

B'Mitzvah Handbook 2025-2026



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Dear Parents,

When your child was named, the congregation said, “Just as they have brought this child into the covenant, so too may they bring this child to Torah, to the wedding canopy and to a life of good deeds.” Your decision to raise your child as a Jew, educated in a synagogue setting, means that you have fulfilled part of this charge and that you take Judaism seriously. We share our gratitude and admiration.

Over the years we have worked hard to make the experience of B’Mitzvah in our congregation a meaningful one. The entire clergy and staff is involved in the preparation and instruction. We hold classes for families to discuss the B’Mitzvah experience and to ensure that the focus is where it should be: on the development of character, of wisdom, and of spirituality in the life of your child and in the experience for your family.

If the focus of B’Mitzvah is purely on the mechanics of the celebration or whether our children can get through the Torah reading without a glaring error, then we have missed out on what B’Mitzvah can mean. It is not enough to teach our children how to say a blessing; we must also teach them how to be a blessing. We must guide them to see God in acts of kindness, justice, caring, love and in the pursuit of peace. As their clergy and teachers, we want them to begin to sense God's presence in the way they treat others and how they treat our planet. We want them to see those acts to be equally Jewish as saying *kiddush* or *motzi*. While our children develop physically and mentally, we need to also help them develop spiritually so that they may exercise their souls. B’Mitzvah is an opportunity to do this and more. If it works, B’Mitzvah can serve as a launching pad into adult Jewish life, giving our young people the resources and tools to access Jewish wisdom on the issues that confront adolescents when they need it most.

Our B’Mitzvah program is designed to give you the tools and resources to bring Jewish values into your celebration: values like study, justice, giving, sanctity and moderation. This binder, therefore, is designed to give you the information underlying the process of becoming B’Mitzvah at Community Synagogue of Rye, so that we can ensure these goals are fulfilled.

Amidst the social pressures you and your children feel surrounding this experience, we hope that you also feel the spiritual promise of the event, the Divine presence, and the knowledge that you are participating in an event filled with meaning both in the ancient past and in the very immediate present. We feel blessed knowing we will accompany you along this well-trodden path.

Mazal Tov!

Rabbi Daniel Gropper

Cantor Melanie Cooperman

What to Expect When You're Expecting a B'Mitzvah... Notes from One Parent to Another

By Sarah Overbay

Congratulations to you and your family on the upcoming simcha of your child's B'Mitzvah! It was an experience beyond our highest expectations – a day filled with warmth, pride, joy and many tears.

You will find in this binder many helpful bits of information that will be very valuable once you start this journey. As a parent of a recent B'Mitzvah, there are a few things that are helpful to keep in mind – from one parent to another parent...

Preparations

- There's a handy calendar in this binder that shows a timeline for preparations. If you don't hear from the synagogue around these times, reach out. If you have travel or camp or something that will get in the way of the normal preparation timeline, reach out early. Generally, if in doubt, reach out. There's no need for this to feel rushed at the end so be proactive about scheduling. Most important things to make sure are scheduled: 1) initial meeting with Cantor Cooperman, 2) starting the tutoring process, 3) meetings with the rabbi and rabbinic intern for D'var Torah preparation. Keep your eye on these!
- Use the resources that exist around you – lots of families at CSR have gone through this already and would be happy to provide any help needed. Just ask them directly or ask the clergy to connect you to someone helpful. Also, if possible, hire a party planner – it may sound “over the top” but it's worth every penny to have someone experienced help guide you through everything needed for the service and celebration, even if it's a low-key event.

B'Mitzvah Service

- The clergy welcome your participation in the service itself. Don't be afraid to ask to include a meaningful poem or reading or prayer in the service. You can have special relatives or friends read those inclusions in the service too. I found that this was a nice way to make the service reflective of our family's values and traditions, as well as make parts of the service more accessible for those in the audience who weren't regular service attendees.
- Streaming the Service- Share the Streamspot link to include relatives or friends who may not have been able to travel to you – or who didn't make the A invitation list. This enabled us to include a bunch of folks who couldn't attend and were thrilled to watch the service from the comfort of their couch.
- Remember to invite the rabbi and cantor and anyone else in the synagogue community who was meaningfully involved in your child's experience to the B'Mitzvah celebration. I did not remember to do this until the week before and it was a mortifying oversight.
- Try to invite your child's classmates from their synagogue class to the service, if not the entire celebration. It's great to have the CSR community support and celebrate your child.

Gratitude

- Consider making a gift to one of the synagogue funds to celebrate the occasion. You can also show your gratitude to the rabbi and cantor by donating to their discretionary funds. If not, just remember to write a thank you note to those that helped your family have such a special day.

B'Mitzvah Guide

MEANINGS AND CUSTOMS

The term B'Mitzvah literally means "subject to the commandment." It is a title given to all Jews upon reaching age 13 to signify that they are now personally responsible for their own religious actions and moral behavior in accordance with the *mitzvot* (commandments). Throughout this handbook, we will use the term B'Mitzvah, which can be used to refer to Bar or Bat Mitzvah students.

Although no ritual or service is necessary to establish this status, over the centuries it has become customary for the B'Mitzvah to demonstrate a commitment to Judaism and the Jewish people through a celebration in the synagogue. Within the Shabbat morning or afternoon service, the learner helps lead the congregation in prayer and chants from the Torah, and offers a D'var Torah, a lesson and interpretation of the week's Torah portion.

