

Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah Guidelines

Approved by Beit Am Board 3/14/05

Beit Am has a diverse membership and a history of working with the families of *benai mitzvah* to meet their needs. However, the *bar* or *bat mitzvah* service is not a private family affair, but a religious function open to the entire Beit Am community. The following guidelines are based on Beit Am's egalitarian traditions. If parents would like to vary from these guidelines, they should work with the *benai mitzvah* leadership coordinator (*), who will attempt to accommodate their needs. In some cases the parents and/or the leadership coordinator may need to petition Beit Am's Religious Affairs Committee with specific requests.

* Note: The **leadership coordinator** may be one of our community lay leaders, especially your child's Haftarah tutor, or it may be Rabbi Benjamin. Be sure to discuss this with your child's tutor, and with Rabbi Benjamin, so that everyone knows who is taking this role.

General Guidelines

- Jewish boys age 13 and Jewish girls age 12 plus one day (based on Hebrew birthday) are eligible for the ceremony. However, Beit Am's egalitarian tradition is to not distinguish between boys and girls, and so *bar* and *bat mitzvah* ceremonies are typically held after the *bar* or *bat mitzvah* student turns 13.
- Priority for scheduling the service date is given to birth date or birth *parashah* (Torah portion) of the *bar/bat mitzvah* student.
- It is required that families having a *bar* or *bat mitzvah* service with Beit Am support hold current Beit Am membership.
- Parents may petition the Religious Affairs Committee to have outside religious leaders conduct the service. If approved, outside leaders are expected to follow Beit Am guidelines and must contact Rabbi Benjamin to coordinate the service.
- Each *bar* or *bat mitzvah* student is expected to attend one Shabbat service per month (either Friday night or Saturday morning) during the year prior to their *bar* or *bat mitzvah* service.
- It is encouraged that the student decide on a *mitzvah* project that is suitable for him or her, either during the preparation year or during the year following the ceremony.
- It is traditional to give back. Beit Am has various funds that parents of *benai mitzvah*, family members, and friends can contribute to in celebration of the blessing of the student's achievement.

If you have decided to go ahead with planning a *bar* or *bat mitzvah* ceremony at Beit Am, the following information should help guide you through. It's best if you read through the entire planner right to get an overview.

Set a date for the service (preferably by August of the prior year).

Congratulations on your decision to plan a bar or bat mitzvah ceremony! Be sure to contact Joni in the Beit Am office by phone ((541) 753-0067) or E-mail (office@beitam.org) to set a date for the event. Your child's birth date and time (their Jewish birth date, which we can calculate for you) determine the birth *parashah*. The dates set for *bar* and *bat mitzvah* ceremonies will be worked into the Beit Am calendar for the following year. The Beit Am calendar is usually set in August, so it is best for Beit Am's leaders and the family they choose a date by August at the very latest. Because students generally need from nine months to a year for preparation, it is best for the student if the date can be settled as soon as possible.

Decide on a location.

If your child's service will be held at the Beit Am building, and the date has already been approved, then the event will be scheduled like any other Beit Am service. You may need to work around the Friday night service to plan set-up for the event, but that is easily done. Remember to contact Joni in the office to double check that your date is scheduled on the Beit Am calendar.

If you suspect you will need more space than Beit Am can provide, we suggest the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Corvallis (UUFC), where we traditionally hold our High Holy Days services. Their phone number is (541) 752-5218. No matter where you decide to hold the service, if it is held at a place outside of Beit Am you must still schedule the event with the Beit Am office (in addition to scheduling with the alternate location). Be sure to schedule the alternate location as soon as possible.

- ✓ **You will need to move** the portable *bimah* and ark, the prayer books, the *tallitot* and *kippot*, etc. Remember to ask other bar/bat mitzvah families for help with hauling. Plan to move everything no later than the Friday before the service. It's best to make arrangements at the other location to store the items overnight, or, even better, to set them up at the alternate location on Friday. (Joni will strive to make sure that the books and *tallitot*, etc. are boxed and ready for pick-up by Thursday before your child's service. You or your helpers will need to sign a form before taking the supplies from the building, so be sure to contact Joni in the Beit Am office concerning who will be moving the items and when. Usually, everything is moved back to Beit Am on Saturday after the service. The Torah requires special consideration...she must travel to her destination before sundown on Friday and remain there until after Havdalah on Saturday night. Call Joni for contact information for the Religious Affairs Committee (RAC).

You must have RAC approval to move the Torah and to obtain proper handling procedures for the Torah. (*Torah* transporters need keys to both buildings, to the ark, and to the room housing the *Torah* at the other location.)

- ✓ **Consider a mitzvah.** After your child's ceremony at the UUFC, you will know what it takes to move services back and forth to another location. Please think about offering to help with moving during High Holy Days and other B'nai Mitzvah services. That would surely be a mitzvah!

Assign someone to take charge of clean-up of the building after the event, whether using Beit Am or another facility. (This would be in ADDITION to kitchen cleanup helpers.)

Decide on whether to have a public celebration after the service.

