



**OHR HATORAH
SYNAGOGUE**

**BAR/T MITZVAH PROGRAM
PARENT HANDBOOK**

I. Timeline and Planning

Preparation Overview

This is a very exciting time for your family. Preparing and planning for a Bar/t mitzvah can be all consuming in and of itself, yet it must be done in the context of all of the other aspects of our daily lives. This section of the handbook is intended to help you identify and map out what will be taking place and what you need to do over the course of the next 8 to 12 months. At the end of the timeline is a checklist that corresponds directly to it.

8 - 12 Months Out

Bar/t Mitzvah Overview

If you are reading this manual, you have already completed this step. If you have not yet selected a date, please submit your Date Request Form (included in this packet). Should you misplace it, please email rabbi_assist@ohrhatorah.org. We will confirm a date with you as soon as possible, verifying that the student will be able to fulfill the ceremony requirements by the requested date.

Student Skills Assessment

Approximately 6 - 10 months before the ceremony, you must contact a private tutor to arrange for a skills assessment and develop an appropriate program of study for the student. Please let us know if you need help finding a tutor.

Schedule Tutoring

Make sure you are in contact with your tutor to schedule tutoring and your child is completing their assignments. The length of study will vary by student and based on the skills assessment. Be prepared to start private tutoring immediately, as well as monitoring at-home practice.

Weekly Zoom Attendance - optional *Skills* - required

Students may attend a weekly class of Bible, Holidays, Prayer, Israel and Wisdom Works on Tuesdays. Students who are not enrolled in the class will be required to have basic skills such as mastery of Hebrew reading, etc. The list of basic skills will be discussed individually with each family according to each child's abilities and interests.

Planning of Celebration/Reception

How a family celebrates the *simcha* (joyous event) is as individual as each family. Some limit it to family, some invite everyone. Some make the entire weekend a celebration, others limit it to the day of the event. This is the time to begin to assess what feels right for your family and budget, keeping in mind that Ohr HaTorah only facilitates afternoon Bar/t Mitzvah services. *Ohr HaTorah has available vendors for your consideration.*

6 Months Out

Start Thinking About Drash

The Rabbi will meet with the family and give them an overview of the Torah portion and resources for the student and family to begin studying the individual Torah portion.

Invitation Text Approval

Prior to printing/emailing invitations, the family sends a copy of the *entire* Bar/t Mitzvah invitation to the Ohr HaTorah office for approval of the wording before ordering/sending the invitations.

3 Months Out

Shabbat Services

Attending Ohr HaTorah's online Kabbalat Shabbat evening and Shabbat morning services weekly is highly encouraged. Participation not only facilitates the development of Jewish identity and community, it also aids in the preparation for becoming a Bar/t Mitzvah. Attending online familiarizes the Bar/t Mitzvah student with Ohr HaTorah's customs and practices and also regularly exposes them to our melodies making the learning process smoother.

Begin Writing Drash

The Rabbi will meet with the individual student and family to begin the process of writing the drash (speech) and start planning/discussing the service.

Please review and prepare in advance from the Drash Writing Guidelines (in the Tutoring and Study section of the handbook) so that maximum productivity can occur during this meeting.

2 Months Out

Submit Student Profile

Prepare a picture and paragraph about the student for the Ohr HaTorah website. Forward it to the office four weeks before the ceremony.

Determine Service Honors & Send in Form

Fill out and email in the Service Honors Form for your child's ceremony (at the end of this document).

Determine Bar/t Mitzvah Logistics & SEND Form

Review and fill out the Bar/t Mitzvah Logistics Form (see Appendix). Discuss Ohr HaTorah's requirements and preparation for the ceremony or about ritual practices with the Bar/t Mitzvah Tutor or office and email the final version to the office. Be sure to retain your original version for your reference.

Please Note: Discuss all service details in full with the office and be prepared to cover expenses such as:

1. Pianist
2. Cantor
3. Kippot
4. Aliyot Candy

These and any other fees will be determined and delineated. Our goal is to assist you every step of the way so you feel prepared enough to enjoy the day of celebration whole heartedly when it comes.

