

## B'nai Mitzvah Process and Guidelines

### Policy

#### Board of Directors

#### Congregation Emeth

### The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program – Student Expectations:

Since the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony encompasses all aspects of Jewish life, it provides a unique structure upon which to focus learning. During the Torah Service we parade through the synagogue carrying the Torah proudly, and singing famous words from the Pirke Avot (The Ethics of Our Tradition) which affirm the foundations of Jewish life: “*Al shlosha d’varim haolam omed*” — “On three things the world stands”: “*Al haTorah, v’al haAvodah, v’al G’milut Chasadim*” — “On study, on prayer, and on acts of loving kindness.” It is on that basis that we examine the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process.

#### Torah (Study/Jewish Learning)

The student is expected to demonstrate a commitment to *Torah* in two primary ways:

First, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah will learn the ancient tradition of chanting from the Torah scroll itself. This reading connects the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to all the other Jewish communities on the earth, each of whom will chant the same portion from the Torah in the same way, on the same day. The Torah portion under which someone becomes Bar/Bat Mitzvah is an important aspect of their Jewish life. Many Jews affirm, and many mystics surmise that a person becomes Bar/Bat Mitzvah under a certain portion because that portion contains specific significance for that person’s life. Frequently a person may be asked to chant their Bar/Bat Mitzvah portion year after year in their own congregation.

Second, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah will demonstrate the ability to study and teach Torah by examining his/her Torah portion (along with traditional commentary), the *Haftarah* (readings from the books of the Prophets) and then offering a D’var Torah (literally, words of Torah, a sermon) to the congregation. It is hoped that through this process the student can identify specific relevance in the Torah portion to his/her modern Jewish life.

#### Avodah (Prayer/Service to God)

The student is expected to demonstrate a commitment to *Avodah* in two primary ways:

First, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is expected to regularly attend congregational Shabbat services. Regularly means that, more often than not, for at least the year leading up to Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the student attends the entire prayer service.

Second, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah will learn the fundamentals of leading a prayer service. The Friday evening Shabbat Short N Sweet services is essentially a Learner’s Minyan whose focus is on learning about prayer and the parts of the service. Bar/Bat Mitzvah students are expected to participate in these twice monthly services as well as the TNT (Torah N Tefilah) service (usually once a month), Friday night or Saturday morning. This means that during the year preceding one’s Bar or Bat Mitzvah, the

student is expected to attend Shabbat services approximately three times a month. Students are welcome but not required to attend the Friday Night Live services.

As the year progresses, Bar/Bat Mitzvah students will be given the opportunity to become comfortable leading portions of the prayer service before their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Students will spend time during Biet Seifer learning their prayers. After their Bar/Bat Mitzvah, students will be encouraged to transition from learners to teachers by teaching portions of both the following year's Learner's Minyan and leading portions of Shabbat evening services. These students are also typically asked to participate in subsequent High Holy days.

### **G'milut Chasadim (Acts of Loving Kindness)**

The student is also expected to demonstrate a commitment to *G'milut Chasadim* in two ways:

First, the student is expected to participate in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah class program, "Year of Living Jewishly". The students will do acts of lovingkindness and mitzvot (literally "commandments") throughout the year preceding their Bar/Bat Mitzvah and record their activities regularly. The Rabbi will check their books each week, so they must bring their books to class.

Second, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is expected to demonstrate a commitment to *tzedakah* (righteousness). This expectation requires some explanation. Without passing judgment on the merits of either, it must be noted that Jewish *tzedakah* is a fundamentally different concept from the common notion of charity. Judaism considers *tzedakah* an obligation rather than a choice, teaching that *tzedakah* is necessary to create a just society. Jewish tradition instructs that a minimum of 10% of a person's income be given to *tzedakah*. In so teaching, Judaism makes it clear that even people who are hard to love are deserving of our help, and that even when we do not feel loving, we still have the obligation to maintain a righteous community.

However, in the case of Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the Jewish value of *tzedakah* is combined with the value of *n'divut* (generosity), the voluntary act of marking a sacred time by sharing that which we have with those who are less fortunate. Recognizing that the gifts a person receives for Bar/Bat Mitzvah typically represents the most significant sum of money a student has been required to handle, as part of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process, it is expected that the student, guided by the Rabbi, will select a Jewish or Israeli charitable organization. It is hoped that the student will find an organization whose work is particularly meaningful to them, and that they will share with the community why they chose this particular organization.

## The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service – Protocol Expectations:

Please recall that, although this is a wonderfully special day for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and his/her family, the service is fundamentally a congregational service, which is a sharp contrast from other life-cycle events such as a baby naming, wedding, or funeral. This reality means that an appropriate balance must be struck between the family's desires and the congregation's *minhag* (norms).