HISTORY OF B'MITZVAH

The Bar Mitzvah celebration (as it was, until the 20th century, exclusively male) dates back to the 13th century C.E. Although customs varied from place to place, the responsibilities of Bar Mitzvah were always the same. A boy was considered to have reached the Jewish age of maturity; he accepted personal responsibility for the mitzvot; he was thereafter counted as part of a traditional minyan (the 10 male adults required to hold a prayer service,) and he was looked upon as a full participant in *Klal Yisrael*, the "community of Israel." The first recorded Bat Mitzvah celebration involving a synagogue service occurred in the United States in 1922. The Bat Mitzvah was Judith Kaplan, the daughter of Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan, founder of the Reconstructionist movement in American Judaism. Today in Reform Judaism, in the spirit of equality, all students celebrate becoming B'Mitzvah at age 13.



GOALS OF THE B'MITZVAH PROGRAM

- To help learners reach their religious, moral, and spiritual potential through the encouragement, guidance, and support of the clergy, tutors, and teachers.
- To instill a thirst for Jewish knowledge through the study of Judaism's rich heritage and culture, and to inspire learners to adopt Judaism as their personal way of life.
- To encourage the regular practice of the *mitzvot* of Torah, *Avodah*, and *Gemilut Chasadim*-that is, the life-long study of Judaism, regular participation in community worship, and the continual performance of acts of loving-kindness.
- To gain the skills necessary to lead the congregation in prayer, to chant the Torah, and to understand and explain the content and meaning of the Torah and Haftarah portions.

WHAT DOES COMMUNITY SYNAGOGUE OF RYE ASK OF OUR B'MITZVAH?

- Learners at Community Synagogue of Rye become eligible to celebrate a B'Mitzvah at a Shabbat service with our clergy by fulfilling the following commitments:
- In order to be prepared, we strongly encourage a minimum of five years of Jewish learning. If this minimum is not met, additional tutoring may be required.
- Learners must practice and prepare in-between meetings with the cantor, rabbi, and tutor as they work on chanting Torah, leading prayers, and writing a D'var Torah.
- At least one parent must join the learner at all B'Mitzvah Family Education sessions in the 6th and 7th grade.
- Completion of a Mitzvah Project fulfilling the obligation of *Gemilut Chasadim* -deeds of loving kindness.

Learners who fully participate in and successfully complete our B'Mitzvah preparation process will be able to:

- Lead the Shabbat service with the clergy.
- Chant from the Torah scroll with musical trope.
- Offer a D'var Torah - a teaching about the Torah portion.
- Deliver a D'var Mitzvah on the experiences and lessons learned doing a *mitzvah* project at Friday night Shabbat services the night before the B'Mitzvah.

B'MITZVAH PREPARATION TIMELINE

1 year before: Rabbi meeting with families in their home.

9-12 months before: Parents and learners meet with the cantor to discuss the process of tutoring, choose their section of Torah, briefly discuss Honors, and answer any questions the family may have.

9-12 months before: Learners enter into B'Mitzvah training on Monday nights from 6:00-8:00 pm. Each Monday night session includes two modules, prayer/decoding and parshah.

Overall schedule for Monday nights

- 6:00-6:30 pm Dinner with teens
- 6:30-7:10 pm Prayer/decoding or parshah
- 7:10-7:20 pm Break/switch groups
- 7:20-8:00 pm Prayer/decoding or parshah

Each student will have a total of 24 sessions scheduled, consisting of 21 sessions on Monday nights and three sessions with Cantor Cooperman before the B'Mitzvah.

Two to three tutors will work with the students and Cantor Cooperman on Monday nights.

- **Materials:** Each learner will receive a folder that will include a Torah and *Haftarah* workbook and their portion of the Torah portion.
- **Missed lessons:** if your child is ill and needs to miss one of the last three meetings with Cantor Cooperman before their B'Mitzvah, every effort will be made to make up those lessons, but please provide notice as early as possible if any meetings have to be missed.

➔ 7th graders who have already become B'Mitzvah will continue to attend Monday nights for a separate 7th grade curriculum.

TIMELINE OF THE LAST 2 WEEKS

2 weeks before: Cantor begins to bring students into the sanctuary to practice and chant from the Torah.

1 week before: Final meeting with the rabbi.

Friday before: Final rehearsal with the cantor. Full run-through with parents.

Erev Shabbat Friday Evening Service

- Parents and B'Mitzvah bless the candles. B'Mitzvah leads the Kiddush (see Ritual Resources.)
- B'Mitzvah delivers a D'var Mitzvah, an explanation of their Mitzvah Project.



Shabbat/Saturday Morning or Afternoon Service

- The parents and B'Mitzvah meet with the rabbi 15 minutes before the service begins for a special moment in our spiritual passage to put on your child's *tallit*.
- For Saturday morning, the service begins at 11:15 am and ends at approximately 12:45 pm.
- The afternoon service begins at 5:00 pm for a single or 4:30 pm for a double. The service ends at approximately 6:15 pm.
- B'Mitzvah will be responsible for leading the services, chanting Torah and delivering a D'var Torah, explaining their interpretation of the Torah portion.

**Please see the next page for a parent checklist
for B'Mitzvah preparation.**

Please tear it out and put it somewhere handy!