Family Learns Torah Blessings

The family makes sure that those who will be called for an aliyah have a printed copy of the Torah blessings and a recording of them. Both are available in the Bar/t Mitzvah section of the Ohr HaTorah website under “Study Resources.” (A printed copy is also in the Appendix of this Handbook.) The student should be able to assist their family and friends in learning them if necessary.

One Month Out

Tweak and Polish Blessings, Prayers, Parashah, Haftara and Drash

The bulk of “learning” will be complete or winding down and study will focus on the flow of the service, projection and public presence.

Write Parental Blessing(s) (See Service Logistics)

Remember to Breathe!

Be responsive and communicate promptly with the office regarding your ceremony details. We will answer any questions and guide you as you make final preparations.

Full Rehearsal

Rehearse the service with the Rabbi during the week prior to the ceremony. Parents and close family who are key participants should be present. The Rabbi will have a completed Service Honors Form with all names and details as required. The Rabbi will review the order of the service and the family’s participation.

Your Preparation Timeline and Checklist

Start at the end of the list – with your ceremony at T minus 0 – and enter its date. Then work up the list entering the dates that correspond with the timeframe for each milestone. Use this as your guide.

MILESTONES	DATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8 - 12 MONTHS OUT		
Bar/t Mitzvah Overview Meeting		<input type="checkbox"/>
Family Starts Considering the Reception		<input type="checkbox"/>
Student Skills Assessment		<input type="checkbox"/>
Schedule Tutoring		<input type="checkbox"/>
6 MONTHS OUT		
Invitation Text Approval		<input type="checkbox"/>
Start thinking about Drash		<input type="checkbox"/>
3 MONTHS OUT		
Begin Writing Drash		<input type="checkbox"/>
2 MONTHS OUT		
Submit Student Profile		<input type="checkbox"/>
Determine Service Honors & Email in Form		<input type="checkbox"/>
Plan Bar/t Mitzvah Logistics/Email in Form		<input type="checkbox"/>
Family Knows Torah Blessings		<input type="checkbox"/>
1 MONTH OUT		
Tweak and Polish Prayers, Parashah, etc.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Write Parent Blessing		<input type="checkbox"/>
Remember to Breathe!		<input type="checkbox"/>
Full Rehearsal with the Rabbi		<input type="checkbox"/>
Smile for the photographers and enjoy the day!		<input type="checkbox"/>

II. Ohr HaTorah Bar/t Mitzvah Program Policies

Entering the final year of study and preparation to become a Bar/t Mitzvah – a Jewish adult – is a significant transition period for every Jewish family. The ceremony itself, particularly the reading of the Torah, seals the stamp of Jewish adulthood on the Bar/t Mitzvah. It is our goal at OHT to facilitate the best possible Bar/t Mitzvah experience for both student and family –one that is rich with meaning, demonstrates the character and maturity of the Bar/t mitzvah student and is as low-stress as possible for the family. To facilitate this, Ohr HaTorah has developed the following policies.

Bar/t Mitzvah Age

At Ohr HaTorah, becoming a Bar/t Mitzvah is based on a student's readiness rather than his/her birthday. In determining each student's readiness, we consider the following characteristics: 1) maturity; 2) extent of his or her study, specifically the ability to analyze and critically think about concepts gleaned from the Torah; 3) Hebrew facility; and, 4) musical ability. Experience has taught us that a child is most ready at some point between 13 ½ and 14. Thus, our policy is to schedule Bar/t Mitzvah ceremony dates between 13 ½ and 14.

Maturity is a critical factor in successful Bar/t Mitzvah preparation. It requires hard work, **discipline** and a **willingness** to engage in Torah study. There may seem to be little difference between 13 and 13 ½ or 14; however, maturity increases rapidly during adolescence and six months can make a big difference in both the preparation process and in a child's ability to participate in and appreciate the ceremony itself.

Religious Education

In order to provide our families and the Bar/t Mitzvah students with the most meaningful experience, we encourage participation in the synagogue's calendar year programs (Friday nights, Shabbat mornings, holidays, family gatherings, etc.). More specific details will be in coordination with the Ohr HaTorah B'nei Mitzvah coordinator and tutor.