### Service Timing:

It is expected that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service will be held on a Saturday Shabbat Morning. The Shabbat morning service begins promptly at 10:00 AM and ends approximately 12:15 PM. This is the primary service for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration, and includes a Torah service and student speeches. This service is typically followed by a light lunch hosted by the family.

As part of the student's preparation for the Bar/Bat the student is expected to attend and participate regularly in Shabbat evening and/or morning services. The congregation's goal is that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah be part of the Shabbat morning service. Only in extenuating circumstances and at the discretion of the Rabbi, it is possible to have the service at an alternate time. Holding the service at a time other than Shabbat morning would require the student to learn a different set of prayers which would rarely be used in the student's Jewish future.

### Photography:

It is important to cherish the memories of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah day. However still photography is not conducive to a focused prayer environment and therefore may not be a part of the Shabbat Morning services. A video camera may be set up in a fixed, unobtrusive location (typically at the back of the sanctuary) without additional lighting for the duration of the service provided that it is fully set up before the service begins, the videographer is dressed appropriately for the service, and the camera can be attended without distracting the fundamental purpose of the prayer service.

If photographs of family/friends are desired, these should be taken at the Friday afternoon rehearsal. If this is not possible, photographs may be taken on Saturday morning (**prior** to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service); however, the Rabbi will not participate in Shabbat morning photography sessions. If you must choose to do photographs Saturday morning, those involved should arrive at least 1½ hours before the start of the service. This decision should be discussed with the Rabbi well in advance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.

### Family participation

Family participation in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service is highly encouraged. Nothing makes a service more meaningful than seeing loving grandparents *kvell* over the young adult on the *bimah*. To ensure a prayerful flow to the service, however, all participation should be planned ahead of time with the Rabbi. Participation of non-Jewish family members is very much encouraged but must be done in an appropriate manner that does not, for example, ask someone who is not Jewish to recite a blessing which speaks about accepting Jewish obligations. Specific guidelines will be discussed during individual family meetings with the Rabbi. All comments should be written out ahead of time to ensure that they are delivered appropriately and within the timeframe provided.

### **The Bar Mitzvah Service – Student Expectations for Prayers:**

The following is the minimum liturgy (set of prayers) that each Bar/Bat Mitzvah student should expect to lead at their Saturday morning service. Please note that the ultimate decision regarding the contents of any prayer service is the prerogative of the Rabbi. [Items in brackets will be part of all Saturday Morning Services, but need not be led by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah]:

Blessing over the wine and Sabbath Kiddush

Blessing over the meal (HaMotzi)

[Ma Tov]

Blessing for Torah Study

Morning Blessings

[Ashrei]

Chatzi Kaddish

Student-written explanation of the student's "Year of Living Jewishly" project, and Tzedakah commitments

Barechu

Yotzer Or (Peticha\* & Chatima\* only)

Ahavah Rabbah (Chatima only)

Shema/V'ahavta

Mi Chamocho

Geulah (Chatima only)

Avot

G'vurot

[K'dushah] (Student to learn congregational responses)

[Yismechu]

[Kedushat Hayom] (Chatima only)

[Avodah] (Chatima only)

[Hoda'ah] (Chatima only)

[Sim Shalom]

[Service for Taking out Torah]

Blessing Before the reading of Torah

Chanting the Torah Portion (general guideline is 5 aliyot of at least 3 verses each; depending on skill level of student; the Rabbi will determine the number of aliyot for each student)

Blessing after the reading of Torah

Blessing before the Haftarah

Reading or chanting the Haftarah (Hebrew or English, after discussion with Rabbi)

Blessing after the Haftarah

[Service for Returning the Torah]

D'var Torah

Aleinu

[Mourner's Kaddish]

\*A Peticha is the opening line of a prayer which begins "Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech HaOlam...". A Chatima is the closing line of a prayer which begins "Baruch Atah Adonai...".

The students will have substantial opportunities to learn these prayers as they will be the core of the Shabbat Short N Sweet and Torah N Tefilah services, and will be taught and reviewed in Hebrew School. Many of these prayers are the same prayers used both Friday nights and Saturday morning. Students are expected to learn their prayers outside of individual sessions with the Rabbi or tutors.

The student is also expected to write and present (in English) summaries of the Torah portion.

### **Expected Participation Commitments prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah:**

**Parents and students** are expected to commit, by signing the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Contract, to regular attendance at the following:

#### **Beit Sefer:**

Hebrew studies, 4:30-6:00 PM, every Tuesday afternoon, where students will learn about the prayer service and Torah study. This class also introduces pre-B'nai Mitzvah students to the D'var Torah and commentary on the Torah.

Chai studies, 4:30-6:00 PM, every Friday afternoon, where students learn about what it means to be a Jew and how to live a Jewish life.

