



Main Line Reform Temple Beth Elohim

B'nai Mitzvah Handbook

Edited October 2022



Mazal Tov! A message from your clergy teamPage 2
What is this thing called Bar/Bat Mitzvah?Page 2
Timeline of B'nai Mitzvah journeyPage 3
B'nai Mitzvah YearPage 4
Highlights of the journeyPage 5
B'nai Mitzvah Tutoring PolicyPage 6
The Mitzvah ProjectPage 7
Family Information FormPages 8-9
FAQsPage 10



Dear B'nai Mitzvah Families,

Mazal tov on reaching this exciting time in your family's life! You are about to embark upon a journey towards a special moment, unique to the Jewish people.

We are all here to help guide you along this sacred path. We will travel this path with you and will be by your side throughout the journey. MLRT recognizes that each person and family is unique, each bringing his or her own distinct qualities to our community, and we are here to support your individual needs, questions, and concerns along the way. MLRT is a fully accessible community. Please let us know how we can best support you.

The awe and pride you will feel when your child(ren) ascends the bimah on the day of his or her Bar/Bat Mitzvah will be incomparable. We are deeply honored to be a part of this special and sacred time in your family's life. We look forward to sharing this milestone with each of you, and look forward to working closely with you as you go on this path.

What is this thing called Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

The Torah states that the age of maturation for a young man is 20, when a man becomes eligible for taxation and military service. There is no mention of a Bar or Bat Mitzvah in the Torah, but *Pirkei Avot* (the ethics of our fathers) states: "At age thirteen one becomes subject to the commandments." For generations, the age of thirteen has been considered the age of maturity for accepting and following the commandments. However, the ritual ceremony that we know today did not begin to evolve until the Middle Ages in Germany, when a boy of thirteen would begin to wear *tefillin* and read from the Torah. This became the central feature of the early Bar Mitzvah ceremony and by the 16th century, it became obligatory to call the Bar Mitzvah boy to the Torah the Shabbat coinciding with his 13th birthday. In the 16th and 17th centuries in Poland, boys who were particularly mature were also called upon to deliver a *D'var Torah*, a speech about the Torah portion. Over time, Bar Mitzvah boys were called upon to lead parts of the prayer service, and eventually the blessing of the Torah became a focal feature of becoming a Bar Mitzvah, as well.

It was not until 1922 when the first Bat Mitzvah would occur for a 13 year old girl. Judith Kaplan, the daughter of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, took the lead and is credited as being the first female to have a formal Bat Mitzvah. Today, Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrations are not uniform; rather they are crafted to the individual needs of each young person. Most importantly, however, is its significance in the life of Jewish people around the world. Rooted in Jewish values and the promise to pass Judaism down from one generation to the next, becoming a Bar and Bat Mitzvah connects us to our ancestors and the future.

Religious School Education

Kindergarten

- Transition into our Religious School

Fourth Grade

- B'nai Mitzvah dates are assigned

Fifth Grade

- 5th Grade Retreat
- Gaining confidence with Hebrew reading, Judaics, and Jewish knowledge

Sixth Grade

- 6th Grade Retreat
- Begin working on mitzvah project
- Have an introductory meeting with Cantor to receive materials and explore the Torah portion
- Begin tutoring with assigned tutor
- Ushering at 2 B'nai Mitzvah during 6th grade *(sign up for this at end of 5th grade)*

