



**CONGREGATION
SINAI**

CLASS OF 5784

B'NEI MITZVAH HANDBOOK

B'rukhim Haba'im! Welcome!

Kislev 5782, December 2021

Dear B'nei Mitzvah Parents,

Mazal tov! You are taking a big step in what is a lifetime's journey through Judaism. You have been thinking and preparing for this day for a long time. Becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah is not the culmination of a child's Jewish education, but rather the beginning of his or her adult Jewish life. Reaching the age of mitzvot is a turning point in the life of every Jew. It is when the members of Sinai warmly embrace the newest adult member of our community.

I am committed to meeting the needs – educational, spiritual, and pastoral – of your entire family. Your child will be working hard to achieve the skills that will be showcased on the big day, as well as study to understand the meaning behind it all. It is a privilege to be your Rabbi for this journey. Let me wish you *Chazak v'Amatz* – have strength and good courage. I look forward to teaching you and learning with you in the time ahead!

L'shalom,

Rabbi Josh Berkenwald

Bruchim HaBaim,

Welcome B'nei Mitzvah parents!

Welcome to the next chapter in your child's life. Your child is on the tarmac getting ready to leave childhood and take off into the beginnings of Jewish adulthood. You've done so much to prepare them, but there is still work to be done before they fly off on their own.

It is a privilege and pleasure to be able to contribute to this incredible milestone in your child's life and your family's Jewish history. Our educators are committed to making sure your child is ready, excited, and enthusiastic about becoming part of the Jewish community here at Congregation Sinai and in the world beyond our doors. B'nei Mitzvah marks the beginning of post elementary school Jewish learning. Congregation Sinai Religious School is honored to offer an education that enables our students to become skilled Torah and Haftarah readers, *sh'lichei tzibbur* (service leaders), and committed, knowledgeable, active members of our community.

We welcome the entire family to learn as we go through the B'nei Mitzvah process and continue learning long after this step has been completed. I look forward to sharing in this next chapter with you and providing anything you may need including materials, a listening ear, and/or a shoulder to lean on.

L'fum tzara agra, “according to the effort is the reward.” – Ben Hei Hei, Ethics of the Fathers, 5:26.

Michelle Jenkins

Director of Congregational Learning

Dear B'nei Mitzvah Parents,

Mazal Tov to you and your family on reaching this Jewish milestone. Please use this B'nei Mitzvah Handbook to prepare for your child's bar or bat mitzvah at Congregation Sinai. We have tried to be thorough by including information about every aspect relating to your family's big day. If you have any questions, there is a good chance that you will find the answer in these pages. I am happy to help you with any other questions that may arise. I look forward to working with you to plan a memorable and meaningful *simcha* with our Sinai community.

Warmest Regards,

Joelle Pluemer, Executive Director

Table of Contents

Timeline for Planning for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah	3
Philosophy of Congregation Sinai's B'nei Mitzvah Program, The B'nei Mitzvah Contract	5
What Do B'nei Mitzvah Do?, B'nei Mitzvah Preparations	6
Requirements for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Congregation Sinai	7
Skills Checkpoints, Tutoring	8
Seventh Grade B'nei Mitzvah Class, Membership Requirement, Planning Ahead for B'nei Mitzvah Expenses	9
Invitations, The Voice Article, Shabbat Bulletin Greeting, <i>Sadranim</i> (Greeters)	10
Clothing, The Rehearsal, The Day of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah	11
Kiddush and Hamotzi, Honoring Those Who Helped Make it Happen, A Word About Boys and Girls	12
Putting the Mitzvah in Bar/Bat Mitzvah.	13
Schedule for Working on the D'var Torah with Rabbi Berkenwald	14
Preparing to Write Your D'var Torah	15
Writing the First Draft of Your D'var Torah	17
Form for Aliyot and Other Honors During Bar/Bat Mitzvah	19
FAQ About Aliyot, Honors, and Participation	20
Parents' Blessing to B'nei Mitzvah	24
Tallit and Tefilin	29
Facilities Information:	
Application Form for Use of Facilities	30
Congregation Sinai House Rules	33
Approved Caterers, Bakers, Markets, and Kosher Wine Merchants	38
Setup Chart for Social Hall	40

Timeline for Planning for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Time Frame	Activity
Kindergarten	Begin attending Sinai Religious School or a Jewish Day School
5 th Grade, December	Tentative Bar/Bat Mitzvah dates are set during a Family Education Program with the Rabbi and other members of the B'nei Mitzvah class First payment of \$800 is due to finalize the date Keep synagogue dues current for next two years Student attends minimum of 12 Shabbat services between July 1 & June 30
March, 2022 (5 th grade)	B'nei Mitzvah Commitment Plan Students and Parents will learn about <i>brit</i> (covenant) with the Rabbi and Director of Congregational Learning and discuss the commitments that will result in a meaningful B'nei Mitzvah experience Everyone will sign a B'nei Mitzvah Plan outlining the respective responsibilities of students, their parents, and Congregation Sinai
6 th Grade	Student attends Sinai Religious School or full time Jewish Day School in addition to B'nei Mitzvah program 2 Family Education Programs in Fall and Winter Parent Meeting in February or March Student attends at least 16 Shabbat services B'nei Mitzvah Inauguration in May
7 th Grade	Student attends Sinai Religious School or full time Jewish Day School All students attend year long B'nei Mitzvah program Student attends at least 12 Shabbat services
12 months before	Reserve any Sinai facilities that are needed (social hall for Friday night dinner or Saturday night party, kitchen, etc.)
9 months before	Select and contact a tutor from the approved list
7 months before	Student begins meeting with a Sinai tutor Second payment of \$800 is due If not self-catering the Kiddush, hire caterer from synagogue-approved list
4 months before	Meet with Executive Director to review facilities usage
3 months before	Parents meet with Rabbi Begin to pre-assign honors to friends and family members. Be sure to collect all required Hebrew names

	Contact the Torah reading and/or service leader coordinators if you intend to invite friends or family members to read Torah or lead services; Otherwise, members of the Sinai community will fill these responsibilities
2 months before	Send out invitations; All B'nei Mitzvah class members must be invited to services and any additional celebrations that include peer-aged friends Provide the office with 150 word (max) article for the Voice and a high resolution headshot, Voice article and photograph due on the 1 st of the month preceding the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Schedule three meetings with the Rabbi to work on D'var Torah (speech) Schedule the rehearsal with the Rabbi
6 weeks before	Submit high resolution photo and student greeting to the Sinai office Student begins meeting with the Rabbi to prepare the D'var Torah Parent(s) begin preparing their blessing, with the Rabbi's guidance
1 month before	Provide service participants with instructions, blessings, page numbers, etc.
2 weeks before	Deadline for providing room setup instructions and other forms to the office Email the aliyah (honors) form to the office and the B'nei Mitzvah coordinator Email Shabbat bulletin greeting from the parent(s) to the office
The week of	Attend rehearsal with the Rabbi, which includes a complete walk-through by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah; this rehearsal should take place no later than Thursday afternoon (preferably Wednesday); it usually lasts about 2 hours If you would like to take photographs in the sanctuary, please schedule a time with the office
Day before	All deliveries and setup must be complete by 2:00 pm on the Friday preceding the Bar/Bat Mitzvah
Day of	Mazal Tov!
Sunday after	Remove all leftover food and supplies. Please inquire ahead of time to determine when the synagogue will be open.

Philosophy of Congregation Sinai's B'nei Mitzvah Program

The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is an important milestone in our Jewish lives, connecting us to the Jewish people and its history and traditions. At Congregation Sinai, we aim to facilitate this transformational experience for our young people as they become *B'nei Mitzvah*. This process requires a significant commitment from the children and their families. Our goal is to integrate the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* child and family into the larger synagogue community, so that the family's *simcha* is also the community's celebration. From the moment a child joins our community, he or she embarks on this sacred journey that is designed to guide him/her toward Jewish learning, *mitzvot*, prayer, and acts of kindness. Our family-focused program fosters communication between parents and their children. In this way, the entire family may engage in opportunities to define and experience their Jewish identity.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah is an important milestone in one's Jewish life, connecting a person to the Jewish people, its history, and its traditions. Technically, one does not *have* a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. A person *becomes* Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Literally, this means that a girl who turns twelve and a boy who turns thirteen become "subject to the mitzvot" as Jewish adults. That is why children below the age of mitzvah cannot lead services or be counted in the minyan – they are not yet considered to be fully responsible for their actions. When the Sinai community celebrates a child becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah, it is a celebration of the newfound role that is being embraced.

For many years, the members of Congregation Sinai have viewed the celebration of becoming B'nei Mitzvah as a community event. The Rabbi, teachers, and leaders of Congregation Sinai have developed a robust program meant to instill a strong sense of community in our newest adult members. The B'nei Mitzvah program also provides a framework that positively encourages families of our B'nei Mitzvah to become integrated into the Sinai community before the big event.

Congregation Sinai is a lay-led community. We celebrate the participation of many of our members in the leadership of our services, including those who have undertaken goals of learning new skills. We are proud that many of our post *B'nei Mitzvah* members continue to serve as leaders in our services.

When your child leads services, s/he will be serving as a *shaliach tzibbur* – an Agent of the Community. This is an honor and a responsibility. A *shaliach tzibbur* is appointed by a community to be its representative to lead communal prayers and to offer prayers to God on behalf of those who are unable to do so themselves. This is a big commitment!

It is for this reason that the community has formulated reasonable expectations regarding the preparation, learning, and service attendance commitments of anyone who would step into the leadership role of a *shaliach tzibbur*.