Shabbat Short N Sweet. This is primarily a Learners' Minyan (prayer service), which follows the community Shabbat dinner. Students from Beit Sefer participate by leading parts of the service. Students will learn the following in this service:

Structure of the Prayer Service / Learning the Prayers / Ability and Comfort leading Prayers

#### **Torah N Tefilah (TNT) Services, usually once per month for the year leading up to Bar/Bat Mitzvah.**

Because this is a service includes reading from the Torah, students learn the structure of the Torah service, which is central to the morning service. The Rabbi also delivers a D'var Torah (words of Torah, a sermon) which is also helpful to their own preparation. Students preparing for Bar/Bat Mitzvah will often be asked to lead prayers at these services.

#### **Family Meetings with the Rabbi**

Individual Student Sessions with Rabbi & tutors. These meetings will be held as needed beginning about 12 months prior to the Bar Mitzvah. Three people will be involved in individual preparation with the student & family:

- In addition to being the student's primary teacher, the Rabbi will meet with the student during the year to work on the *D'var Torah*, make general preparations for the service, and supervise the process.
- The Torah/Haftarah tutor will meet or have a "check-in" phone call every 1-2 weeks with the student during the 6 months prior to the service to help prepare Torah and Haftarah portions.
- A Prayer tutor (may be the same as the Torah/Haftarah tutor) will be available for the 6 months prior to the service (check-in phone call) to review and ensure proper preparation of prayers for the service. The prayer tutor is available to ensure proper preparation of prayers.

Students regularly attending Beit Seifer and services will find the above student sessions adequate in completing preparations for the Bar Mitzvah. Families whose students who require significant work learning or preparing prayers will be expected to pay a private tutor for this work.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Dress Rehearsal, typically during the week of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service, scheduled with the Rabbi. Students are expected to come to the rehearsal wearing the same clothes they will wear Shabbat morning, including shoes and their tallit (prayer shawl) and kippah (head covering).

Walk-through for all accepting honors in the service, typically the morning of the service, or Friday before services begin.

**Two notes:**

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation process is intended to give the students and their parents the tools to complete this process on their own. However, some families find it desirable or necessary to hire an outside Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutor as part of the study process. If necessary, the Rabbi can supply contacts.

Clearly there will be times when the above expectations need to be flexible, particularly with regard to class attendance and individual meetings. Your Rabbi hereby commits to being as flexible as possible with the expectation that families commit to being as consistent as possible, and being responsible for the material covered at any missed classes/sessions.

## Financial matters related to Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Emeth\*

### 1) Bar/Bat Mitzvah Fee: \$700

This fee covers approximately 25% of the actual Bar/Bat Mitzvah costs, including *siddurim* (prayer books) and *HaShavua* (literally “This Week”, the program book), 12 hours of tutoring, sanctuary space, and clergy. The Congregation chooses to cover a portion of the total costs, as it does with Religious/Hebrew School costs. This fee is billed when the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date is locked onto the congregational calendar.

### 2) Bar/Bat Mitzvah Prep Book Fee:

The Rabbi will provide each student with a booklet that includes the appropriate Torah and Haftarah selections, study questions, and commentaries.

Etz Hayim, Torah and Commentary is required and should be ordered when the student begins the Bar/Bat Mitzvah prep process with the Rabbi. Families who already own this book may choose not to purchase additional copies. Etz Hayim can be ordered on Amazon (please use Emeth’s website) in either hardback or paperback. This chumash (Five Books of Moses) has excellent commentaries, essential for preparing a D’var Torah.

### 3) Bar/Bat Mitzvah Tutoring: Typically no additional charge

Students who participate actively in the Beit Seifer programs should be able to achieve all Hebrew (Torah and Haftarah) and Prayer objectives within the hours of tutoring covered by the basic fee (above). **If additional tutoring hours are required, they are payable directly to the tutor at the rate of \$40 per hour.**

### 4) Clergy: No additional charge

As the Rabbi is the professional spiritual leader of Congregation Emeth, there is no Rabbi’s fee to synagogue members for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. The congregation hires a Cantorial soloist for the service and no additional payment by you is required.

### 5) Sanctuary Space: \$200

Since the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service is a regular congregational service, except under special circumstances (which require pre-approval by Rabbi & Ritual committee), Bar/Bat Mitzvah services will be held only at the synagogue of Congregation Emeth. The only cost to the family for using the synagogue for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is the fee of \$200 to restore the sanctuary, social hall, classrooms, patio and parking lot to customary layout. This does not include clean up of the kitchen following a kiddush luncheon. Additional kitchen help is the responsibility of the family. In short, the family is responsible for the entire set up of the event and Emeth is responsible for cleaning up (except the kitchen).