Seventh Grade

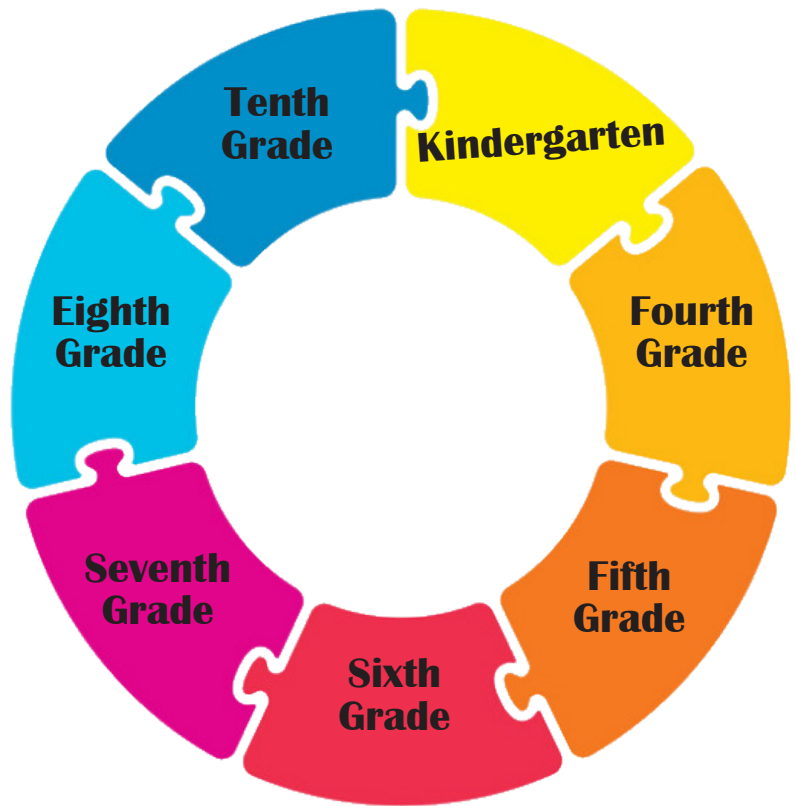
- Continuation of B'nai Mitzvah training with tutors and Cantor
- Meet with the rabbis to work on D'var Torah
- Have rehearsals with the rabbis
- Celebrate your special day!

Eighth - Twelfth Grade

- Enroll in our post-BM program, the TRIBE!

Tenth Grade

- CONFIRMATION



B'nai Mitzvah Year

Families meet with Cantor to receive materials, discuss mitzvah projects, introduce the Torah portion, and discuss any individual needs

10
MONTHS
BEFORE

Begin tutoring with assigned MLRT tutor (25 lessons plus 3 check ins with Cantor Rudnick and 2 check ins with Rabbi Newburge)

10
MONTHS
BEFORE

Begin working on your mitzvah project

10
MONTHS
BEFORE

4
WEEKS
BEFORE

Begin rehearsals in the Sanctuary

Have final rehearsal

1
WEEK
BEFORE

Attend Friday Night Services and lead the congregation in Candles and Kiddush

1
WEEK
BEFORE

Turn in final honors form

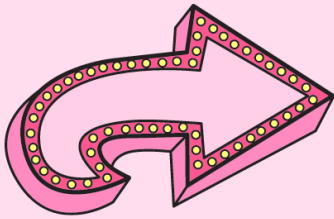
Friday
NIGHT

Day of
B'NAI MITZVAH

Celebrate!
Either at 10:30 am or 5:00 pm



B'nai Mitzvah Highlights

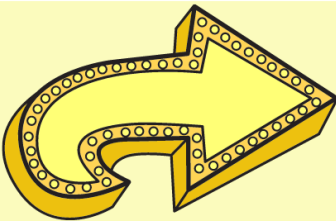
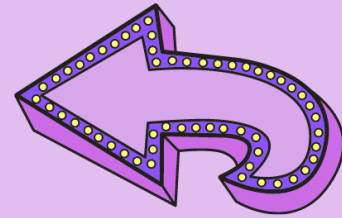


Tutoring

Bracha Camron, David Camron, Glenn Brooks,
Julie Simon, and Cantor Rudnick

D'var Torah

Learn about your Torah portion in depth with one of our rabbis; write a speech to share at your Bar/Bat/B'nai Mitzvah about the themes and what you learned.

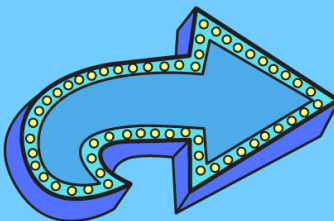
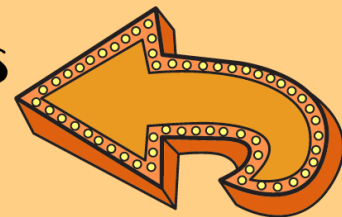


Mitzvah Project

An opportunity to participate in the community and share in the mitzvah of tikkun olam, repairing the world.

5th & 6th Grade Retreats

Join your peers in a day-long retreat.

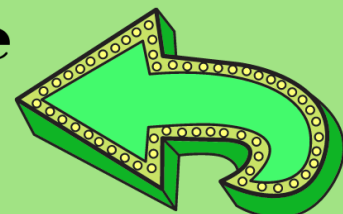


Service Attendance

Attend 13 services throughout your B'nai Mitzvah year. These can be Friday night, Saturday, holiday, and at another synagogue.

