**
- Prepare as much of the service (competently) as your ability will allow
- Keep up with schoolwork and religious school
- **Enjoy** the process of learning, studying, questioning, doing your mitzvah project
- **Don't get stressed** out by doing too much, **don't get BEHIND** by doing too little
- **Be yourself** and trust that this will really be enough!
- **Participate** in class and in services actively and respectfully!
- **Be proud of yourself and have a fun day!**



We Shall Never Forget: Twinning and Remembrance

A million and a half Jewish children under the age of 16 were murdered during the Holocaust. We know very little about them; however, there is one special way to remember them. The “Twinning and Remembrance” concept is to have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah student “twin” and in this way remember a young Jewish person who perished in the Holocaust in his/her ceremony.

The Cantor/Cantorial Soloist will provide information on the specific child you will be twinned with and this information will be incorporated into your speech.



Shown on left in both pictures is Ralph, with his cousin, Esther Posner on right. Photo on left shows them with their grandparents in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Ralph was taken to Westerbrook Internment Camp, where he died in 1943. Esther survived in hiding and currently lives in Michigan, USA. If you wish to twin with Ralph, you can interview Esther and she will tell you about Ralph, about his childhood, his grandparents, and the Jewish world they lived in.

THE MECHANICS OF THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH CEREMONY

Time of Services

Bar/Bat Mitzvah is celebrated on Shabbat morning at Temple Sinai. The family also has a role in the Friday night service the night before.



- Friday night services begin at 7:30 PM every other Friday (unless otherwise noted).
- Services on Shabbat morning begin at 10 AM and end at approximately noon. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah child should be in the sanctuary 25 minutes prior to the beginning of the service.

Music:

Music adds beauty and dignity to the ceremony. If you would like a professional organist to be present, there will be a \$250 dollar fee.



Honors and Family Participation at Shabbat Morning Services

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah takes place within the context of our normal congregational worship service. In order to celebrate this event, every family may receive certain honors during the Shabbat morning service for friends and family.

You will receive a sheet with all of the honors available to you about 2 months before the bar/bat mitzvah from the Cantor/Cantorial Soloist (appendix). All Bar/Bat Mitzvah families are allotted the same number of honors. Please understand the remaining Aliyot must be reserved for the ongoing needs of our congregants. These Torah honors enrich the entire service and will in no way

detract from the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration. All people receiving honors involving the Torah must be Jewish. For interfaith families, appropriate roles in the service may be given to the non-Jewish honorees.

Many Bar/Bat Mitzvah children are presented with a Tallit by their parents on Saturday morning at the beginning of the service on the bimah. Our congregation believes that a Tallit is important symbolically for both Bar and Bat Mitzvah.

A member of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family may offer a prayer to their child from the Bimah for a period of no longer than three minutes. Families are encouraged (but not restricted) to include in their remarks a tie in to the Torah portion or prayer or family background. The Rabbi and the Cantor will work with the family to provide guidance and study as needed, to help prepare the prayer. The prayer must be in writing and presented in final form to the Rabbi two weeks prior to the date, for his approval. This prayer does not replace any prayers in the prayer book that relatives or friends may be reading as part of the service.



Decorum

The wearing of a head covering and Tallit for men and women is an option for family and guest. Both are available at the Temple.

All females participating in the service are requested to have their shoulders covered and have their legs covered modestly. (No micro-minis please!) Males: long pants, jacket or dress shirts.

It is important to ensure the appropriate behavior of your younger guests in order to maintain decorum in the Sanctuary as well as in all other parts of the building. They should remain in the service and to respect the worship service that is taking place. If you are inviting more than 25 of your child's peers to the service, you are required to provide one usher per ten children.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Oneg, Kiddush and Se'udat Mitzvah (Celebration)

As Jews, we recognize the sacred nature of all religious celebrations. As Reform Jews, we recognize the importance of setting an example for others by our own actions. Serving Kosher – style food during the Bar/Bat Mitzvah weekend is such an example, and helps keep the spirit of the weekend tied to the Torah. Following services on Friday night, there is an Oneg Shabbat and following services on Saturday morning, there is a Kiddush repast for everyone present at the services.

Temple policy is families pay for the Oneg and Kiddush. Friday Night Oneg price is independent of the number of guest invited. Saturday Morning Kiddush pricing is based on the number of guest invited. When using a Temple supplied Kiddush parents must provide the number of guest expected to the Operations Manager no later than one week before the event. Outside catering must be approved by the Temple's Operations Manager one month before. Payment for the Oneg and Kiddush must be made one week prior to the date of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Pricing details will be provided upon request.

Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger

Giving tzedakah to the poor through Mazon (the Jewish Response to Hunger organization) and other charitable organizations teaches the value that Jews, even in the midst of celebration, share with the poor. By observing these mitzvot, we teach that the values of the Torah – propriety at celebrations and the giving of tzedakah are values we cherish and seek to perpetuate.

