

# Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation Emek Shalom

## B'nai Mitzvah Handbook

Note: This handbook has been prepared by the FVJC-ES Religious Committee and is subject to change.

With Gratitude to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and Temple Ner Tamid, Bloomfield, NJ for use of their Bar and Bat Mitzvah handbook.

**Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation Emek Shalom****B'nai Mitzvah Handbook**

*Picture this - it's the day of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah! A bead of sweat forms on your upper lip. Your fingers tremble slightly when you hold your hands out. You feel faint and your stomach is doing somersaults. Your parents smile a lot and shake hands with everyone they meet. Someone you're sure you've never met before asks if you remember her...*

Your day this rite of passage known as Bar/Bat Mitzvah -- is finally here. You have prepared for the past twenty three weeks for this day. You have practiced reading the Hebrew prayers and conducting the service. You have learned to chant the blessings and your Torah and Haftarah portions. You have learned how to write and deliver a speech reflecting your thoughts and feelings about this momentous time in your life. Now you summon confidence and poise you didn't know you had. Your Bar/Bat Mitzvah has been wonderful and you feel great!

A dream? A wish? A myth? Not really! Effort; practice; the support and cooperation of parents, Cantor, Rabbi, and tutor; plus one's best effort, all adds up to making a B'nai Mitzvah a success.

The B'nai Mitzvah instructional process consists of three components:

1. Service-oriented instruction of reading Hebrew.
2. Cantillation of Torah, Haftarah and blessings.
3. Review and work on speech under the auspices of the Rabbi.

Getting to this day is a process of learning and doing. It is a culmination of Jewish learning up to this point in the life of the student. It is the beginning of taking responsibility and continuing Jewish learning and doing as a Jewish adult. Finally, it is a process of growing and maturing and sharing with family, friends and the Jewish community.

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## A History Of Bar/Bat Mitzvah Ceremonies

Throughout history, many groups of people have had rituals to celebrate the time when a boy becomes a man, and a girl becomes a woman. For the Jewish people, these rituals are called Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah. Like most traditions, the ceremonies connected with becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah at age thirteen evolved over time. During Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremonies the boy or girl actively participates in the ceremony – reading prayers and giving his or her own personal speech. Family, friends, and members of the synagogue come to celebrate the young person's coming of age. It is a chance for the young people to express themselves as individuals. It has always been viewed as one moment in the process of spiritual growth and commitment to the Jewish people.

The establishment of becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah has several origins. The Talmud records that during the time of the Second Temple (520 B.C.E.–70 C.E.), it was traditional for Sages to bless a child who had completed his first fast day at the age of twelve or thirteen. In *Pirkei Avot* (“Ethics of the Fathers,” second century C.E.) it is written, “At thirteen one is ready to do mitzvot.” By the time the Talmud was completed in the sixth century C.E., boys of thirteen years had assumed full responsibility for performing the mitzvot, hence the term Bar Mitzvah, “son of the commandment.” This also had legal ramifications: These boys were now counted in a *minyan* (prayer congregation) and could act as witnesses. There was no formal rite, only a public blessing by the father that he was no longer responsible for the sins of the son.

The earliest Bar Mitzvah ceremony consisted of blessing and reading the last section of the weekly portion of the Torah, the *maftir*, meaning the extra reading, since the boy was not a Bar Mitzvah until after the service, and reading the Haftarah portion. The most important part of the rite was a *d'rashah* or *d'var Torah*, a discussion of the Torah or Haftarah portion. Since the Bar Mitzvah was assuming adult religious responsibilities, he was expected to show his understanding of those responsibilities to his family and, more importantly, to the community. Structurally, the Bar Mitzvah ceremony is essentially the same as it originally was. It wasn't until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that we find records of a Bar Mitzvah being invited to lead part of the worship service.

A public ceremony in celebration of a girl becoming a Bat Mitzvah, “daughter of the commandment,” did not come into formal being in North America until 1922. Dr. Judith Kaplan-Eisenstein, the daughter of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, blessed and read the Torah portion from a book “at a respectable distance” from the Torah scroll. The regular celebration of girls becoming Bat Mitzvah came into prominence in Reform congregations particularly in the second half of the 20th century and is generally identical in form to the celebration of a Bar Mitzvah.

It should be noted that the rite of confirmation originated in the Reform Movement in Germany in 1810 and included girls in 1817. Since it was felt that a thirteen-year-old was too young to understand the precepts of Judaism, the celebration of a boy becoming a

Bar Mitzvah was dropped in favor of confirmation, which was held at age sixteen or seventeen because that was deemed a more mature age to assume the responsibilities of Judaism. Today, most congregations, including FVJC-ES, hold both ceremonies.

Historically, all joyous occasions were celebrated in some manner, and becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah was no exception. However, unlike weddings at which we are commanded to rejoice with bride and groom, the Bar Mitzvah has no such mandate. In early years the celebrations varied from a simple *Kiddush* of wine, brandy, and cake following the service to more elaborate meals for the family and friends. The Rabbis urged families not to have elaborate celebrations and always to provide for the poor in order to fulfill the mitzvah. The *d'rashah* was delivered by the Bar Mitzvah some time during the celebration in order to emphasize its religious aspects.

Historically, Bar/Bat Mitzvah has been viewed as a first step in a young person's acceptance of the obligations to family and community as a responsible Jew. It was and should continue to be the beginning of a lifetime of the performance of mitzvot, study, prayer, and a commitment to share the destiny of the Jewish people.

## Keeping Bar/Bat Mitzvah In Perspective

**Bar/Bat Mitzvah Is about the Acceptance of Responsibility.** In the final analysis, this is the bottom line of *becoming* a Bar and Bat Mitzvah. It's not about acquiring the skill of *k'riah*,—"the reading of the Torah." Rather, it's about acquiring the skill of responding to a challenge: a mitzvah. This is how Judaism defines maturity.

**The Torah Is the Center of Judaism.** Everything we do as Jews, everything we believe, everything we value revolves around the Torah. The Torah is the testimony of our people's encounter with G-d. However you interpret those events in the wilderness of Sinai some three millennia ago, what cannot be dismissed is the sacredness with which our ancestors have embraced this legacy. This is why the first mitzvah we expect our children to fulfill is to stand at the Torah.

**Bar/Bat Mitzvah Is a Community Observance.** It is not by coincidence that we choose to hold this initiation ceremony in public. To be a Jew means to live within a covenantal relationship—not only with G-d but with other Jews as well. Bar/Bat Mitzvah marks the entry of the child as a full-fledged member of the community. The awarding of an *aliyah*, ("being called to the Torah"), is a gift of the Jewish people. For this reason, the marking of the child's coming of age takes place in the synagogue—the communal home.

