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1. Mazal Tov! Now what?

Mazal tov on your upcoming happy occasion at The Jewish Center! We are so pleased that your family will be celebrating with all of us. *Bar & Bat Mitzvah* (plural: *B’nai Mitzvah*) is the major rite of passage into adulthood for Jewish teens, aimed to inspire a lifelong connection to Jewish practice and peoplehood.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide families with general guidelines about the *B’nai Mitzvah* program at the Jewish Center. It’s written with parents in mind. We realize that, particularly if this is your first child’s *Bar or Bat Mitzvah*, it’s difficult to know where to start. How do you become familiar with all the new terminology, the nature of the Shabbat service, and the educational process for your child, not to mention planning for the celebration that surrounds the *simcha*? You’re not alone! Our *klei kodesh* (clergy), professional staff, and parent coordinators are available to address any additional questions or concerns you may have.
People to Contact

Rabbi Adam Feldman 609-921-0100 ext. 203
afeldman@thejewishcenter.org

Hazzan Joanna S. Dulkin 609-921-0100 ext. 213
jdulkin@thejewishcenter.org

Phil Nordlinger, Director of Administration
pnordlinger@thejewishcenter.org 609-921-0100 ext. 205

Gila Levin, Religious School Principal 609-921-0100 ext. 220
glevin@thejewishcenter.org

Parent Coordinators
These parents are the point people (the room parents, if you will) of the current classes. Please feel free to use them as resources. They are responsible for community-building and family communication among each class.

Check back for names and numbers after our initial meetings in Fall 2015.
Introduction

Jewish tradition teaches that a child reaches the age of mitzvot (responsibility for commandments) on his or her thirteenth birthday according to the Hebrew calendar. Bar and Bat Mitzvah is an active, rather than a passive process: one does not “get Bar Mitzvahed,” rather one “becomes a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.”

For centuries, Jewish families have recognized and celebrated their children’s religious coming of age within the context of communal worship. Here at TJC, not only is the B’nai Mitzvah celebration incredibly meaningful for each student, his or her family and friends; the entire congregation takes great pride in each child’s achievements. **How the TJC Bar and Bat Mitzvah process works:**
We aim to create an all-encompassing experience, beginning in the fifth grade, inspired by the *B’nai Mitzvah Revolution* (Google it!): *which asks us to rethink the B’nai Mitzvah process so synagogues and members can focus on what is most important about Jewish living and learning.*

Through the child’s hard work, and with the nurturing of professionals, friends, family and community, we strive to celebrate the unique qualities, interests and achievements of each child at his or her Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The learning over the years pulls from four major categories of involvement, shown in the image above. What each child does on their big day will be unique and special to him or her and worthy of priceless nachas (pride).

**Who can become Bar/Bat Mitzvah at TJC?**

A child becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* at The Jewish Center must both be halakhically Jewish (born of a Jewish mother or have undergone official conversion) and be currently enrolled in an accredited Jewish education program, supplementary or full-day, for at least three years. Families joining The Jewish Center in the last few months before a child reaches *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* age should contact the Rabbi or Hazzan to discuss options.
Assignment of Dates

Bar and Bat Mitzvah dates are assigned three years in advance of the anticipated celebration. The TJC B’nai Mitzvah season runs from the end of August to mid-June. Each date is chosen with care, according to many factors: beginning with the child’s thirteenth birthday on the Hebrew calendar, the synagogue calendar as well as Jewish and secular holidays. If you are interested in finding out your child’s Hebrew birthday, go to http://www.hebcal.com and use the convenient date converter app.

In the month of August preceding your child’s fifth grade year, each family will receive a letter from Hazzan Dulkin with your child’s Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. After the initial letter is issued, you will have a period of six months to submit a request (via email to Hazzan Dulkin) for a date change. We cannot guarantee that all requests will be granted.

The Religious School Connection

Preparation for the B’nai Mitzvah begins years before the actual event. Students begin their formal Hebrew study in Gimel (Third Grade), where they will study Hebrew reading, ritual, history, values, and prayer that will begin to provide them with a solid background of Jewish content. Students will learn the Friday night service in Kitah Dalet.
(Fourth Grade), the Shabbat Morning Service in *Kitah Hey* (Fifth grade), and the Torah Service in *Kitah Vav* (Sixth Grade). All students must attend a tropes (cantillation) class with Hazzan Dulkin, for one semester of the *Vav or Zayin* year, where they learn the methodology and melodies of Torah trope. Students will also attend a Prayer Lab class, the goal of which is to review and master the various prayers and blessings unique to the Bar/Bat mitzvah experience. Regular attendance at our school and *Shabbat* morning services are also part of the requirements: Students in the Gimmel through Vav years choose one trimester of Shabbat Religious School attendance, and Zayin students are required to attend twelve Shabbat morning sessions.

Parent/child meetings focus on the big picture of the family’s journey. Fifth grade families will forge each child’s personal connection to the Torah portion and to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience, Sixth Grade families will focus on Community service (Hesed), rituals such as Tallit & Tefilin, and the rhythm of the Jewish Year. A highlight for Zayin (Seventh Grade) families is making a personalized Tallit (prayer shawl).
B’nai Mitzvah Tutoring

In preparation for the big day, each student receives seven months of individual instruction: first, 20 lessons over a five month period with one of our two approved tutors, then 6-8 lessons over the final two months with Hazzan Dulkin, and 1-2 meetings with Rabbi Feldman, culminating in a “final rehearsal” the week of the celebration.