Religious School Attendance (6th and 7th grades)

A commitment to Jewish education and building community through class attendance and participation.



Service Information

 **FRIDAY** Please check the calendar for service times 

 **SATURDAY MORNING** *Service begins at 10:30 am 
B'nai Mitzvah Family arrives no later than 10:00 am

 **SATURDAY EVENING** *Service begins at 5:00 pm 
B'nai Mitzvah Family arrives no later than 4:30 pm

Tutoring Policy

Mazal tov to you and your family! This is an exciting time in your child's Jewish journey and we are honored to be a part of it. As part of the preparation for your child's bar/bat mitzvah, MLRT will provide 30 weeks of private tutoring: 25 lessons with an MLRT tutor, and 5 lessons with the clergy. Individual tutors are engaged on a contract basis to provide this service, for which MLRT pays from funds allocated from the B'nai Mitzvah fees.

Students and tutors choose a time to meet each week, and those appointments must be kept unless an emergency arises. In order to cancel a tutoring session, please call or email the tutor with at least 24 hours' notice. It is the responsibility of the student/family to reschedule the lesson based on their tutor's availability.

If a tutoring session is missed without notice and it is not an emergency, the missed lesson will count towards the 25 allotted lessons. To ensure your child his/her full allotment of 25 lessons, there will be a \$25 fee per missed lesson.

Please do not hesitate to contact Cantor Rudnick (frudnick@mlrt.org) if you have any questions or concerns.

Accessibility

Main Line Reform Temple is proud to be an inclusive congregation.

Please contact Cantor Rudnick at frudnick@mlrt.org to discuss accommodations for you and your family.

Mitzvah Project Information

Complete your own project (volunteering time, raising money, etc.) OR choose from suggested projects below:

1	Read a Jewish themed book and share a review of it
2	Create a piece of Jewish artwork/music/poetry
3	Study and summarize a significant piece of Jewish history
4	Interview an elderly person about what it was like to be Jewish and 13 in his/her lifetime
5	Attend a TRIBE Jr. event
6	Create a family tree
7	Light candles every Friday night for four consecutive weeks
8	Make challah four consecutive weeks
9	Make Shabbat at home and keep a Shabbat journal for four consecutive weeks
10	Recite Shema every night before going to bed for two weeks
11	Recite Modeh Ani every morning when you wake up for two weeks
12	Build a sukkah in your home and invite guests to eat at least three nights of the holiday
13	Visit a nursing center, a hospital, etc. and play games or read
14	Make blessing bags and deliver them to people living on the street
15	Pledge a part of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah gift money to the charity of your choice
16	Watch a Jewish themed movie and summarize
17	Ask for donations to the food pantry as part of your birthday gifts
18	Write to an elected official about an issue of concern to you and the community
19	Show hospitality – invite someone new to sit with you, usher at a Shabbat service, etc.
20	Take on a new chore in your home and do it every day for a month
21	Volunteer to read Torah at a chapel service
22	Plant trees in Israel through JNF
23	Do a group mitzvah project with your friends
24	Usher at an MLRT service
25	Invite a new MLRT family over for dinner
26	Remember Us - The Holocaust B'nai Mitzvah Project



Family Information Form

Please complete and return to Cantor Faryn Rudnick

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date: _____ (circle one) AM PM

Name of Student(s): _____

Name of Parents: _____

Best Contact Number(s): _____

Best Contact Email(s): _____

Names as they should be listed in the eNews, Shabbat Brochure & Bulletin:

(Please write parents' names as John & Jane Doe or John Smith and Jane Doe)

Help Us Get To Know You and Your Child(ren)


This is an exciting time for your family. We are looking forward to being a part of your B'nai Mitzvah journey, and we look forward to building a stronger relationship with you and your child(ren). Please help us to maximize your child(ren)'s success by answering the questions below as best as possible.

Preferred Pronoun (Circle one): He She They/Them Other _____

What are your child(ren)'s strengths or what does your child(ren) do especially well?

Does your child(ren) have specific learning differences or receive accommodations in school, have an IEP, or receive any related services that you would like us to be aware of?

Have there been recent challenges in your household (divorce, death, illness) that we should know about? _____



Are there specific triggers of which our tutors should be made aware (i.e. body language, behaviors, verbal)?

Please identify best practice strategies that are effective for your child(ren) (If applicable):

How would you best describe your child(ren) (friendly, creative, caring, organized, anxious, easily frustrated, curious, etc.):

Is there a tutor that you or your child(ren) would prefer to work with? Or not work with?