**The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Ceremony Is Not a Performance: It's a Celebration.** The synagogue is not a theater, and the *bimah* is not a stage, and the congregation is not an audience. More to the point, the only *mistake* one can make at a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is to lose sight of this truth.

**Try to Think of the Reception That Follows Not As a Separate Event but As a Continuation of the Celebration.** In fact, Judaism has a formal name for the meal after a Bar/Bat Mitzvah: It is a *s'udat mitzvah*. This meal is in honor of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. It too, is a sacred gathering. This is not to say that it must be solemn; it *is* to say, however, that the spirit of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration should be perpetuated through the performance of mitzvot. The recitation of the blessings and the setting aside of a portion of one's bounty for the poor demonstrate that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration was not an isolated event but a standard from which to follow.

**The Meaning of Becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Is Enduring Only If It Takes Place within a Context of Continued Jewish Growth.** Being a Bat or Bar Mitzvah is not the experience of a lifetime. It is a lifetime experience—a state of being that remains with us throughout our lives. Indeed, the true measure of *performance* comes not on the day one becomes a Bat or Bar Mitzvah but in the days that follow. In other words, becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah should be thought of as a Jewish "commencement," marking not an end point but a beginning—a beginning of a lifetime of mitzvot, a beginning of a lifetime of learning. As such, it is our firm belief that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration is validated and enhanced by a commitment to continue religious education to confirmation and participation in our synagogue.

## **Requirements And Expectations**

Becoming a B'nai Mitzvah at the Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation-Emek Shalom is a major life cycle event. It is a celebration to be shared with family and friends. It represents the culmination of years of active religious study and preparation as well as involvement in many other FVJC-Emek Shalom activities - an exciting time for all involved.

Because FVJC-Emek Shalom views this as an event to be shared with the entire family and our congregation, the Religious Committee has established certain requirements of our students to ensure that all B'nai Mitzvah students are properly prepared. It is important that the B'nai Mitzvah candidate and other family members understand the advance commitment required so that these responsibilities are satisfied.

Several years of advance preparation are necessary, including regular participation by both the student and the family as discussed below. If you have questions about any aspect of these requirements, or about date assignments, please contact the chairperson of the Religious Committee.

### **Requirements for B'nai Mitzvah Candidates**

**Four years of Hebrew and Religious School.** Each child must complete a minimum of four years of Hebrew and Religious School Education (grades 4,5,6 and 7); and currently be registered and attending Religious School. This means that he or she must commit to attend our comprehensive program of Sunday morning Religious School and Wednesday afternoon Hebrew School. While we encourage an earlier start to religious training, FVJC-Emek Shalom requires attendance starting no later than the fourth grade to complete the above requirement.

**Attendance at 23 Wednesday Afternoon Services.** B'nai Mitzvah candidates must be present at 23 Maariv evening services during Hebrew School in the year preceding the B'nai Mitzvah.

**Attendance at 12 Regular Shabbat Services.** While attendance at a Shabbat service may be either Friday evening or Saturday morning, please note that Holiday services are not counted in this total, nor are the Maariv services mentioned above. Each student will receive a blue signature card (from Rabbi, Cantor, or Mrs. DeRosa) approximately 1 year prior to their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. This card must be signed by the Rabbi or Cantor at each service they attend. The completed cards are due at the dress rehearsal.

**A note about Friday Services.** A seventh grade requirement brings the student to Shabbat Services a minimum of 12 times during the school year. As the student gains proficiency, he/she will take parts at Friday evening services. This allows the student to experience "live" conditions with a congregation and does a great deal to alleviate nerves prior to the actual ceremony. Students and parents tell us that this successfully enables students to experience prayer recitation under real circumstances. Attendance at services, whether on Friday night or Saturday morning, is both a worship and learning experience for the student. Therefore, inappropriate behavior or dress in the sanctuary will not be tolerated. Attendance cards will not be signed if a child is disturbing our worship by his/her behavior. It is strongly recommended this be a family experience. Make Friday night Temple night and worship together!

**Appropriate Dress.** We bring honor to the sanctuary in how we dress and it is extremely important parents are sensitive to this issue. For Friday evening or Shabbat morning services, boys must wear neat khakis or dress pants, appropriate footwear (no sneakers or sandals) and a dress shirt. Getting used to wearing a tie and a jacket is also suggested since they will be worn for the Bar Mitzvah. For the girls, an *appropriate* dress is expected. This means arms and back are covered (short sleeves are fine); spaghetti straps, strapless or bare-backed dresses are not appropriate. It should also be noted that a tallit is a prayer shawl, not a covering for a dress. If you have questions regarding appropriate dress, please see Cantor Levine.

**Six Months of Private B'nai Mitzvah Study.** This will typically include regular weekly meetings with Cantor Levine or other approved qualified instructor (approved by the Cantor only) and eight meetings with Rabbi Herman.

**Participation in Friday evening services.** Student will take part in parts of Friday evening services leading up to their Bar or Bat Mitzvah, based on the student's proficiency. The Cantor will arrange this through her meetings with the students. Typically each student will take part in 4 or 5 services during the 4-month period prior to their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Participation during a Friday evening service will begin by lesson # 11. The student is required to attend the entire service that he or she participates in.

**Mitzvah Project.** Although Mitzvah Projects are not mandatory, we encourage each student to do a Mitzvah Project during the year proceeding their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. They are decided on an individual basis between the Rabbi or Cantor and the candidate and their family. There are many opportunities to do some kind of a project; the student has to decide on one early enough so that he/she can actually do it prior to becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Although they are optional, many of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidates do participate in one. Any displays, collection boxes, etc, must adhere to Temple guidelines and be cleared through the Temple Administrator, Nancy Grandin. The student is responsible for completion of the project, and removal of any displays and collection materials by the week following their Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

### **Requirements for both Parents and B'nai Mitzvah candidate**

**Attendance at two Shabbat B'nai Mitzvah services.** Parents of B'nai Mitzvah students must attend at least two B'nai Mitzvah services prior to their own child's event, and do so with the B'nai Mitzvah candidate.

**Attend and participate in one dress rehearsal.** While one such preparatory session is typical, please keep in mind that it may be determined that more than one dress rehearsal is appropriate. The time and day will be determined based on the Cantor's schedule and availability of the sanctuary.

### **Parental Responsibilities**

**Ushering.** The Religious Committee maintains a policy of providing adult assistance and supervision in the Sanctuary during B'nai Mitzvah services. **Parents are required to usher at two Shabbat B'nai Mitzvah services and provide two ushers for each assigned service.** On the day of your simcha it is most comforting and supportive to know that you will have ushers taking care of numerous service details. We know that you will want to offer the same comfort and support to others.