Our weekly class is specifically geared toward Bar/t Mitzvah preparation. Our Prayer curriculum focuses on giving our students an understanding and mastery of the prayers they will lead at their service as well as the overall structure and significance of the entire service in which they will be participating. In addition to the Prayer Curriculum, the student will develop moral, spiritual and intellectual acumen for a thriving Jewish adulthood.

Our students learn Torah cantillation as part of the weekly program. In this group setting, the students learn the basic principles and applications of Trope – the system of signs and melodies by which Torah is chanted – which each will then apply to their own specific Torah portion.

Therefore, participation in the class is highly recommended. From experience, we have found that the preparation process goes more smoothly if students wait until later in the school year or until the fall of the eighth grade year to have the ceremony.

Finances

1. Payment for the Bar/t Mitzvah Program must be paid in full in order to participate.

Bar/t Mitzvah Program Fee includes:

- a. Full family membership
- b. Weekly Zoom study (not required)
- c. Private and semi private study with the Rabbi
- d. Rabbi officiating at the service
- e. Guidance throughout the whole process for a successful and complete Bar/t Mitzvah ceremony experience

Not Included but Required:

- a. Location - Synagogue Sanctuary/Chapel, Hotel/Banquet Hall, Home/Garden (to be approved in advance by Ohr HaTorah), (to be set-up by the family)
 - b. Cantor - \$500 (to be set-up by Ohr HaTorah)
 - c. Piano Accompaniment - \$500 (to be set-up by Ohr HaTorah)
 - d. Sound System (if it is not a small, private home ceremony identified as such by Ohr HaTorah, to be set-up by the family)
 - e. Private tutoring (to be set-up by the family)
 - f. Coordinator for all ceremony logistics, purchases, transportation, deliveries, display, set-up and take-down. This includes but is not limited to kippot, prayer books, candy, *talitot*, etc. (to be set-up by the family)
2. Once the Bar/t Mitzvah date has been confirmed, should the family change the date, a fee of \$75 will be assessed to cover administrative time and costs necessary to accommodate the processing of the family's new date request.

Bar/t Mitzvah not Born to a Jewish Mother

Our policy is that if a Bar/t Mitzvah student's mother had not converted to Judaism before the student was born, then the student needs to go to the mikveh to complete the establishment of his/her Jewish identity at age 13, and before the Bar/t Mitzvah service. Please contact the Rabbi's assistant at (310) 915- 5200 in order to make an appointment with the Rabbi to discuss this process.

III. Tutoring and Individual Study

Tutoring

Approximately nine months before the ceremony, contact between the family and the tutor must be made to arrange for a skills assessment for the student. The tutor will then develop an appropriate individualized program of study for the student. Please note that in case a student falls behind and does not keep up with his/her work, the Bar/t Mitzvah date may be moved.

During the course of the tutoring, the student will learn several new prayers, Torah and Haftarah trope (melodies) particular to their portions, how to read and chant their specific Torah portion, how to read and chant their specific Haftarah (optional) and the cues for the order of service. The sequence of study will be roughly as follows:

1. Learn the blessings recited for wearing tallit, before and after reading the verses from Torah and before and after reading the Haftarah (if applicable).
2. Learn, review and refine execution of the core Shabbat afternoon service prayers and blessings as they are outlined on our website (under resources, password to be obtained from the office)
3. Learn the Torah portion and how to chant it.
4. Learn the Haftarah portion and how to chant it (if applicable).
5. Study the Torah portion and prepare a *drash* (an interpretation of the Torah portion).
6. Learn service cues and flow, and refine presentation skills.

It is the family's responsibility to arrange a schedule of dates and times for the private sessions with the tutor.

Students are requested to come to each tutoring session fully prepared and feeling confident about the assigned work from the previous session. Parent(s) and/or guardian(s), the Rabbi, the Rebbetzin, and the Bar/t Mitzvah tutor will be notified if the student begins to fall behind. An alternative plan for helping the student will be determined. Our goal is for the student to be able to demonstrate his/her commitment to becoming a Bar/t Mitzvah.