Task	When?	Completed?
Reserve space for party / kiddush	once date is known	
(optional) Hire DJ, emcee, or band for party / kiddush	once date is known	
Logistics phone conversation with Glynis	one year prior	
meet with Rabbi Gropper	one year prior	
Begin B'Mitzvah classes at CSR on Monday nights	six to eight months prior	
Send save the date cards / emails to guests	six months to a year prior	
Attend Mitzvah Madness Fair for 6th grade families through CJL	January prior	
Attend B'nei Mitzvah kickoff for 6th grade families through CJL	Spring prior	
Select Mitzvah project with clergy and your child and begin on project	ten months prior	
Meet with Cantor Cooperman and your child to start tutoring	nine to twelve months prior	
(optional) Hire professional photographer	nine months prior	
buy tallit and kippot for your child to wear	six months prior	
mail / email invitations to guests	three months prior	
order kippot for guests at the ceremony	three months prior	
(optional) order flowers for the bimah for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony	three months prior	
arrange for catering or food delivery for party / kiddush if at CSR	three months prior	
Attend first D'var Torah meeting with your child	two to three months prior	
Review logistics with Jon via email	two months prior	
Create Bar/Bat Mitzvah program for guests (optional)	one month to six weeks prior	
Get certificate of insurance for bus company, photographer, caterer if at CSR	one month prior	
Select ushers for Bar/Bat Mitzvah	one month prior	
Email completed honors form to Cantor Cooperman	three weeks prior	
Email completed mitzvah project form to Jon Rekedal	two weeks prior	
Attend final family meeting with Rabbi Gropper	one to two weeks prior	
Share video live stream link with guests who cannot make it to CSR	one week prior	
Attend final rehearsal with Cantor Cooperman	one day prior	
Photos on the bimah	at final rehearsal with Cantor Cooperman and before ceremony	
Attend erev Shabbat services at CSR - D'var Mitzvah	night before	
meet with Rabbi and Cantor on bimah	twenty minutes prior	
receive download link for video of the ceremony	during the week after the Bar/Bat Mitzvah	

TEACHING TORAH: THE CENTERPIECE OF BECOMING B'MITZVAH

(Excerpt from JPS B'Mitzvah Torah Commentary by Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin)

What is Torah?

So, what exactly is the Torah? You probably know this already, but let's review.

The Torah (teaching) consists of "the five books of Moses," sometimes also called the *chumash* (from the Hebrew word *chameish*, which means "five,") or, sometimes, the Greek word Pentateuch (which means "the five teachings.")

Here are the five books of the Torah, with their common names and their Hebrew names.

- **Genesis (The beginning,) which in Hebrew is *B'reishit* (from the first words – "When God began to create.")** *B'reishit* spans the years from Creation to Joseph's death in Egypt. Many of the Bible's best stories are in Genesis: the creation story itself; Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden; Cain and Abel; Noah and the Flood; and the tales of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah. It also includes one of the greatest pieces of world literature, the story of Joseph, which is actually the oldest complete novel in history, comprising more than one quarter of all Genesis.
- **Exodus (Getting out,) which in Hebrew is *Shemot* (These are the names).** Exodus begins with the story of the Israelite slavery in Egypt. It then moves to the rise of Moses as a leader, and the Israelites' liberation from slavery. After the Israelites leave Egypt, they experience the miracle of the parting of the Sea of Reeds (or "Red Sea"); the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai; the idolatry of the Golden Calf; and the design and construction of the Tabernacle and of the ark for the original tablets of the law, which our ancestors carried with them in the desert. Exodus also includes various ethical and civil laws, such as, "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (22:20)
- **Leviticus (about the Levites,) or, in Hebrew, *Vayikra* (And God called.)** It goes into great detail about the kinds of sacrifices that the ancient Israelites brought as offerings; the laws of ritual purity; the animals that were permitted and forbidden for eating (the beginnings of the tradition of *kashrut*, the Jewish dietary laws); the diagnosis of various skin diseases; the ethical laws of holiness; the ritual calendar of the Jewish year; the various agricultural laws concerning the treatment of the Land of Israel. Leviticus is basically the manual of ancient Judaism.
- **Numbers (because the book begins with the census of the Israelites,) or, in Hebrew, *Be-midbar* (In the wilderness).** The book describes the forty years of wandering in the wilderness and the various rebellions against Moses. The constant theme: "Egypt wasn't so bad. Maybe we should go back." The greatest rebellion against Moses was the negative reports of the spies about the Land of Israel, which discouraged the Israelites from wanting to move forward into the land. For that reason, the "wilderness generation" must die off before a new generation can come into maturity and finish the journey.

(continued)

- **Deuteronomy (The repetition of the laws of the Torah,) or, in Hebrew, Devarim (The words.)**
The final book of the Torah is, essentially, Moses’s farewell address to the Israelites as they prepare to enter the Land of Israel. Here we find various laws that had been previously taught, though sometimes with different wording. Much of Deuteronomy contains laws that will be important to the Israelites as they enter the Land of Israel – laws concerning the establishment of a monarchy and the ethics of warfare. Perhaps the most famous passage from Deuteronomy contains the *Sh’ma*, the declaration of God’s unity and uniqueness, and the *V’ahavta*, which follows it. Deuteronomy ends with the death of Moses on Mount Nebo as he looks across the Jordan Valley into the land that he will not enter.