- Both parents are required to usher at two (2) Shabbat B'nai Mitzvah services. Families will receive notification of date assignments, details of ushering duties and a B'nai Mitzvah list of assigned ushering dates and families in August of their child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah year. **If the assigned dates are not convenient, it is the responsibility of the ushering parents to contact another family to make a switch and then notify the volunteer who is serving as B'nai Mitzvah usher coordinator.** The volunteer coordinator's name and phone number will be included in the mailing with the ushering assignment schedule.
- What is the responsibility of the ushers? The ushers keep decorum in the back of the sanctuary. They keep an eye on the younger guests and they are generally responsible for holding people at the door while the ark is open or the congregation is standing. They are charged with being the representatives of the congregation during the service. They pass out tallesim, programs, candy, kippot, etc.

**Financial Responsibilities.** All families of B'nai Mitzvah candidates must be members in good standing of our congregation. This means being current with all financial obligations prior to the beginning of B'nai Mitzvah lessons and remaining current in all dues and financial obligations to the Temple. In addition, 50% of the current B'nai Mitzvah fee is due prior to the start of B'nai Mitzvah lessons. The balance is due 60 days prior to the actual B'nai Mitzvah date. Specific details of financial responsibilities will be sent to each family before the start of lessons. If there is a question about this issue, a vice-president of the Temple must be contacted directly prior to all subsequent lessons.

## The B'nai Mitzvah Process

### Date Assignment

Bar and Bat Mitzvah dates are assigned according to policies set by the Religious Committee. A copy of this policy can be found in Appendix A.

### **Havdalah and Friday Night Services**

After the B'nai Mitzvah calendar assignments for a given year are sent to parents, requests may be made to change from a Saturday morning to a Friday night service. There are no restrictions on the number of Havdalah B'nai Mitzvah services per month, however, honoring changes to a Havdalah service will only take place if the Rabbi and Cantor are available for that particular Saturday evening. All requests must be made through the Religious Committee AFTER the calendar comes out and must be approved by the Cantor and Rabbi. Requests for a change need to be made in accordance with the FVJC-ES B'nai Mitzvah Date Assignment Policy found in Appendix A.

### Lessons

**Overview.** Bar/Bat Mitzvah lessons consist of 6 months of private study. You will be contacted by Cantor Levine about 6-7 months prior to your B'nai Mitzvah to set up lessons. Lessons are scheduled on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday afternoons and early evenings. Although the goal is that your lessons occur on the same day and time each week, this is not always possible and may vary slightly.

Lessons consist of:

- Prayers for Service (with Mrs. DeRosa or other qualified instructor who has been approved by Cantor Levine)
- Conducting service in sanctuary (with Cantor Levine)
- Cantillation of Torah (with Cantor Levine)
- Haftorah and blessings (with Cantor Levine)
- Write Speech (with assistance of Rabbi Herman)
  - About 10 weeks prior to their becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah the Rabbi meets first with the parents for one session and then with the child for 7-8 sessions

During lessons, at least one other adult must be in the building with the child and teacher. Therefore parents need to stay in the building while their child has lessons, unless both the Rabbi and Cantor or the Cantor and Mrs. DeRosa are in the building during the time of your child's lessons.

**Students are expected to practice at home at least 30 minutes per day.**

The B'nai Mitzvah tutoring is a 23-lesson process. Each student meets with Cantor Levine or the B'nai Mitzvah tutor once a week for a 1/2 hour lesson. At the end of 22 sessions, a full dress rehearsal will be held; lesson 23 is a follow-up lesson *after* the dress rehearsal. A full dress rehearsal will occur approximately 1 week prior to B'nai Mitzvah (following lesson 22). The dress rehearsal date and time is scheduled by Cantor Levine in conjunction with the availability of the sanctuary, her schedule and the family's schedule.

**Scheduling Lessons.** Two to three weeks prior to the first lesson beginning, Cantor Levine calls the family to set up a day and time for an initial meeting. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutor will also contact the family at this time to schedule lessons. *The day and time for all subsequent lessons will be set at this time* -- this guarantees the student a consistent time slot. **Lessons may be scheduled on Monday, Tuesday or Thursday afternoons and early evenings.** If you know of vacations or other circumstances in which you will be away for any extended period of time, lessons will need to begin earlier to allow for your absence. Please let the Cantor know as soon as possible to reschedule to then ensure the student will receive 23 weeks of training.

**Format Of Lessons.** *Lessons are 30 minutes in length and begin and end on time.* With so many students involved in this process, to delay the start of a lesson or to make-up late minutes unfairly holds back the next person. Given our very rigorous and tight schedule, lesson times cannot be extended for late students. Make-up lessons will be rescheduled only due to illness, emergencies or inclement weather.

All lessons will be held at FVJC-Emek Shalom on Mondays, Tuesdays, or Thursdays. As you are aware, the Temple's policy states that Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidates must be registered as students in Religious School at the time of lessons. ***No lessons will be scheduled on Wednesdays, Sundays, Fridays, Shabbat, Festivals and High Holidays.***

At the first lesson, a CD will be provided for home practice. This CD will contain all the prayers and blessings of the service. Once the student's Torah and Haftarah portions are determined, he/she will receive an additional CD with his/her portions, both read and chanted. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend lessons 5, 10, 15, and 20 to observe and evaluate the student's progress. A timeline of the lessons can be found in Appendix B. Attendance at these particular lessons is considered **very important** in emphasizing the cooperative nature of the learning process. It also gives the student, parents, Cantor and the B'nai Mitzvah tutor a valuable opportunity to communicate and review the learning process together as a team.

Each student is encouraged to practice according to the schedule he/she is given. We need to see a best-effort attempt right from the start maintained to the end. Mastering all the material requires cumulative learning over the 23 weeks of lessons. Crammed learning does not stay with the student - *it literally goes in one ear and out the other!*

**Actual Lessons.** What happens at a lesson? At the first lesson, the student receives a folder, a schedule of all lessons, a practice sheet, and a CD of the prayers and blessings. Time is spent reviewing these expectations and students enter into a covenant, an agreement, of B'nai Mitzvah responsibilities and expectations. A copy of this can be found in Appendix C.

The first lesson is a review of prayers taught in sixth grade as well as drawing on the knowledge of key prayers that the student has been learning and reciting in Religious School since fourth grade. Bar and Bat Mitzvah training builds upon the foundation of all learning and requisite reading skills that have taken place in religious school. If a student enters the lesson process with Hebrew reading difficulties, a private tutor may also be recommended. This would be at the expense of the family.