Students should be prepared to spend half an hour to an hour a day (depending on the student's abilities) studying the assigned material. We recommend that each student schedule a particular time every day to study, as one would a piano or sport lesson, and adhere to the schedule as consistently as possible.

Ohr HaTorah highly encourages Bar/t Mitzvah students to refrain from engaging in supplementary activities during the Bar/t Mitzvah preparation period. If preparation will take

place during the summer months, we recommend that the family limit extended vacations, camps, etc., or, if these are already planned, that the student make arrangements with the tutor to set up virtual sessions (such as Zoom) in lieu of physical sessions. Many summer camps, particularly Jewish ones, offer Bar/t Mitzvah tutoring services.

Study with the Rabbi

About three months prior to the service, please contact Rabbi Finley (rabbifinley@gmail.com) and the Office (rabbi_assist@ohratorah.org) to schedule a meeting with the Rabbi, the student and family to begin the process of writing the drash (speech) and start planning/discussing the service.

The students' independent study with the Rabbi and preparation of their *drash* begins with a group study session of classmates who have proximate ceremony dates together with their families. The student will then begin to study independently with the Rabbi. Along with the Torah content, the Rabbi will instruct the students in the Jewish interpretive process.

Once the student's first meeting with the Rabbi has occurred, additional meetings between the student and the Rabbi will take place as necessary based on the progress of the student's pace and achievement. Please note that following the initial meeting with the Rabbi the writing process of the *drash* will be in the form of email correspondence. The Rabbi will then schedule times to discuss questions or topics raised by the student. However, the student will have to show initiative, be responsive and punctual during this process.

In preparation for the first drash meeting, please review and prepare in advance from the Drash Writing Guidelines that follow so that maximum productivity can occur during this meeting.

Drash Writing Guidelines

Prior to the first study session with the Rabbi:

1. Read your Torah portion in English. This is not just the selection you are reading at your service, but rather the entire portion
2. Outline the portion and as you read and look for any significant idea, theme, text, person, event, etc., that you find interesting.
3. Write down any questions that you have. Note things that you don't understand that you would like the Rabbi/Rabbinic Intern to explain.
4. At your first study with the Rabbi/Rabbinic Intern, you will go over the entire portion. The Rabbi/Rabbinic Intern will help you find some issues, ideas, topics or themes for your *drash*.

After the first *drash* meeting and prior to your second study session with the Rabbi:

Write your first draft. This draft does not have to be perfect or even very good, but IT MUST BE DONE BY YOUR SECOND MEETING. The first draft should have the following paragraphs:

- a. A brief introduction to your Torah portion.
- b. An introduction to the idea, theme, text, person or event which is your focus.
- c. Some questions about the aspect upon which you are focusing.
- d. Answers to those questions, and your main teaching about your Torah portion.
- e. How all of this applies to your own life.

As you write, you will go back and forth among the paragraphs as the ideas you are developing get clearer and clearer. This going back and forth as you write is called "reflective writing." It is a CRUCIAL ASPECT of the writing process. You must sit with the speech and try to figure out what you are trying to say. It doesn't come in an instant. You must start writing and give it time.

Send the first draft to the Rabbi by email before the second meeting. Your draft will be the topic of the second meeting.

At the second meeting, the Rabbi will help you refine your *drash*, give sources to make your point, and help you take your ideas to the next level.

After the second meeting, you will go home and write a final draft. Then send that to the Rabbi. Usually you and the Rabbi can finish the speech after the second meeting by exchanging emails and phone calls. If you need additional meetings, the Rabbi will be glad to set them up.

When you send emails, make sure you write your name and that you are sending a draft of your *drash* in the subject line so that we know who the email is from and that it is your *drash*. We delete mail we can't identify. We will answer immediately that your e-mail was received. If you don't hear from us soon after you send it, make sure to call us to confirm that we have received your email.

How Parents Can Help with the Studying

As students prepare for their Bar/t Mitzvah services, parents may want to help in the process and often aren't quite sure how to do so, particularly if they do not know Hebrew. Following is a list of tips for parent involvement when the student practices at home.