The B'nei Mitzvah Contract

For thousands of years, since the time of Abraham, the Jewish people have had a *B'rit* (Covenant) with God. Each of us affirms this Covenant when we reach the age of *B'nei Mitzvah*. At Sinai, we view the B'nei Mitzvah preparations as a covenantal relationship between the child, the parent(s), and the Sinai community. Before final confirmation of a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* date, students, parents, the Rabbi, and the Director of Congregational Learning will discuss and sign a B'nei Mitzvah Contract. This will take place at a family learning session on March 18, 2018.

What Do B'nei Mitzvah Do?

The celebration of your child's becoming Bar/Bat mitzvah will take place within the context of a Shabbat morning service. Students participate primarily in the Torah service. Of course, every child has unique abilities and motivations, and the determination of what s/he leads will be made in consultation with the student, Rabbi, tutor, and parents and will reflect the student's proficiency and dedication.

B'nei Mitzvah lead portions of the services, which typically include the following:

- Lead the service to take the Torah out of the ark
- Receive and chant the maftir aliyah
- Deliver a D'var Torah
- Chant the Haftarah with its blessings
- Return the Torah to the ark
- Lead Ein Keloheinu and Aleinu (with other members of the B'nei Mitzvah class)
- Lead the Kiddush and Hamotzi

If a student is motivated to do more, additional opportunities include:

- Read additional Torah readings
- Lead the Shacharit (morning) service

Please note that this is a significant commitment. Learning to lead the Shacharit service will take at least six months, and requires strong Hebrew skills. Students who are interested in leading the Shacharit service should discuss the requirements with Rabbi Berkenwald far in advance.

B'nei Mitzvah Preparations

Learning these skills takes years of study. By fifth grade, your child should be able to read Hebrew proficiently. This is the year during which students attending Sinai Religious School and Yavneh Day School learn how to chant from the Torah using Torah trope. Over the next several years, students will be given opportunities to practice and improve their skills by chanting Torah in Junior Congregation and the main service.

On Sunday mornings, sixth grade students attend B'nei Mitzvah classes in which they learn Shabbat morning prayers and Haftarah chanting. Please note that these skills are not taught at Yavneh Day School.

By the time students begin working individually with a tutor, they will have already been exposed to all of the prayers and skills that they will need to eventually master.

Requirements for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Congregation Sinai

Preparation – Anyone who leads services or chants Torah or Haftarah is expected to be ready. We want to encourage *B'nei Mitzvah* to set goals that are a bit of a stretch, but that are achievable with hard work. Whatever a *B'nei Mitzvah* student leads, s/he must be prepared. When someone is unprepared, it is embarrassing for that person and disrespectful to the congregation. The Sinai *B'nei Mitzvah* program is designed to ensure that each *B'nei Mitzvah* has developed the skills necessary to confidently serve as a *shaliach tzibbur*.

Education – Congregation Sinai values Jewish education and recognizes it as a lifelong endeavor. Becoming *B'nei Mitzvah* is, in part, a celebration of the commitment to Jewish learning that a young person has embraced. All *B'nei Mitzvah* students at Congregation Sinai are expected to continue their formal Jewish learning through (at least) the end of seventh grade. If a student who has attended a Jewish Day School transfers to another school, s/he is expected to enroll in the Sinai Religious School in order to continue his/her Jewish learning. All students are expected to participate in the *B'nei Mitzvah* class throughout 6th and 7th grades.

Service Attendance – A *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is a celebration of a young person's first steps as an adult in the Jewish community. Attending services is the best way to become familiar and comfortable with Sinai's Shabbat morning service, and to develop deeper connections with the Sinai community. A person who steps up to serve as a *shaliach tzibbur* should be known by the Shabbat regulars. This is why students and their families are expected to attend Shabbat services a minimum number of times during the years preceding the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

K-2 nd Grade	7 services	5 th Grade	12 services
3 rd Grade	8 services	6 th Grade	16 services
4 th Grade	10 services	7 th Grade	12 services

Attendance on Shabbat morning is taken using a sticker and chart system managed by the Director of Congregational Learning. All students – both Religious School and Day School – should see the DCL to ensure that they receive attendance credit. Students who have met their Shabbat attendance requirements will be recognized at the end of the year.

Midway through the year, the DCL will update students regarding their attendance progress. If a sixth grade student is not on track, the family will be invited to meet with the Director of Congregational Learning and the Rabbi to discuss adjustments to the *B'nei Mitzvah* Plan.

*Although it is not the norm at Sinai, there is a possibility of a modified, non-contract Bar/Bat Mitzvah for families that are not able to commit to these requirements. Contact the Rabbi if you have questions.

Skills Checkpoints

To help students stay on track to accomplish the goals in their *B'nei Mitzvah* Plan, tutors will periodically conduct assessments. This will help ensure that students are on-track to master all of the skills. It will also enable students, in consultation with the Rabbi and tutor, to make appropriate adjustments to the *B'nei Mitzvah* Plan. If a student does not pass a “check-in,” s/he will have an opportunity to be “re-checked” two weeks later. Parents are encouraged to be present at the recheck. Please understand that this is not intended to be punitive. It is meant to enable us to identify areas of concerns early in the process. We want to avoid situations in which the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date is fast approaching and a student is still struggling to master skills.

A student who attends and participates in classes and services, and who practices his/her skills between tutoring sessions, will easily reach these goals.

The following chart is a typical schedule of the checkpoints for various skills that *B'nei Mitzvah* students master. Please note that there might be variations to the deadlines depending on the tutor.

Skill/Role	Check-In ability	Deadline before BM
Have an aliyah	Can recite blessings before and after aliyah	4 weeks before
Deliver a D'var Torah	Meet with RJB	6 weeks before
Lead Kiddush and Hamotzi	Mastery	4 weeks before
Lead First Half of Torah Service	Mastery of 1st half of Torah Service	8 weeks before
Lead Second Half of Torah Service	Mastery of 2 nd half of Torah Service	4 weeks before
Chant Haftarah	Chant 1 st half of Haftarah	4 months before
Chant Maftir Aliyah	Chant entire Maftir smoothly	5 weeks before
Chant an additional aliyah	Chant <i>aliyah</i> fluently from Torah	3 weeks before
Lead Shacharit	Chant all prayers in Shacharit service fluently	4 weeks before

Tutoring

Your child will work with a Sinai tutor to learn his/her Torah and Haftarah readings, as well as the portions of the service that s/he will be leading. Most students begin their individual preparations approximately seven months before the date, attending 24 weekly ½-hour tutoring sessions at Congregation Sinai. It is your responsibility to schedule tutoring sessions. You should contact your child’s tutor nine months beforehand so that tutoring can begin on time. If you feel that your child needs additional time, you can make arrangements with a tutor at an earlier date. Contact the Sinai office for information about tutors.

If additional tutoring sessions are required, families may make their own private arrangements with the tutor.

If you wish to hire an outside tutor, you must first contact the Rabbi, who will determine whether the prospective tutor is qualified to provide instruction that meets the standards of Congregation Sinai. If a non-Sinai tutor is approved, the B'nei Mitzvah fee will be reduced by \$400.

Seventh Grade B'nei Mitzvah Class

All seventh grade students will participate in the B'nei Mitzvah class throughout the seventh grade year. The monthly class will focus on what it means to be a responsible member of the Jewish community. It will include hands-on volunteer projects at the synagogue and off-site.

Membership Requirement

It is the policy of Congregation Sinai that a family belong to the synagogue for a full two years prior to an observance of a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. For practical purposes, this means that a family must join Sinai no later than December of the child's 5th grade year, when the first of a series of Family B'nei Mitzvah Learning Sessions takes place.

A family's financial obligations to Congregation Sinai must be paid in full 3 months prior to a Bar or Bat Mitzvah celebration, including payment of dues through a date one month after the event.

We look forward to many years together after your child has been welcomed as an adult member of the community. Please note that every family must remain members in good standing through the end of the fiscal year in which the simchah takes place.

Planning Ahead for B'nei Mitzvah Expenses

As you are fully aware, preparing for your child's becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah is not free. In addition to some of the significant expenses like invitations, family meals, parties, photographers, etc., you should plan ahead for synagogue fees. Here is what you can expect:

The B'nei Mitzvah fee is \$1600 per child. This fee covers all 6th and 7th grade B'nei Mitzvah classes, family sessions, and individual tutoring sessions. The first \$800 of the fees will be paid during 5th grade, before a Bar/Bat Mitzvah date can be scheduled on the Sinai calendar. The second \$800 of the fees will be paid before tutoring can begin. Plan to make your payment to the synagogue before scheduling your child's first tutoring appointment.

For sponsoring the kiddush after services, there is a fee for use of the social hall. This covers the costs of setup and cleanup, as well as some use of the kitchen during the preceding week. See the second half of this handbook for more information.

Please note that these fees do not cover the full extent of the costs incurred by Congregation Sinai. Because it is the responsibility of the entire community to provide for the education of its children, the true cost of Congregation Sinai's B'nei Mitzvah program is partially subsidized by the membership.

Invitations

Please make sure that all students from the Sinai B'nei Mitzvah class are invited to the Shabbat service and any party/event involving your child's peers. A class roster will be provided to you.

When you compose the language of your invitations, remember to indicate that Shabbat morning services begin at 9:00 am.

Student's Personal Message

During the month preceding your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah, a photo and personal message by your child will appear on the Sinai website.