6) Service-related Items: Typically cost of Service Booklets and flowers

- Service Booklets – The congregation prints a service booklet, *HaShavua* (“This Week”), specific to each Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. This booklet will typically contain an explanation of the service and ritual items for visitors/non-Jewish guests as well as the Hebrew & translation of the Torah & Haftarah portions. It may also include readings or other additions to the service, a welcome from the family, a list of people participating in the service, etc. These booklets are usually printed in the temple office. NOTE: some families choose to have a photograph of the student on the cover of *HaShavua*. The photograph must be submitted digitally to the synagogue administrator. Usually the photograph is taken at the dress rehearsal, while the student is wearing dress clothes, tallit, and kippah. Photographs of the student as a baby or informal shots are more appropriate to a party than a Shabbat service and will not be included.
- It is customary that Bar/Bat Mitzvah families provide floral arrangements to make the prayer space appropriately festive. Usually that means an arrangement for the bimah and on the serving table in the social hall.
- *Kippot* (plural of *kippah*, also called *yarmulkes*, headcoverings) imprinted with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah’s name and date are also a common choice but are not required. Please order a minimal amount.

7) Honoraria: Clergy donations are typical, but are at the discretion of the family.

- Some families may choose to donate to the Rabbi’s Discretionary fund. For those who choose to make a contribution, amounts vary considerably, typically ranging up to \$500. (Our Rabbi does not accept personal gifts or personal honorarium from Congregation Emeth’s members.)
- Since the congregation does not have a salaried Cantorial soloist, an honorarium to the Cantorial soloist is appropriate. You may also choose to give an honorarium or gift to your child’s student’s Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutor. These honoraria are typically based on the amount of time the soloist and/or tutor has spent with this particular student in preparation for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah are appropriate, and often range up to \$150.

**Contributions:**

Student Tzedakah:

As indicated in the section on G’milut Chassadim, each family and each student are expected to reach a carefully-considered decision regarding Tzedakah donations, in consultation and guidance from the Rabbi, from the student’s gifts.

Mazon:

In addition to student contributions to tzedakah, it is appropriate for parents to reflect on how fortunate we are to be able to provide wonderful festivities to celebrate our students’ Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Parents are strongly encouraged to consider a contribution to Mazon, A Jewish Response to Hunger, as a reflection of gratitude for our blessings. Mazon is a Jewish organization which funds numerous groups and projects whose programs echo Jewish values in the fight against hunger, and Congregation Emeth is a Mazon Partner Congregation. Mazon requests that families contribute 3% of the cost of their celebration toward this cause (for a \$5000 party, contribute \$150). Certainly other organizations are considered, though it would be particularly appropriate if they were Jewish organizations. Information on Mazon will be provided to you.



Synagogue Donations:

Many families also consider a donation to the synagogue to honor the happiness of the day. Donation of ritual items used in the Saturday morning service such as Chumashim (Torah books), Siddurim (Prayer books), or Tallitot (Prayer shawls) are particularly appropriate for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.

**Please discuss any potential ritual item purchases with the Rabbi and ritual practices committee chair** before making any final decisions so it can be assured the gifts received will be well used.

**\*NOTE:** *Congregation Emeth is committed to providing Bar/Bat Mitzvah opportunities for all members regardless of financial situation. If any of the fees present an obstacle to participation, please let the Rabbi or Treasurer know and individual arrangements will be made.*

## The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Weekend:

### Rehearsals:

An opportunity must be set up for all who are participating in the service (grandparents who are handing down the Torah, all who are honored with an aliyah, etc.) to meet with the Rabbi to review their roles in the service. This could be at the service rehearsal typically held during the week before Bar/Bat Mitzvah day, or prior to the start of the Saturday morning service.

See page 3 for Congregation policy regarding Photography

### Thinking through the Celebration:

A *Seudat Mitzvah* (Celebratory Meal) is an integral part of any Jewish *simcha*. In these days of “theme” Bar/Bat Mitzvah, it is quite wonderful when we can recall that ultimately the “theme” of this event is “Judaism”. As part of any Jewish celebration we consider how our happiness and privilege interacts with those around us. As you make your preparations for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, and particularly the *seudat mitzvah*, parents are encouraged to think through the many ways that their decisions affect and can benefit those in the surrounding community. Many families choose ways that their celebration can also become a testament to generosity. How about table centerpieces made from stuffed animals which will be donated to “toys for tots” after the party, or live plants given to a retirement home instead of cut flowers? The Jewish Family Services (JFS) of Silicon Valley offers food baskets in place of flowers as centerpieces which are distributed the poor throughout the year. The nominal fee helps JFS support needy families and is a recommended additional tzedakah opportunity.