Jews read the Torah in sequence – starting with *B’reishit* right after *Simchat Torah* in the autumn, and then finishing *Devarim* on the following *Simchat Torah*. Each Torah portion is called a *parasha* (division; sometimes called a *sidrah*, a place in the order of the Torah reading). The stories go around in a full circle, reminding us that we can always gain more insights and more wisdom from the Torah. This means that if you don’t “get” the meaning this year, don’t worry – it will come around again.

Your Mission – To Teach Torah

On the day when you become B’Mitzvah, you will be chanting Torah – in Hebrew. That is the major skill that publicly marks the becoming of B’Mitzvah. But, perhaps even more important than that, you need to be able to teach something about the Torah portion.



How Do I Write a D'var Torah?

It really is easier than it looks.

There are many ways of thinking about the D'var Torah. It is, of course, a short sermon on the meaning of the Torah (and, perhaps, the *haftarah*) portion. It might even be helpful to think of the D'var Torah as a "book report" on the portion itself.

The most important thing you can know about this sacred task is: LEARN the words. LOVE the words. Teach people what it could mean to LIVE the words. Please see the next page for a basic outline of a D'var Torah.

"My Torah portion is (name of portion) _____, from the book of _____, chapter _____."

"In my Torah portion, we learn that _____ (summary of portion)."

"For me, the most important lesson of this Torah portion is (what is the best thing in the portion? Take the portion as a whole; your D'var Torah does not have to be only, or specifically, on the verses that you are reading).

"As I learned my Torah portion, I found myself wondering:

- Raise a question that the Torah portion itself raises.
- "Pick a fight" with the portion. Argue with it.
- Answer a question that is listed in the "Connections" section of each Torah portion.
- Suggest a question to your rabbi that you would want the rabbi to answer in his own D'var Torah or sermon.

"I have lived the values of the Torah by _____" (here, you can talk about how the Torah portion relates to your own life. If you have done a *mitzvah* project, you can talk about that here.)

How to keep it from being boring (and you from being bored)

Some people just don't like giving traditional speeches. From our perspective, that's really okay. Perhaps you can teach Torah in a different way – one that makes sense to you.

- Write an "open letter" to one of the characters in your Torah portion. "Dear Abraham: I hope that your trip to Canaan was not too hard..." "Dear Moses: Were you afraid when you got the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai? I sure would have been..."
- Write a news story about what happens. Imagine yourself to be a television or news reporter. "Residents of neighboring cities were horrified yesterday as the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were burned to the ground. Some say that God was responsible..."
- Write an imaginary interview with a character in your Torah portion.
- Tell the story from the point of view of another character, or a minor character in the story. For instance, tell the story of the Garden of Eden from the point of view of the serpent. Or the story of the binding of Isaac from the point of view of the ram, which was substituted for Isaac as a sacrifice. Or perhaps the story of the sale of Joseph from the point of view of his coat, which was stripped off him and dipped in a goat's blood.
- Write a poem about your Torah portion.
- Write a play about your Torah portion, and have some friends act it out with you.
- Create a piece of artwork about your Torah portion.

The bottom line is: Make this a joyful experience. Yes – it could even be fun!

A BIT MORE ON HOW TO WRITE YOUR D'VAR TORAH (“WORD OF TORAH”)

Using this outline might help you to structure your D'var Torah after meeting with the rabbi and/or rabbinic intern. *It is best to work with an adult or a friend as you prepare your draft.*

Intro:

- Start with the words "*Shabbat Shalom*,"
- Where your portion is from (What is the name of the *parshah* in the Torah? What chapters and verses are you about to discuss?)

Summary:

- Summarize the entire Torah portion (the introduction on page 8 of your blue Torah booklet is a great resource)
- Summarize the section of Torah you are reading in your own words.

Focus:

- What question(s) does the Torah text raise that you want to consider?
- Pick a particular theme, sentence or word that is in your Torah portion.
- Explain why you are going to talk about this idea.

Timeless Lessons:

- What do I think the Torah is trying to teach (my opinion)?
- Why do you think it is trying to teach this, why is this an important lesson?
- Are there commentaries that help you understand the meaning of the Torah?

Application:

- How does this lesson apply to me as I prepare to become B'Mitzvah?
- How does it apply to all of us, to the Jewish people?

SUMMARIZE YOUR MESSAGE

- What have you learned from your Torah portion that impacts the process of becoming a B'Mitzvah?
- What do you want people to take away from your *D'var Torah* the day of your B'Mitzvah?

HOW TO WRITE YOUR D'VAR MITZVAH (“WORD OF MITZVAH”)

At the Friday night service of the Shabbat where you will be called to the Torah as B'Mitzvah, you will give a D'var Mitzvah. This is a short, two paragraph presentation about your Tikkun Olam (Community Service) project.

Your D'var Mitzvah should be only two paragraphs long:

- Paragraph 1: Introduce yourself and describe your *mitzvah* project
- Paragraph 2: say what you learned or found meaningful from doing this project and why you chose this project

B'Mitzvah: BECOMING RESPONSIBLE

Becoming B'Mitzvah is not just about marking a milestone with a finite ritual moment. It is also about entering a new stage of life in which a learner takes on more personal responsibility for his or her life-Jewish and secular. In addition to the outlined responsibilities of preparing for the service, to become B'Mitzvah at Community Synagogue of Rye, learners are required to complete a *Mitzvah* Project as well as 13 personal challenges that they select for themselves.