**Progress Report And Parental Involvement.** After each lesson, the student receives a progress report. We strongly encourage you to review this sheet with the student on a weekly basis. This report includes:

1. The date/time of the next lesson
2. Current progress
3. The homework assignment and a description of how it is to be practiced

The report also reviews the progress of the prayers that were practiced at the lesson. Again, parents are urged to review the weekly progress reports with the student; it is a good measure of material covered, progress made and how much is still left to learn.

The eventual performance of the student centers on parental involvement. Parents are encouraged to participate in the experience, read reports, and listen to the student at home. Listening to the student **a minimum of once a week** will tremendously help his/her learning. The ability to read Hebrew is not necessary to hear whether the student reads fluently. Weekly "parent/child" reviews also communicate to the student the parents are taking an active interest in the B'nai Mitzvah process. Parents who listen at least once a week ensure an advantage that lasts not just through the lesson process, but also on the actual Bat/Bar Mitzvah day. Attendance at progress evaluation lessons will also send a strong message to the student about parental support.

**Practice, Practice, Practice.** Productive practicing can't be stressed enough! Practice is essential for building skills, especially in chanting. Practice at home should:

1. Be a minimum of one-half hour daily; this will need to be expanded to 45 minutes as more material is added.
2. Be oral (out loud) and in a quiet setting
3. Follow the practice instructions to the letter. The wrong type of practicing can be very frustrating and non-productive.
4. Be daily and cumulative.

Listening is a crucial component to successful practice, especially in regards to learning to chant. A student must be able to **hear and get the melody in their ear before they can chant**. Learning melody one sentence, even one phrase, at a time is the key to productive learning. A common mistake in practicing is that students try to learn too much at once and are then very frustrated and discouraged when they can't retain what they've learned. Building chanting skills phrase by phrase, sentence by sentence, every day will yield positive results. Musical ability (or lack thereof) does not affect the ability to learn the chanting. The portions and lessons are geared to each individual child and the Cantor's assessment of what each student can successfully handle.

**Communication.** Communication is probably the most important aspect of the lesson process. Students and parents should call *as soon* as a question or problem arises rather than wait until the next lesson. The Cantor will regularly review progress reports with the Rabbi and tutor; if the student is not prepared, one warning is given, then parents are notified. The workload is based upon a tight schedule, and communication among Rabbi, Cantor, and tutor and parents maintains integrity of the learning process and ultimately of the B'nai Mitzvah service.

**Student Pick-Up from Lessons.** It is important all students be picked up promptly and inside the building. The building is locked at all times and each child will receive an electronic key card so he or she can access the building. To ensure both safety of the student and the integrity of the Temple building, parents must come and get his or her child. Each family will be asked to provide \$50.00 (cash or check) for the key card; if the card is returned to the Cantor within one week of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah, the cash or check will be returned to the family. If the card is lost or not returned by the set date, the Temple will cash the check to cover the cost of the card.

**Canceling Lessons.** If a lesson must be cancelled, notification must be as early as possible and preferably one day in advance. Make-ups will be scheduled according to availability; time is also built in for make-ups during vacation periods. If it is absolutely necessary to cancel on the day of a lesson, a call should be made as early as possible.

If it is necessary for the Rabbi, Cantor or tutor to change an appointment, the change will be made as far in advance as possible. If a lesson is cancelled a make-up will be provided. Sudden illness, emergencies, or weather do sometimes necessitate a cancellation, however, cancellations due to inclement weather are not made according to secular school closings. If the weather is poor, please call the person with whom the student is meeting to confirm.

**Final Service Format.** The goal is to introduce all the Hebrew by the midpoint of lessons. The intent is to challenge the student to make rapid progress, but without stress or frustration. If this is the case, the last half of lessons focuses on refining pronunciation, performance, and chanting. For some this process of learning takes longer so modifications will be made as needed on an individual basis. The FVJC-Emek Shalom policy is to finish the learning mode and be in the review mode by the 20th lesson. Rabbi Herman receives progress reports on all students and reviews them with Cantor weekly.

By the 20th lesson, at the progress evaluation parents and student will review with Cantor:

1. Performance at that point
2. Prediction of how nervous the student may be at the ceremony:
  - Based upon performance at Friday evening services
  - Based upon performance at Wednesday school services
  - Based upon performance at rehearsals in the Sanctuary
3. What still needs to be done
4. Attitude
5. Work ethic

The last month involves rehearsals in the Sanctuary, reading from the Torah, delivering the speech, and practicing the service so that it is performed slowly and with as much feeling as possible. Throughout lessons, meaning and content are explored with the student. Reinforcement of learned skills and concepts allows the student to develop a sense of pride, self-worth and accomplishment. This brings the student to the dress rehearsal at the peak of his/her ability. Performing what one can do best enhances one's sense-of-accomplishment and self-confidence.

**Dress Rehearsal.** A full dress rehearsal will occur approximately 1 week prior to B'nai Mitzvah (following lesson 22), often on a Sunday afternoon. The dress rehearsal date and time is scheduled by Cantor Levine in conjunction with the availability of the sanctuary, her schedule, and the family's schedule. The dress rehearsal is a full run-through of the entire ceremony including all prayers, chanting, and the student's speech. For this rehearsal, a young man should wear a sport coat, dress shirt with tie, dress pants, and Bar Mitzvah shoes. A young lady should wear a dress and Bat Mitzvah shoes. The student may elect to use the actual Bar/Bat Mitzvah tallit or a FVJC-Emek Shalom tallit for this rehearsal. **No photography or videotaping is allowed during a dress rehearsal since it is too distracting for the student and family.**

### **Family Meetings**

Three group meetings will be held within 18 months of your Bar or Bat Mitzvah. They are structured as part of our commitment to provide a variety of experiences to deepen the significance of the special milestone of becoming B'nai Mitzvah. These events provide opportunities to create a strong, close-knit B'nai Mitzvah family community. Notification of these meetings will be sent out approximately two-months in advance.

**Parents Meeting.** At the parents meeting you will receive this B'nai Mitzvah handbook, and will have the opportunity to meet with the Rabbi and Cantor to learn about all the practical, religious and social aspects of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at the Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation-Emek Shalom. This is a good meeting to have your questions answered regarding any aspect of the preparations leading up to this wonderful day.

**Kallah.** The Kallah is a day of learning about the emotional, spiritual and some practical aspects of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah in our Temple. There are sessions for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidates, parents and siblings.

**Shabbaton.** The Shabbaton is a service and learning experience for upcoming Bar and Bat Mitzvah students and parents. It is an important group experience that takes place in the synagogue on Shabbat where a service and learning activity are performed, each complementing the other.