### Kiddush Lunch and Private Celebrations:

All members of Emeth are welcome to, and should be invited to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service itself. As the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is part of a communal Shabbat morning service it is expected that the family will provide a kiddush (light lunch) immediately following services to all who are present. A more private luncheon or dinner at another location may certainly be organized and be open to invited guests. Whom to invite to any party, sit-down luncheon, or dinner is at the discretion of the family however it would not be appropriate to have a luncheon on-site immediately following the service unless everyone is invited. It is expected that all classmates in the bnai mitzvah class will be invited. It is typical to invite any person who has participated in the service (cantor, tutor, etc.) together with their families to any private parties.

Since all congregants are invited to the bat mitzvah ceremony some kind of reception afterwards is required. If everyone in the congregation is invited to the party, then this is not necessary. Light finger foods (fruit and cheese for example) are fine.

Out of respect for *k'lal Yisrael*, (the entirety of the Jewish people), it is encouraged that all meals associated with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah respect Jewish culinary traditions. At a minimum, pork and shellfish may not be served, and beef/poultry may not be served directly with milk products (however

having dairy appetizers with a meat meal, for example, is acceptable according to Emeth standards).  
**Meals served at Congregation Emeth must follow the dietary policy established by the Congregation.**

## **The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service – Important Logistics:**

Please use the following guidelines when planning your event:

**Maximum Number of people that can be seated in the Sanctuary is 160.** This number includes the congregational members attending. The Sanctuary is set up to accommodate 100 seats. The setting up of additional seating is the responsibility of the family. The library table is very heavy to move. Prior arrangements for access to the building will be needed.

Please arrange for two ushers/greeters to be at the service. They will need to arrive ½ hour before the start of the service. Please clear your selection through Michael Oshan who will have guidelines.

The Social Hall can accommodate approximately 80 seated people depending on the food buffet and table setup. The outside patio area can seat approximately 80 people. The temple has round tables and market umbrellas with stands that can be used in the patio area. The back parking lot (directly behind the building only) is available to use for the light lunch with advance arrangements with Dale Foster.

The family can start to bring and store items at the temple the week before the service. A designated area for storage will be assigned. Set up for the service, oneg and light lunch can be done the prior week. Please arrange ahead of time for the building to be open.

The Saturday light lunch (Kiddush) should include a minimum of wine, 2 challah, sweets, bagels and cream cheese. It is the family's obligation to host the oneg and Kiddush. Many in the congregation offer their help with this. It is very appropriate to ask your family and friends as well. Please do not call upon congregants for assistance. As many families also host a private party later that same day it is encouraged to keep the Saturday meal as simple and easy as possible for the family. A full meal is not expected or required.

Saturday help: As it is the responsibility of the family to host the Kiddush and clean up the kitchen is highly recommended the family arrange for official help. There are two women who have been regularly hired by previous families to assist with Saturday. Laura Machucha 831-768-1958 and Jeanette Garcia 831-761-2016. They are familiar with: the temple; where things are located; and the requirements of the event.

The parking conditions will depend on the use of the back parking lot. In any case the parking lot cannot accommodate all cars. Teenagers are NOT allowed to be parking attendants. Please provide an insert in your invitation stating the places people can park. The following can be used with advanced arrangements made:

### **There is limited parking at the temple. Please park:**

- Along the West side of Monterey Street
- 17795 Monterey Street – Trinity Christian Center
- 17734 Monterey Street – along the back fence only of Dari Delite
- 80 W. Central Av. – Britton Middle School Main lot

**Please use crosswalks and  
do not park on residential side streets.**

### **The use of Emeth on Friday Evening preceding a Saturday morning Bar/Bat Mitzvah:**

Advanced notice is required if a family would like to have a Friday evening service prior to the Saturday morning service. Please speak to the Rabbi to schedule the service.

The social hall is available, at no charge, on Friday evening to host Shabbat dinner for the family's guests. Please keep in mind that there are limited linens available, and if used must be washed and ready for Saturday morning. Also the kitchen will need to be clean and the room will need to be set-up for the Saturday oneg prior to leaving.

The kitchen is available to use on Friday night for Shabbat dinner. Emeth's Food Policy applies. There is no charge for using the kitchen strictly for warming and staging the food, and the kitchen is left in a clean condition. If a licensed caterer will be doing the cooking then our standard rental rates would apply; contact Grant Gordon, [grant.gordon88@gmail.com](mailto:grant.gordon88@gmail.com), for specifics. A security deposit of \$200 is required for using the kitchen.

Both the kitchen and social hall are available for Saturday evening celebrations at the standard rental rates.

### **Important Contact Information:**

We understand that the information provided here cannot cover all aspects of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. A mentoring program for families is now in place. The family who had the Bar/Bat Mitzvah previous to yours is available for help and questions. In turn, you will be the mentor for the family that has the Bar/Bat Mitzvah after yours. Please use this invaluable resource as often as you need.

