



# FARMINGTON VALLEY JEWISH CONGREGATION — EMEK SHALOM



## B'NAI MITZVAH HANDBOOK

# Mazel Tov!

We're looking forward to working with you to plan this exciting *simcha*!

Please reach out to any member of the B'nai Mitzvah Team for assistance, recommendations, or support during the days ahead...all questions are welcome!

Please let us know if you'd like to be connected with a family who has been through this experience before and can offer insight to your questions.

We are looking forward to sharing this life event with your family.

Sincerely,  
The FVJC-ES B'nai Mitzvah Team

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## INTRODUCTION

The B'nai Mitzvah process at FVJC is the culmination of Jewish learning up to this point in the life of each student. We see this period as a transitional moment in the life of every Jewish child, where they are now able and expected to take responsibility for their Jewish identity, learning and practice. We expect this event to serve as a single, albeit large, map dot along their Jewish Journey, not an end point. Finally, this experience requires time, commitment and maturity on the part of your child, but it also requires support and engagement on your part. This process consists of three parts:

- Hebrew Instruction
- Cantillation of Torah, Haftarah and blessings
- Completion of *d'var Torah* with the support of the Rabbi

## TIMELINE AND PROCESS

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Event</b>
2 ½ to 3 ½ years prior to event (4 <sup>th</sup> or 5 <sup>th</sup> grade depending upon age)	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, Clergy are both available) Saturday morning in September.
6 to 18 months prior to event	Parent Meeting (See Appendix A) Clergy present practical, religious and social aspects of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. At this point you will receive essential information regarding the B'nai Mitzvah process.
6 to 18 months prior to event	Kallah (See Appendix A) Discussion about the B'nai Mitzvah experience, history and values. This day of learning is for Bar/Bat Mitzvah child and parents. Mentors (post B'nai Mitzvah students) serve as panelists to answer questions.
12 months prior to event	Student receives notification from the Education Director that attendance and participation at 12 services is required in the following 12 months before B'nai Mitzvah dress rehearsal. School office will track attendance by signing in on the service attendance log. Please work to exceed this requirement.
6 - 8 months prior to event	Lessons Begin
5 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	Progress Evaluation with Parents
10 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	Progress Evaluation with Parents Make appointment w/Rabbi Begin taking parts in Friday night services
15 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	Progress Evaluation with Parents
60 days prior to event	Music accompaniment decision
20 <sup>th</sup> Lesson	Progress Evaluation with Parents
1 week prior to event	Dress Rehearsal

## REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

**Hebrew School Enrollment:** Students must be enrolled in (and attend on a regular basis) Hebrew School for a minimum of four years (grades 4-7) and currently be registered and attending Religious School prior to B'nai Mitzvah. 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, we understand that is not always possible.

**Lessons:** B'nai Mitzvah lessons consist of 6-8 months of private study with Education Director and approved tutors. We will contact you to set up lessons. Students are expected to practice at home at least 30 minutes per day.

**Mitzvah Project:** Each student must be engaged in a sustained, year-long Mitzvah Project during the year preceding his or her B'nai Mitzvah. These are decided on an individual basis between the Clergy, the student and their family. We are available as a resource for ideas and support. We strongly encourage each student to take a hands-on approach, rather than collecting donations for a certain cause. This is to demonstrate to our students that any one of us can change the world if we put our all into a project. *Any displays must adhere to Temple guidelines and be cleared through the Temple Administrator.* The student is responsible for completion of the project, and removing any displays and collection materials by the week following their B'nai Mitzvah.

**Shabbat Service Attendance:** This requirement brings the student to Shabbat Services a minimum of 12 times during the year. Attendance at services, whether on Friday night or Saturday morning, is a worship opportunity, a learning experience for the student, as well as an opportunity for each student to create deeper connections with the broader FVJC community. We encourage you to make Friday nights “family night” and worship together!

**Participation in services:** Students will take part in Friday evening services leading up to their B'nai Mitzvah, based on the individual student's proficiency. Participation during services will be coordinated through the Rabbi.

**Appropriate Attire:** It goes without saying that it is extremely important parents are sensitive to this issue. If you have questions regarding appropriate dress, please see the Clergy.