### **After Bar/Bat Mitzvah – What's Next?**

There are a number of ways for a new Bar/Bat Mitzvah student to remain connected to Judaism and our synagogue. These opportunities foster growth in Jewish learning and values that are part of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process. The 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Mentor Program meets once monthly on Sundays and encourages our students to participate in community service projects, to help within religious school, and to expand their Judaic knowledge in a familiar atmosphere. It is a first step to continuing on to confirmation with our 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade programs.

*We are looking forward to working with you and your family. We hope that this simcha will foster a positive, cooperative learning experience that will be spiritually meaningful and fulfilling. In working together, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience can truly be one of growth, sharing, pride and accomplishment, and a stepping-stone to continued Jewish living and learning.*

## Responsibilities During the Service

### **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Student**

There are basically four areas of participation for the student on the day of his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah:

1. To be a *sh'liach tzibur*, "leader of worship" - conducting the service and leading the congregation in Hebrew prayers
2. To chant the Torah portion
3. To chant the Haftorah portion
4. To offer a *d'var Torah* - delivering a speech which teaches the congregation about some aspect of Torah, Haftorah or Judaism, and how it relates to his or her life.

**Sh'liach Tzibur.** One of the oldest and most prestigious roles in the synagogue is to be the sh'liach tzibur. Literally, the "representative of the community," the sh'liach tzibur leads the congregation in prayer. Each Bar/Bat Mitzvah student joins with the Cantor in this sacred role.

**The K'riat Hatorah.** Each Bar/Bat Mitzvah assumes the role of the *baal(at) k'riah*, "Torah reader," for the day. This entails the learning of four *parashiyot* or selections from the week's Torah portion. The Torah is unvocalized (without the diacritical vowels or accents); moreover, each student is expected to learn the trope or traditional cantillation melody. This skill is taught by the Cantor. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will chant the Torah blessings only for the fourth and final *aliyah*. (The previous *aliyot* are given to family members and friends.)

**The Haftorah.** Following the reading of Torah, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student will chant the Haftorah or secondary biblical reading. Like the Torah reading, the Haftorah is chanted according to a specific melody to be learned from the Cantor. The number of verses to be read will be determined by the Cantor.

### **Parents**

Besides *kvelling* (untranslatable), the parental involvement in a Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration includes:

- Performing the candle lighting on Friday night (female family members);
- Participating in the ceremony of the handing down of the Torah (parents and grandparents);
- Having the third *aliyah*, which involves reciting the Torah blessings; and
- Offering a prayer for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

## **Honors and Aliyot**

Honors are an important part of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. Family and friends who are given honors cease to be observers and become active participants. A variety of opportunities for family and friends exist within the Shabbat morning worship service. Below is a basic guide to Bar/Bat Mitzvah honors. About three months prior to the B'nai Mitzvah, the Rabbi will hold a meeting with the parents and discuss the honors with the family. At this time he will give you a form to fill out where you list who you'd like to have an honor at the service.

### **Honors include:**

- Passing the Torah down from a grandparent to a parent to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child
- Opening the ark (four for a single Bar/Bat Mitzvah, two per each family when there is a double)
- Dressing the Torah
- Reciting the Prayer for our Country (an English reading consisting of four paragraphs which may be given as honors to friends, relatives or siblings to read).

### **Aliyot**

Aliyot refers to being called to the Torah. There are four aliyot, one is reserved for the B'nai Mitzvah. The first two aliyot are for family and friends. The third aliyah is for the parent(s). The fourth aliyah is for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student. Usually between 1 and 4 people can be called to the torah at one time for an aliyah. In the case of a double B'nai Mitzvah, each child has their own Haftorah and Torah portions with 4 aliyah each (total of 8 aliyah that day). Information regarding one's responsibilities when called to the Torah can be found in Appendix E.

### **The Participation of Non-Jews**

We welcome the participation of non-Jewish family and friends. While there are some limitations, we very much want all of your guests to feel welcome. Non-Jews may participate in any of the above honors *except* the handing down of the Torah through the generations, and the recitation of the Torah blessings. In the instance of an interfaith marriage, both parents come to the Torah while the Jewish spouse recites the blessings.

### **The Involvement of Younger Siblings and Children**

Siblings or other young children should be given age-appropriate honors, such as helping to dress the Torah or opening the ark. Siblings may also help in leading the *Motzi*, blessing over the challah, at the conclusion of the *Kiddush*. Older siblings can be given an aliyah.

### **Additional Information - Miscellaneous Items**

**Music (Keyboard/Organist).** Music plays a very important part in our worship on Shabbat, holidays and festivals throughout the year. The milestone of Bar/Bat Mitzvah is marked by special music that is sung in honor of the student. One special anthem is sung during services that reflect personal thoughts, hopes and prayers of parents for their children. This selection is chosen from a list of songs compiled by the Cantor. You may sign out a sample CD along with a copy of the list from the Temple Office.

Keyboard (Organ and Piano) accompaniment is available to you in addition to the guitar. The inclusion of keyboard accompaniment for the student's Bar/Bat Mitzvah service is available to you, as an option. It is the responsibility of the family to pay \$200 fee for the organist/pianist. This fee is payable one week prior to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Financial arrangements will be made through the Cantor. The Cantor will hire and rehearse with the accompanist to prepare for that day. Arrangements must be made *at least 2 months* in advance to allow for hiring and scheduling rehearsals. If no special accompaniment is desired, then the Cantor will accompany the service with guitar and acapella chanting.

As always, Cantor Levine is available to answer any questions you might have about either the specific music or the use of the organ and piano.

**Oneg.** People often choose to celebrate simchas such as a Bar or Bat Mitzvah by sponsoring the Friday night Oneg prior to the event. It is a wonderful way to celebrate a happy event and honor the Bat or Bar Mitzvah. More information on the options available can be obtained by calling the Temple office.

**Flowers.** Flowers are used to grace the bima both on Shabbat evening and on Shabbat morning or afternoon, depending when the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is taking place.

B'nai Mitzvah families have the option of renting the silk flowers in the Sanctuary rather than ordering fresh flowers from an outside florist. To rent the Bimah flowers, please contact the Temple office. If you are having fresh flowers delivered, they must arrive before noon on the Friday before your Bat or Bar Mitzvah.

**Mazon Baskets.** Mazon, A Jewish Response to Hunger, is a charity that provides food to the needy. Mazon Baskets are available for use if a donation to Mazon will be made in lieu of flowers. If you choose to do this, please let the office know you would like to use the baskets. Donations are not made through the Temple but rather should be sent directly to Mazon.