The personal message should be written by the student. This is an opportunity for the student to share meaningful thoughts with the entire community. The article should be no more than 150 words (If it is longer, it will be edited down). Use the following questions as a guide:

- What have you learned during your preparations?
- What are you looking forward to about becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

The article and picture are due on the first day of the month preceding the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. For example, if the date is March 16, the article is due on February 1. Photos should be high resolution, vertically oriented, not blurry, and with a close up on the face.

Shabbat Bulletin

A double-sided, half page insert will be included in the weekly Shabbat bulletin. You are invited to compose a greeting to the congregation and guests. Please limit your text to no more than 275 words. The other side will list the names of people who are given honors during the service. We will also include the photo and personal message of your child that was published online. Please submit your greeting to the office by email at least two weeks before the event

***Sadranim* (Greeters)**

One of the ways that parents of the B'nei Mitzvah class support each other is by serving as *sadranim* (greeters) for one another. *Sadranim* welcome guests and congregants and help distribute kippot, siddurim, chumashim, and Shabbat brochures. They also let guests know where we are in the service and answer questions. For those who are new to a Shabbat Service, we have a blue booklet *All you want to know about Shabbat Services - a guide for the perplexed* to hand out.

Each family will serve as greeters for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service immediately preceding its own. Greeters should arrive at synagogue at 9 am to begin to welcome guests to the congregation. While kids are welcome to help with greeting, there must be an adult present throughout the service. If you are unavailable at the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service prior to your child's, it is your responsibility to trade greeting dates with another family.

Clothing

While Congregation Sinai's culture is fairly informal, the clothing that one wears to synagogue should reflect the holiness of Shabbat and holidays. This is especially true for someone leading services as the representative of the community (*shaliach tzibbur*). On the day of your child becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah, this certainly applies. Clothing that is acceptable or appropriate for a party, concert, or other occasion might not be appropriate in synagogue.

One of our duties as parents is to provide guidance to our children regarding appropriate clothing for holy places and sacred occasions.

The following are Sinai's standards for anyone who leads services on Shabbat morning. This is the basic rule of thumb: If a service leader's clothing might distract a typical worshipper from prayer, it is probably not appropriate.

Clothing should be clean and not have visible tears. Shirts should not be low-cut, should cover the shoulders, and should not have any writing or images that are inappropriate to a sacred setting. Long pants and a shirt with a collar or nice sweater is acceptable. Skirts or dresses should be about knee length or longer. Jeans are not appropriate. A leader should not be barefoot. Out of respect for the holiness of the sanctuary and of Jewish worship, males and females are expected to wear a head covering and a *tallit*.

The Rehearsal

The rehearsal with the Rabbi should be scheduled for no later than Thursday preceding the Bar/Bat Mitzvah (preferably Wednesday). The purpose of the rehearsal is, first and foremost, to give the Bar/Bat Mitzvah an opportunity to review everything that he/she will be involved in during the Shabbat service. Students have an opportunity to practice, ask questions, and build their confidence. The rehearsal takes approximately two hours, and usually requires that the student miss some school. Parents and siblings typically attend the rehearsal, and are sometimes joined by close relatives.

Family members and friends who would like to practice reading Torah, having an aliyah, hagbahah, etc., are invited to participate.

You are welcome to take photographs or video recordings, but posed pictures should be scheduled before or after the rehearsal. Some families schedule sessions for family photographs on Friday. Please contact the Sinai office to arrange a convenient time.

The Day of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Shabbat morning services begin at 9:00 am. Plan to be in the sanctuary ten minutes early so that you have time to get situated before your guests begin to arrive. Services begin with *birkhot hashachar* (morning blessings) and *p'sukei d'zimrah* (opening psalms of praise, i.e. warmups) at 9:00 am. *Shacharit* (the morning service) begins at approximately 9:30 am, and the Torah service begins around 10:00 am.

Kiddush and Hamotzi

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah leads Kiddush, *al n'tilat yadayim* (the prayer for washing hands) and *hamotzi* (the prayer over bread) in the sanctuary at the end of Shabbat morning services. This ensures that everyone will be able to hear and participate in the blessings, and makes crowd control much easier.

Make sure to provide two regular-sized *challot* for the blessings in the sanctuary. Wine and grape juice should be grape only and must have a valid kosher certification (the plain letter “K” is insufficient). Kedem and Manischewitz are both readily available. Blackberry wine, although tasty, is not acceptable for Kiddush. In addition, wine and grape juice, washing stations, and *challah* should be provided in the foyer for everyone attending services.

Honoring Those Who Helped Make it Happen

It is customary to make a donation to the shul in honor of your *simchah*. You may also wish to make donations in honor of others who helped, such as the Rabbi, tutor, religious school teachers, or office personnel.

Tablets on the Simchah Board, which is on display in the foyer, can be dedicated in honor of your child. Contact the Sinai office for more details.

A Word About Gender Roles in Judaism

Congregation Sinai is a pluralistic, egalitarian synagogue. We teach children of all genders in the same classrooms. They learn the same material, and are taught to have equal roles in Judaism. All children are expected to lead the same prayers, and chant the same Torah and Haftarah portions during their B'nei Mitzvah.

Just as we emphasize that males and females participate in public religious life equally, we also emphasize that they have equal religious obligations.

For this reason, all B'nei Mitzvah students are expected to wear tallitot and tefillin, as well as have their heads covered while they are in the synagogue.

We support students who identify as non-binary and work with them and their families to determine language that affirms how they see and express themselves.

Some adult women are uncomfortable with wearing a tallit and/or a kipah. The gendered images and roles with which we grow up are extremely powerful, and often difficult to overcome. Mothers often express the hope that their daughters will eagerly embrace these mitzvot even though they themselves cannot bring themselves to take them on.

Keep in mind that children look to their parents as role models for just about everything in life, whether or not they are willing to admit it. The effect on a daughter of seeing her mother taking on the mitzvot of kipah, tallit and tefillin, despite her discomfort, is significant. For this reason, mothers who do not yet wear tallitot, tefillin, and/or kippot are especially encouraged to experiment with these mitzvot in order to be examples (*dugmaot*) for their daughters.

Putting the Mitzvah in B'nei Mitzvah

B'nei Mitzvah parents will have many opportunities to teach Jewish values to their children during this experience. Keep in mind that a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is the celebration of your child's Jewish future. When you make decisions, do so with mitzvot in mind.

The following are some opportunities to include mitzvot in the planning and celebration of your child's becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

- **Kashrut** – The meal of celebration that one eats after a simchah is considered to be a *seudat mitzvah* – a feast of mitzvah. As your child becomes a Jewish adult, think about the message you send when you choose to serve kosher food at your party. Even if you do not keep kosher yourself, consider at least serving fish or vegetarian food during this meal celebrating your child's entry into the company of Jewish adults.
- **Shabbat** – You can send a powerful message to your child about the importance of Shabbat when you schedule B'nei Mitzvah celebrations. If you are thinking about having a Saturday night party, find out when Shabbat ends, and begin with Havdallah. During daylight savings months, consider having a Sunday party instead of beginning while it is still Shabbat.
- **Kipot** – B'nei Mitzvah families often provide special kipot for guests. Multi-colored, handmade fair trade kippot are available from www.mayanhands.org or www.mayaworks.org. Eco-Suede Kippot (made from recycled cardboard, from Israel) are also available. Significant bulk discounts are usually available.
- **Centerpieces for Tzedakah** – Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley will provide color-coordinated food baskets in lieu of flowers. Rental fees support Project N.O.A.H. Food Assistance Program, providing food year-round for the needy in our community. Check out www.jfssv.org for more information.
- **MAZON – A Jewish Response to Hunger** – It has always been a Jewish custom to share one's happiness with those who are hungry. MAZON's 3% Circle includes those who commit to donating 3% of whatever is spent on the celebration to finding lasting solutions to hunger. MAZON provides table cards, centerpiece cards, and more. www.mazon.org.
- **Tzedakah** – Your child will probably receive a considerable number of gifts. Encourage him/her to donate a percentage of the gifts (perhaps 10%) to one or more worthy causes. Consider especially supporting Jewish organizations. If you have questions about organizations to support, Rabbi Berkenwald is happy to help.
- **Mitzvah Project** – While giving tzedakah is a mitzvah, it is not a Mitzvah Project. Students are encouraged to roll up their sleeves and get their hands dirty by volunteering for an organization or putting together their own project. While there is not a formal requirement, students are encouraged to take on a personal project. Rabbi Berkenwald is happy to help students identify and contact worthy organizations.

Schedule for working on the D'var Torah with Rabbi Berkenwald

1st Meeting - 6 weeks before

To prepare, the student should:

- Read the *entire* Torah portion and Haftarah in English. You can consult books or the internet for summaries, but you should also read the original itself. Please use the translation in the Etz Hayim humash (the red covered volume that we use in shul).
- Complete the handout entitled "Preparing to Write Your D'var Torah." Be sure to bring it with you to your meeting with Rabbi Berkenwald
- You can also look at commentaries. Rabbi Berkenwald will be happy to offer suggestions for outside resources.

At the meeting, the student and Rabbi Berkenwald will:

- discuss the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process as a whole, and what it means to become a Jewish adult
- study the parashah together
- discuss the D'var Torah and formulate a thesis and an outline

Afterwards, the student should:

- Write the first *complete* draft of the D'var Torah. The handout, "Writing the First Draft of Your D'var Torah" will provide guidance.
- Be sure to share the D'var Torah with Rabbi Berkenwald on Google Drive.