**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.

**Ushering:** Parents are required to usher at two B'nai Mitzvah service. On the day of your *simcha* it is 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. Families will receive notification of date assignments, details of ushering duties. If the assigned dates are not convenient, please contact another family to switch and then notify the B'nai Mitzvah coordinator.

**Financial Responsibilities:** All families of B'nai Mitzvah students 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 on all dues. 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 B'nai Mitzvah date. If there are questions or concerns, please contact our president.

## LESSONS

Lessons consist of:

- Prayers (Rabbi, Education Director or other qualified instructor—who has been approved by the Clergy)
- Conducting service in sanctuary (Clergy)
- Cantillation of Torah (Tutor)
- Haftarah and blessings (Tutor)
- D'var Torah (speech) (Rabbi)
  - About 8 months prior to the B'nai Mitzvah, Rabbi will meet with the family to discuss process and essential details.

During lessons, at least one other adult must be in the building with the child and teacher.

The B'nai Mitzvah tutoring is a 22-lesson process. Each student meets with the tutor once a week for a 1/2 hour lesson. At the end of all sessions, a full dress rehearsal will be held with the family. The dress rehearsal will occur approximately 1 week prior to B'nai Mitzvah. The dress rehearsal date and time is scheduled by clergy in conjunction with the availability of the sanctuary and the family's schedule.

**Lesson Scheduling:** Two to three weeks prior to the first lesson, we will contact the family to set up a day and time for an initial meeting. The day and time for all subsequent lessons will be set at this time – the goal is for the student to have a consistent time slot. 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 (i.e.: camp). Make-up lessons can be rescheduled due to illness, emergencies, or inclement weather. Lessons are 30 minutes in length and begin and end on time.

**Location and Days:** All lessons will be held at FVJC-Emek Shalom. Our policy states that B'nai Mitzvah students must be registered as students in Religious School at the time of lessons. Lessons will not be scheduled on Shabbat, Festivals or High Holidays.

**Music Files:** At the first lesson, a music file will be provided for home practice. This file will contain all the prayers and blessings of the service. Parents are strongly encouraged to touch base with the Clergy instructor or attend lessons periodically to observe and evaluate their child's progress. This gives the student, parents, Clergy and the tutor a valuable opportunity to communicate and review the learning process together as a team.

**Parental Involvement:** We strongly encourage you to review the prayers or other materials with your child on a weekly basis. The eventual performance of the student hinges on consistent practicing as well as parental involvement. Parents are encouraged to participate in the experience, read reports, and listen to their child 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 in all future endeavors.

**Practice, Practice, Practice:** 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 22 weeks of lessons. Crammed learning does not stay with the student - it literally goes in one ear and out the other! Productive practicing can't be stressed enough! Practice is essential for building skills, especially in chanting.

**Practice at home should:**

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

**Communication:** Communication is an important aspect of this process. Students and parents should call as soon as a question or problem arises rather than wait until the next lesson. The tutor will regularly review progress reports with the Rabbi. The workload is based on a schedule, and communication among Clergy, tutor and parents maintains integrity of the learning process and ultimately of the B'nai Mitzvah service.

**Student Pick-Up and Drop off:** 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. Each family will be asked to provide \$50.00 deposit (cash or check) for the key card. This deposit will be returned when the keycard is given back to the temple after the B'nai Mitzvah. Please be aware that if you have forgotten your card key, we may be unavailable to buzz you into the building.

**Cancellations:** 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. 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.

**Lessons with Rabbi:** The last two months involve rehearsals in the Sanctuary, reading from Torah, delivering the d'var Torah, and practicing the service so 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 service, often, but not exclusively, on a Sunday or Tuesday afternoon. The dress rehearsal is a full run-through of the entire ceremony including all prayers, chanting, and the student's speech.



## APPENDIX A: Lesson Timeline

Lesson plans and number of lessons required for each item vary for each child.