Parents, you do not need to know Hebrew. Listen for fluidity and confidence. You will quickly be able to tell if your teen can say or sing a prayer with confidence and at a normal reading pace or if he or she is slow and unsure of the words. Look for improvement on a weekly basis and be sure to point out where you see it.

While each student learns at their own pace, many have found the following timetable helpful.

- When the student is working on the prayers, listen to the prayers daily @ 20 minutes per assigned prayer
- When the student is working on the Torah, listen to Torah and prayers daily @ 40 minutes per session (20 minutes for prayers and 20 minutes for Torah).
- When the student is working on Haftarah, listen to Haftarah daily @ 15 minutes per session and listen to prayers and Torah together 2 times/week @ 30 minutes per session.
- For the last month before the Bar/t Mitzvah, when the student is reviewing for the entire service, listen to prayers, Torah, Haftarah, and speech daily @ 45 minutes per session.

IV. The Service and its Logistics

Generally, the Bar/t Mitzvah will do the following:

1. Lead parts of the service. The list of prayers are described in detail on our website and offers various tracks for the student to choose his/her level of participation.
2. Say the blessing for Tallit.
3. Chant the Torah blessings and all of the 10-15 assigned verses of the weekly Torah portion. The specific verses chanted by a Bar/t Mitzvah will be determined by the office and influenced by the student's interest.
4. Chant the Haftarah blessings and the assigned verses of the Haftarah (the prophetic section of the Bible) linked to the Torah portion.
5. Present a *drash* (speech) dealing with the significance and meaning of some issues from anywhere in the Torah portion, regardless of which part of the portion the student actually chants.

The service itself will vary according to the family's choice and the student's personal abilities. The extent to which a student will lead prayers in the service will be determined by the family under the direction of the B'nei Mitzvah coordinator and tutor. Determining factors will include the family's choice of service location (home, synagogue), child's readiness, abilities and knowledge as well as the Bar/t Mitzvah's weekly progress, Hebrew ability, and musical skills.

Clergy Participation

The Rabbi, Cantor and Pianist are necessary in your Bar/t Mitzvah service.

Many families want to provide a gesture of thanks to the Rabbi, Cantor, and Pianist. For the Rabbi, families may choose to make a donation to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund or give him a personal gift in his name.

Liturgy

For the Shabbat Morning service, Ohr HaTorah uses *Siddur Hadash*, prepared under the supervision of The Center for Contemporary Judaica, 1992. For the chanting of the Torah and the Haftarah, the Stone Edition *Tanakh* published by Mesorah, Ltd., 1992, is used.

Video and Still Camera Photography

We welcome participation of professional video and still photographers during the service in order to commemorate this important milestone.

Invitations

Please refrain from using the words "Bar/t Mitzvah" as a verb, for example, we hear parents say that their son /daughter was "Bar/t Mitzvahed." The words Bar/t Mitzvah are nouns, referring to

“Jewish adults.” An example of appropriate wording on the invitation could be stated as, (name) becomes a Bar/t Mitzvah, or (name) is called to the Torah as a Bar/t Mitzvah.

Ohr HaTorah kindly asks that the invitations reflect the religious and spiritual nature of the ceremony. Invitations decorated with symbols of the Bar/t Mitzvah’s favorite sport or type of car would be considered inappropriate.

We require inviting all students in the class to both the service and the reception. This guideline is in keeping with our philosophy of community cohesiveness and showing the utmost consideration to the sensitivities and feelings of our students at this tender age.

Please send invitations for the Rabbi and Rebbetzin to the Ohr HaTorah office.

Participation of Family and Friends

It is customary to honor family and friends by designating various components of the Torah service to them. The Rabbi will be glad to counsel you in the handling of the number of people you wish to honor as well as with special family situations such as interfaith marriage, divorce and remarriage, and involvement of significant others.

Below are the specific roles available to designate to your honorees.

Presentation of Tallit

The tallit may be presented by anyone the family chooses. Should the presenter wish to say a few words, please keep the presentation to ONE minute. Samples of wording for the tallit presentation and parental blessings are below.