Our fantastic TJC tutors are Michele Alperin and Nancy Lewis. Nancy and Michele work closely with our Hazzan to monitor each student’s progress, and help each student achieve their potential in a supportive environment. The tutoring program is designed to be a seamless extension of the religious school learning: tutors provide supervised practice of skills learned in Religious School and tropes class. Families may request another tutor only in the case of an existing IEP for special needs learning, and this tutor must be approved by Hazzan Dulkin.

As amazing as our tutors are, they cannot follow your child home and make sure he or she practices every day. As such, you as parents are the primary partners in the day to day endeavor of supporting your child in learning their material. This can mean sitting daily one on one with your
child to review the material, reminding them to practice, etc. materials are available online, in transliteration and on recordings, so knowledge of Hebrew is not required on your part. This is actually an opportunity to learn along with and from your child.

Well in advance of your date (approximately 9-10 months), your tutor will contact you to arrange an individual tutoring schedule. Ideally, students meet their tutors at the same time each week, to establish rapport and rhythm. Please note that tutors are not available to teach your children during your child’s own Religious school or Tichon learning time.

Parents are invited and encouraged to attend tutoring sessions, and are strongly encouraged to attend the first session. We appreciate, and will keep confidential, any information you can provide about your child’s learning style, and how we can best teach him or her. Should there be any concerns about your child’s progress, speak to the tutor directly, or to Hazzan Dulkin.
At the beginning of the tutoring session class each student will receive the following:

- A link to an online Dropbox file containing all relevant materials: recordings, PDF’s etc.
- A booklet containing the relevant texts including Torah, Haftarah readings, blessings, and translations/explanations. A trope instruction booklet called “Moreh T’amim” – a guide to the tropes.

The Final Rehearsal

The final rehearsal will take place in the Sanctuary during the week preceding the celebration, either on a Thursday afternoon or Friday morning. This time will be arranged with you well in advance of the B’nai Mitzvah date.

The purpose of this rehearsal is to go over everything, in order, in the sanctuary, without stopping to fix or change things. Well in advance of this final rehearsal, your child is expected to have gone over all their material multiple times, both at shul and at home. The purpose is to build comfort, stamina and energy, and to dispel any remaining
performance anxiety. As such, your role as a parent at the final rehearsal is to begin to take in the moment and all that it represents: cheerleading, supportive comments, smiles and hugs are most welcome! As Teddy Roosevelt once said, "Comparison is the thief of joy."

If you wish to have photographs taken in the Sanctuary setting, they may be done before or after the rehearsal as photography is prohibited in the sanctuary on Shabbat. Please arrange this with the office to avoid scheduling conflicts.

**Synagogue Attendance**

What if I told you that we know something you can do that is guaranteed to lower your stress level? Here is the ultimate secret to success – and it’s buried here on page 10: **SHOW UP!** The B’nai Mitzvah program is designed to be engaged in as a whole. **100% participation in the process ensures maximum preparation and minimal stress.** And nothing is more important than making time to come to shul together. It is a proven fact that kids who come to shul are more comfortable and familiar with the service on any given Shabbat, and especially their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. For parents, having the opportunity in advance to ask your questions, know
the page numbers, learn the melodies, and know the flow of the service before your child’s Bar/Bat Mitzvah will guarantee that a majority of the stress off your shoulders. Plus there’s plenty of opportunity to get in touch with your own spirituality, to study the weekly parasha, to get to know the members of our community and to feel a part of something very special. There are attendance requirements in the back of this guide that we will hold you to, however we encourage you to make the time to attend services together, and work to exceed the minimum requirements. You will be so glad you did!

**Hesed (Community Service) Requirement**

A major piece of the Bar and Bat Mitzvah experience is giving back to the community, and learning first hand the lessons of G’milut Hasadim (acts of loving kindness) and Tikkun Olam (repairing the world).

During the Vav year, students will participate in a team Hesed project, culminating in a year-end Hesed fair and the creation of a special pamphlet describing their activities and the organization they worked with.
Barbara Schwartz and Wilma Solomon are the primary supervisors of the project. Wilma will be working with the B’nai Mitzvah class of 2014-15, and Barbara will work with the B’nai Mitzvah class of 2015-16. You will hear from each of these teachers in more detail at an initial meeting, held in the fall, but you are welcome to contact them and obtain an overview of the program in advance.

**Tzedakah**

In addition to a Hesed project, which concentrates on person–to person social action, we also encourage all of our students and families to use our resources to help less fortunate people in our community by contributing *tzedakah*. Your child may wish to designate in advance a favorite Jewish organization or foundation to which he or she will contribute a certain portion of the gifts received.

**D’var Torah**

Each student will meet with Rabbi Feldman two times during the two months before his or her event to study together the student’s *parasha* and to begin developing a written *D’var Torah*—a two to three minute speech about the meaning of that week’s *Torah* or *Haftarah* portion.
Another secret to success – please make time as parents to participate in these meetings with your child, and make sure to study your child’s parasha at home before the first lesson. This can be as simple as reading it though in English and discussing any questions or thoughts that come to mind. At these meetings, feel free to ask Rabbi Feldman about the service itself, or to discuss the various honors.