### Lessons 1-5:

Basic prayers reviewed with Rabbi

Student is expected to have fluent mastery of:  
Bar'chu, Sh'ma/V'ahavta, and Amidah

Additional prayers added

Daily practice habit established

Progress evaluation with parents

### Lessons 6-14:

Service marked

Service practice in sanctuary

Torah portion begun

Torah chant begun

Torah and Haftarah blessings

Progress evaluation with parents

Service parts on Friday night begin

### Lessons 15-20:

Torah chant completed

Haftarah begun

Torah without vowels

Lessons with Rabbi begin

Haftarah chant begun

Progress evaluation with parents

### Lessons 21-23:

All material polished and completed

Service parts on Friday night

Confidence building

Practice in sanctuary

Dress Rehearsal:

Complete run-through

## APPENDIX B: Participation During Shabbat Evening Services

### B'nai Mitzvah Student

The areas of participation for each student on the day of his/her B'nai Mitzvah:

To be a *shaliach tzibur*, “leader of worship” - conducting the service and leading the congregation in Hebrew prayers. This is one of the oldest and most prestigious roles in the synagogue. It literally means “messenger of the community.” Each B'nai Mitzvah student joins with the clergy in this sacred role.

To chant the Torah and Haftarah portion. Each B'nai 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. Torah is unvocalized (without vowels or accents); moreover, each student is expected to learn the trope or traditional cantillation melody. This skill is taught by the clergy. The B'nai Mitzvah will chant the Torah blessings only for the fourth and final *aliyah*. (The previous *aliyot* are given out as honors to family members and friends.)

To offer a *d'var Torah* - delivering a speech which teaches the congregation about some aspect of Torah, Haftarah or Judaism, and how it relates to his or her life.

### Parents

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

- Performing the candle lighting on Friday night
- 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 personal blessing for the B'nai Mitzvah
- Please discuss with Rabbi alternative ways to be involved

## APPENDIX C: Required B’nai Mitzvah Family Cohort Events

Two 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 have the opportunity to meet with the Clergy to learn about all the practical, religious and social aspects of becoming a B’nai 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 practical aspects of a B’nai Mitzvah in our Temple, beginning with a Shabbat morning service. There are sessions for students and parents. This is an important group experience that helps families and students get to know each other and bond.

## APPENDIX D: Honors and Aliyot

Honors are an important part of the B'nai 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 two months prior to the B'nai Mitzvah, Rabbi will hold a meeting with you to discuss the honors. At this time we will go over the honors form and discuss how to fill it out.

### Honors include:

- Passing the Torah down from elders in the family to the B'nai Mitzvah child
- Opening/Closing the ark (three times)
- Dressing/Lifting/Returning the Torah (three separate honors)
- Reciting the Prayer for our Country/Congregation/Israel (three English readings consisting of a few paragraphs which may be given as honors to friends, relatives or siblings).

### Aliyot

Aliyot refers to being called to the Torah. There are a number of aliyot, one is reserved for the B'nai Mitzvah child. One or two aliyot are for family and friends. One aliyah may be for the parent(s). The final aliyah is for the B'nai Mitzvah student. Aliyot can be individual honors or groups honors (for example, the Cohen side of the family). In the case of a double B'nai Mitzvah, each child has their own Haftarah 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 below.

### How your friends or family of other faith backgrounds can participate

We welcome the participation of family and friends of other faith backgrounds. While there are some limitations, we very much want all your guests to feel welcome and included. People of other faith backgrounds may participate in any of the above honors except dressing, lifting, or returning the ark and the recitation of the Torah blessings. In the instance of an interfaith marriage, both parents come to the Torah while the Jewish parent 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. Older siblings can be given an aliyah.

## Invited Guests

For some guests, this may be their first time at a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The following are tips to help them understand appropriate behavior during a service at FVJC. If creating a program for the service, you may want to include these:

- Cells phones should be turned off or set to mute.
- No photographs or video may be taken during the service. (See information on Videography in the section on miscellaneous items.)
- Although *kippot* are not required, wearing one demonstrates respect.
- Stand when the congregation stands.
- Participate in whichever prayers you are comfortable reciting.
- Prayers books should be placed on the shelf under the seat in front of you, not on the floor.
- Do not leave or re-enter the Sanctuary when the congregation is standing, when the Ark is open, when the Torah is being carried or read or during the speeches.
- Although it is customary to applaud a fine speech or performance, we do not applaud during services.