TIKKUN OLAM OR MITZVAH PROJECT

TIKKUN OLAM means “repair the world.” It is otherwise known as social justice or social action. Mitzvah literally means “commandment,” and refers to the 613 commandments that we are given in the Torah, ranging from ritual observance to ethical values. Each learner is required to complete a Tikkun Olam or mitzvah project, together with his or her family, which will personalize and add substance to what it means to become B'Mitzvah. Each learner will be asked to select a Tikkun Olam project that is meaningful to them and their family. The learner will then create a plan to fulfill this project, which should not be less than 8-10 hours of service. Learners will present a D'var Mitzvah, a short talk about their Tikkun Olam project at the Friday evening Shabbat service prior to their B'Mitzvah.

Examples of Mitzvah projects include:

- Help an older neighbor by running errands or doing some other helpful chores.
- Tutor or read to younger children at a local library.
- Adopt an elderly person at a local care facility; send cards and pay visits.
- Run a collection drive for food, clothing, or other items to donate.
- Participate in one of CSR's Social Action projects.
- Help out at a soup kitchen. The Carver Center has a special relationship with CSR.
- See other ideas at our website, www.comsynrye.org



Mitzvah Project Action Plan

Name: _____

Mitzvah:				
Goal:				
Completion Date:				
Action Steps <i>(What will you do?)</i>	Responsibility <i>(Who will do it?)</i>	Resources <i>(What do I need in order to do this step?)</i>	Communication <i>(Who should I talk to about this?)</i>	Timeline <i>(By when?)</i>
Step 1:				
Step 2:				
Step 3:				
Step 4:				
Step 5:				

THIRTEEN PERSONAL CHALLENGES

Your family mitzvah project will demonstrate your responsibility to help others and make a difference in the world around you. Becoming B’Mitzvah also means taking responsibility for yourself and your own life.

We encourage each B’Mitzvah learner to select 13 personal challenges or goals for the year as they move towards greater independence and personal responsibility. We ask that approximately half of these challenges relate to Jewish aspects of their lives, and the others are completely open to what each teen wants to learn, try, and accomplish.

Here are some examples of what we believe a 13-year-old should be able to do, in Judaism, at home, and beyond:

AROUND THE HOUSE

- Load, run and unload the dishwasher
- Do your own laundry
- Cook a meal (maybe Shabbat dinner!) for the whole family
- Assemble and take out the garbage and recycling
- Change a diaper
- Mow the lawn and rake the leaves
- Manage your own schedule and time
- Write a proper email or letter
- Keep a personal budget
- Dress professionally for an important event
- Feed, walk, and care for pets
- Make your bed
- Set the table for a formal meal
- Help clean up the house (not just your own room)
- Give directions around town
- Read the newspaper and discuss major headlines



What else do you think a 13-year-old should be able to do?

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JEWISH LEARNING & SKILLS CHECKLIST:

- Add a Jewish book to your personal library (and actually read it!)
- Watch a movie or program of Jewish interest and discuss it with your parent
- Learn to play a piece of Jewish music
- Create a piece of artwork inspired by your Torah portion
- Record an interview with a grandparent about Jewish life when they were 13 years old
- Light and bless Shabbat candles for a minimum of three Shabbat evenings
- Lead your family in kiddush for a minimum of three Shabbat evenings
- Lead your family in *motzi* 13 different nights before a meal
- Recite the *Sh'ma* before bed on 13 nights
- Attend one Saturday morning Torah study (8:45-10:15 a.m.) service with your family and participate in the discussion
- Attend a Jewish lifecycle event (brit, baby naming, wedding, or funeral)
- Attend a Shabbat service at another synagogue with your family; tell the rabbi or cantor about how it compared to our own
- Attend a service at a church or institution of a different religious faith
- Write a creative prayer to use as part of your B'Mitzvah service
- Visit a sick friend or relative
- Buy a mezuzah and affix it to your bedroom door with the appropriate blessing
- Have Shabbat dinner with another B'Mitzvah family
- Help build a sukkah at your or a friend's home; or help decorate the congregation's sukkah
- Make a ritual object (e.g. yad, Chanukiah, challah cover, kiddush cup, etc.)
- Attend a *shiva* minyan and help comfort mourners in the community

What other Jewish acts or skills do you think a 13-year-old should master?

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YOUR 13 PERSONAL CHALLENGES

In the space below, write down the 13 personal challenges you will accomplish over the course of your B'Mitzvah year-at least half of which should be Jewish in nature. Check them off as you accomplish each, and bring this completed sheet to your final meeting with the rabbi.

Personal Challenge

Date Completed

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2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
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12.	
13.	

FAMILY PARTICIPATION

FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN THE SERVICE

Shabbat Morning - Aliyot to the Torah:

Each family may ask relatives or close friends to be called up to the *bimah* for an *aliyah*. This set of blessings is recited before and after a section of the Torah and can be either chanted or read. (Please see Ritual Resources section for Blessings for the reading of Torah.) Each family is given the honor of three *aliyot*. Typically, the first *aliyah* is said by grandparents, the second by parents and the third *aliyah* is given to the B'Mitzvah.

Other Honors:

- Passing down the Torah ritual
- Lifting and Dressing the Torah (*hagbah* and *g'lilah*, must be done by Jewish participants.)
- Opening and closing the Ark (this honor can be performed by anyone in attendance.)