Financial Responsibilities

1. B’nai Mitzvah fee: $1700. Fee includes 10 hours of individual tutoring, 6 hours of clergy mentoring, family programming, materials, room reservations, and congregational Kiddush lunch contribution. Inquiries regarding fee adjustments should be directed to our Financial Secretary, and are handled with full confidentiality.

2. Payment schedule: You will be billed the B’nai Mitzvah fee amount one year prior to the date. The fee is due in full prior to the start of individual Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring.

3. All Bar/Bat Mitzvah families must be members of the synagogue in good standing: all dues, fees, and tuition payments must be current before individual tutoring begins. Please know, however, that no one is denied access to The Jewish Center for financial reasons. Simply let us know, in strict confidence, if that is an issue.
What to expect on a B’nai Mitzvah Shabbat at TJC

Friday Night

The Friday of your B’nai Mitzvah weekend should be a day to finish preparations early, so that the entire family can begin this most special Shabbat in an atmosphere of peace and joy. We know that this occasion will create a lifetime of rich memories for all of you!

The Friday night service (Kabbalat Shabbat) is led by Hazzan Dulkin and Rabbi Feldman, and aided by our B’nai mitzvah students, each of whom, according to their interests, will lead a prayer or prayers, a song, or a short reading or poem based on the tefilah (prayers). Following the service, the student leads the congregation in Kiddush.

Saturday (Shabbat) Morning Celebrations

Shabbat morning services begin at 9:30 a.m. You should make sure to arrive no later than 9:15 that morning, in order to get settled and greet your guests before services. Please know that it is customary at Conservative synagogues that the Shabbat regulars arrive late, and/or
walk in and out of services. You, nonetheless, have the great honor of arriving early that day!

The Hazzan or service leader begins the preliminary portion of the service, and then you and your child will be invited up for the Tallit presentation and a special moment of blessing on the bima, around 9:45am.

The Bar or Bat Mitzvah may participate in the Shacharit (morning) service in a number of ways depending on their comfort level, including Shma/V’ahavta or other prayers, and the Torah service. Before the Torah reading, the Bar or Bat Mitzvah student delivers their thoughts on the Torah portion (D’var Torah).

The seven Torah readings (aliyot) are then read by family members or congregants. Families are encouraged to participate to whatever extent comfortable in the Torah reading and must be in contact with Hazzan Dulkin for all preparations.
Before and after each Torah reading, short blessings are recited by honorees. Up to five of the seven *aliyot* are reserved for relatives of the *B’nai Mitzvah*, including the final Torah reading, called *maftir*. It, and the blessings before and after, is read by the Bar or Bat Mitzvah student.

After *maftir*, the *Bar or Bat Mitzvah* chants the *Haftarah* after a brief introduction from the Rabbi. The Torah service finishes with various prayers for congregation, country, Israel, and/or peace. The *B’nai Mitzvah* leads *Ashrei*, together with the immediate past and upcoming celebrants, and continues with the conclusion of the Torah service. After the Rabbi’s sermon, the Bar or Bat Mitzvah celebrant is called once again to the bima, together with his or her parents, for a special blessing and song.

The service continues with *Musaf*, typically led by the Hazzan. At the conclusion of the service is a brief presentation of gifts from a TJC board member, and the service then finishes with *Adon Olam*, Kiddush and HaMotzi.
During the service, we ask that all attendees please exercise discretion and respect for the prayer service and for Shabbat by holding extended conversations in the hallway, and silencing all cell phones. All men and boys must wear a kippah (yarmulke) in the sanctuary, and men and women over Bar/Bat mitzvah age are encouraged to wear a tallit (prayer shawl). Kippot and tallitot (talleisim) are available in the Lobby. Many families opt to provide personalized kippot for their celebration – please consult Rabbi Feldman if you have any questions.

What’s a Jewish gathering without food?

An important part of our Shabbat celebrations at TJC is gathering as a congregation after services for an oneg (Friday night) or a Kiddush lunch (Shabbat morning). It is a fantastic time to greet and commune with friends and family, and bask in the glow of your child’s achievement!

Friday night Oneg & Shabbat Dinners

On Friday night, the Jewish Center offers a light oneg (cookies and grape juice) after the service. If your family would like to supplement the offering, please note the food must be certified kosher pareve and must
be delivered to The Jewish Center before 3:00 p.m. on Friday. Any food or beverages brought into The Jewish Center must comply with our Kashruth guidelines, which are included in the Appendix. Please note that challot are not required on Friday night. The Oneg – to be enjoyed after Kabbalat Shabbat services – must be completely set up by 6:15 p.m., before services begin.

Many families have out-of-town guests attending services on Friday night, and choose to host a Shabbat dinner in The Jewish Center Adult Library for visiting family and friends after services. Feel free to contact our Director of Administration if you are interested in this option.

“The three most important words you can hear at synagogue? Kiddush to follow.”

The Shabbat Kiddush (meal after Shabbat morning services) may be organized in one of two ways: (1) Your family may choose to sponsor a congregational luncheon in the Social Hall, or (2) The Jewish Center will arrange for light Kiddush refreshments either in the lobby or the Social Hall.
Most families choose to sponsor a congregational luncheon following services in the Social Hall, and have found it to be an incredibly meaningful and enjoyable extension of the B’nai Mitzvah celebration. The menu (from very simple to more elaborate, and either dairy, pareve or meat), is up to you, and a list of approved kosher caterers appears in the appendix.