**Rental of FVJC Social Hall.** You have one year following assignment of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah date to reserve the Social Hall at FVJC for your event. After that time, the Social Hall is rented out on a first come first serve basis. If you'd like to rent the FVJC Social Hall for your event, please call the Temple office to find out the rental fee and to secure your date.

Kashrut of the FVJC kitchen is based on Kosher style. You can use a Kosher caterer but it is not necessary. No pork products or shellfish will be permitted in the kitchen or the social hall and the serving of milk with meat products will not be permitted. If someone wishes to use a Kosher caterer, the Temple will sustain the cost of making the kitchen kosher and it will be done prior to the Kosher caterer placing any of his/her equipment in the kitchen. All menus must be submitted to and approved by Rabbi Herman at least two months in advance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. A copy of our House Rules For Kosher-Style Temple can be found in Appendix D.

**Program / Booklet.** The printed booklet found at B'nai Mitzvah ceremonies is optional. Most people do provide one for their child's service. It is printed and paid for by the family of the B'nai Mitzvah and is really governed by their own creativity. Its purpose is to provide the congregation there that day with some guidance, direction and insight into the service and ceremony. The booklets are all personalized with artwork, pictures, letters from the B'nai Mitzvah and parents. They have explanations as to the service, rituals, symbols in the sanctuary, etc. Some list the service participants as to the honors and aliyot. Some show a family tree. Some print the entire service, Hebrew and English in the booklet. Some include the Torah Portion and Haftorah portion in Hebrew and English and others have poetry, readings, a copy of the child's speech, something about their Mitzvah Project, etc. The Rabbi has many examples that people can borrow to look at for a format. The Rabbi or Cantor must proof read the booklet in advance.

**Kippot (Yalmukahs).** Many people order personalized kippot for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Following the service, your guests can keep the kippot as a memento, and you can leave the extra kippot at the Temple, if you wish.

**Candy.** The candy is used when the B'nai Mitzvah child marches the Torah around the sanctuary. It is tossed at the child as the congregation's wish that that child have a sweet life ahead of him or her. The candy should be soft candy, wrapped, and given to the ushers at the beginning of the service as they are the ones who pass it out. Usually one bag of candy is enough and is only given to those in the first two rows (not children).

**Photography.** There are no special requirements for your still photographer, you do not need to have a professional photographer although most people do hire someone in that regard.

- Pictures are taken before the service (usually at 8:30 am on Saturday morning, and at 3:30 pm on Saturday afternoon).
- The Rabbi and Cantor will be available at this time to be included in some of your pictures.
- No photography is permitted during the service.

**Videography.** If you intend to make a video of the service, the Videographers need to be approved by Rabbi Herman.

- The videotaping must be done by a professional videographer (a professional videographer is defined as someone whose primary occupation and source of income is videotaping – no family members with their own cameras are ever permitted to video a service).
- Videographers must contact Rabbi Herman to discuss our requirements and see the facilities, and they must agree to abide by FVJC-Emek Shalom's lifecycle event videotaping policy. They must also submit a certificate of liability from their insurance carrier.

**Contact List**

<b>For Questions Regarding</b>	<b>Please Contact</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>
Financial Matters	Darryl Worobow Shelden Paul	404-0579 651-5030
Honors and Aliyot	Rabbi Herman	658-1075
Lessons / Tutoring	Cantor Levine Marlena DeRosa	658-0369 651-4218
Mitzvah Projects	Rabbi Herman Cantor Levine	658-1075 658-0369
Oneg Preparation	Nancy Grandin	658-1075
Parental Prayer	Rabbi Herman	658-1075
Photography in the Sanctuary	Rabbi Herman	658-1075
Rehearsal	Cantor Levine	658-0369
Religious Committee	Dan Millstein	658-0429
Reserving the Social Hall	Nancy Grandin	658-1075
Scheduling of Dates	Dan Millstein	658-0429
Shabbat Attendance	Rabbi Herman Cantor Levine	658-1075 658-0369
Special Needs	Rabbi Herman Cantor Levine	658-1075 658-0369
Speech	Rabbi Herman	658-1075
Torah Blessings	Rabbi Herman Cantor Levine	658-1075 658-0369

Please note that Cantor Levine can also be reached after hours at home at 651-6156 (please no calls after 10pm)

## Appendix A

### FVJC-ES B'nai Mitzvah Date Assignment Policy

Dates will be assigned by the FVJC-ES administrator according to Temple policy and reviewed and approved by the Religious Committee. Date assignments are governed by the following rules:

- Dates are assigned from the first available Saturday in September to the last available Saturday in June.
- Saturdays with a Jewish or other major holiday (i.e. Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, etc.) falling on them are not part of the assignment schedule. Other Saturdays may be taken off the available list due to the Rabbi or Cantor's vacation or events such as the UAHC Biennial.
- No July or August B'nai Mitzvah dates will be assigned. If a parent requests a summer date, he or she must present a compelling reason to the Religious Committee; the committee must then accept the reason. These dates are discouraged because only one clergy member is available during these summer months. The Religious Committee feels that both clergy members should be in attendance. In addition, a summer B'nai Mitzvah is problematic for tutoring sessions, ushering and administrative oversight; it also results in extra expense for the synagogue because of the need for unscheduled custodial help.
- Dates are assigned in birthday order, NOT by grade. The oldest eligible Hebrew School student will be assigned the first date; this date will be the first open (non-holiday, Rabbi and Cantor are both available) Saturday morning in September. Typically, each new B'nai Mitzvah class has several children with July and/or August birthdays, therefore family whose eligible child has a September birthday cannot expect to automatically receive a date in September. The final date assigned will be the last available Saturday morning in June of that B'nai Mitzvah year.

Date assignments rest on the size of the B'nai Mitzvah class, available Saturdays and where the birthdays of the eligible students fall. This means the younger 5<sup>th</sup> grader (with birthdays July – December) and the older 4<sup>th</sup> graders (with birthdays January – June) receive dates.

- Student(s) whose B'Nai Mitzvah are postponed from the previous year will be assigned the first available date(s).