2nd Meeting - 4 weeks before

At this meeting, the student and Rabbi Berkenwald will:

- study the Torah portion in greater depth, bringing in commentaries when appropriate
- read and edit the first draft of the D'var Torah

Afterwards, the student should:

- Continue editing the D'var Torah until it is complete

3rd Meeting - 2 weeks before

At this meeting, the student and Rabbi Berkenwald will:

- read through the D'var Torah to make final revisions
- discuss feelings about the approaching Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Afterwards, the student should:

- practice delivering D'var Torah in front of a mirror, parents, friends, pets, immobilized siblings, etc.

These are general guidelines. Of course, every student is unique. If more time is needed, or if there are other considerations, please contact Rabbi Berkenwald.

Preparing to Write Your D'var Torah
To be completed before your first meeting with the Rabbi

My Name _____ Parashah _____

1. **Read the entire Parashah and Haftarah** in English (or a language you understand fluently). It would be a good idea to do this **out loud** with an adult.

Please note: the Parashah is the **entire** portion for that week, not just the aliyah that you are chanting. A parashah is typically 3-5 chapters from the Torah. If you have a special maftir from a different part of the Torah, be sure to study it *in addition* to the weekly portion. If you have questions about what you are supposed to read, please ask Rabbi Berkenwald

2. Based upon the Parashah, please **answer the questions** on this worksheet.
3. **Bring** this worksheet with you to your first meeting with Rabbi Berkenwald.

1. In which of the five books of the Torah does the Parashah take place? _____

2. The Parashah begins at chapter _____ verse _____ and ends at chapter _____ verse _____.

3. **Where** do the events in the Parashah take place?

4. **When** (among the stories of the Torah) does the Parashah take place?

5. List the **important characters** who appear in the Parashah:

6. List 3 **major events** that occur in the Parashah. If the Parashah contains mostly laws, list 3 **significant laws**

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

7. Come up with 3 (or more) **questions** about the Parashah. The best questions deal with things in the text that bothered you, or sections that you really liked.

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

8. What is one thing you like about **being Jewish**?

9. What is one thing that you would **change** (about anything – yourself, school, the United States, the world, etc.), if you could?

Writing the First Draft of Your D'var Torah

This should help you organize and write the first draft of your D'var Torah.

1. For your second meeting, complete your entire rough draft. Compose it in Google Docs and share it with rebyehoshua@gmail.com before your meeting.
2. Put yourself in the shoes of a listener who does not know anything about the *parashah*, understands little about Judaism, and cannot read Hebrew. What does this person need to hear to understand your point?
3. Every thing you say should help develop your thesis. Anything that does not move your argument forward should probably not be said.
4. There is no rule about how long a *D'var Torah* should be. If you have been able to fully communicate your thesis, it will be the right length. (But most *Divrei Torah* are 700-1100 words.)

INTRODUCTION

- **Hook** — Grab your listeners' attention. This can be with a story, a joke, a provocative question— something that would be interesting to most people (not the *parashah*). Your opening should set up your thesis.
- **Thesis** — What lesson will your listeners come away with? You should be able to say it in **one sentence only** (no run-ons). A thesis should teach your listeners something about their lives.

THREE BODY PARAGRAPHS

1. Something in the *parashah* supports this thesis (a story, a character, a law). Tell the story or law in your own words. Make it dramatic and exciting (see below). Include all details that a listener who is completely unfamiliar with the Torah needs in order to understand – and no more!
2. This is where you prove your thesis. Ask a question/raise a dilemma about the section of the *parashah* that you have just discussed. Suggest possible answers, referring to at least one traditional commentary. Your final answer to the question/dilemma you raised should directly support your thesis.
3. How does your thesis relate to our lives? Give examples from world events, popular culture, your own life, etc. How does this give us insight into what it means to be a Jew or a human being?

CONCLUSION

- Restate your thesis (in different words).
- Relate to your thesis personally. How do you intend to apply this lesson to your life, as a responsible member of the Jewish community?
- You might want to talk about a mitzvah project (volunteer hours) or a tzedakah project (donating money).
- Wrap up your *D'var Torah* with a final, inspiring message. What would you like your listeners to do or think about now that they have heard you speak?

GIVING THANKS

- After your D'var Torah's conclusion, pause for 3-5 seconds.
- If you can connect your thesis to your Thank You's, it will be a smoother transition.
- Then, thank all of the people who helped you prepare for this day: teachers, Rabbi, parents, siblings, etc.
- Vary your thank you language (I would like to thank..., Thank you..., I appreciate..., etc.)
- For each person you thank, try to think about something special that you appreciate about that person. The best Thank You's are personal and honest, and can only be said by you.

ENDING

End with the following:

“Shabbat Shalom. The *Haftarah* for *Parashat* _____ can be found on page _____ in the red *Etz Hayim chumash*.”

GENERAL GUIDELINES REGARDING LANGUAGE

- Usually, the fewer words it takes to describe something, the easier it is for a listener to understand. Keep your sentences short.
- When describing what happens in the Torah portion, you can make it exciting for your listeners by telling it in the **present tense** and by using as much **dialogue** as possible.
- Unless you are telling a story about yourself, it is generally advisable to avoid speaking in the 1st person singular (I, me). It puts up a barrier between the speaker and the audience.
- Similarly, avoid the 2nd person (you). Instead, consider using the 3rd person singular (he, she, a person, etc.) or the 1st person plural (we, us). It is more inviting.
- Avoid expressions like: “I think,” “In my opinion,” “I thought about it and then decided,” etc. Statements like these only make your speech weaker.

RECOMMENDED ONLINE RESOURCES

Torah Sparks from the Conservative Yeshiva—<http://www.conservativeyeshiva.org/torahsparks/>

Torah From the Jewish Theological Seminary—<http://www.jtsa.edu/jts-torah-online>
Has the *parasha* (Torah portion) in English and a large archive of commentaries on each *parasha*.

MyJewishLearning.com—<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/>
A comprehensive adult Jewish education website with a section on the weekly *parasha* that includes many contemporary commentaries.

Iyunim: Weekly insights on the parasha with commentaries by Nehama Leibovitz
<http://www.jewishagency.org/nechama-leibowitz/>
High level analysis of the *parasha* and medieval commentators by a giant of contemporary Torah interpretation.

The Judaica Press Complete Tanach with Rashi
https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/63255/jewish/The-Bible-with-Rashi.htm
A translation of Rashi's commentary, the classic interpretation of the Bible from the 11th century.

Torah Study from the Union for Reform Judaism.
<https://reformjudaism.org/learning/torah-study>

Aliyot and Other Honors for B'nei Mitzvah

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Child: _____ **Parshah:** _____ **Date:** _____

This form includes all honors that you may pre-assign. To include the maximum number of people in the service, a person may only receive one honor. Any honors that are not pre-assigned will be distributed by the Honors Gabbai to members of the congregation on the day of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Please submit this completed form to the synagogue office at least two weeks before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Be sure to indicate if an honoree is a kohen or levi, as a kohen can only receive the first aliyah, and a levi can only receive the second aliyah. Please note that this form does not indicate the order of aliyot, which will be determined in consultation with the Rabbi.

Honor	Hebrew Name of Honoree <i>bar/bat</i> Honoree's Father's and Mother's Hebrew Names (transliterated)	English Name (first and last), Relationship to Bar/Bat Mitzvah
Petichah (Open Ark)		
Petichah (Open Ark)		
Aliyah		
Aliyah		
Aliyah		
Aliyah		
Aliyah		
Maftir/ah – Bar/Bat Mitzvah		
Hagbahah (lift the Torah)		
G'lilah (tie the Torah)		
Prayer for Our Country (English Reading)		
Prayer for the State of Israel (preferably in Hebrew)		
Prayer for Peace (English Reading, 1–2 max)		
Ashrei (1-2 max, usually kids)	Must be approved by Rabbi	
Petichah (Open Ark)		
Petichah (Open Ark)		
Greeter	Family from upcoming B. Mitzvah	
Candy Distributors	Should be two or more children. Note: candy should not be passed out in the balcony	

Frequently Asked Questions About Aliyot, Honors, and Participation

During B'nei Mitzvah celebrations, Congregation Sinai strives to strike a balance between observing and honoring the Shabbat, marking the transformation of a child into a Bar/Bat mitzvah, and respecting the customs and practices of Sinai's members.

Ours is a vibrant community with congregants at all stages of life. The celebration of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah on Shabbat is an occasion of joy and pride for our entire community. A child becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah is an event that takes place within the context of the community's regular observance of Shabbat.

As such, it is important that there be standard policies in place, both to be in accordance with Jewish law and tradition as well as to make it possible for the Rabbi, staff, and volunteers to meet the needs of the entire community.

The following are a list of frequently asked questions regarding honors. If you have further questions that are not addressed below, please do not hesitate to ask.

Which honors are available for me to distribute?

The form entitled "Aliyot and Other Honors for Bar/Bat Mitzvah" (on the previous page of this packet) includes all of the honors that you are able to pre-assign. You do not need to pre-assign all of the honors on that form. To include the maximum number of people in the service, a person may only receive one honor. Any honors that are not pre-assigned will be distributed by the Honors Gabbai to members of the congregation on the day of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Note that the 5 aliyot available for you to distribute are not numbered. The Ritual Committee, in consultation with you and Rabbi Berkenwald, will determine the order of aliyot. Please indicate if you have any requests.

What if I have more people whom I would like to honor?

There are other moments during the weekend at which family members and friends can be honored, such as Shabbat dinner, a Sunday brunch, or a party. Unfortunately, there are simply no more available honors during the Shabbat morning service. Your guests should understand the limitations that you face, and can keep in mind that your child is the person whom it is most important to honor.