## APPENDIX E: Miscellaneous

**Music:** Music is an important part of worship, holidays and festivals. The inclusion of keyboard accompaniment for the student's B'nai Mitzvah service is encouraged if desired. It is your responsibility to arrange this in consultation with the administrator and clergy. Accompanist arrangements must be made by you in advance. The clergy are available to answer any questions regarding the service music.

**Oneg:** Families are welcome to honor the B'nai Mitzvah by sponsoring the Friday night Oneg prior to the event. The food can be ordered through the Temple or, if the family does not wish to sponsor the Oneg but would like to provide the food, may be brought in by the family. All food must be kosher style. More information on Oneg options and prices may be obtained by calling the administrator.

**Flowers:** Flowers are used to grace the Bima on Shabbat. B'nai Mitzvah families may rent the silk flowers in the Sanctuary or order fresh flowers from a florist. To rent flowers, contact the administrator, admin@fvjc.org. Fresh flowers must be delivered before noon on the Friday before your B'nai Mitzvah. Fresh flowers may be taken home by the family after the event or if left in the sanctuary, used or distributed by the Temple.

**Mazon Baskets:** Mazon, A Jewish Response to Hunger, is a charity that provides food to the needy. Mazon Baskets will be placed on the Bima instead of flowers by notifying the Temple office if a donation to Mazon will be made. Please Send your donation 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. After that time, the Social Hall is rented out on a first-come, first-served 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. A contract must also be signed.

**Serving Food if You Rent:** *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 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 C.

**Program Booklet:** A printed booklet for B'nai Mitzvah ceremonies is optional. It should be printed and paid for by the family of the B'nai Mitzvah student and is 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 Haftarah portion in Hebrew and English and others have poetry, readings, a copy of the child's speech, something about their Mitzvah Project, etc. Many program examples can be viewed in the office. Clergy must proofread the booklet before printing has been completed.

**Kippot (Yarmulkes):** Some people order personalized kippot for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Following the service, your guests can keep the kippot as a memento.

**Candy:** Candy is *gently* tossed at the child while the Torah is being marched around the congregation to extend our wish that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah has a sweet life. The candy is provided by the synagogue and is given to the family/guests seated in the first few rows. It will be distributed by the Board Host for that service.

**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 can be taken immediately preceding or following the dress rehearsal or before the service (usually at 8:30 am on Saturday morning, and at 3:30 pm on Saturday afternoon). Clergy 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 videographer needs to be approved by Rabbi. 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 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.

## APPENDIX F: Contacts

For Questions Regarding	Contact	Phone Number	E-mail
Honors and Aliyot	Rabbi	860-651-8576	<a href="mailto:rabbibekah@fvjc.org">rabbibekah@fvjc.org</a>
Lessons and Tutoring:	Rabbi Education Director	860-651-8576 860-651-4218	<a href="mailto:rabbibekah@fvjc.org">rabbibekah@fvjc.org</a> <a href="mailto:school@fvjc.org">school@fvjc.org</a>
Mitzvah Projects	Rabbi Bekah Education Director	860-651-8576 860-651-4218	<a href="mailto:rabbibekah@fvjc.org">rabbibekah@fvjc.org</a> <a href="mailto:school@fvjc.org">school@fvjc.org</a>
B'nai Planning Assistance/ Oneg Preparation	Temple Administrator	860-658-1075	<a href="mailto:admin@fvjc.org">admin@fvjc.org</a>
Parental Prayer	Rabbi	860-651-8576	<a href="mailto:rabbi@bekah@fvjc.org">rabbi@bekah@fvjc.org</a>
Sanctuary Photography	Rabbi	860-651-8576	<a href="mailto:rabbi@bekah@fvjc.org">rabbi@bekah@fvjc.org</a>
Rehearsal	Rabbi	860-651-8576	<a href="mailto:rabbi@bekah@fvjc.org">rabbi@bekah@fvjc.org</a>
Ritual Committee, Date Scheduling	Robin Bergman	860-402-8612	<a href="mailto:robinsbergman@gmail.com">robinsbergman@gmail.com</a>
Reserving the Social Hall	Temple Administrator	860-658-1075	<a href="mailto:admin@fvjc.org">admin@fvjc.org</a>
Shabbat Attendance	Education Director	86-651-4218	<a href="mailto:school@fvjc.org">school@fvjc.org</a>
Special Needs	Rabbi	860-651-8576	<a href="mailto:rabbi@bekah@fvjc.org">rabbi@bekah@fvjc.org</a>
D'var Torah	Rabbi	860-651-8576	<a href="mailto:rabbi@bekah@fvjc.org">rabbi@bekah@fvjc.org</a>
Torah Blessings	Rabbi	860-651-8576	<a href="mailto:rabbibekah@fvjc.org">rabbibekah@fvjc.org</a>
Ushering	Temple Administrator	860-658-1075	<a href="mailto:admin@fvjc.org">admin@fvjc.org</a>