HEBREW NAMES

All *aliyot* are called to the Torah by their English, and if possible, by their Hebrew names. You will be encouraged to provide Hebrew names for those who you wish to honor. Those who are called to the Torah must be Jewish and at least 13 years old. Families will receive a form, included in the Ritual Resources section of this document, to be filled out with the English and Hebrew names of all family and friends who are given the honor of an *aliyah*. This form must be returned to the cantor's office prior to the final rehearsal.

INTERFAITH FAMILIES

It is the goal of our congregation to honor and respect the integrity of each family, and we wish to promote *shalom bayit* (family unity) on joyous occasions. We do not want family members to compromise their beliefs or identity, nor do we wish them to take on roles or speak words that are not in consonance with their religious identity.

Some of our words of prayer are particularistic. Certain prayers, such as the blessings over the *Shabbat* candles and those before and after reading from the Torah, refer to the obligations Jews owe to God. Non-Jewish parents participate in our worship services by reading universalistic prayers and by blessing their children after the Torah reading. (See the Ritual Resources section for a copy of this alternative blessing.)

SIBLING PARTICIPATION

Siblings of appropriate age join their family on the *bimah* and read an English prayer. (See the Ritual Resources section for the Sibling prayer). Siblings who are 13 and older may also be called to the Torah for an *aliyah*.

FAMILY PREPARATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

USHERING DURING SHABBAT MORNING SERVICES

Families are expected to select adult friends who will be present to serve as ushers. Ushers are expected to:

- Arrive 20 minutes before services begin in order to greet people with a friendly “*Shabbat Shalom*” as they arrive.
- Remind guests, as needed, that we do not allow any photography or personal videography during the service.
- Ensure that teens are sitting in the rows reserved for the B’Mitzvah’s friends and are not disruptive during the service.
- Approximately one chaperone per ten teenagers should be seated with the children to ensure that they are acting appropriately and participating in the service.

TALLIT AND KIPPAH (YARMULKE)

The *minhag* (custom) of Community Synagogue of Rye is that one should wear what is meaningful to oneself. We encourage all B’Mitzvah to wear a *tallit* and *kippah*. We have some *tallitot* for guests to wear which are available outside the sanctuary. *Kippot* and *tallitot* can be purchased at our Judaica shop in the lobby. Please contact the CSR office at 914-967-6262 for more information, or stop by any time the office is open to browse our selection.

GIVING BACK: THE MITZVAH OF TZEDAKAH

Community Synagogue of Rye encourages every family to make *tzedakah* (righteous giving) a part of its celebration. Community Synagogue of Rye is a partner congregation with MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger. In the spirit of Jewish tradition, please consider giving 3% of the cost of your celebration to MAZON. Make this day even more special by providing food and other help, through MAZON, to poor families everywhere. Donations can be sent on their website at mazon.org.

It is also common practice for the learner and family to express appreciation to the clergy, the tutor, and the congregation for their dedication to your child’s Jewish life and Jewish education. It is appropriate to contribute to the Rabbi’s and Cantor’s discretionary funds or to other synagogue funds, please visit our website at www.comsynrye.org and click “Donate.” Feel free to contact the clergy or educators to discuss *tzedakah* donations or ideas for special gifts to commemorate the occasion.

DONATING LEFTOVER FOOD FROM YOUR RECEPTION AT CSR

- **Canned food and non-perishables, not past their date:** bring to CSR any time, put in the bin across from the coat room in the lobby. This food will go to Feeding Westchester, which distributes to families in need across the county.
- **Fresh/perishable food, even if partially consumed leftover trays from the reception:** Please bring the food to Don Bosco Community Center, 22 Don Bosco Place, Port Chester, NY from 9 am to 11 am, Monday to Friday. For any questions, please call Carmen Linero at 914-552-9541. This food goes to families and kids in Port Chester, many of whom depend on Don Bosco Community Center to ensure three good meals a day.

B'Mitzvah Ceremony Form - morning

Name of B'Mitzvah:

Hebrew name:

Parents names:

Torah Portion (chapter/verses):

Page:

Haftarah portion (chapter/verses):

Page:

1st ark opening (2 people max from the same household)

Names of grandparents and/or parents that are participating in passing down the Torah ritual:

Aliyot to the Torah – (must be Jewish, typically grandparents for 1st Aliyah, parents for 2nd Aliyah, and the B'Mitzvah for the 3rd)

1. English Name Relationship Hebrew Name	English Name Relationship Hebrew Name
--	---

English Name Relationship Hebrew Name	English Name Relationship Hebrew Name
---	---

2. English Name Relationship Hebrew Name	English Name Relationship Hebrew Name
--	---

3. B'Mitzvah

Lifting and dressing the Torah (one Jewish person for each)

Names of loved ones who
have passed to read
before *Kaddish*:

2nd ark opening (2 people max from the same household)

Sibling Prayer:

Board Host (provided by CSR)

Third Ark Opening (2 people max from the same household)

Ushers:

B'Mitzvah Ceremony Form for Afternoon services

Name of B'Mitzvah:

Hebrew name:

Parents names:

Torah Portion (chapter/verses):

Page:

1st ark opening (2 people max from the same household)

Names of grandparents and/or parents that are participating in passing down the Torah ritual:

Aliyot to the Torah – (must be Jewish, typically grandparents for 1st Aliyah, parents for 2nd Aliyah, and the B'nei Mitzvah for the 3rd)

1. English Name
Relationship
Hebrew Name

English Name
Relationship
Hebrew Name

English Name
Relationship
Hebrew Name

English Name
Relationship
Hebrew Name

2. English Name
Relationship
Hebrew Name

English Name
Relationship
Hebrew Name

3. B'Mitzvah

Lifting and dressing the Torah (one Jewish person for each)

2nd ark Opening (2 people max from the same household)

Names of loved ones who have passed to read before *Kaddish*:

Sibling Prayer:

Board Host (will be provided by CSR):

3rd Ark Opening (2 people max from the same household)

Ushers:

BLESSINGS FOR THE READING OF TORAH

Blessing before the reading of Torah:

READER:

Bar 'chu et Adonai ha'm'vorach!