Why am I not permitted to assign all seven of the aliyot?

There are a number of circumstances during which a person is obligated to receive an aliyah, including: observance of a yahrtzeit (anniversary of a relative's death), recovery from a serious illness, return from a long trip, aufruf, the birth of a child, baby naming/brit milah, etc. Out of respect for our community, aliyot must be available for congregants to whom these circumstances apply.

Am I responsible for finding people to lead services and read Torah?

No. You are not required to find sh'lichei tzibbur (service leaders) or Torah readers. Sinai's ritual committee assigns people every week to lead Pesukei D'zimrah, Shacharit, and Musaf as well as to read Torah. Leading services and reading Torah are, however, excellent ways to honor someone who has the requisite knowledge and skills.

There are volunteers who are responsible for assigning service leaders and Torah readers (and they love it when people volunteer). If you would like to ask someone who already has the requisite skills to lead services or read Torah, please contact the appropriate coordinator no later than three months prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Please note: If the prospective shaliach tzibbur is not a congregant who is familiar with Sinai's services, he or she must speak with Rabbi Berkenwald to review our minhagim (customs).

Be aware that Sinai follows the annual cycle of Torah readings, completing the entire parashah each week (unlike many other Conservative synagogues). This is a significant amount of chanting, taking up a large portion of our service. Our community gives proper respect to the Torah and the congregation by having Torah readers chant fluently from the unmarked Torah scroll according to the trope markings. If you are thinking about inviting any of your guests to read Torah, please make sure that he/she will be able to adequately prepare. If this is going to be someone's first time reading a Torah portion of this length, you may want to reconsider to avoid an awkward situation.

How do I write the Hebrew name of an honoree on the Aliyah Form?

At Sinai, we call up each honoree by his/her Hebrew name, along with the Hebrew names of his/her father and mother. The formula for calling someone to the Torah is as follows:

[Honoree's Name] *bar/bat* [Father's Name] *v'*[Mother's Name]

Here are two examples: Yitzchak *ben* Avraham *v'*Sarah and Dinah *bat* Ya'akov *v'*Leah. Please include the Hebrew names of honorees on the Aliyot Form.

Can more than one person share an aliyah?

According to Jewish law, only one person may be called up for an aliyah. This is considered to be the proper way to give honor to the Torah.

Under special circumstances (such as B'nei Mitzvah), a married couple can come up to the Torah together in the following manner: one person is called up to receive the aliyah, accompanied by his or her spouse. The aliyah recipient alone recites the blessings before and after the Torah reading. If a married couple is going to come up for an aliyah, please indicate on the Aliyah Form which spouse will receive the honor and recite the blessings by listing his/her name first.

What is Sinai's practice regarding kohanim and leviim?

It is the practice of Congregation Sinai to only give the first aliyah to the son of a kohen. The second aliyah may only be given to the son of a levi. If there is no levi present, the same kohen who received the first aliyah will also receive the second aliyah. A kohen and levi may not be called up for any aliyah other than the first and second, respectively. The exception to this rule is the acharon aliyah (see below).

Please indicate whether any of your honorees is a kohen or levi on the Aliyot Form by indicating "hakohen"/"halevi" after the honoree's father's Hebrew name. A kohen/levi is included in the five aliyot which you are entitled to distribute.

What is an acharon aliyah?

An acharon (last) aliyah is an additional Torah reading that is created by splitting one of the seven standard Torah readings into two. An acharon aliyah will be designated at the Rabbi's discretion to ensure that an Israel aliyah is available for a congregant. This is done when the B'nei Mitzvah family does not assign the kohen or the levi aliyah, when the B'nei Mitzvah family has numerous members who are kohanim/leviim, and when twins celebrate their B'nei Mitzvah together.

Even if an acharon aliyah is designated, you will still only have five aliyot to assign to guests.

Who will serve as a greeter?

The family members of the upcoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah will serve as greeters. Please be sure to contact them to confirm their availability.

Am I responsible for assigning the gabbaim?

No. The gabbaim who call up honorees to receive aliyot and assist the Torah readers are assigned by the Ritual Committee.

How do non-Jewish parents participate in the service?

Congregation Sinai is committed to welcoming non-Jewish parents, and respects the serious commitment it takes to raise children in a Jewish environment. A non-Jewish parent comes up to the bimah during his or her child's maftir reading, and to bless his or her child. He or she can also lead the congregation in A Prayer for our Country (148) or A Prayer for Peace (149).

How can I honor a non-Jewish relative or friend?

Non-Jewish relatives and friends are permitted to lead the congregation in A Prayer for our Country (148) and A Prayer for Peace (149).

Are there honors that can be passed out to children who are not yet b'nei mitzvah?

Yes. Jewish children can lead A Prayer for our Country (148), A Prayer for the State of Israel (149), A Prayer for Peace (149), and can open and close the ark. Children usually lead Ashrei (151) as well. Because Ashrei involves chanting a significant amount of difficult Hebrew, Rabbi Berkenwald must approve any child(ren) whom you are considering choosing. In addition, all members of Sinai's B'nei Mitzvah class are invited to lead Ein Keloheinu, Aleinu, and the Kiddush. All pre-B'nei Mitzvah students are invited to lead Adon Olam (187).

Pre-B'nei Mitzvah students with the requisite skill can read a Torah portion (but cannot have an aliyah). Please check with Rabbi Berkenwald far in advance if you are considering this.

Who wears a kippah and tallit at Congregation Sinai?

Wearing a kippah is considered to be a sign of respect and humility in Judaism, and is traditionally worn during services, while learning, and while eating. It is our custom for all those who come up to the bimah, including females and children, to wear a kippah or other appropriate head covering. Jewish men are expected to wear a tallit, and Jewish women are encouraged to wear one as well.

Out of respect for the sanctity of the synagogue, males (Jewish as well as non-Jewish) are asked to wear a kippah while on synagogue grounds. Women who choose to do so are also encouraged to cover their heads.

To whom should I assign the honor of Hagbahah (lifting the Torah)?

Since it involves a considerable amount of forearm strength and balance, we recommend that the honor of Hagbahah be assigned to someone with experience. An inexperienced lifter should make an appointment to come to the synagogue for a brief "training session."

What is the honor of Gelilah?

The person honored with Gelilah is responsible for "dressing" the Torah after it is lifted during hagbahah. The gabbaim will assist the honoree by passing the various ornaments used to tie and decorate the Torah.

Parents' Blessings to B'nei Mitzvah

It is the custom of Congregation Sinai for parents to bless their child following the maftir aliyah. Parents are free to select, adapt or write their own blessings. Below are some suggestions for preparing your blessing, as well as several examples, which you are free to use or modify.

Remember, a blessing is not a speech.

The blessing should be three minutes or less. It is important to prepare and write out your blessing in advance. Please keep in mind that most people speak at a rate of about 130 words per minute. It is not necessary for more than one parent to speak, although it is certainly acceptable.

The following is advice compiled from several B'nei Mitzvah guides.

- **Be honest.** Your blessing will only be meaningful if you speak from the heart.
- **Be prepared.** This is not the time to wing it. Write your remarks down ahead of time.
- **Be positive.** If there were difficult moments along the road to this day, you might mention them in passing, but only if you think it will not hurt your child's feelings. Otherwise, stick to the happy memories.
- **Be short and to the point.** The service tends to be long, and the parents' blessing comes towards the end of the morning. If your blessing drags things out, people will lose their concentration and miss the impact of what you say. The power of a blessing is its ability to succinctly capture the emotion of the moment. If you are having a party or reception later, you will have plenty of time to share your feelings about how special your child is and how much the day means to you (as well as share all of those embarrassing stories from when your child was six years old).
- **Make it relevant.** Some parents connect their blessing to the message of the Torah portion.
- **Remember that you are speaking to your child.** Even if the room is filled with hundreds of important guests, no one there is more important than your child. This is an opportunity to publicly express your love for your child directly, simply, and with grace. Also, keep in mind that most middle school age children would rather that their parents did not speak about them at length in public in the middle of Shabbat morning services.

What is a Blessing?

Moses Maimonides (1135 – 1204) identifies three kinds of blessings:

1. Blessings for the pleasure and enjoyment we derive from tastes, sounds, fragrances, and extraordinary sights. (Birkhot Nehenin)
2. Blessings recited to accompany the performance of mitzvot commanded by the Torah or tradition. This kind of brakhah includes the words, "Asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu..."--"Who has made us holy/consecrated us with mitzvot and commanded us to..." (Birkhot Mitzvah)

3. Blessings recited at personal or private occasions. These may be times of joy or moments of sadness, as an expression of affirmation of life and love of God. They are not based on a formula, but come from the heart.

Preparing Your Blessing

Some parents prefer to rely on a blessing formula, finding comfort in the ritual and language of the ages, both because it is historically resonant and because we ourselves may not feel capable of creating a suitable prayer to express our thoughts and feelings. Other parents prefer to express themselves in a more original and personal way. Either approach, or a combination, is appropriate.

Most blessings and prayers associated with joyous occasions focus on the following:

- gratitude to God
- appreciation for all that has been and is
- hopes and dreams for the future

As you prepare your own blessing, consider using the following questions to help you find meaningful words to express your gratitude, appreciation, and dreams.