## APPENDIX G: 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 Clergy's vacation or events such as the UAHC Biennial.
- No July or August B'nai Mitzvah dates will be assigned.
- 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, Clergy are both available) Saturday morning in September. Typically, each new B'nai Mitzvah class has several children with July and/or August birthdays. Therefore, a 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.
- Students whose B'Nai Mitzvah are postponed from the previous year will be assigned the first available dates.
- Parents wishing to change their assigned dates may do so depending on availability. The Ritual Committee oversees the change process. All requests for change must be directed to the committee, not the Temple office or Clergy, 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 following receipt of the request. The family will be contacted after the meeting to discuss the options available.
- 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 B'nai Mitzvah in the same year.
- All Saturday morning services are scheduled for 10 a.m. and take place at FVJC. However, families may request a change to a Havdalah service at FVJC-ES, provided the Clergy are available. Requests for change must be in writing and sent to the Religious Committee through the B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator.
- 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):

- A switch may be made to any open Friday night; one per month, first-come, first-served.
- All services take place at FVJC-ES.
- A Bat/Bar Mitzvah may be held on Rosh Chodesh (the beginning of a new Hebrew month) if it is a Sunday.
- A Bar/Bat Mitzvah may be held Mondays and Thursdays with Committee and Clergy approval
- Families interested in having a Bar/Bat Mitzvah service in Israel should talk to Rabbi.

*Before reading the Torah, you say:*

בְּרַחוּ אֶת יְיָ הַמְּבֹרָךְ.

**Honoree:**

Barchu et Adonai hamvorach.

**Congregation**

בְּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבֹרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

**Responds:**

Baruch Adonai ham-vo-rach Polam va-ed.

בְּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבֹרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

**Honoree:**

Baruch Adonai ham-vo-rach Polam va-ed.

בְּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבֹרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ

מִכָּל הָעַמִּים, וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

**Honoree:**

Baruch atta Adonai, eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher  
ba-char-banu mee-kol ha-a-mim, v'natan lanu et torato.  
Baruch atta Adonai, notein hatorah.

---

*After reading the Torah, you say:*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ

תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת, וְחַיִּי עוֹלָם נָשֶׁע בְּתוֹכָנוּ.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

**Honoree:**

Baruch atta Adonai, eloheinu melech ha-olam,  
asher natan lanu torat emet,  
v'cha-yei olam na-ta b'to-chei-nu.  
Baruch atta Adonai, notein hatorah.

## APPENDIX I: 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 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 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. Insurance Certificates will be required at least 1 week prior to your event.
  - 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 J: Aliyah Primer

Below are the basic fundamentals of being called to the Torah. 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*. 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 names of your father and/or mother. The formula would thus be:

*For men: xxx ben xxx v’xxx For women: xxx bat xxx v’xxx*

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 *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 ham’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 Torah*

*Baruch Atah Adonai Notein ha Torah.*

*The congregation responds, “Amen.”*

### The Torah Reading

Following the conclusion of the *b’rachah* (blessing), the reader will read the selection from 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’tocheinu.*

*Baruch Atah Adonai notein ha Torah.*

The congregation responds, “Amen.”