בָּרַכּוּ אֶת יי' הַמְבָרָךְ.

CONGREGATION RESPONDS:

*Ba-ruch Adonai ha'm'vorach
l'olam va-ed.*

בָּרוּךְ יי' הַמְבָרָךְ
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

READER:

*Ba-ruch Adonai ha'm'vorach
l'olam va-ed.
Ba-ruch atah Adonai
Eloheinu Melech ha-olam
asher bachar banu mikol ha'amim
v'natan lanu et Torato.*

בָּרוּךְ יי' הַמְבָרָךְ
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי'
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים
וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ

Baruch atah Adonai no-tein ha-Torah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי', נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

Praised the One to whom our praise is due! Praised be the one to whom our praise is due, now and forever! We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe: You have called us to your service by giving us the Torah. We praise You, O God, Giver of the Torah.

Blessing after the reading of Torah:

READER:

*Ba-ruch atah Adonai
Eloheinu Melech ha-olam
asher na-tan la-nu Torat emet
v'chayei olam natah b'tocheinu.
Ba-ruch atah Adonai, notein ha-Torah.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי'
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת
וְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם נָטַע בְּתוֹכֵנוּ.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי', נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe: You have given us a Torah of truth, implanting within us eternal life. We praise You, O God, Giver of Torah.

**A Blessing for *Ger Toshav* (fellow traveler)
who has brought a Jewish child to the Torah:**

Before the Torah Reading (after the Hebrew prayer is chanted/read by the Jewish Parent)

O God of all humanity:

We lift our voices in gratitude that the Torah has come into the world through the Jewish people.

We lift our voices in gratitude for the ideals it teaches: justice; compassion; devotion; the partnership of mind, heart and deed.

After the Torah Reading (after the Hebrew prayer is chanted/read by the Jewish parent)

O God of all humanity:

We lift our voices in gratitude that our son/daughter today takes his/her place among the people of Israel.

We pray that he/she will do so with pride and joy.

As You called Israel to be a light to the nations, so, too, we pray that our son/daughter will be his/her own ray of light to the world.



SIBLING'S PRAYER

I pray you see all the things that matter most. Our tradition calls this *Torah* - Teaching.

I pray you do all the things that fill our world with blessing. Our tradition calls this *Mitzvah* - Commandment.

Let's walk hand in hand on the path of Jewish life, learning from and giving to each other.

Thank you, God, for bringing us together in this world, and for guiding us along the way.

ALTERNATIVE SIBLING BLESSING from Talmud *Berachot* 17a (For siblings 13 and older)

May you live to see your world fulfilled,

May your destiny be for worlds still to come,

And may you trust in generations past and yet to be.

May your heart be filled with intuition

And your words be filled with insight.

May songs of praise ever be upon your tongue

And your vision be on a straight path before you.

May your eyes shine with the light of holy words

And your face reflects the brightness of the heavens.

May your lips speak wisdom.

And your fulfillment be in righteousness.



ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECTS OF BECOMING B'MITZVAH AT CSR

B'Mitzvah Preparation

Technical preparation for your child's B'Mitzvah begins 9-12 months prior to the service when your child attends their B'Mitzvah Bootcamp tutoring sessions on Monday nights. There is a B'Mitzvah fee that covers the costs of the weekly tutoring, materials, administrative support, staff time and the pre-neg. The fee is due prior to the start of tutoring sessions in preparation for your child's B'Mitzvah. For an afternoon service, there is an additional tax-deductible contribution, which does include rental of the Western Room and Social Hall for your event.

B'Mitzvah Service & Materials

A final rehearsal with the cantor is scheduled on the Friday before the B'Mitzvah service at 11:00 am for morning services and at 1:00 pm for afternoon services. If families have ordered personalized *kippot* (*yarmulkes*) or opted to create a program, you may bring them with you on Friday and we will put them out before your guests arrive on Saturday morning. All B'Mitzvah are both expected to wear a *tallit* (prayer shawl).

Morning B'Mitzvah

The family meets with the clergy at 11:00 am on the morning of the B'Mitzvah and the service begins at 11:15 am. The service generally concludes between 12:30 and 12:45 pm.

Afternoon B'Mitzvah

This service begins at 5:00 pm (4:30 pm for a shared ceremony) and lasts about 75 minutes. Please note: Havdalah is included in the winter months as darkness sets in, but not during the part of the year when it is still daylight at the time the service ends.