An extended celebration for your family and friends, and/or the community is completely optional! But if you are thinking about doing this, and plan to use a location other than Beit Am, start looking for an appropriate location right away. Depending on the time of year, it can be hard to find! (You may be competing with sorority and fraternity functions, for one.) If you are planning to use Beit Am for an extended celebration (beyond a *Kiddush*, and possibly a luncheon) please contact the office to schedule time in the building and to learn of any restrictions there may be. If you are planning to have the luncheon or a dinner celebration catered, you will want to start looking for a caterer right away.

Other considerations.

Invitations. Order invitations about two months ahead of time (the internet is a great resource) or design them yourself. Send out invitations 6 weeks ahead, or more for out-of-town guests. For out-of-towners, remember to include directions to Corvallis, directions to Beit Am or other facility, and a map of Corvallis.

It is Beit Am tradition to invite the entire Jewish community to Bar and Bat Mitzvah services. Be sure to send an announcement of the service to the Beit Am newsletter **by the 15th day of the month BEFORE your child's service month** (contact Ze'ev Orzech at zeevo@msn.com).

Hotel Accommodations for your guests. For deals on hotels, maps and other city information, contact Corvallis Tourism at 257-6963 (or 757-1544) located at 553 NW Harrison Blvd.

Decide on which prayer book to use.

Decide on the *siddur* that works best for your family's tradition. Work with Rabbi Benjamin and your leadership coordinator to choose an appropriate siddur. Beit Am offers a Reconstructionist siddur with lots of transliteration (*Kol HaNeshamah*), a Reform siddur that's mostly in English (*Gates of Prayer*), or a more traditional siddur (the *Sim Shalom* group's siddur).

Decide on whether to create supplemental booklets.

We now have about 100 *humashim* (Bibles), about 50 Hertz, and 50 Eytz Chayim bibles. If you think you will need more, you may want to consider putting together a supplemental booklet. The booklet should include at least the verses of *Torah* being chanted (including the *maftir*) and the *Haftarah*. It may also include a description of the *bar* or *bat mitzvah* service and sometimes includes greetings and/or a letter-of-thanks from the family to people who have helped with the service preparation and leadership. You may contact Joni in the Beit Am office for resources (Hebrew ready to paste into your booklet) and for samples of booklets. Take your booklets to a printer **at least two weeks before the service**. Henderson's is one of the less expensive places to print, as is the OSU print shop.

Note on Disposal of Booklets: It is the family's responsibility to dispose of booklets after the service. Because the booklets contain words of Torah, sometimes people are concerned about what to do with them afterwards. Some are comfortable with recycling the booklets. If you are not, and want to have them buried as *Geniza*, we ask that you cut out the word for "God", yud-hey-vav-hey, from each booklet and bring these pieces to Beit Am for burial, and then, recycle the rest (see Rabbi Benjamin for details).

Resource: No time to make your own booklet? Becky Levien has done booklets for members previously (at a cost). Becky Levien, 1755 NW Hillcrest Drive, Corvallis, phone 752-1755. (We welcome hearing about other resources for *Benai Mitzvah* Families. Contact Joni in the office.)

Decide on the Kiddush luncheon

(Ask for help, especially from other Benai Mitzvah families)

At least one month ahead, decide what you want to do for a *kiddush* (*minhag*, Beit Am tradition, is a potluck luncheon). Please remember that Beit Am has a vegetarian and kosher-fish kitchen. For a *bar* or *bat mitzvah* ceremony luncheon, the family is expected to supply the paper goods and other supplies, including the tea, coffee, and other drinks. At the least, the family provides grape juice, kosher wine, and the *hallot* for the actual *kiddush*. Often families donate any leftover paper supplies to Beit Am for future services. If you have any questions about the *kiddush* or luncheon, please contact Joni in the Beit Am office.

If you decide to have a potluck, assign a friend to make the phone calls for help with (1) set up of the luncheon, and overseeing the food that people are bringing, (2) overseeing the luncheon during the meal, so that plates are refilled or taken away, and (3) cleanup of the dishes and food. If you need it, ask Joni for a list of supplies and a suggested menu for a potluck luncheon. Sometimes a family will higher help for clean up of the kitchen. This is a good idea for large events!

Have your guests RSVP'd? If you are having any portion of your event catered (or for some other reason need to know the number of attendees) and you haven't heard from your invitees, you (or someone you've asked) need(s) to call them.

On the Day of the Service -- Relax and enjoy your *simcha*! You deserve it and so does your child!

After your friends and family go home remember to thank those in your community who helped make it all happen!

Move on to the next page for information on the MOST important part -- preparation for the actual *bar* or *bat mitzvah* service!

Student Preparations for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah Service.

(Start this process 9 to 12 months before the service date.)

“What is my child expected to learn in preparation for leading the service?” It is Beit Am *minhag* (tradition) for the *bar* or *bat mitzvah* to chant the *maftir* (from the Torah portion), the blessings for an *aliyah*, and the *haftarah* and its blessings. Also, each student is expected to prepare a *devar torah*, a talk covering the Torah portion (and/or the *haftarah*) of the day. It is also encouraged, but optional, for the *Bar or Bat Mitzvah* to lead the *Shema*, the *Torah* service, and/or other parts of the service.