The following people are here to assist you make this day as special and easy as possible. Please contact the person pertaining to your specific question.

Building:	Dale Foster	<a href="mailto:daleedwardfoster@msn.com">daleedwardfoster@msn.com</a>
Ritual:	Michael Oshan	<a href="mailto:michaeloshan@sbcglobal.net">michaeloshan@sbcglobal.net</a>
Administration:	Debbie Zajac	<a href="mailto:admin@emth.net">admin@emth.net</a>
Miscellaneous:	Becky Neto	<a href="mailto:netolove@aol.com">netolove@aol.com</a>
The Service:	Rabbi Israel	<a href="mailto:rabbidebbieisrael@gmail.com">rabbidebbieisrael@gmail.com</a>

*Congregation Emeth*

02/2013

**BAR/BAT MITZVAH CONTRACT**

This document is designed to formalize the mutual understanding and agreement between the named Bar/ Bat Mitzvah and his/her family at the start of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process. Congregation Emeth believes that a clear statement of what is expected is the best way to ensure a ritually fulfilling and personally satisfying Bar/Bat Mitzvah for all parties, especially the young person him/herself.

We, \_\_\_\_\_, {the “Bar/Bat Mitzvah”}  
and \_\_\_\_\_

(“Parent(s)”/ “Guardian(s) ”)

confirm that we have read and understand the BAR/BAT MITZVAH GUIDE published by Congregation Emeth.

We affirm that we meet the prerequisites listed in the BASIC GUIDELINES of the BAR/BAT MITZVAH GUIDE.

We affirm that we meet the membership requirements, as stated in the Membership Guide, and are or will become members in good standing (current on all Emeth financials or have made approved arrangements with the Treasurer) at the time of scheduling our Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. We agree to maintain our membership in good standing from this time until the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.

We agree to pay the current Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee at the time we select our date. All fees related to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah must be paid in full no later than 6 weeks prior to the event. (Payment plans may be available after consultation with the Treasurer).

We agree to meet the PREPARATION AND STUDY provisions, especially the “attendance and participation at services” guidelines, as stated in the BAR/BAT MITZVAH GUIDE. Continued failure to comply with the stated Preparation and Study provisions after repeated warnings may result in disciplinary actions up to and including postponement and/or

cancellation of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Ceremony. In the unlikely event of cancellation, any expenses incurred up to that point shall not be reimbursed.

Signed: Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
For Congregation Emeth

### **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Honors**

Return this form to the Rabbi 3 weeks before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Please indicate if any of the honorees are not Jewish and clear the honor with the Rabbi prior to offering it to your honoree.

Name of Bar/Bat Mitzvah (English): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Bar/Bat Mitzvah (Hebrew – if name is not known, check with the Rabbi):

(Name) \_\_\_\_\_ son (ben)/ daughter (bat) of

(Father's Name if Jewish) \_\_\_\_\_ v'

(and)

(Mother's Name if

Jewish): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Bar/Bat Mitzvah: \_\_\_\_\_

Tallit presentation by: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to  
student: \_\_\_\_\_

Torah Passing (suggested list which may be altered as needed); this is not an appropriate "honor" for extended relatives – the meaning "dor l'dor" is "generation to generation" which is the intension of the Torah passing. This is not a required part of the ceremony and is entirely optional:

**Grandparents generation:**

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**Parents:**

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**Older Sibling:**

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**Aliyot (Torah honors)** – The maftir (final) aliyah is the bar/bat mitzvah celebrant. The parent(s) usually have the aliyah just before the maftir aliyah, to be standing next to the bar/bat mitzvah during the reading. Please include complete English and Hebrew names. No more than two individuals per aliyah, please. Only Jews may have Torah aliyot; if one person of a couple is not Jewish, that person may accompany the Jew but will not say the blessings or be called by a Hebrew name.

1<sup>st</sup> Aliyah: (English) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Hebrew) \_\_\_\_\_  
(English) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Hebrew) \_\_\_\_\_  
Relation to Bar/Bat Mitzvah: \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> Aliyah: (English) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Hebrew) \_\_\_\_\_  
Relation to Bar/Bat Mitzvah: \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> Aliyah: (English) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Hebrew) \_\_\_\_\_  
Relation to Bar/Bat Mitzvah: \_\_\_\_\_

4<sup>th</sup> Aliyah: (English) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Hebrew) \_\_\_\_\_  
Relation to Bar/Bat Mitzvah: \_\_\_\_\_

Maftir (last) Aliyah: Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrant:  
(English) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Hebrew) \_\_\_\_\_

Hagbaah (Lift Torah after reading): (English name only)

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*(Please be sure the honoree is capable of lifting the Torah. He/she must arrive early to practice if he/she has never done this before!)*



Relation to Bar/Bat Mitzvah: \_\_\_\_\_

G'leela (Dress Torah after reading): (English name only)