Questions to ask your child:

- When you think about your life in general, what are you most proud of? What are you most thankful for? What brings you the most happiness?
- When you think about becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah, about leading services, chanting Torah and Haftarah, and being counted as a Jewish adult, what do you feel?
- When you think about the future in general, what do you wish for?
- When you think about your future as a Jewish adult, what do you hope for?
- Are there any people, alive or not, whom you admire? What about them makes you feel that way? Are any of these people Jewish? Can you think of any Jewish role models?
- When your parents bless you during services, does it make a difference to you if the words are in English, Hebrew, or some combination?

Questions for the Parents of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah:

- When you think about your child, what thoughts come to mind? What are you most thankful for? What are you most proud of?
- When you think about your child becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah, what do you feel? How do you feel about your child leading services, reading Torah, and being “counted” as a Jewish adult?
- When you think about your child’s future in general, what hopes, dreams or wishes do you have for him/her?
- When you think about your child’s future as a Jewish adult, what do you hope for? Do you envision your child leading services and/or reading Torah in the future?
- When you imagine blessing your child as he/she becomes Bar/Bat Mitzvah, do you think that traditional Jewish words (in Hebrew or in English) -- words that may include thoughts about God and Torah – might enhance the expression of your feelings and thoughts?

Examples of Parents' Blessings from a Variety of Sources:

Barukh atah adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, she-p'tarani me-onsho shel zeh (m) / zo (f).

Praised are You Adonai our God, who rules the universe, who has released me from the punishment for "this one"

- Traditional blessing recited by parents when child has first aliyah

Praised is God who has granted new responsibility to _____ and to us. As _____ begins to enjoy (his / her) new status among the Jewish people, a status which redefines our own role in (his / her) life, may God grant us the wisdom to continue as guides and counselors, allowing _____ to live in accordance with the teachings of our Torah as a responsible Jewish adult.

- The Rabbinical Assembly Rabbi's Manual

"May you live to see your world fulfilled, May you be our link to future worlds, and may your hope encompass all the generations to be. May your heart conceive with understanding, may your mouth speak wisdom and your tongue be stirred with sounds of joy. May your gaze be straight and sure, your eyes be lit with Torah's lamp, your face aglow with heaven's radiance, your lips expressing words of knowledge, and your inner self alive with righteousness. And may you always rush in eagerness to hear the words of One more ancient than all time."

- Talmud, Berachot 17a

Surrounded by our family, friends, and our community, we share these prayers we have for you:

May you have the ability to make your hopes and dreams come true, and may you see your visions come to be.

May you be blessed with patience and understanding, with wisdom and compassion, in your heart and deeds.

May your deeds support justice and righteousness, and your goodness serve as an example to those around you.

May your enthusiasm for learning continue throughout your life, and bring you great personal joy and fulfillment.

May your Judaism not be something inherited, but something to be discovered.

We thank You, O God, for the joyous fulfillment we feel as our son/daughter reaches the threshold of adulthood.

How privileged we feel that he/she is our son/daughter, and that he/she is bound to us by bonds of love, of memory, and of hope! Praise to You, Adonai our God, who has kept us alive, and sustained us, and enabled us to reach this day.

O God, accept our thankfulness for the thirteen years that have come and gone; bless our hope for the years that are yet to be. May Your mercy and guidance accompany this Bar/Bat Mitzvah at all times, in a life marked by reverence for Torah and love of all Your 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 and 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 grace of the Torah rhythm dance in your soul.

- Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg-Sasso (adapted)

On this Shabbat when our daughter/son becomes a Bat/Bar Mitzvah, we have come with her/him 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, thus sharing with You in the miracle of creation. We are grateful for the thirteen years of nurturing this life, for the unnumbered joys and challenges which these years have brought us. Praise to You, Adonai, for keeping us alive, for sustaining us, and for enabling us to reach this day.

Bless our daughter/son, O God; watch over, protect, and guide her/him. Help her/him to continue to grow in body and mind, in soul and character. Keep her/him loyal to our people and to the teachings of our Torah. May her/his life be rich and rewarding. May all her/his deeds bring pride to us, honor to the house of Israel, and glory to Your name.

Our God, may this day of excitement and joy remain always with us. May it be a source of inspiration to us, to enhance our commitment to our People and to our religious heritage.

With family and friends here to join in our celebration of life, we pray that the bonds of love and closeness will grow ever stronger and that our feeling of love for each other will be constantly strengthened.

We pray that this day reminds our son/daughter of the responsibility he/she has as a Jew to do whatever he/she can to make the world a better place for him/her, for the Jewish People, and for all the inhabitants of the earth.

We thank You, Eternal God, for granting strength to reach this day.

We thank You for the joyous privilege of seeing our daughter/son attain this milestone. We recognize that life itself is truly the greatest blessing, but to have the opportunity to share our life with others and to give of ourselves is a gift beyond compare.

We thank You for the special blessing of being able to share in our daughter/son's life, to love, to guide and to nurture her/him as she/he matures. Help us to set a worthy example for our child. May we always have the strength to give her/him the support she/he needs us to give.

Grant our daughter/son a growing understanding of the true significance of this occasion and a deepening loyalty to everything which it represents. We pray that she/he will translate becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah into a life-long commitment to Jewish living and Jewish values. May she/he be a strong link in our Tradition and translate its values and concerns into her/his daily life.

With family and friends here to join in our celebration of life, we pray that the bonds of love and closeness will grow ever stronger and that our feelings of love for each other will be constantly strengthened.

We pray that You grant our daughter/son Your gifts of long years and good health to enable her/him to be a constant source of pride and joy to You, to the Jewish People, to our family and to her/himself.

Tallit and Tefillin

Reaching the age of bar/bat mitzvah means becoming responsible to observe the commandments as an adult member of the community. During the seventh grade year, students will learn how to put on a tallit (prayer shawl) and tefillin (phylacteries: black leather boxes and straps that contain verses from the Torah), and will develop a personal connection to these ancient Jewish mitzvot.

Tallit

Students will learn how and why to fulfill the mitzvah of tzitzit (fringes on the four corners of the tallit). Lessons in the B'nei Mitzvah curriculum include learning about the mitzvah of tzitzit along with learning how to tie the knots.

Students begin to wear a tallit regularly in synagogue once they become B'nei Mitzvah. You, a relative, or a close friend should purchase a tallit for your child. This is an important ritual item that s/he will take along wherever s/he goes in life. There are many reasonably priced, beautiful tallitot available in Judaica shops and online.

Please note: If you are having an artist make a custom tallit for your child, please make sure that kosher tzitzit strings are being used. Some artists are not familiar with the rules for kosher tzitzit. You could even tie the tzitzit yourselves, which can be very meaningful. Contact the Rabbi with any questions.

Tefillin

Tefillin are traditionally worn by post B'nei Mitzvah Jews during weekday morning prayers. During the B'nei Mitzvah year, all students in the B'nei Mitzvah class will be taught how to put on tefillin with the appropriate blessings.

It is an excellent time to purchase a set of tefillin when your child becomes Bar/t Mitzvah. There are many sources for tefillin. They can be purchased at local Judaica shops. In addition, there are many online retailers. If you are interested in additional sources for purchasing tefillin, feel free to contact the Rabbi for suggestions.

You may have a set of inherited tefillin. While it can certainly be meaningful to wear a great grandparent's (or other relative's) tefillin, it might not be kosher. Old sets are often so deteriorated that they are difficult to wear and/or no longer kosher. Tefillin-making technology has improved dramatically in recent decades, such that some tefillin nowadays can last a lifetime.

Purchasing a set of tefillin for a child reaching the age of mitzvot is an investment in his or her Jewish future. The B'nei Mitzvah year is the ideal time to make this investment.

If you have any questions about tefillin, please ask the Rabbi.

CONGREGATION SINAI

APPLICATION FOR USE OF FACILITIES FOR B'NEI MITZVAH

EVENT INFORMATION

Date of Event: _____

Type of Event: _____

Approximate Number of Guests*: _____

*"Guests" includes the total number of anticipated placesettings. Make sure that your total includes 80 "regulars."

Event Starting Time: _____

Event Ending Time: _____

HOST INFORMATION

Host Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Telephone Number: _____

Evening Telephone Number: _____

Cell Phone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____

Email Address: _____

FACILITIES

This application is for the use of the following facilities:

Sanctuary Social Hall Chapel Foyer Courtyard

SETUP CONFIGURATION

Please indicate your desired setup configuration:

Seated for meal with table service

Buffet Service Meal

Please provide a layout of the tables and chairs no later than two weeks prior to the event using the diagram provided.

VENDORS

Please list the names and contact information of your Vendors.