Find a Tutor: See suggestions at the back of this planner.

Note: Parents can grow too! Often parents lead parts of the service or *leyn* (even for the first time!) at their child’s *bar* or *bat mitzvah* service. (See the appended “Beit Am Service Resource List” for possible leaders and tutors. Some tutors are paid and some are not, so please clarify that with the tutor.)

Family obligations for the service.

It is the family’s primary responsibility to obtain leadership for their service. Rabbi Benjamin or your leadership coordinator will be there to assist you in filling service leadership roles, so please discuss this with them.

Note: It is courteous to ask for *leyners* and leaders **at least** one month ahead so that they have time to prepare and can plan to be in town. A suggestion list for *leyners* is included at the back of this planner.

The family is expected to provide a list of the Hebrew names (including the Hebrew name of the mother and/or father) of the *aliyot* (seven) who will be called up to the *Torah*. This list should be given to the *Gabbai* before the service begins.

Refer to the “List of Possible Honors” on the next page for honors that you may assign to family and friends.

List of Possible Honors

Jewish Honors - Please be sure that each honoree is properly informed about choreography and blessings for their honor. Your child's service may be the first time these honors have been given to your friend or family member. If so, wonderful! But be sure to ask Rabbi Benjamin or your leadership coordinator for guidance for your friend or family member. Don't leave them hanging!

Jewish Honors

- Leading any sections of the service (*Birchot HaShachar, P'sukei D'zimra, Shacharit, Musaf*)
- Seven *Aliyot*
- *Magbiha*- Holds up the Torah (sometimes two, for special holidays).
- *Golel* - Wraps the Torah (sometimes two, for special holidays).
- Ark opener/closer (two times).

Jewish and Non-Jewish Honors

- Any reading during the service. There are a number of possibilities for English readings which are great opportunities to honor Jewish and non-Jewish friends and family. Examples include: Prayer for Peace, Prayer for the Congregation, any of the psalms recited during *P'sukei D'zimra* or any additional readings from the *siddur* or an outside source. Ask Rabbi Benjamin for guidance on this.
- Greeters (welcome people at the doors)

Tutors, Leaders and *Leyners*

This is only a partial list - there are up-and-coming tutors, leaders and leyners all the time, just ask around! *Please let Joni in the Beit Am office know if you would like to be added to this list.*

Haftarah/Maftir/Service leader Tutors – Most of these tutors charge for their services, so please be sure to ask them up front

Lisa Shepard, Sarah Sapon-White, Yael Begeg-Dov, Aaron Wolf, Amy Buccola, Usha Honeyman, Neil Davison, Jim Wilson

Service Leaders - Please contact leaders to find out which types of services and which parts of the service they are comfortable with leading. Contact them well ahead of time to make sure they are free for you service date.

Rabbi Benjamin, Ze'ev Orzech, Amy Buccola, Lisa Shepard, Richard Sapon-White, Sarah Sapon-White, Jeff Cohen, Larry Plotkin, Ken Krane, Howard Friedman, Aaron Wolf, Neil Davison, Jon Katz, Rachel Peck

Leyners – *Leyners* should be asked to *leyn* and **provided with their lines** (and a tape if needed) at least a month ahead of the *bar* or *bat mitzvah* service date.

Amy Buccola, Sarah Sapon-White, Yael Begeg-Dov, Sarah Tuttle, Rachel Peck, Joni Plotkin, Amy Becker, Susan Aronson, Mike Aronson, Aaron Wolf, Jon Katz, Richard Sapon-White, Usha Honeyman, Lisa Shepard, Peg Freed-Elefant, Rabbi Benjamin, Karen Gottschlich

Petition for *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* Service

Fill out and return this petition to the Beit Am Office at 625 NW 36th Street, Corvallis, OR 97330 or to Beit Am , PO Box 472, Corvallis, OR 97339 and it will be given promptly to the chair of the Religious Affairs Committee for review.

Petitioner's name: _____

Daytime phone: _____

Night time phone: _____

Child's birth date _____ time (if known) _____

Child's Jewish birth date (if known) _____

Fill out the appropriate portions of this form below and return it to Beit Am.

" I would like to petition for a different *bar/bat mitzvah* service date than I was assigned:

My reasons are as follows:

I suggest the following optional date(s) as an alternative: _____

I am interested in my child having a *bar/bat mitzvah* service with the support of the Beit Am community, but we do not meet the criteria for scheduling a service because:

- My child will not be 13 (for a boy) or 12 and one day (for a girl) by the date I want to schedule the service
- We are not members of Beit Am
- Other _____

I wish to have a religious leader who is outside of Beit Am conduct the service:

Name of leader I am working with: _____

Leader.s phone number: _____

Leader.s Email address: _____

My concern is not expressed above: (Please describe your concern on the back of this paper.)