\_\_\_\_\_

Relation to Bar/Bat Mitzvah: \_\_\_\_\_

Optional additional honors:

Open ark beginning of Torah service (can be 2  
people): \_\_\_\_\_

Close ark end of Torah service (can be 2  
people): \_\_\_\_\_

Optional English readings:

Prayer for our Country (may be a non-Jew): English Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Relation to Bar/Bat Mitzvah: \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer for the State of Israel (must be a Jew): English Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Relation to Bar/Bat Mitzvah: \_\_\_\_\_

(If additional readings are needed, please list the name(s) below and relationship(s) to bar/bat mitzvah.  
Please indicate if the person is a non-Jew. The Rabbi will assign appropriate readings and inform you of  
them in advance of the bar/bat mitzvah.)

Additional Honors - OPTIONAL:

Ushers and handing out HaShavuah:

\_\_\_\_\_

Handing out candy:

\_\_\_\_\_

## GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS' BLESSINGS

If the parents choose to give a blessing, the total presentation, including remarks by both parents, shall last no more than a total of four minutes.

Remarks must be written out and consist of no more than one page of double spaced text per parent (approximately 250 to 300). The Rabbi shall review the parents' remarks at least one week in advance and require changes as deemed necessary. Out of respect for your child, your family, and the congregation, please abide by these guidelines.

Sample remarks follow.

### SAMPLE PARENTS PRAYERS (taken from internet)

1.

We are so proud of you today. How joyful it is for us to see you set these wonderful goals and do whatever it takes to achieve them. What an incredible young woman you are!

You were our destiny — the daughter we always envisioned and prayed for in every way, and yet we are constantly amazed by your continual devotion as a daughter, granddaughter, great-granddaughter, niece, cousin, friend, and citizen not just of the community but of the world.

You are thoroughly intelligent, creative, genuine, and full of optimism. As one of your teachers once said, you only see through to the good in others. We pray that you will hold on to you innate understanding of right and wrong.

You possess a powerful trait – the courage to stand up for you beliefs. We pray you will continue to be an independent thinker, regardless of the temptations that you will encounter.

We pray that you will never lose sight of your passions and that you will always follow the bliss that will carry you to your dreams and make them real. Most of all, we pray that you use your talents to do something remarkable so that you will make a difference in this world. And yet, we have no doubt that you will do just that . May you never forget how much we love you.

2.

Dear God,

There are no words for the depth of my love for this child.

Please bless this beautiful young woman and surround her always.

I pray for her protection.

I surrender her into your hands.

May she be protected from the darkness of our times.  
May she have the strength to remember that those who have gone...have not gone far.  
May she always see you at the center of her life.  
May her heart grow strong to love and serve You.  
Show me to love most patiently, to be there for her most fully, to understand profoundly who she is and what she needs.  
May the spirit of this family be a blessing unto her now and forever.  
May she continue to learn values and principles of love and righteousness.  
May she learn from me kindness.  
May she learn from me strength  
May she live most fully and love most deeply  
That is my wish.  
That is my prayer for her.

3.

\_\_\_\_\_,  
Today is one of the most significant days of your life, whether you realize it or not. As you become a Bar mitzvah, you join the many generations of Israel who have been called to the Torah before you. You are now a link in the chain that connects our past with our future, and you represent all that is promising and possible. Let this day be a reminder to you that your place in the universe is unique because you are a Jew.

What a privilege it is today for me to publicly tell this congregation of our family and friends what a wonderful human being that you have been since the day you were born. You are a kind and gentle person whose compassion for others is remarkable for someone your age. I have always been truly moved by your capacity to make people feel better just by your presence. Your smile has the power to brighten any room you walk into. You, \_\_\_\_\_, are an extraordinary person, and we are so proud and honored to be your parents.

I have written a blessing that I would like to say for you today, as you become a bar mitzvah.  
May the light in your eyes shine upon the path that you choose to follow.  
May the kindness in your heart radiate to those around you.  
May the caring that you show to others help to heal the world, one person at a time.  
May your awareness of God be a constant source of wonder and amazement and always bring you comfort and strength.  
May you always know peace in your soul and carry it with you through the journey of your days.

4.

My beautiful darling, I pray for you....  
That one day, you will know the boundless love, pride and joy for a child, as I have with you.  
That your dreams and wishes are on their way.  
That you never take away a piece of yourself to fit in.  
That you share your many gifts with the world, which is in need of much healing.  
That you continue to learn the importance and value of integrity.  
That in pursuits both personal and professional, you use your head, but follow your heart.  
That you continue to draw to you all the love that you give.

That you manifest the divine in your deeds.

When you relocate to a university, a new city or new town---that you always remember three small, but important words – call your mother.

5.