### After the Concluding Blessing

Following the concluding *b’rachah*, the person(s) called to Torah should 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 K: Frequently Asked Questions

*I'd like my child to get a head start on the service or Torah or Haftarah. How do we go about this?*

Our recommendation is that your child just practice, practice, practice, so he/she does not struggle with Hebrew during 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 meet individually and then 6 or 7 times together.*

Each student is responsible for learning the entire service; then we meet and creatively divide it. Each child has his/her own Haftarah and Torah portions. Each child does his/her own d'var Torah (speech), and each set of parents give their own blessing or speech, and each family passes the Torah. Opening/closing the Ark is split between families. (Service may run about 30 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? What time does the service start, what time should I put on my invitation?*

Date of the event

Time when you'll be arriving (service start times are exact; end is approximate)

Friday 7:00 pm -8:15 pm

Saturday morning 10:00 am – 11:30 am

Saturday Havdalah 5:00 pm – 6:45 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 on the honors sheet.

*Is it customary to invite Clergy to the reception?* It is a thoughtful sentiment and much appreciated, however please keep in mind that if our clergy attended every reception, they'd be busy nearly every Saturday evening.

*Is it customary to give a gift to the Clergy?* No. Instead of a gift, a donation in honor of your child to their Discretionary Funds is encouraged.

*What are the rules/policy regarding switching our date?* Every case is judged by the FVJC-ES Ritual Committee on its own merits.

*What happens in case of bad weather?* The service takes place, unless conditions are deemed unsafe by all parties.

## APPENDIX L: Driving Directions

Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation – Emek Shalom

55 Bushy Hill Road, Simsbury, Connecticut

### From Route 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, in about 2 miles.

Turn right onto Rt. 10/202, and drive 5.5 miles.

Turn left onto Rt. 44, and drive 0.7 miles.

Turn right onto the continuation of Rt. 10/202, and drive 3.1 miles.

Turn left onto Stratton Brook Rd, and drive 1.2 miles.

Turn right onto Bushy Hill Rd. (Rt. 167) and drive 0.8 miles, past the entrance to Stratton Forest Condominiums.

The next left is Thornbush Road. Turn left, and then immediately right into the entrance for FVJC-ES.

### 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.

At the traffic light at First Church, turn right onto West Street.

Follow West Street to the light at the intersection with Rt. 167 (Bushy Hill Road). Turn left onto Rt. 167 and then take the third right, onto Thornbush Road.

After turning right onto Thornbush, turn immediately right into the entrance for FVJC-ES.

## APPENDIX M: Fees

### Bar/Bat Mitzvah Fee

\$1,000.

**NOTE:** When multiple children from the same family will be sharing the same B'nai Mitzvah service, the fee for the first child will be \$1000 which includes items such as utilities, administrative support, custodial help, and tutoring. Since each child will get individual tutoring and their own set of materials, there will be an additional tutoring fee of \$700 for each additional child. Finally, the family will be expected to have only one set of ushering duties and to sponsor only one Oneg. (Updated 2016)

### Tuition and Membership Dues & Fees

All must be current by the month prior to your service.

### Oneg Shabbat – Options

#### **Level I Sponsorship**

*Family provides a check to FVJC to cover paper goods drinks etc.; provides all own food for up to 50 people.*

\$72.

#### **Level II Sponsorship**

*Food includes fruit platter, cookie platter, pastry platters and all paper goods and drinks. Platters serve up to 50 people.*

\$275.

#### **Level II Sponsorship**

*Food includes same as level I plus a combination which can include sandwiches, cheese or hummus platter and wine if family chooses, as well as all paper goods and drinks.*

\$375.

### Flowers

#### **Fresh**

Family orders own  
Delivery should be in time for the Friday evening service prior to your event.

#### **Silk --rented from FVJC**

\$ 72.

#### **Mazon Baskets**

Family donates directly to Mazon.  
Ask for guidelines on amount of donation.  
[www.mazon.org](http://www.mazon.org)

### Music (Keyboard/Organist)

We have a variety of accompanists who make themselves available for services.  
Please speak with the Temple Administrator for their contact information,



**Temple Card Key** for lessons (refundable deposit)

\$50.