Facility Rental

We encourage you to consider using the synagogue facilities for your celebration. If you decide to hold a special Friday night Shabbat dinner, luncheon, or your B'Mitzvah party here at Community Synagogue of Rye, please contact Glynis Conyer, Executive Director as soon as possible prior to your event and she will provide you with our Facility Rental information. Rentals are approved on a first-come first-served basis, provided that space is available. Glynis can be reached at 914-967-6262 or gconyer@comsynrye.org.



Bimah Flowers/Baskets

The family of the B'Mitzvah may choose to provide flowers or other decorative baskets for the bimah to be delivered by 3:00 pm on the Friday preceding your child's B'Mitzvah. Some families choose to provide baskets of food, books, etc. to be donated to a local hospital or charity. This is a lovely way to extend the theme of your family's mitzvah project. If you are ordering flowers, they must be unscented varieties that are reasonably low in sensitivity to the attendees. If you display donation baskets, it is your responsibility to retrieve them for donation the following week.



Friday Night Shabbat

On the Friday evening prior to the B'Mitzvah, you and your family attend evening services and are called up to light the Shabbat candles at the start of the service and lead Kiddush at the end of the service. Your child will also speak about their Mitzvah project. This is an opportunity for the congregation to celebrate with you and offer you wishes of Mazal Tov. Families of the B'Mitzvah child(ren) sponsor the pre-neg before Shabbat services (6:00 pm), including light refreshments. The office takes care of all the arrangements. Charges are included in the B'Mitzvah fee.



Photography and Videography

Photography is allowed in the sanctuary provided that the photographer is stationary towards the back, does not use a flash and turns off any sounds the camera may emit. Please note that because of our Torah Study Service, the sanctuary will only be available at 10:30 am on that Saturday morning for photos. We suggest you begin with others in the lobby or outside. The synagogue will schedule a video recording of the B'Mitzvah service and will send you the link to download. Family and friends who are unable to attend may watch the service here: <https://www.comsynrye.org/live-video-streaming.html>.

Transportation

You may arrange for buses to take friends of the B'Mitzvah to an off-site party after the ceremony. Please let the office staff know in advance and ensure you submit a certificate of insurance from the bus company you have hired.

Glynis Conyer, Executive Director, the office staff and custodial staff will be working with you to ensure a meaningful and memorable experience.

Summary of Guidelines

Requirements and Financial Conditions for Afternoon B'Mitzvah Ceremonies:

Families who choose an afternoon B'Mitzvah will:

- Fulfill all requirements (e.g. member in good standing, years in CJL and attendance, Shabbat evening service attendance, etc.).
- Recognize that the service will run from start at 5:00 pm (4:30 for a double B'Mitzvah) and run to about 6:15 pm.
- Make a tax-deductible contribution at the current member rate (\$3,000.00 as of January 2025), which includes rental of the communal spaces (Social Hall, Western Room, Café and/or Lobby) for their evening celebration.
- Recognize that Saturday afternoon B'Mitzvah ceremonies are only offered on certain dates from September through June. (Any family who already has a date assigned may switch to a Saturday afternoon service if the time is available.)
- Understand that each member of the clergy will conduct either a morning OR afternoon service each Shabbat. Rarely both.
- Understand that if the clergy member who was to officiate at your family's B'Mitzvah is called on to officiate at a member wedding on the scheduled date - after every reasonable attempt is made to accommodate both life cycle events, the family will either have another member of our clergy team, outside clergy (approved by CSR clergy) or can move the ceremony to the 11:15 am time if available on the same date. (This applies up to eight months before the scheduled date.)
- Observe all rules of decorum and appropriate dress for the sanctuary.
- Provide ushers to help hand out *siddurim*, welcome your guests and, as needed, enforce appropriate behavior of both children and adults.
- Note that the ceremony of *havdalah* (i.e. wine, spices, and candle) will only be included at afternoon B'Mitzvah based on the time of sunset on the date of the B'Mitzvah ceremony.
- Welcome any attendee to the service - as is the case with all services at Community Synagogue of Rye.

Whom to call when I have a B'Mitzvah Question?

We have an extensive team of clergy, staff, and lay leaders who work together to ensure that your B'Mitzvah experience is meaningful, well-planned, and meets the needs of your family. We know that there are many dimensions of the preparation process to keep track of. The following chart can help direct you to the appropriate person should you have questions about any aspect. Of course, if you are not sure who to contact, you can always call the main office at (914) 967-6262 and someone will help direct your question to the appropriate person.

Whom to contact?	For questions about:	Phone	E-mail
Rabbi Daniel Gropper	Writing & editing your D'var Torah	(914) 967-6262	dgropper@comsynrye.org
Cantor Melanie Cooperman	Learning your prayers and Torah reading	(914) 967-6262	mcooperman@comsynrye.org
Glynis Conyer Executive Director	Fees, facility rentals, and other logistics	(914) 967-6262	gconyer@comsynrye.org
Abby Pisaniello CJL Administrator	Scheduling a lesson or meeting with Cantor Cooperman	(914) 967-7598	rs@comsynrye.org
Jon Rekedal Clergy Assistant	Scheduling appointments with the Rabbi, logistics	(914) 967-6262	clergyassistant@comsynrye.org
Barbara Chumsky B'Mitzvah Date Coordinator	B'Mitzvah dates	(914) 967-6354	barbaramb419@aol.com
Felicia DePaola B'Mitzvah Date Coordinator	B'Mitzvah dates	(914) 939-6693	feliciadepaola9@gmail.com



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