If you do not choose to fully sponsor a Kiddush luncheon, The Jewish Center will arrange for a congregational Kiddush at the conclusion of the service, in one of two ways.

(1) A light Kiddush in the main lobby, typically consisting of items such as assorted fresh vegetables, dips, a salad, fresh fruit, cookies, and cold drinks. This is a very casual Kiddush in the lobby without seating, yet it provides a way for our congregation to mingle after services while having a light snack.

(2) A more substantial luncheon generally served in the Social Hall, typically including a wider variety of cold and/or hot items (e.g., a variety of salads, a pasta dish, kugel, blintzes, cheeses, vegetable dishes, and dessert). At times, there will be a more substantial luncheon in the Social Hall when there is another special occasion (i.e., a baby naming, anniversary, pre-wedding aufruf, etc.) in addition to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
Whether The Jewish Center arranges for a light *Kiddush* in the lobby or a congregational luncheon in the Social Hall, if you expect to have **more than 75 guests** joining us for either event, you must make arrangements at least one month in advance with our Director of Administration so we can be sure to have adequate food and drinks. There will be an additional charge above and beyond the portion of the *B’nai Mitzvah* fee.

Last, if you choose to have a private luncheon or a party in the Social Hall for your guests, we still look forward to having you and your guests join our other *Shabbat* attendees for the light *Kiddush* in the lobby. Your private luncheon or your party can begin after the lobby Kiddush, and at least one hour after services are over. Please speak with our Director of Administration about how best to coordinate these two activities, and consult the guidelines in the appendix.

**Participation in the Service by Family and Friends**

Many options are available to the family of the *B’nai Mitzvah* for their own participation and for honoring relatives and friends. Please make sure to complete the honors form, which appears in the appendix and also in the online Dropbox, including the English and Hebrew names of
all the people you have chosen to receive honors, and return it to the Rabbi at least one month before the day of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah. What follows is an explanation of the various honors.

All honors, with the exception of one English Reading, are to be assigned only to Jewish participants over thirteen years old. Men are required (and women are strongly encouraged) to wear a tallit when going onto the bima.

• Aliyot: Five of the eight aliyot, including the Maftir (#8), are reserved for the B’nai Mitzvah families. The aliyah honor involves going up to the bima and chanting the blessings in Hebrew before and after the Torah is read. An aliyah may be assigned to one, two or three people. (The blessings appear in Appendix D.) Please leave any three aliyot blank (typically the first three); these will be assigned to congregants by the Hazzan or Rabbi.

• Torah Reading: The development of the child’s Torah reading skills is covered during the tutoring process. It is equally important that all other Torah readers – family members, friends, or other congregants – also be prepared to read Torah correctly. This means the ability to read
from the *Torah* on the *bima* without consulting supplementary papers or a *Humash*.

- It is our obligation to make sure that anyone who reads *Torah* does so accurately; the words must be pronounced correctly and, ideally, the proper trope be used throughout. To ensure this happens, it is our requirement that everyone who will be reading *Torah* has a practice session with the Hazzan in advance of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. This includes any out-of-town guests, for whom a read-through must be done by phone, FaceTime or Skype before the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. We do not have the capability to coach out-of-town readers - if it is determined that there will be difficulty reading correctly, the Hazzan will need the additional time to recruit and prepare replacement readers.

- **Ark Opening (p’ticha):** One or two people may be assigned for each of the four *p’tichot*.

- **Glilah:** One person may dress the *Torah* with its cover and ornaments, as directed by the *Gabbai* on the *bima*. Please note that *Hagbahah*, the honor of lifting the *Torah*, is reserved for a trained member of the congregation.

- **Carrying a *Sefer Torah* in procession around the Sanctuary.** Please bear in mind that the *Torah* scroll is heavy. This honor is available only
on Shabbat morning when more than one scroll is used; the Hazzan can tell you if this will be the case on your child’s Bar/Bat Mitzvah day.

Some helpful hints for newbies and guests

Shabbat is a day of rest and celebration, a day set apart from the other six days of the week. Our congregation has established standards to help us create an atmosphere of prayerful respect for The Jewish Center’s building and members on Shabbat. While we welcome the many friends of our B’nai Mitzvah, please advise your guests in advance about observing appropriate rules of behavior while at The Jewish Center. Here are some tips:

• Dress in the Sanctuary should be appropriate for worship. Boys and men need to cover their head with a kippah. Girls and women should have their shoulders covered. All guests should wear both clothing and footwear that demonstrate taste, modesty, and appropriate respect for sitting in a house of worship.

• The Jewish Center is a non-smoking facility in the building and on the grounds at all times.

• The use of cell phones, cameras, pagers, PDAs, electronic games, and other electronic equipment is not permitted anywhere at The Jewish
Center on *Shabbat* or during any service, especially on the bima, where it can interfere with our sound system.

- Please ask guests to arrange transportation needs before arriving at The Jewish Center so they can avoid using cell phones for this purpose either in the building or on the grounds.

- The Jewish Center provides babysitting (on request from the *B’nai Mitzvah* family with at least three days prior notice) downstairs in the Choir Room (below the Youth Lounge).

- Amplification equipment to assist persons with hearing impairment is available in the Sanctuary. Please arrange this in advance with the Director of Administration.

- There are a few times where the congregation is encouraged not to enter or leave the sanctuary: during the *Torah* processions, anytime the congregation is standing in prayer, or during the Rabbi’s sermon.