**FVJC Social Hall Rental** - Optional for Reception

\$425.

**FVJC Multi-purpose Room Rental**

\$360.

**Booklet/Program** - Optional

Family is responsible for booklet, not through Temple. *Please stop in the office for examples of programs.*

**Personalized Kipot** (Yarmulke) - Optional

Family is responsible for Kipot, not done through Temple. *We can put you in touch with families who have used popular websites in the past if you need direction on this purchase.*

**Table Linen Rental** -

\$108

A variety of linens are available for rental. Please stop in the office to reserve the selection for your Kiddish or event reception.



**FVJC Facility Fee Schedule (One-Day Events)**  
**55 Bushy Hill Road, Simsbury, CT 06070**  
**860-658-1075 admin@fvjc.org**

Room	Current Member	Non-Member *
Sanctuary		\$360.00
Social Hall (2-hr day)	\$425.00	\$575.00
S.H. Additional Hrs.	\$72.00	\$108.00
Social Hall (4-hr evening)	\$575.00	\$700.00
S.H. Additional Hrs.	\$90.00	\$144.00
Multi-Purpose Room(4-hr)	\$360.00	\$500.00
M.P. Additional Hrs.	\$54.00	\$72.00
Nursery Large Room	\$180.00	\$252.00
Nursery School rooms	\$90.00	\$162.00
Kitchen (*2)	\$180.00	\$252.00
Classrooms	\$90.00	\$162.00
Custodial Fee (*3)	\$90.00	\$270.00
Koshering the kitchen	\$50.00	\$50.00
Security Deposit	\$100.00	\$100.00

- 1) Non-Member must provide certificate of insurance
- 2) A kitchen fee will only be charge for food preparation and actual cooking at the facility. Staging and simple oven heating will not.
- 3) A custodial fee will be charged for any events outside the normal working hours of the custodian which require extensive cleanup
- 4) *Catering menus of all meals served must have prior approval of the Rabbi*



## Bar/Bat/B'nai Mitzvah Ushering Responsibilities



### **Prior to the beginning of the service:**

When you arrive, be sure to introduce yourself to the B'nai Mitzvah family. Ushering families should arrive **at least 30 minutes** prior to the service to greet guests and assist with seating. Ushers should direct guests to seats and, if available, distribute Yarmulkes, special pamphlets, etc. This is also a perfect time to remind younger guests that there is absolutely no cell phone use during the service. All guests should turn off their phones.

### **Once the service begins:**

Close the doors to the Sanctuary and then open one of the doors to the Social Hall. The building superintendent (Manuel) will have previously adjusted the moveable wall separating the Sanctuary and Social Hall so latecomers and those who wish to leave the service may enter and exit. If this is not the case, please find the superintendent and ask him to make the adjustment. (If the Social Hall is being used for a reception following the service, disregard these instructions as the wall will therefore need to remain closed. In this case, one usher will need to monitor the Sanctuary doors very carefully to ensure that there is no noise when they are opened and closed).

### **During the service (these duties are shared by the ushers):**

- *One or two ushers should remain inside the sanctuary to assist and direct latecomers to seats (do not hesitate to usher guests directly to available seating).*
- *One usher should remain outside the Sanctuary to guide latecomers through the Social Hall into the Sanctuary.*
- *Ushers should redistribute Prayer Books where needed. This may entail walking through the aisles for Prayer Books that are in front of empty seats, and handing them to guests who are sitting in the side sections of the Sanctuary.*
- *All ushers should monitor the behavior of our young guests. Please be proactive!! If someone is disruptive you may move him/her to another seat or, if necessary, remove him/her from the Sanctuary.*
- *Candy is only thrown by the first row (or two) of family members and will be distributed by the Board member. However, you will need to retrieve the candy basket from the Board member and pick up loose pieces in the aisle and on the stairs of the Bimah to ensure a clear path for guests receiving an aliyah.*
- *All ushers should monitor the behavior of any young guest leaving the Sanctuary. We ask that they not loiter outside of the Sanctuary; ushers should also keep track of children in the restrooms. You may also limit the number of children who leave at one time.*
- *Make sure that anyone leaving the Sanctuary exits through the Social Hall and discourage entering or exiting while the congregation is standing or during the Rabbi's sermon.*

Ushers **must stay until the end of the service**. At the conclusion of the service, open both of the Sanctuary doors.