When your child begins his/her studies, material concerning *MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger* will be given to you. It asks that you voluntarily contribute 3% of the cost of the celebration that you are about to enjoy. Three reasons for doing so are:

- It is in keeping with Jewish tradition to invite the poor to the table of our celebration
- The kind of behavior that we seek to foster in our congregation, which gives meaning to the admonition of our prophets who over and over again instruct us to "feed the hungry" can be met through this program

In addition, in a very real sense, giving to MAZON builds a bridge between the relative abundance that you are blessed with at the time of your celebration, and the deprivation of very many millions living among us who are poor and hungry.

Assigning Honors

The Cantor/Cantorial Soloist at Temple Sinai directs the Torah Service. Two months before the service, you will be given an "Honors sheet". One month before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the Cantor will collect from you the information contained on it. Please carefully examine what is asked for so that you will be able to appropriately respond, as well as be able to ask any questions about information that is unclear to you.

Rehearsal

A rehearsal will be arranged by the Cantor for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student and the parents. The rehearsal is scheduled for the week prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, as a time convenient for everyone. It lasts one to two hours. Your child will also be asked to participate in regular Shabbat morning services the month before, to get her/him comfortable leading prayers with the congregation present.

Pictures

Pictures may be taken in the sanctuary at any time up to 30 minutes before the ceremony. Video of the service is allowed. No lights. Camera location is at the back of the sanctuary.

PLEASE REMEMBER: If you are taking pictures on a day other than the day of the Bar/Bat mitzvah, please inform the temple, the Rabbi and the Cantor/Cantorial Soloist so that we can make the sanctuary available to you, be present, participate and help you with your pictures.

NO FLASH PHOTOGRAPHS MAY BE TAKEN DURING THE SERVICE!

Bimah Flowers and Decorations

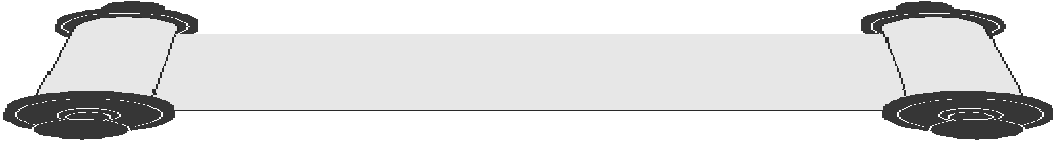
Bimah Flowers are sponsored by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family. All decorations must be in place before Shabbat begins. Call the office to make these arrangements.

The Temple Sinai Tablet

If you would like an announcement of your child's upcoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah may be placed in the Temple Sinai monthly newsletter. A copy of the announcement must be delivered to the Temple Sinai office by the first Friday of the month prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. This would include a picture and a biography.

Gift Shop

Tallitot, kippot, and other appropriate items may be purchased through the Temple Sinai Gift Shop. Purchasing these items through the Gift Shop helps to support the synagogue.



CONCLUSION

These Bar/Bat Mitzvah requirements have been established to insure that the learning process and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony provides a meaningful and rewarding experience to every student. In addition, these requirements will insure that we maintain the standards of excellence of the Temple Sinai Religious School program. Please feel free to contact the Rabbi, the Education Director or the Cantor with any questions.

AND MOST IMPORTANTLY. . .

Bar and Bat Mitzvah are not the culmination of Jewish education, but rather a milestone which represents not only the attainment of a child’s thirteenth birthday, but also their ability to participate in a Torah service, as part of the Temple Sinai community.



APPENDIX

A TIME LINE OF EVENTS/FEEES PRECEDING THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH:

- 2 years** Hebrew test is taken, and the date is set (\$300 of B/M fee is due at this time)
- 1 year** At the beginning of fifth or sixth grade, students begin prayer class with B’nai Mitzvah Coordinator on Sunday mornings (\$300 of B/M fee is due at this time)
- 1 year** Make appointment to meet with Office Manager to review policies and guidelines and party room information.
- 1 year** Begin fulfilling service attendance requirements. 6 Friday night services and 4 Saturday morning services.

- 7 months** B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator contacts the family to arrange for meeting schedule between the B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator and the student
- 6 months** B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator and student begin private lessons. Family begins to think about arrangement for the Kiddush and Oneg, donations in honor of their child to synagogue, Mazon, etc. (\$250 of B/M fee is due at this time)
- 3 months** Family contacts Rabbi to set parental meeting for Bar/Bat mitzvah speech/prayer.
- 1 month** Mitzvah project must be complete and documented **1 month**. Meet with the Cantor to discuss honors. Lead part of services Saturday mornings. (\$250 Accompanist fee is due at this time)
- 2 weeks** Rehearsals with student in sanctuary
- 1 week** Family rehearsal in sanctuary with organist if applicable.
- 1 week** **AFTER:** Come to Synagogue; show that you understand the true meaning of commitment to Judaism
- 1 year** **AFTER & years to come study for and read Torah and Haftarah on your anniversary during Shabbat and/or Holiday services**

ALL YOUR LIFE:

CONTINUE A COMMITTED JEWISH LIFE!!!!

PLEASE NOTE, WHEN THE CANTOR/CANTORIAL SOLOIST IS UNAVAILABLE, A BAR MITZVAH COORDINATOR/TUTOR IS PROVIDED.

Last changed 05/15/07 CJ//Temple Sinai (Edited January, 2009)