Is there anything else we should know?

Contact me about: _____ Remember Us (\$36 minimum; your child will be paired with a child lost in the Holocaust and will relate that child to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah in several ways.)

***To arrange a Kiddush, luncheon, room rental, or pictures, please contact
Amy Krulik, Executive Director, at akrulik@mlrt.org***

Shabbat and B'nai Mitzvah resources can be found at mlrt.org under Worship



B'NAI MITZVAH FAQs

Who do we speak to about ...?

◆ **Tutors, Prayer Lab, Binders/Training Materials**

Cantor Faryn Rudnick at frudnick@mlrt.org

◆ **Mitzvah Projects, Religious School Issues**

Rabbi Kevin Kleinman at kkleinman@mlrt.org

◆ **Appointments, Facility Rentals/Usage, Photography, Plaques**

Amy Krulik at akrulik@mlrt.org

◆ **Bulletin/eNews/Shabbat Brochure**

Davida Chornock at dchornock@mlrt.org

◆ **Facilities Set-Ups, Vendors, Caterers**

Dave Greim at dgreim@mlrt.org

◆ **Date Changes, Finances, Fees, Congregational Issues**

Amy Krulik, Executive Director at akrulik@mlrt.org

◆ **The B'nai Mitzvah Service, Aliyot, Family Participation, Miscellaneous Concerns**

Rabbi Geri Newburge and Cantor Faryn Rudnick

What do we need to know about ushering at services? During the B'nai Mitzvah year, we ask that at least one parent from each B'nai Mitzvah family usher at TWO B'nai Mitzvah services. This process serves two purposes: to give parents a better awareness of what happens at our Shabbat services and to better support fellow B'nai Mitzvah families by helping to fill the ushering needs and ensuring that this special simcha is a meaningful spiritual experience for each child. A member of the Board of Trustees will also attend to provide guidance. Your children are welcome to join you as ushers. We will send you an Ushering Request letter prior to your child's B'nai Mitzvah year so you can request ushering dates.

What is the Temple's policy regarding non-custodial parents? Our policy requires that all parents receive correspondence and be invited to participate in their child(ren)'s B'nai Mitzvah preparation & service. Therefore, in situations where one parent has a different address, copies of all communications will be forwarded to that parent unless that parent requests to be excluded or an exception is granted. Exceptions to this policy must be addressed with the Executive Director.

What is the B'nai Mitzvah Fee and what does it cover? The fee currently is \$1,425, payable either in total or in 3 installments of \$475 each. Your temple bill will reflect this expense as soon as you are given your child's B'nai Mitzvah date. In the event of a B'nai Mitzvah for twins or siblings in the same family, adjustments can be made at the discretion of the Executive Director.

The B'nai Mitzvah fee covers the cost of the Temple tutor for 25 sessions, the flowers at the Shabbat service, the Oneg Shabbat or Snack & Schmooze at the Friday night service, and the general use of MLRT custodial staff in preparation for and during the Shabbat service.

What if we have financial difficulties during the B'nai Mitzvah preparation process? Amy Krulik, our Executive Director, is always available to discuss your personal family situation. We will work together in recognition of your family's needs and financial concerns. You must be a member in good standing (fully meeting your membership and Religious School obligations) to have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at MLRT.

What kinds of luncheons, receptions or parties can we have at MLRT? We would love for all of our families to celebrate this amazing simcha here at the Temple. We have several spaces available for your use following the Shabbat service, whether in the morning or for Havdalah. These rooms are of various sizes and shapes with varying costs and they are available on a first come, first served basis.

When we send you your child's date assignment, we will include a Facilities Request Form and a description of the available rooms. Please return this room request form as soon as possible because the room fee is subject to change and you will be charged based on when you reserve the room, rather than when you actually use it. Once we receive your form and we ascertain that the requested room is available, we will send you a contract, which must be signed and returned with a deposit. Room rentals are only confirmed upon receipt of a signed contract and deposit.

All rentals are subject to MLRT's House Rules. These rules are currently being reviewed and revised. We will share them with you once they are approved.

What if I have other questions? Our Rabbis, Cantor, and all our staff are here to support you throughout this process. Your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a special stepping stone in their Jewish journey. We are proud to enable you to celebrate this simcha at MLRT and to work with you to make the event as spiritually meaningful as it can be. Thank you for giving us this honor.