Caterer: _____

Florist: _____

Rental Company: _____

Entertainment: _____

Photographer: _____

Other vendors: _____

AGREEMENT FOR USE OF FACILITIES AT CONGREGATION SINAI

1. I, the applicant, have reviewed the attached “House Rules and Guidelines.” My signature below indicates my understanding of the rules and my agreement to abide by them.
2. I agree to maintain my membership in good standing at Congregation Sinai through the end of the fiscal year in which the simcha takes place.
3. I have reviewed the attached Facilities Fee Schedule. My signature below indicates my understanding and my agreement to pay the incurred fees in full when they are due.
4. I agree that a security deposit of \$500 is due at the execution of this agreement. This security deposit will be held and refunded following the event once a determination has been made that no damage or loss to the facility has occurred as a result of this function. Any damage to the equipment or facilities of Congregation Sinai caused by the applicant, their guests, or vendors shall be deducted from the security deposit. If the security deposit is insufficient to cover any such damage, I shall pay any additional amounts.
5. I agree that all facilities usage fees are due in full at least 30 days prior to the event.
6. In the event that additional facilities usage is incurred, such as extra time in the kitchen, payment must be remitted within five business days.
7. I understand that individuals holding events at Congregation Sinai (“host”) agree to indemnify and hold the congregation harmless from all claims, suits, liabilities or causes of action whatsoever other than sole negligence. I further agree to be responsible for any and all damage to the building, facility or equipment and I agree to indemnify and hold harmless Congregation Sinai from any claims for loss, injury or damage to any person or property while on the premises, arising out of negligence of any person attending the function or any contractor provided by the host. I further agree to indemnify, defend and hold harmless Congregation Sinai from any and all liabilities arising from the service of food and/or alcoholic beverages to members, guests and invitees of the host whether such liabilities arise from an occurrence on or off the premises. My signature below indicates my understanding of these indemnifications and my agreement to abide by them.
8. It is understood and agreed that there is no other contract or agreement, written or oral, between the parties except as set forth herein. Any arrangements not set forth in this agreement are null and void. The signatures below indicate the parties understanding and agreement to abide by the agreement.
9. A security deposit in the amount of \$500.00 has been received on _____.
The check number is _____.
10. The current estimate of fees is \$ _____.

Contract Approval and Acceptance:

Applicant’s Signature

Executive Director’s Signature

Applicant

Executive Director

Date Signed

Date Signed

CONGREGATION SINAI

HOUSE RULES AND GUIDELINES

Congratulations on your upcoming celebration. If you have any questions or concerns, we are available to assist you. Call us during office hours at 408-264-8542 or email office@sinai-sj.org. Mazal tov to you and your family!

Reservations

- All Bar and Bat Mitzvah families must be members in good standing of Congregation Sinai and be current in their membership dues through the end of the quarter in which the event is taking place, and have fulfilled all other financial obligations, including Religious School enrollment.
- Every family must remain members in good standing through the end of the fiscal year in which the *simcha* takes place. A family's financial obligations to Congregation Sinai must be paid in full 3 months prior to a Bar or Bat Mitzvah celebration, including payment of dues to be a member in good standing at least one month after the date of the event.
- We honor all requests for use of the facilities on a first come, first served basis with priority given to Congregation members.
- In order to complete the reservation of the facilities, the Host and the Executive Director must meet in person to discuss arrangements, sign an agreement and complete the deposit process.
- The booking for the facilities usage is complete when the signed agreement, accompanied by a security deposit of \$500 per function, is received by the Executive Director.
- Application forms must be filled out in full and signed by the responsible parties.

Payment

- All facilities usage fees must be paid in full at least 30 days prior to the event.
- Fee rates are subject to change. Fee rate changes will not apply to a contract once it has been signed and all deposits have been received.

Security Deposit

- A security deposit of \$500 is due at the time of the reservation by the person renting the facility. The security deposit will be held and returned following the function once a determination has been made that no damage or loss to the facility has occurred as a result of the event. All or part of the security deposit may be retained to pay for any extra facilities cleaning, repairs or replacements that may be necessary as determined by the Executive Director.

Facilities Capacity

- The seating capacity of the sanctuary is 320. This configuration has 180 seated downstairs and 140 seated in the balcony.
- The seating capacity of the Mirkin Chapel is 100.
- Functions in the Social Hall are limited to 250 for assembly seating.
- Functions in the Social Hall are limited to 200 for seated dining.
- Synagogue tables and chairs may be used by pre-arrangement. Rental of the Social Hall includes the use of the tables and chairs up to the amount in inventory.
 - There are 200 straight back chairs in inventory.
 - There are 40 brown folding chairs.
 - There are 22 round tables and 23 rectangular tables in inventory. The round tables are 60 inches in diameter. The rectangular tables are 30 inches wide. Specifically, there are 10 white round tables, 12 wooden round tables, 10 white tables 8 foot long, 3 white tables 6 foot long, 9 wood tables 8 foot long, and 1 wood table 6 foot long.
 - Please rent any additional tables and chairs you may need.

Kitchen Usage

- Facilities usage fees includes one day of full Kitchen use during office hours on a day prior to the event.
- If additional kitchen usage time is required, there will be an additional fee. Please refer to the Facilities Usage Fee Schedule for details.
- Rental of the kitchen includes the use of permanent building fixtures and equipment, and serving items and serving utensils, but excludes paper products, and other consumables.
- Cutlery and china can be rented for an additional fee.

Sustainable Utensils and Cutlery

- Congregation Sinai is committed to environmental sustainability.
- Compostable and biodegradable cutlery, plates, bowls, cups (hot and cold), and napkins are readily available and reasonably-priced. Please work with your caterer to select appropriate options.

Kashrut in the kitchen

- Standards of kashrut set by the Rabbi must be followed at all times.
- Anyone who intends to use the kitchen for food preparation must first read and sign the Kashrut in Congregation Sinai policy. A copy of the policy can be downloaded from the Sinai website or picked up at the synagogue office.

Cleanup

- Facilities usage fees include: set-up of tables and chairs, vacuuming of the facilities prior to and following the event, cleaning the kitchen and foyer floors prior to and following the event and cleaning the bathrooms prior to and following the event. Any additional setup expenses will be the responsibility of the host.
- If additional custodial services are required, a fee of \$25/hour will be incurred.
- Tables must be cleaned and cleared at the end of the function.
- Linens and/or any other equipment that are not the property of the synagogue must be removed from the premises. Linens, flower arrangements and/or any other equipment may not be removed from the synagogue on Shabbat.
- All leftover food must be removed from the premises. Food may not be removed from the synagogue on Shabbat.
- All dishes, flatware, serving items, etc. must be washed, dried and put away after the event.
- All garbage must be bagged and deposited in the dumpster.
- The kitchen must be left clean and in the condition in which it was found.
- All decorations must be removed from the Social Hall and/or any other synagogue facilities.

Kiddush

- The Bar/Bat Mitzvah leads Kiddush, *al n'tilat yadayim* (the prayer for washing hands) and *hamotzi* (the prayer over bread) in the sanctuary at the end of Shabbat morning services.
- Please make arrangements for the caterer to provide two regular sized *challot* specifically for the blessings in the sanctuary. Additional challot should be provided for the guests in the foyer area.
- It is the host's responsibility to provide wine and grape juice for the congregation. Please make the necessary arrangements with your caterer. Wine and grape juice should be grape only and must have a valid kosher certification (the letter "K" is insufficient). Kedem and Manischewitz are both readily available. Blackberry wine, although tasty, is not acceptable for Kiddush.
- The entire congregation is invited to the Shabbat Kiddush luncheon after a regularly scheduled service. Plan for an additional eighty Shabbat "regulars."

Setup of Foyer and Social Hall

- No later than two weeks prior to the date of the event, please provide the synagogue office with a diagram of required tables and chairs for all the events you plan to host.
- A short rectangular table and chairs will be set-up in the Social Hall for younger guests.
- In the foyer, two tables will be set up, one for Kiddush wine and grape juice, and another table for hand washing and challah. You can choose to order a large challah or a number of regular sized challot.
- Coffee urns with coffee or water must be set up and plugged in on Friday by 2:00 pm. They may not be turned on or off, adjusted, or refilled on Shabbat. The use of timers is permitted.
- It is the responsibility of the host to complete all decorations by 2:00 pm on Friday. This includes delivery and placement of balloons and centerpieces. Decorations may not be affixed to the inside or outside walls or floors of the building.

Deliveries

- Any and all deliveries by the host and/or any vendors, including but not limited to: food, kitchen supplies, flowers, decorations, rental linens, rental equipment, and furniture must be arranged with the synagogue office.
- The synagogue office is open and available to accept pre-arranged deliveries on Mondays from noon to 4:00 pm; on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm; and on Fridays from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. Deliveries may not be scheduled at other times, unless special arrangements are made in advance.

Rental Equipment

- Congregation Sinai assumes no responsibility for any rental items secured by the host.
- All rental items must be removed from the premises on Monday following the event.
- Arrangements for delivery and removal of all rental items must be arranged in advance with the synagogue office.

Photography

- Photographic sessions prior to the event must be arranged in advance with the synagogue office during office hours. Before or after the rehearsal is a good time to take portrait pictures. Pictures may be taken during the rehearsal when not interfering with the rehearsal. No photography, audio or video recording of any kind is permitted on synagogue grounds on Shabbat and Jewish holidays.

Flowers

- It is optional to provide floral arrangements for the Sanctuary. Flowers must be delivered before 2:00 pm on Friday.
- If you are including candy or any other edible products in your table centerpieces or decorations, make sure it is kosher. Please let your florist know about Sinai's kashrut policy and refer him/her to the office for questions.

Candy

- After the Parents' blessing, it is optional to shower B'nei Mitzvah with candy. If you would like to include this in the service, individually wrapped Sunkist Fruit Gems are the only candy acceptable. Sometimes, local supplies are limited. Please make sure you purchase them well in advance.
- The office will arrange to have the candy and kippot set out in baskets in the sanctuary.

Private Events

- If you are planning to use the facility for an additional private event, such as a Friday night Shabbat dinner, or a Saturday night party, please reserve the space with the synagogue office no later than six months in advance.
- An onsite staff person must be present at all private events during non-business hours. Congregation Sinai will arrange for an on-site staff person to remain on the premises throughout the setup and cleanup, and during the entire function. The cost of \$25/hour will be passed on to the host, and billed through the synagogue.
- If deemed necessary, additional security may be required. Congregation Sinai will arrange for a security guard and will bill the host for all related expenses.
- A security guard may be present at any event if the host so chooses.
- All activities on the facility property, both inside and outside, require adult supervision.