- **Parents wishing to change their assigned dates may do so depending on availability. The Religious Committee oversees the change process. All requests for change must be directed to the committee, *not the Temple office or Rabbi or Cantor*, and must be in writing, with the reason for the need to change clearly stated. The committee will review the request at the monthly meeting which follows receipt of the request and the chair of the committee, will subsequently contact the family to discuss the options available to them.**
- The Temple reserves the right to assign double B'nai Mitzvah if the number of students exceeds the open Shabbat dates. Should this happen, the first double assignment will be on the first open date in September, then the last open date in June, then alternating between the first and last open dates. A double may also be assigned at a later date if a new family joins the Temple and has a student of Bat/Bar Mitzvah age. If there are no open dates, that family will receive a double closest to the child's birthday.
- If both families make the request, we will double friends having a Bat/Bar Mitzvah in the same year.
- All services are scheduled for 10 a.m. However, families who wish to do so may change to a Havdalah service, provided the Rabbi and Cantor are available. Requests for change must be in writing and sent to the Religious Committee.
- Only one B'nai Mitzvah service will occur on any given day. That means either a Shabbat morning service or a Havdalah service, *not both*, will be conducted.
- Families wishing to switch to a date OTHER than a Saturday should consider the following (all are subject to Religious Committee approval):
  1. A switch may be made to any open Friday night; one per month, first-come, first-served.
  2. A Bat/Bar Mitzvah may be held on Rosh Chodesh (the beginning of a new Hebrew month) if it is a Sunday.
  3. A Bat/Bar Mitzvah may be held during the middle days of a festival like Sukkot, Passover or Chanukah.
  4. A Bat/Bar Mitzvah may be held Mondays and Thursdays
- Families interested in having a Bat/Bar Mitzvah in Israel should talk to Rabbi Herman.

## Appendix B

### Lesson Time Line

1. Lessons begin approximately six months prior to Bat/Bar Mitzvah
2. **Lessons 1-5:**
  - Basic prayers reviewed
  - Student is expected to have fluent mastery of: Bar'chu, Sh'ma/V'ahavta, Avot v'Imahot, Gevurot and Aleinu
  - Additional prayers added
  - Daily practice habit established
  - Progress evaluation with parents
3. **Lessons 6-14:**
  - Service marked
  - Service practice in sanctuary
  - Torah portion begun
  - Torah chant begun
  - Torah and Haftorah blessings - chanted
  - Progress evaluation with parents
  - Service parts on Friday night begin
4. **Lessons 15-20:**
  - Torah chant completed
  - Haftorah begun
  - Regular practice without vowels
  - Lessons with Rabbi begin
  - Haftorah chant begun
  - Progress evaluation with parents
5. **Lessons 21-23:**
  - All material polished and completed
  - Service parts on Friday night
  - Confidence building
  - Most practice in sanctuary
  - Service attendance requirement- completed no later than dress rehearsal
6. **Dress Rehearsal:**
  - Complete run-through
  - Last week of practice mapped out
  - All systems go - we're ready to go!

**Appendix C**

**10 Commandments of B'nai Mitzvah**

- I. Thou shall come on time and prepared for all lessons.
- II. Thou shall bring ALL materials, booklet and prayer book to lessons.
- III. Thou shall not chew gum or wear a baseball hat during lessons.
- IV. *Thou shall observe a respectful code of conduct in the Synagogue at all times.* This includes lessons, Sunday and Wednesday school and all religious services and celebrations.
- V. Thou shall not receive credit for any Services in which proper behavior was not followed.
- VI. Thou shall complete and turn in service requirement sheet *no later than dress rehearsal.*
- VII. Thou shall come appropriately dressed to all services.
- VIII. Thou shall try to make Shabbat "Family Night" *and attend services with your family.*
- IX. Thou shall remember that becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is both a responsibility and privilege.
- X. *Thou shall observe these commandments to keep this rite of passage spiritual and meaningful in the continuing development of your life as a Jewish adult.*

I hereby enter into this B'rit, this covenant, on this day of \_\_\_\_\_,  
and agree to keep these Commandments of B'nai Mitzvah to the best of my ability.

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Cantor: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness/Parents: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

### House Rules For Kosher-Style Temple

- Once the kitchen of FVJC-Emek Shalom is rendered non-kosher it can be koshered at any time by agents approved by the Rabbi. No congregant will be permitted to kosher the kitchen by him/herself.
- The kitchen may be utilized by any congregant, or arm of the congregation, or approved renter of the facility for food service and preparation during approved hours. Those hours will be designated by the Rabbi or Temple administrator.
- To maintain the integrity of a "kosher-style" kitchen, the following will be strictly enforced:
  - No shellfish, pork products, insects, reptiles or any other biblically prohibited food will be prepared, utilized, combined, served or eaten in the Temple.
  - Milk and meat products will not be utilized, combined, served or eaten together in the Temple.
  - Dairy desserts may be served after eating meat meals, but only after all the meat products have been removed from the tables and have been put away in the kitchen.
  - Any and all wine, beer and liquor will be permitted to be utilized in the Temple at any function (age permitting).
  - Any caterer with catering license will be permitted to prepare and serve food in the Temple for any function pending approval of the Rabbi.
  - All food deliveries for functions taking place on Shabbat must be delivered on Friday afternoon before 3:00 p.m.
  - Food prepared in individual homes will be permitted to be brought into the kitchen and into the rest of the building as long as it conforms to the above specified conditions.
  - It is always preferable when preparing food for use in the Temple that kosher ingredients be utilized as well as using disposable containers for transport of the food.

## Appendix E

### Aliyah Primer

Below are the basic fundamentals of being called to the Torah (*aliyah*, {HEBREW}) at Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation – Emek Shalom. Meaning to “go up” or “ascend,” *aliyah* also implies a spiritual ascent. An *aliyah* is considered to be one of the most sacred privileges in Judaism. Consequently, you must be Jewish and “of age” (i.e., a Bar/Bat Mitzvah) to qualify for an *aliyah*. Indeed, the ceremony of Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a celebration of a child’s first *aliyah*.

**Hebrew Name.** Proper form requires you to be called to the Torah by your Hebrew name. This includes not only your given name but the name(s) of your father and/or mother. The formula would thus be:

<b>For men</b>	<i>Ya’akov <b>ben</b> Avraham v’Sarah</i>
<b>For women</b>	<i>Rachel <b>bat</b> Avraham v’Sarah</i>

**Being Called Up to the Bima.** When your name is called, go to the *bimah*, pulpit, and stand to the right of the reader. She or he will point to the place in the *sefer Torah*, scroll, where she or he is reading. Touch that spot with the *tzitzit*, fringes, of your *tallit*, prayer shawl, or the corner of your *siddur*, prayer book; and then kiss the *tzitzit* or the *siddur*.

**The First Blessing.** Below is the blessing recited in Hebrew prior to the reading of the Torah. You should recite the first line, wait for the congregation to respond with the second line, then repeat that second line, and read the rest of the first blessing.

*Bar’chu et Adonai hame’vorach.*

The congregation responds, and you repeat  
*Baruch Adonai ham’vorach l’olam va-ed.*

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam*

*asher bachar banu mikol ha-amim*

*v’natan lanu et Torohto*

*Baruch Atah Adonai Notein ha Torah.*

The congregation responds, “Amen.”