Taking out the Torah and the Hakafah

The Rabbi will pass the Torah through the generations of the Bar/t Mitzvah’s family, from grandparent(s) to parent(s) to the Bar/t Mitzvah. Non-Jewish parents and grandparents will stand behind the Jewish parent and grandparents and will not pass down the Torah. Male non-Jewish parents and grandparents (and female non-Jewish parents and grandparents, if they choose to do so,) will wear a kippah, but not a tallit. As the Bar/t Mitzvah carries the Torah through the audience, the parent(s) and grandparent(s) follow the Torah. When the Torah is brought to the Rabbi, the relatives return to their seats. Two sifrei Torah will travel through the congregation at the Morning service. The Bar/t Mitzvah will carry one Torah; the second Torah scroll may be given to someone in your family.

Aliyot

At Ohr HaTorah, the Torah reading is divided into three aliyot. For the first aliyah, the family of the Bar/t Mitzvah may choose family members and/or friends to honor. The second aliyah is

reserved for the parent(s) of the Bar/t Mitzvah, and the last aliyah (maftir aliyah) is reserved for the Bar/t Mitzvah.

In the calling up of aliyot, the order from first to third aliyah progresses from those more distantly related to the Bar/Bar Mitzvah to those most closely connected through family relationship. The family may choose to honor single persons or groups of people (couples, such as a grandmother and grandfather), cousins (together in a group), etc. Those called up to chant the Torah Blessings must be Jewish and 13 years of age or older. It is recommended that they have had a Bar/t Mitzvah service. They may chant or read the blessings in Hebrew. It is expected that the Hebrew will be read correctly. These blessings may be found below. They are on page 190 of the siddur and on the Bar/t Program Resources page as well.

The Gabbai will call each honoree to the bimah by his/her Hebrew name. Fill out the Service Honors Form (the last page of this section) with the English and Hebrew names of your honorees and forward a copy of the completed form to the Ohr HaTorah office.

With respect to non-Jewish participants, for the second aliyah, a non-Jewish spouse will accompany a Jewish spouse to the bimah, but will not chant the Torah blessings. For the first aliyah, non-Jewish family members will accompany Jewish family members to the bimah, but will not chant the Torah blessings. The non-Jewish spouse and non-Jewish family members will be called up by English names only.

Hagba'hah

This is the honor of lifting the Torah. The Magbihah is the person designated to lift the Torah.

Guidelines

The honoree faces the table holding the Torah; takes the bottom handles of the Torah; bends his/her knees slightly and lifts the Torah; turns around so the Torah writing is facing the congregation and the honoree has his/her back to the congregation. Next, he/she opens the Torah so at least 3 columns of writing are showing. Keep the Torah open as the congregation sings V'zot HaTorah for the first time. The Rabbi will help the honoree sit down with the Torah, so the gollel/gollelet can redress the Torah.

G'leelah

This is the honor of dressing the Torah.

Guidelines

The Torah is dressed in the following manner: the Rabbi will help you roll the Torah scroll together. The girdle (band holding the Torah scrolls together) is clipped or tied. The mantle (cloth cover) is put on the Torah. The chain of the silver breastplate is placed on top of both of

the wooden handles and the yad (pointer) is placed atop one wooden handle and the breastplate. Last, the 2 rimmonim (crowns with bells) are placed, one on each of the two wooden handles of the Torah.

Holding the Torah during Torah and/or Haftarah Reading

One honoree will sit and hold the Torah (if the family is given both Torah scrolls to carry) while the Bar/t Mitzvah chants both the Torah and the Haftarah. The second honoree will sit and hold the Torah from which the Bar/t Mitzvah has just chanted while the Bar/t Mitzvah chants the Haftarah. Once the student completes both the Haftarah and the drash, the Rabbi will guide the Torah holders through the process of returning the Torah scrolls to the Ark.

P'tichat Aron

This is the honor of opening and/or closing the Ark. There is an opportunity to open the ark at the beginning of the Torah service and to close it upon returning the Torah scrolls to the ark,

Tanakh from the Synagogue

These are presented by the Rabbi/Rebbetzin.