**Recommended Books and Resources**

The Jewish Center staff and leadership is more than happy to help you plan and conduct a celebration that will be both meaningful and memorable. Please consult with them as often as necessary. There are also a number of books offering guidance in how to plan a *B’nai Mitzvah*
celebration. As your family embarks on the road to Bar/Bat Mitzvah, you will receive the book “Surviving your Bar/Bat Mitzvah” by Cantor Matt Axelrod. In addition, the following are all available in The Jewish Center Library:

- Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin, Putting God on the Guest List
- Rabbi Ron Wolfson, God’s To Do List
- Seymour Rossell, The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Handbook-A Spiritual Journey
- Alice K. Lanckton, Bar Mitzvah Mother’s Manual (includes a chapter on children with special needs)
- Rabbi Bradley Artson, It’s a Mitzvah

Shabbat Afternoon Celebrations at The Jewish Center

A very small number of families will be celebrating Bar/Bat Mitzvah on Shabbat afternoon. Here are some helpful tips for you!

- The starting time for the Mincha B’nai Mitzvah celebration may be 4:30 p.m. or 5:30 p.m. depending on the time of year. The typical Mincha service takes approximately one hour.
During this one-hour service, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student is actively involved throughout. Therefore, we recommend that your invitation state a starting time 15 minutes before the actual start of the service, to ensure that your guests don’t miss the “action.”

There are only three aliyot to the Torah at Mincha, and all are available to the family. The last is reserved for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

Consistent with the Shabbat morning service, all men and boys must wear a kippah (yarmulke). Jewish women are encouraged to wear a kippah as well. A kippah and tallit are required for all men who come up for an honor, but otherwise men are not required to wear a tallit during the Mincha service.

Please note that while the same general rules of attire and conduct apply as with a Shabbat morning service, the following apply only to the Mincha service:

No Kiddush meal is required.

Parties, photography, and music may begin immediately after the service.
Timeline for B’nai Mitzvah Planning

All dates are approximate.

3 years before event (summer before 5th grade)
• Dates are assigned by the Jewish Center staff.

2-2 ½ years before event
• Parents of future B’nai Mitzvah students have the first family meeting meet with Rabbi Feldman and Hazzan Dulkin

1-2 years before event
Children choose team Hesed projects, complete requirements for Hesed fair, held in spring of sixth grade year.
• Students begin tropes class with Hazzan Dulkin; prayer Lab on Sundays

1 year before event
• Family meetings #2-4
• Discuss with Director of Administration any arrangements involving Jewish Center facilities, including catering criteria
• Child continues to fulfill requirements to attend Shabbat morning services and classes at The Jewish Center

7 months before event
• Child begins tutoring: reading of and tropes for Torah portion and Haftarah (blessings and liturgy may be included)

2 months before event
• Child begins tutoring with Hazzan Dulkin in the sanctuary
• Schedule final rehearsal.

6 weeks before event
• Family meets with the Rabbi to study the parasha and to plan writing of D’var Torah

1 month before event
• Family meets with Rabbi Feldman to discuss the role the family will play in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and to review the parts the student is doing including the D’var Torah
• Family members or friends who wish to chant a Torah portion must be approved by Hazzan Dulkin
• Aliyah/Honors sheet due, complete with Hebrew names

Week before events
• Rehearsal (to be arranged with Hazzan)
Event Planning at TJC

While the service is rightly the central focus of the day, and should be the focus of your child’s energy, far more preparation is necessary by you, the parents, for the celebration itself. Here are some guidelines and helpful tips to keep in mind as you plan the event itself.

The Jewish Center Social Hall is an ideal site for your B’nai Mitzvah celebration. The many options include (but are not necessarily limited to) a private Friday evening Shabbat dinner, a private party or luncheon after the congregational Kiddush, a Saturday evening party, or a Sunday afternoon or evening party.

Some families choose to host a Kiddush buffet or luncheon for the assembled congregation and their guests in place of the traditional congregational Kiddush followed by a separate private party. (There is no rental fee for the Social Hall if you choose to host a congregational Kiddush luncheon.) The Director of Administration can provide you with information about the various options, including our current rental fees,
guidelines for *kashrut* and our approved caterers. Contact the Director of Administration as early as possible to reserve the space.

**Decorations: Flowers and Tzedakah Baskets**

*B’nai Mitzvah* families may provide fresh or dried flowers or plants for the *bima*, as well as a centerpiece for the *Kiddush* table in the lobby. It is also possible to place food baskets on the *bima* or in the lobby in place of flowers. Jewish Family and Children’s Service of Mercer County currently has a special program to provide the baskets. The funds contributed for the food baskets go to feed the hungry in our community; for more information, call 609-987-8100.

*Bima* and *Kiddush* table flowers must remain at The Jewish Center after the service. If there is another occasion on the *Shabbat* of your child’s *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, the cost of these may be shared. As a courtesy to congregants with allergies, we require that you avoid intensely fragrant flowers, such as lilies. We encourage you to choose roses from Israel in flower arrangements – an Internet search will turn up many providers for you to consider.
Kippot and Birkat Ha-Mazon booklets

While not required, personalized kippot and Birkat Ha-Mazon (Grace after Meals) booklets printed with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah’s name and celebration date may be provided by the family.

Shabbat means no deliveries!