**The Torah Reading**

Following the conclusion of the *b'rachah*, the reader will read the selection from the Torah.

**The Concluding Blessing**

Following the reading of the Torah selection, the concluding *b'rachah* is offered. Again, the person offering the blessing will touch the place in the *sefer Torah* (scroll) with the *tzitzit* (fringes) of his or her *tallit* (prayer shawl) or the corner of his or her *siddur* (prayer book).

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam*

*Asher natan lanu Torat emet*

*V'chayei olam nata b'to cheinu.*

*Baruch Atah Adonai notein ha Torah.*

The congregation responds, "Amen."

**After the Concluding Blessing**

Following the concluding *b'rachah*, the person(s) who was called to the Torah should now move to the reader's left and remain there until the next *aliyah* is concluded. Then that person returns to his or her seat.

## Appendix F

### Frequently Asked Questions

- **I'd like my child to get a head start on the service or Torah or Haftorah. How do we go about this?** *Our recommendation is that your child just Read, Read, Read, so that he/she does not struggle with the Hebrew during their lessons. The current process works very well; there needs to be a compelling reason to start the process early.*
- **How do we split up the honors when there is a double?** *Students first meet individually and then 6 or 7 times they meet together. Each student is responsible for learning the entire service before it is split up. Then we meet and creatively split up the service. Each child has their own Haftorah and Torah portions with 4 aliyot each (total of 8 aliyot that day). Each child does their own speech, and each set of parents has their own speech, and each family passes the Torah. Opening and closing the Ark gets split between families. (service may go about 15 minutes longer than normal)*
- **What things do I need to consider when first receiving our Bar or Bat Mitzvah date?** *Is the assigned date okay?, Do you want a Havdallah or Friday evening service instead of Saturday morning?, Do you want to use the synagogue for the reception?*
- **What you I need to know when booking a hall for the reception?**
  - *Date of the event*
  - *Time when you'll be arriving (service times are as follows; end of service is approximate)*
    - *Friday 7:30 pm -9:30 pm*
    - *Saturday morning 10:00 am – 12:10 pm*
    - *Saturday Havdalah 5:00 pm – 7:15 pm*
  - *Prayers for Challah and wine are performed at the service*
- **What opportunities are there for participation of family and friends?** *Aliyot and Honors are available as noted in the B'nai Mitzvah handbook.*
- **Is it customary to invite Rabbi and Cantor to the reception?** *Although it is not required, most people invite the Rabbi and Cantor to their receptions. However, due to their time constraints and other obligations, they may not be able to attend.*
- **What are the rules/policy regarding switching our date?** *Every case is judged by the FVJC-ES Religious Committee on it's own merits.*
- **What start time does the service start, what time should I put on my invitation?** *We begin all our services right on time as follows:*
  - *Friday 7:30 pm*
  - *Saturday morning 10:00 am*
  - *Saturday Havdalah 5:00 pm*

- **What happens in case of bad weather?** *The service takes place anyway.*
- **Do you have a set of driving directions to FVJC?** *Driving directions are included in the appendix to this handbook.*

**Appendix G****Driving Directions  
to  
The Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation-Emek Shalom  
55 Bushy Hill Road  
Simsbury, Connecticut 06070  
(860) 658-1075****From Rt. 44 (West Hartford)**

Follow Rt. 44 over Avon Mountain through the town of Avon to the intersection with Route 167 (Bushy Hill Road). The intersection will be just after the Avon Marketplace (on the right) and the entrance to Simsbury Commons (also on the right). Turn right (north) on to Bushy Hill Road and follow approximately 6 miles to the intersection of Stratton Brook Road and Bushy Hill. Continue on Bushy Hill approximately ¼ mile. On the left will be a sign for and entrance to the Stratton Forest Condominiums. Immediately after the main entrance, also on the left, is a green street sign for Thornbush Road. Turn left onto Thornbush, immediately right into the entrance for FVJC-ES and follow the road to the left into the main parking area.

**From Route 91 South**

Exit from Rt. 91 to the Bradley Connector/Route 20. Follow Route 20 to the center of Granby and the intersection with Route 10/202. Turn left on Route 10 and follow to the center of Simsbury. The Simsbury Public Library will be on the right, followed by the First Church of Christ (a large white colonial church on a hill). At the traffic light at First Church, turn right onto West Street. There will be signs for Rt. 167 and Simsbury High School at the intersection. Follow West Street to the light at the intersection with Rt. 167 (Bushy Hill Road). Turn left onto 167 and turn right on the third road on the right. This road comes up just after the crest of the first short hill; there is a green street sign "Thornbush Rd." and a sign for FVJC-ES set back from Bushy Hill. After turning right onto Thornbush, turn immediately right into the entrance for FVJC-ES and follow the road to the left into the main parking area.

**From Rt. 185 (Bloomfield/West Hartford)**

Follow Rt. 185 through Bloomfield over the mountain into Simsbury. At the junction of 185 and Rt. 10/202 (the Pettibone Tavern will be on the right), turn right onto Rt. 10 (Hopmeadow Street). At the second light on Rt. 10, turn left onto Stratton Brook Rd. Follow Stratton Brook to the next light and at that intersection, turn right on Bushy Hill Rd. (Rt. 167). Continue on Bushy Hill approximately ¼ mile. On the left will be a sign for and entrance to the Stratton Forest Condominiums. Immediately after the main entrance, also on the left, is a green street sign for Thornbush Road. Turn left onto Thornbush, immediately right into the entrance for FVJC-ES and follow the road to the left into the main parking area.

**From Rt. 84 East**

Take Exit 39 off Rt. 84 in Farmington. Continue on the exit to the center of Farmington (the road becomes Rt. 4). Rt. 4 will intersect with Rt. 10/202 in Farmington Center; from that point, follow Rt. 4 until it intersects with Brickyard Road – approximately 1.7 miles. The Keg Restaurant is on the right corner of Rt. 4 and Brickyard Rd. Turn right onto Brickyard Road and follow it until it intersects with Rt. 44. (Note: the road, CT Rt. 167, will change names several times – Brickyard Rd, Harris Rd, West Avon Rd.) Cross over Rt. 44 – Rt. 167 becomes Bushy Hill Rd. Follow Bushy Hill approximately 6 miles to the intersection of Stratton Brook Road and Bushy Hill. Continue on Bushy Hill approximately ¼ mile. On the left will be a sign for and entrance to the Stratton Forest Condominiums. Immediately after the main entrance, also on the left, is a green street sign for Thornbush Road. Turn left onto Thornbush, immediately right into the entrance for FVJC-ES and follow the road to the left into the main parking area.