Parent(s) Blessing(s)

Parents will bless the Bar/t Mitzvah at the podium. It may be given privately, publicly, or as a combination private, then public message. Please limit the blessing to ONE minute. Please do not use this time to describe the Bar/t Mitzvah's qualities in detail (please save this speech for the reception). Rather, we ask that you focus on a blessing for your child that encompasses his/her strongest characteristics, talents, and/or interests. Guidelines provided by the Rabbi for the Parents Blessings are below.

Guidelines

Parents have the opportunity to do two personal blessings during the service, first at the presentation of the Tallit, and then again at the end of the service. The blessing should not take longer than about a minute to say; any longer and it becomes a speech. These words are a guideline, please adapt or change them.

Sample tallit presentation

This tallit represents a history of tradition that goes all the way back to our ancestors in the Sinai Desert. As you wear this tallit, you are being wrapped in that tradition. We pray that the Jewish tradition always brings you nourishment and light.

This tallit also represents the embrace of your family. We watch you now with awe and pride as you enter young woman/man hood. We pray that as you wear this tallit, you will always remember the love of your family.

The fringes on this tallit represent the commandments of God to live in holiness. We pray that as you look upon these fringes, you always remember to walk in the ways of holiness, truth and righteousness, and that God's love and blessing accompany you your whole life.

Rabbi Mordecai Finley

Sample final blessing

“Name: You have blessed us since the day you were born, and you continue to bless us today. You have honored us with your dedication to study, your true search for meaning in your Torah portion, and the grace and perfection in your leading of the prayers.

We pray that God continues to bless you with all the things that you treasure: love of family and friends, joy in life and good times, the time for good books, the inspiration for your drawing, insight for your deepening mind.

We pray that God guides you on a path of righteousness and goodness. You have brought so much to us and to all who know you. We know you will fill the world with your light and work.

And we pray that God will guide you toward deep fulfillment from your Judaism, from study, from prayer, from community, and from that special feeling you have when honoring God through the commandments.

You have been a blessing, and we pray that your life be blessed.

In the Appendix of this Handbook you will find Ohr HaTorah's Guidelines for Behavior in the Sanctuary. Please share these basic rules of decorum with your guests (they are especially appropriate for teens who are not familiar with Jewish practice).

V. Agreement

We understand and have read the Bar/t Mitzvah Program Handbook and will follow the guidelines and information as written. We are fully committed to the Bar/t Mitzvah process of Ohr HaTorah.

Parent Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Parent Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

(Please return this sheet to the office.)

VI. APPENDIX

Administrative Contact Information

NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
Ohr HaTorah Office 15030 Ventura Blvd., Suite 11 #378 Sherman Oaks, CA 91403	(310) 915-5200	office@ohratorah.org
Rabbi Mordecai Finley, Ph.D.	Call at office	rabbifinley@gmail.com
Rebbetzin Meirav Finley Executive and Educational Director	Call at office	meirav777@gmail.com
Jennifer Kelsey Bookkeeper	Call at office	accounts@ohratorah.org
Assistant to the Finley's	Call at office	rabbi_assist@ohratorah.org

Ohr HaTorah Synagogue Bar/t Mitzvah Logistics Form

Bar/t Mitzvah Name _____			
Last	First	Middle	
Date of Service _____		Time You Will Arrive _____	
Coordinator Name _____		Phone/Email _____	
# of Expected Guests _____		# of Children _____	
Items required for the service:	Pick Up Date/Time	Drop Off Date/Time	Person Responsible Phone/Email
Kippot			
Prayerbooks			
Sound System Confirmation			
Podium for Rabbi			
Podium/Music Stand for Cantor			
Music Stand for Pianist			
Torah Scroll Confirmation			
Yad			
Talitot for Honored Parties			
Tallit for the Bar/t Mitzvah			
Tallit Clips			
Blessings Sheet			
Tanakh/Tikkun for Gabbai Sheni			
Program (if applicable): _____			

Honors for Bar/t Mitzvah Ceremony

List the names of those you would like to honor and include **their relationship to the Bar/t Mitzvah**. For those being called for an Aliyah, list both their English and Hebrew names in the space provided.