Please arrange all your deliveries (flowers, kippot, food, decorations, party favors, etc.) for no later than 3:00 p.m. on Friday which is well in advance of sunset Friday and the onset of Shabbat. Similarly, no items (such as leftover food, gifts, catering equipment, etc.) can be taken out of The Jewish Center while it is still Shabbat. Please make sure that all involved (family, guests, caterer, florist and others) are aware of this policy. If you have any questions, please discuss this important requirement in advance with the Director of Administration.

Extra hints and tips for party planning

• The TJC sanctuary provides comfortable seating for approximately 350 guests.
• Guests should remain at all times in the area of the Social Hall, Main Lobby, Parking Lot Lobby, and restrooms. (The Youth Lounge, Library, Beit Midrash, and Choir Room are off limits during the B’nai Mitzvah party unless prior arrangements have been made with the Director of Administration. These arrangements must be made well in advance of the date of the party.)

• Do not leave gifts unattended! Ask a friend, your coatroom attendant, or the office staff present during your event to keep the presents in a safe location.

• Arrangements for coatroom attendants and other “party helpers” can be made independently.

Appendix

A. Glossary of Hebrew Terms
B. Guide for Guests Receiving Aliyot (Honors)
C. Blessings Before and After Torah Readings
D. Sample Notification of honors
E. Kashrut Guidelines & Approved Caterers
F. Service Honors and *Torah Aliyot* Name List:
   a. For *Shabbat Morning*
   b. For *Shabbat Mincha*

G. Guidelines for Private Party/Kiddush
A. Glossary of Hebrew Terms

Aliyah (pl. Aliyot)  Lit. going–up. The honor of reciting the blessings before and after reading Torah. On Shabbat morning there are seven aliyyot, and in the afternoon service there are three.

Ark, or Aron Hakodesh (The Holy Ark)  The repository of the Torah scrolls, on the bima.

Bima (Pulpit)  Lit. high place. The bima is the focus of most ritual activities in the synagogue.

B’nai Mitzvah (sing. Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah)  At the age of 13, a young Jewish man or woman becomes obligated to observe the commandments (mitzvot) of Judaism. The celebration signifies that the young adult is beginning and will continue to function as an active and responsible Jew in the Jewish community. Bar Mitzvah refers to a male; Bat Mitzvah, to a female.

D’var Torah  The preparation and delivery of a talk on the Torah portion by the B’nai Mitzvah. This encounter of each child with his or her Torah portion is unique and personal, and the process of deriving meaning from this text and sharing it with others is a serious undertaking.

Gabbai  (pl. Gabbaim)  A person who assists the Torah reader and makes sure that the Torah service runs smoothly. There are two Gabbaim on the bima during the Torah service, and their job is to call people to the Torah for their aliyyot, check that the reader makes no mistakes while reading the Torah and provide correction if a mistake is made, and see to
the mechanics of covering and uncovering the Torah scroll at the appropriate times. Usually, the Gabbaim are congregants who possess the skills to fulfill these tasks.

**G’lilah** The honor of rolling and dressing the Torah scroll. After the congregation has had an opportunity to see the scroll, the Magbiyah (Torah lifter) sits in a chair on the bima while the person honored with G’lilah rolls the scroll, ties the belt around it, places the mantle (fabric cove) over it, and puts on the decorations.

**Haftarah** A text selected from the books of Nevi’im (The Prophets) that is read by the B’ni Mitzvah in the synagogue after the reading of the Torah each Shabbat and holiday morning. The Haftarah usually has a thematic link to the Torah reading that precedes it. When the Haftarah is read in the synagogue, it is sung with cantillations (tropes), preceded and followed by its related blessings.

**Hagbahah** The honor of lifting the Torah. After the Torah has been read, the congregation is asked to stand, and someone lifts the scroll above his/her head. This person then turns around to make the writing visible to everyone assembled. (Otherwise, only those honored with an aliyah would be able to view it.) It is traditional to show a minimum of three columns of writing, including the portion read that morning.

**Halakha** Jewish law.

**Hazzan** Cantor (Hebrew). Master musician of a congregation. Leads congregation in chanting services and teaching Bar/ Bat Mitzvah students.
Hesed  The Hebrew word for loving-kindness.

Humash (pl. Humashim)  A Hebrew name given to the Pentateuch in Judaism. The word comes from chamesh, the Hebrew word for five, because of the Five Books of Moses that make up the Torah. The word humash refers to the book we use to follow along with the Torah reading, and it includes the entire Torah broken up into portions, with relevant passages from the Prophets which are chanted as accompanying Haftarot each Shabbat. At The Jewish Center we use three different editions of the humash: Etz Hayim, Hertz and Plaut.

Kaddish (“Sanctification”) refers to an important and central blessing in the Jewish prayer service. The central theme of the Kaddish is the magnification and sanctification God’s name. In the liturgy, several variations of the Kaddish are used functionally as separators between various sections of the service the most known is the short version (Chatzi Kaddish), which literally means half Kaddish.

Kiddush  A prayer of praise used in the home and in the synagogue on Shabbat and holidays. The Kiddush is recited over a cup of wine. The meaning of the Kiddush is to praise God for God’s presence in the holidays and between people.