Music and Entertainment

- Congregation Sinai is located in a residential zone and has a commitment to preventing unusual disturbances to our neighbors. Therefore, the noise level of music and/or any other form of event entertainment must be kept to a reasonable level. The host assumes responsibility for any complaints to the authorities regarding excessive noise.
- Music and other entertainment must end no later than 11:00 pm sharp.
- Musical groups cannot set up during Shabbat.

Limitations of Use

- Shabbat restrictions shall apply where applicable. The use of cell phones and pagers on Shabbat and Jewish holidays is not permitted on synagogue grounds. Photography, audio or video recording, recorded or live music, kindling of flames, writing, drawing or exchanging money are also not permitted on Shabbat.
- No smoking is allowed anywhere in the building or within the gates of Congregation Sinai at any time.
- Alcoholic beverages may not be served to minors.
- No electrical tape may be affixed to carpeted areas of the facility.
- Glitter, sparklers and other flammable materials, smoke machines and dry ice may not be used in any part of the building.
- Adherence to the policies outlined in the Kashrut guide is mandatory.

CONGREGATION SINAI

APPROVED CATERERS, BAKERIES, MARKETS, AND KOSHER WINE MERCHANTS

All food provided by these caterers must either be accompanied by a certificate of Kashrut from a recognized Kashrut Supervising Authority or be prepared onsite in the Sinai kitchen.

This list of caterers, bakeries, and kosher wine merchants are approved for use at Congregation Sinai functions. This list is subject to change.

CATERERS

Deliciously Yours Catering

Contact: Lucy Fried
Los Gatos, CA
Phone: (408) 395-1077
Email: lucypfried@gmail.com

Dina's Kosher Catering

Contact: Dina Man
South San Francisco, CA
Phone: (650) 827-1309
<http://dinaskoshercatering.com/>

Epic Bites

Contact: Heshy Fried
epicbitescatering@gmail.com
646-853-4630

Gunther's Restaurant & Catering

Contact: Steve Meyberg
1601 Meridian Ave
San Jose, CA 95125
Phone: (408) 266-9022
www.guntherscatering.com

House of Bagels

Contact: Jeff Leo
1640 S Bascom Ave #D
Campbell, CA 95008
Phone: (408) 371-4970

Izzy's Brooklyn Bagels

Contact: Israel Rinde
477 California Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94306
Phone: (650) 329-0700
www.izzysbrooklynbagels.com

Kosher Catering

Contact: Farah Zaghi
Sunnyvale, CA
(650) 906-5286

Yes Catering

Contact: Meni Peretz
San Jose, CA
Phone : (650) 630-5486
www.yes-catering.com

BAKERIES AND KOSHER MARKETS

Grand Bakery

Contact: Bob Jaffe
3264 Grand Avenue
Oakland, CA 94610
Phone: (510) 465-1110

Rachael's Outrageous Desserts

Rachel Berman Huck
408-910-7200

Lucky's Market

2175 Grant Rd
Los Altos, California 94024
Phone: (650) 969-1326

Mollie Stone's Market

164 South California Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94306
Phone: (650) 323-8361

Pars Kosher Market

3978 South Bascom Avenue
San Jose, CA 95124
Phone: (408) 340-5443
Email: parskoshermarket@gmail.com

Semifreddi's Breads and Pastries

3084 Claremont Ave.
Berkeley, CA 94705
Phone: (510) 596-9930
www.semifreddis.com

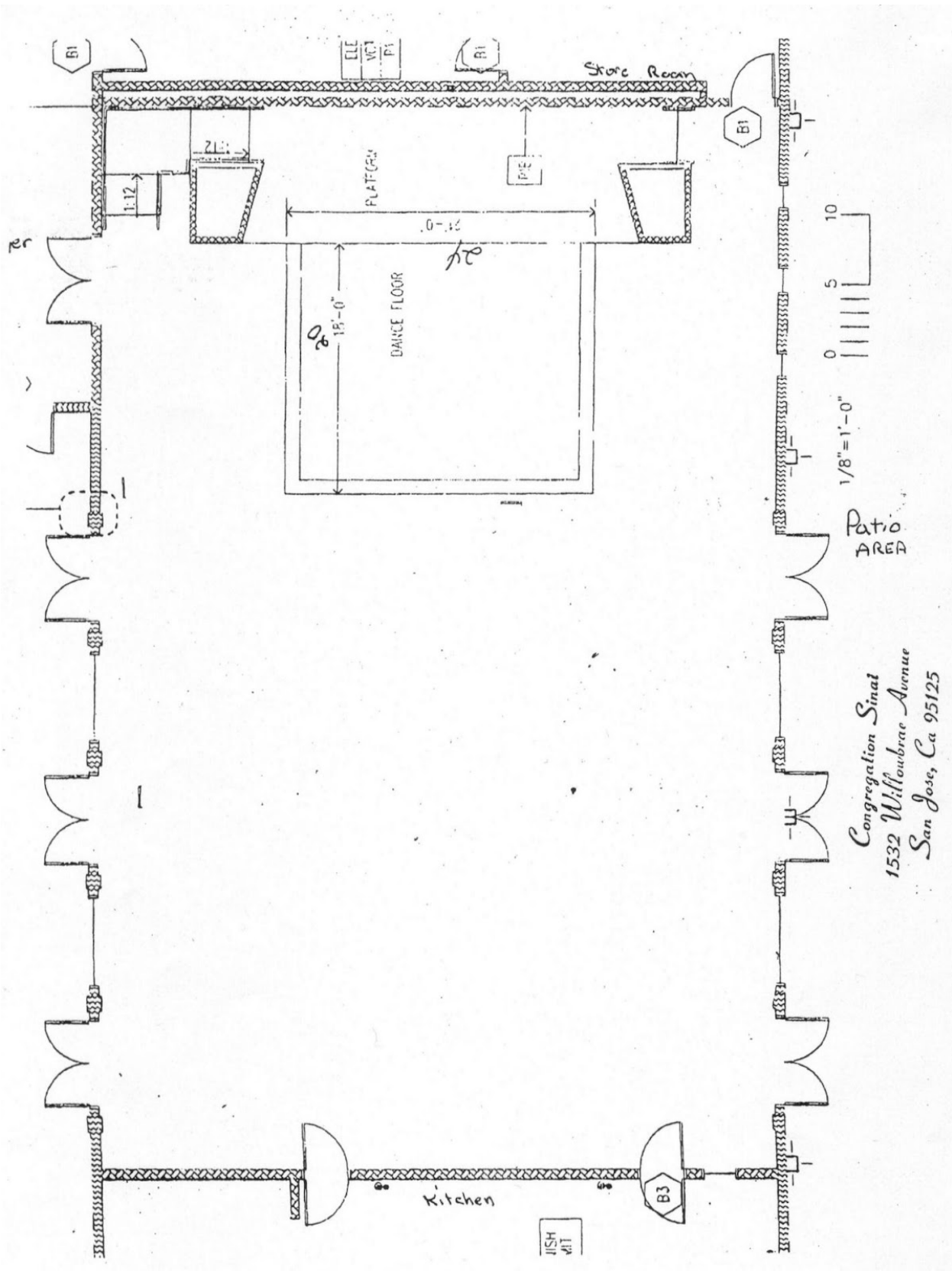
Wedemeyer's Bakery

314 Harbor Way
South San Francisco, CA 94080
Phone: (650) 873-1000
wedemeyer@wedemeyerbakery.com
www.wedemeyerbakery.com

KOSHER WINE MERCHANTS

Royal Wines & Spirits

Contact: David Tabibian
3144 Williams Road
San Jose, CA 95117
Phone: (408) 260-1098 Email: royalwines@yahoo.com



Congregation Sinai
 1532 Willowbrae Avenue
 San Jose, Ca 95125

CONGREGATION SINAI

FACILITIES USAGE FEES FOR B'NEI MITZVAH CLASS OF 5784

These fees reflect the actual costs of using the facility. Congregation Sinai is committed to not making a profit when members sponsor a Kiddush for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Fees are subject to change based on particular setup requirements. There is no fee for usage of the Mirkin Chapel or Sanctuary for services.

FACILITY USAGE	MEMBER FEE	AMOUNT
Social Hall for Shabbat Kiddush		
<i>(includes one day use of kitchen prior to event and on the day of the function)</i>		
Up to 100 guests*	\$250	
Between 101 and 200 guests*	\$425	
201 or more guests*	\$550	
<i>*"Guests" includes the total number of anticipated placesettings. Make sure your total includes 80 "regulars."</i>		
Additional Security Guard Fee	\$82.50	
Social Hall for Private Event		
<i>(Includes one day use of kitchen prior to event)</i>		
Up to 100 guests	\$350	
Between 101 and 200 guests	\$600	
201 or more guests	\$800	
On-site supervision - \$25/hour	TBD	
Use of foyer for parties taking place in the social hall	\$200	
Additional Kitchen Usage for Events at Sinai		
<i>(Caterer or self-catering in excess of agreement for use of kitchen)</i>		
<i>All fees are for usage during normal business hours</i>		
Half Day	\$75 Half Day	
Full Day	\$100 Full Day	
Additional Fees		
Additional Custodial Fees	\$25/hour	
Place Setting	\$25 + \$1/setting	
Security Deposit received at time of reservation	Check #	\$500
	Date Received:	
Facilities Usage Fees due in full 30 days prior to event	Check #	
	Date Received:	
Additional Facilities Usage Fees	Check #	
	Date Received:	