Honor	Name(s)	Relationship to Bar/t Mitzvah
Tallit Presentation:		
Open the Ark:		
Passing Down of the Torah:		
Hakkafah:	1. (Bar/t Mitzvah)	
	2.	
Hold Torah during Torah & Haftarah Reading:		
Aliyot	English Names	Hebrew Names
<i>1st Aliyah:</i>		
<i>2nd Aliyah: Parents</i>		
<i>3rd Aliyah: Bar/t Mitzvah</i>		
Raise and Dress the Torah	English Names Only	Relationship to Bar/t Mitzvah
Magbihah:		
Golel(et):		
Hold Torah during Haftarah reading:		
Haftarah: (Bar/t Mitzvah)		
Closing the Ark:		
Parents' Blessings:		

Guidelines for Behavior During the Service

Please share with your guests these basic rules of decorum (especially appropriate for teens who are not familiar with Jewish practice).

Appropriate Attire

1. All males are required to wear kippot during services.
2. Males and females should refrain from wearing worn out jeans and flip flops.
3. Females should refrain from wearing low cut tops and short skirts; if a low cut top is worn a sweater, coat, or shawl should be worn over it during the service.

Respect the Service

While it is impossible to fully delineate all appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, we simply ask all guests to respect these general guidelines.

1. Remain in one's seat during the service, standing and sitting at the appropriate times.
2. Pay attention to the service and participate as able.
3. Behave in a polite and respectful manner for the duration of the service.
4. Listen carefully whenever the Rabbi and/or the Bar/t Mitzvah speak.
5. Throw candy at the Bar/t Mitzvah in the appropriate manner.
 - a. Candy is thrown after the Bar/t Mitzvah finishes chanting from the Torah.
 - b. Candy is not meant as sustenance for the guests.
 - c. Candy is thrown gently at the Bar/t Mitzvah, not aimed directly or hurled.
 - d. The Rabbi will shield the Bar/t Mitzvah and himself with his tallit (prayer shawl). When the Rabbi's tallit is lowered, that is the signal for guests to cease throwing candy.

To facilitate respectful behavior, we ask that guests:

1. Use the restroom and take a drink before the service, so one does not need to leave or reenter during the service.
2. Refrain from chewing gum or eating food during the service.
3. Refrain from inappropriate behavior during the service, such as:
 - a. Talking or whispering.
 - b. Engaging in horseplay.
 - c. Mutilating service books or booklets.
 - d. Doodling or drawing on the service books or booklets.
 - e. Brushing hair or putting on make-up.

Note: Infractions of these policies and any disrespectful behaviors not mentioned above may make it necessary for the Rabbi to stop the service until decorum at your child's Bar/t Mitzvah can be re-established.

TORAH BLESSINGS

Blessing Before the Reading

בְּרָכוּ אֶת־יְהוָה הַמְּבָרֵךְ.

Congregation responds:

בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה הַמְּבָרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

Repeat congregation's response, then continue below with:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ
הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים
וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת־תּוֹרָתוֹ.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

*Praise Adonai, the Exalted One. Praised be Adonai, the Exalted One, throughout all time.
Praised are You Adonai our God, who rules the universe, taking delight by giving us His Torah.
Praised are You Adonai, who gives the Torah.*

Blessing After the Reading

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ
הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת,
וְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם נָטַע בְּתוֹכֵנוּ.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

*Praised are You Adonai our God, who rules the universe, giving us the Torah of truth, planting
within us life eternal. Praised are You Adonai, who gives the Torah.*



**Ohr HaTorah Religious School
Request for Bar/t Mitzvah Date**

Child's Name: _____

Child's Birth date: _____

Parents' Name(s): _____

Phone Number: _____

Requested Dates (Month, Day and Year):

First Choice: _____

Second Choice: _____

Third Choice: _____

Availability Check: Date # 1 _____

Date # 2 _____

Date # 3 _____

Approvals (Initials and Date):

Rabbi Finley _____

Meirav Finley _____

Final Calendaring Done By: _____