Kippah (pl. Kippot)  Lit. dome or cupola. The Hebrew name for the small round head covering worn out of respect for God and as a sign of recognition that there is something greater and above us. The Yiddish word is yarmulke. The kippah also serves as a symbol of Jewish identity and loyalty. A kippah may be worn by men and women.
Maftir, informally, refers to the final section of the weekly Parasha read on Shabbat and holiday mornings in synagogue from a Torah. Technically, it means the person who is called to read that section. That person then reads the Haftarah from a related section of the Nevi’im.

Mitzvah (pl. Mitzvot) A commandment of the Jewish law.

Mincha Service The afternoon service. A B’nai Mitzvah can take place at a Shabbat Mincha service because the Torah is read.

Mourner’s Kaddish A prayer that expresses love of God and acceptance of God’s will, even while the mourner is feeling sorrow over the death of a loved one.

Musaf Additional service after Shacharit, the morning service, on Shabbat and holidays.

Oneg or Oneg Shabbat Lit. joy of Shabbat. Informal Sabbath (or Friday evening) gathering of Jews in a synagogue or private home to express outwardly the happiness inherent in the Sabbath holiday.

Parasha (pl. Parshiot) Lit. portion. The weekly Torah portion read in Hebrew. It is also known as the Parashat HaShavuah ("Weekly Portion") or the Sidra.

Parve Food or food product that does not contain either meat or dairy products, and that has not come in contact with either.
Rabbi  The title of a Jewish spiritual leader—a person trained in Jewish law, ritual and tradition, and ordained for leadership of a Jewish community.

Shehecheyanu  ("Who has sustained us") The blessing said for special times, usually a first or recurring event that has not happened for a while.

Simcha  A happy occasion such as when a child becomes a B’nai Mitzvah.

Tallit (pl. Tallitot) The tallit is a prayer shawl, the most authentic Jewish garment. It is a rectangular piece of linen or silk with special fringes called tzitzit on each of the four corners. The purpose of the garment is to hold the tzitzit, which are a reminder of the 613 mitzvot.

T’filah (pl. t’fillot ) Prayer.

Tropes  The system of cantillation marks and their music, used to chant sacred books. There are tropes systems for Torah and Haftarah that differ musically from each other.
B. 
Guidance for Guests who will receive an Aliyah

Reciting a blessing both before and after we read from the Torah is one of the ways we show our honor for and devotion to it. The act of coming to the Torah and reciting the blessings is called aliya, which means “going up,” for we go up to the bima (platform) to do so. To be called for an aliya is considered a great honor.

On Shabbat the reading of the Torah is divided into seven portions, each including at least three verses. The person who receives the aliya may also read the text of that portion from the Torah scroll, or there may be a designated reader. If two or three people are called to the Torah to share one aliya, they may recite the blessings together or may divide them - before and after. There can be no more than three people called to the Torah at one time. All men called for an aliya are required to wear a tallit. Women called are encouraged to wear one.

Those honored with an aliya will be called both by their Hebrew and English names. They come onto the bima by way of the set of side stairs closest to them and stand on the reader’s right. There will be an assistant on the bima to guide you, but please familiarize yourself with the following procedure for recitation.
1. Touch a fringe of the tallit (one of the long tzitzit) to the place indicated in the Torah scroll where the reading is to begin, then kiss the fringe. (This indicates respect for the words.) If you do not wear a tallit, use the prayer book or Torah belt for this act.

2. Grasp both handles of the scroll and hold them while you recite the blessing before the reading, found below. After the portion is read, grasp the handles again and recite the blessing after the reading. If two or three people are called, they should share this task of grasping the handles. The act of holding the handles while saying the blessings is derived from Proverbs 3:18: “It is a tree of life to those who hold fast to it.”

3. When you have completed the second blessing, move to stand on the reader’s left. Remain on the bima through the next Torah portion and blessing after the reading. Then return to your seat. It is customary to leave the bima by the steps opposite to those by which you came up.
C. BLESSINGS FOR READING TORAH – ברכות התורה

Before reading Torah:

בָּרְכֻּתָּה בָּאֵרֵךְ
Barchu et Adonai ham’vorach.

Wait for the congregation to recite the next line, repeat it, then continue with the blessing.

בָּרְכֻּתָּה בָּאֵרֵךְ
Baruch Adonai ham’vorach l’olam vaed.

בָּרְכֻּתָּה בָּאֵרֵךְ
Baruch ata Adonai eloheinu melech ha’olam,
Asher bachar banu mikol ha-amim,
V’natan lanu et torato,
Baruch ata Adonai, notein hatorah

After reading Torah:

בָּרְכֻּתָּה בָּאֵרֵךְ
Baruch ata Adonai eloheinu melech ha’olam,
Asher natan lanu torat emet
v’chayei olam nata b’tocheinu.
Baruch atah Adonai, notein haTorah.
D. Sample notification of honors recipients

- Mazal tov! You have been given an honor, indicated below, during the service. You will be asked by a member of the congregation, called the Shamash, to sit in the front row a few minutes before your honor in order to keep the service running smoothly.
- Men are required to wear a kippah (head covering) and tallit (prayer shawl). If you do not have your own, you may pick them up in The Jewish Center Lobby.
- The wearing of a head covering and tallit is recommended for but not required of women.

D. Sample Notification of Honors

You have been given the honor of opening/closing the Ark during the ___________ prayer, which occurs at approximately ________ a.m. The Shamash will direct you.