As you are about to read the Torah and become a Bat Mitzvah I wanted to express what a blessing you are in our lives and how grateful I am to have a daughter like you. You have taught me so much – especially lately. This ceremony marks your transition from child to adult. In modern America this rite of passage must wait until your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, but in the eyes of the Jewish people you are now spiritually mature. You have so many natural God-given gifts and now the gift of Torah. It is time for you to develop your own personal relationship with God. I pray that you develop a connection that is meaningful and helpful to you and that you may feel his peace and love throughout your life. I love you very much! God bless you!

6. For A Son

We give thanks for the wondrous privilege of seeing our son grow day by day, week by week, year by year. For the health and strength You have given him, for the mind and spirit with which You endowed him, for his ability to elicit and return love - for all these precious gifts, we thank You.

Watch over him, O God, on this special day and every day. Grant him a growing understanding of the true significance of this occasion and deepening loyalty to everything which it represents. May the teachings of our heritage guide him throughout life; and may he lead a life worthy of Your blessings. Amen.

7. For A Son

O God, gratefully I thank You for the joyous privilege of seeing my son attain this milestone. On this day cherished dreams and hopes are fulfilled. On this day new dreams and new hopes are born. I pray that Your protecting and loving care will accompany him wherever he goes and in all that he does. Help him to become all that he is capable of being. Give him strength to do all the good things that are within his reach. Keep him loyal to the best that he has been shown, and to the noblest Jewish teachings he has been taught. May his deeds find favor in the eyes of all and be worthy of Your blessings.

8. For A Daughter

Adonai our God, gratefully we thank You for the joyous privilege of seeing our daughter attain this milestone. On this day cherished dreams and hopes are fulfilled. On this day new dreams and new hopes are born. We pray that Your protection and loving care will accompany her wherever she goes and in all that she does. Help her to become all that she is capable of being. Give her strength to do all the good things that are within her reach. Keep her loyal to the best that she has been shown, and to the noblest Jewish teachings she has been taught. May her deeds find favor in the eyes of her fellow creatures and be worthy of Your blessing. Amen

9. For A Daughter

On this Shabbat when our daughter becomes a Bat Mitzvah, we have come with her and our loved ones to join in worship and to offer our prayer of thanksgiving. We are grateful, O God, for the privilege of passing along the gift of life which You gave us, that we might share with You in the miracle

of creation. We are grateful also for the thirteen years of nurturing this life, for the unnumbered joys and challenges which these years have brought us.

Bless our daughter, O God; watch over her, protect her, guide her. Help her to continue to grow in body and mind, in soul and character. Keep her loyal to our people and to the teachings of our Torah. May her life be rich and rewarding.

May all her deeds bring pride to us, honor to the house of Israel, and glory to Your name.

#### 10. For A Daughter/Son

What I wish for my daughter/son, I wish for all our children. I wish for you to be a person of character, strong but not tough, gentle but not weak. I wish for you to be righteous but not self-righteous, honest but not unforgiving. Wherever you journey, may your steps be firm and may you walk in just paths and not be afraid.

Whenever you speak may your words be words of wisdom and friendship. May your hands build and your heart preserve what is good and beautiful in our world. May the voices of the generations of our people move through you, and may the God of our ancestors be your God as well.

May you know that there is a people, a rich heritage, to which you belong and from that sacred place you are connected to all who dwell on the earth.

May the stories of our people be upon your heart and the rhythm of the Torah dance in your soul.

#### 11. For A Daughter/Son

In gratitude and joy we celebrate our child's Bar Mitzvah, We thank you for the blessing of parenthood and for reaching this moment we dreamed of many years ago. May it signal a life of Jewish commitment for our son.

Lead our son to live the values of Torah, Guide him in the path of faithfulness to our people, May he enjoy a life of health and accomplishment, fulfillment and peace.

May God make you like Efrayim and Menasseh,/or/May God make you like Sarah, Rebeca, Rachel ,and Leah, a Jew of wisdom and strength, compassion and peace. Amen

#### 12. For A Daughter/Son

We are very proud of the person that you are becoming. On this your Bat Mitzvah day we have special hopes for you:

We hope that you always remember that you are part of a wonderful heritage that has been passed down from generation to generation for thousands of years. You are connected to the Jewish people, to God and to Torah. You need the Jewish community and the Jewish community needs you.

We hope that you will continue to learn and mature. You will find that the world is not always a fair place, but do what you can to make it better. Do not let others sway you from what you know to be right and just, and always believe in your own abilities.

Remember you are a unique individual and the most important thing is to be the best that you can be.

We hope that you always know that no matter what problems you face you will always have the help, the support and the love of your parents. You have brought more joy and happiness to your mother and me than you will ever know just in being yourself and giving us the pleasure of watching you blossom into the beautiful young lady who stands before us today.