You have been given the honor of tying the Torah at the end of the Torah service, which occurs at approximately ______a.m. When you go up on the bima, the Gabbai assisting in the service will hand you the
coverings for the *Torah* and guide you in placing them properly on the *Torah*.

You have been given the honor of the _______ th *Aliyah* during the *Torah* service. This will occur at approximately ______ a.m. During the *Aliyah*, you will be reciting in Hebrew the blessings before and after the *Torah* is read. They will be available in front of you on the lectern in Hebrew and in English phonetics. **Please be prepared to provide your Hebrew name, including that of your father and mother.** If you have any questions or wish to review the blessings ahead of time, they can be found on page 322 of the *siddur* (prayer book). Recordings are available in the Dropbox.

**E. KASHRUT GUIDELINES & APPROVED CATERERS**

Since Biblical times, the Jewish People have always believed that *kashrut* is an important value. The laws of *kashrut* that were first described in the *Torah* and then developed in Rabbinic texts. Throughout our history, we Jews have taken one of the most basic things we do as human beings and raised it to a level of sanctity. Just as we begin and end our meals with blessings to remind us that eating is a religious act, so too we have certain standards of what food is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Additionally, we want everyone
to feel comfortable in our community especially when it comes to eating in our synagogue. Therefore, the Religious Affairs Committee, in consultation with Rabbi Feldman, has established these regulations for kashrut at TJC. We establish these standards as a way of helping people understand the importance we give to kashrut and we do so in a way that helps everyone feel comfortable with our standards. We also see this as an opportunity to educate members of our community about the laws of kashrut and the meanings of the laws.

1) Only meat products purchased from and delivered by one of our acceptable kosher caterers may be brought into the building. No other meat products may be brought into the kitchens, social hall, lobby or any other part of either building. This includes individual lunches for our students.

2) All products brought into The Jewish Center must carry a symbol of kashrut supervision such as U or K. This applies to all dairy products, cake mixes, etc. Major supermarkets in our area have extensive kosher sections including the Kosher Experience at Shop Rite on Rt. 1. There are also many places to buy kosher baked goods including the Acme in East Brunswick. For more information about where such products can be bought, please contact The Jewish Center main office.

3) All fresh fruits and fresh uncooked vegetables are acceptable in The Jewish Center.

4) Only kosher fish may be brought into the building. Acceptable fish include tuna, salmon, flounder, lox and sole.
5) When a meal is being prepared in one of the two kitchens, please do not use the other kitchen. It is much safer to do all work for a particular meal in the appropriate kitchen.

6) If you would like to bring baked goods into the building we ask that you purchase these baked goods at a kosher or an approved bakery. If they have been baked in someone’s home they should either be baked in a kosher oven or in disposable pans using disposable utensils. Please bring these utensils with you to serve them at TJC. Please do not use our utensils for these baked goods.

These standards apply to the school building and the main building as well as all parts of the building including the kitchens, the social hall, the lobby, the libraries, offices and all classrooms.

Any questions about these standards should be directed to Rabbi Feldman.

Thank you for your cooperation.
Approved Caterers for The Jewish Center
August 2014
Rabbi Adam Feldman

A Bite of Heaven
Rich Landau
1209 Sussex Turnpike
Mount Freedom, NJ 07970
973-895-0010
www.abiteofheaven.com

Betty the Caterer
7037 North Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19126
215-224-8400
www.bettythecaterer.com

Deli King of Linden and Signature Creations
Eddie Levy
628 St. George Ave
Linden NJ 07036
908-486-7889
www.delikinglinden.com

Exquisite Caterers
David Esquenazi
52B N Main Street
Marlboro, NJ 07746
732-294-0032
www.exquisitecaterers.com
Marc’s Gourmet Café & Catering
Marc Sessler
1775 Oak Tree Road
Edison, NJ 08820
732-494-3232 ext. 607
www.mealsbymarc.com

Foremost Caterers
Ira Shulman
65 Anderson Ave
Moonachie, NJ 07074
201-664-2465
www.foremostcaterers.com

Classic Caterer
Evan Bernstein
Temple B’nai Tikvah
North Brunswick, NJ

Lox, Stock, and Deli
Jesse Reitner
Heritage Plaza Center
228 Ryders Lane
Milltown, NJ 08850
732-214-8900
www.loxstockanddeli.net

The Ultimate Caterer
Allan Perl
52 C North Main Street
Marlboro, NJ 07746
732-577-0490
www.ultimatecaterer.com

Jerusalem Pizza - Shalom
231 Raritan Ave.
Highland Park, NJ 08904
732-249-0070
http://jpizza.com
Guidelines for a private party/ luncheon

• The party may not begin until one hour after services are concluded.
  • Your caterer should set up as quietly as possible while our service is underway.
  • Your DJ or band must wait until the service has ended to begin setting up and must wait one hour to begin playing music.
• Photography is permitted only in the Social Hall beginning one hour after services are concluded. Other than that, photography, audio-visual, and audio recording are not permitted in the Sanctuary, synagogue buildings or grounds on Shabbat. For private dinners held on Friday night in The Jewish Center, photography can only take place in the room where the dinner is served.
  • Candle lighting and sign-in boards are allowed on Saturday only after sundown. (In the afternoon, small flags or flowers may be substituted for candles.)

F. Sample Honors Sheets: Shabbat Morning and Shabbat afternoon (next 2 pages) The highlighted honors are reserved for Bar and Bat Mitzvah families. Other honors are assigned by the congregation.