*Thank you for your contribution to the family who is celebrating their day!*



## Bar/Bat Mitzvah Party Planning Checklist

*All items are suggestions and completely optional*

### One - Two Years Out

- \_\_ Estimate # of people preliminary guest list
- \_\_ Decide type of event: Simple kiddish luncheon at Temple, Luncheon off-site, or Party off-site (day or evening)
- \_\_ Book a Venue
- \_\_ Book a photographer
- \_\_ Book a DJ
- \_\_ Talk about a theme This will determine your logo, centerpieces, colors, table numbers...Pinterest is great for this!

### Eight Months Out

- \_\_ Look at invitations Look online for design ideas/ go to an invitation store to view their books
- \_\_ Get a logo designed
- \_\_ Start gathering pictures for a photo montage
- \_\_ Book temple social hall If you are doing a morning service and Kiddush lunch (\$350)
- \_\_ Think about Centerpiece ideas- Pinterest is great for this!
- \_\_ Block rooms for guests at hotel
- \_\_ Book Photo booth

### Six Months Out

- \_\_ Mitzvah project? If he/she is doing one, you can incorporate that into the Bima Baskets.
- \_\_ Clothes shopping!
- \_\_ Order Yarmulkes
- \_\_ Send out Save the date\* either via Ecard or mail

### Four Months Out

- \_\_ Finalize invitation design and guest list
- \_\_ Decide on menu for venue
- \_\_ Sign-in Board
- \_\_ Candle Lighting Order display/ decide on songs and people
- \_\_ Arrange for piano accompanist for service if preferred

### Two months out

- \_\_ Address and Mail invitations
- \_\_ Programs

### One - Two Months Out

- \_\_ Complete photo Montage
- \_\_ Decide on caterer for Kiddush, get tablecloths, napkins, plates, centerpieces/ balloons
- \_\_ Order Favors
- \_\_ Choose Aliyah honors
- \_\_ Purchase Tallit
- \_\_ Decide on Sunday morning brunch plans
- \_\_ Bus transportation for kids if party immediately follows service
- \_\_ Arrange for Oneg pastries/ coffee for Friday night service
- \_\_ Finalize:
  - Centerpieces
  - Seating cards
  - Gift box for cards
  - Tablecloth & napkin colors
  - Sign-in board
  - Socks for girls

### Sponsored Vendors:



Digital Design Chick

**Digital Design Chick, Ari Mills**  
Logo Design, Graphics, DVD Montage  
401-225-4142  
arimills@me.com  
DigitalDesignChick.com



**Plan-it Vicki, Vicki Ross**  
Event Planner  
860-402-4033  
events@plan-itevicki.com  
plan-itevicki.com



**Boppers Events**  
DJ & Event Services  
866-865-3535  
boppersevents.com

## PROMOTIONS by DESIGN LLC

**Promotions By Design**  
Promotional products and apparel  
860-673-6996  
elenasue@sbcglobal.net  
www.promotionsbydesign.net

## Lena Stein Photography

**Lena Stein Photography**  
Photography  
860-916-1792  
lenainavon@comcast.net  
www.lenastein.com



**Harvest Cafe**  
Kiddush/ Oneg/ Party Catering  
860-658-5000  
harvestcafe@sbcglobal.net  
www.harvestcafebakery.com

### Sponsored Vendors:

#### Studio Pura, LLC

Photo Booth  
860-550-5454  
amber@studiopura.com  
www.purabooth.com



FVJC Pinterest page: [www.pinterest.com/fvjcsimbury](http://www.pinterest.com/fvjcsimbury)

**APPENDIX N: Forms** E-copies of these forms will be sent to you in the months leading up to your service. They are for reference at this time.

- 1) **Event Planning Form** – you can use this a guide during your planning process
- 2) **Current Room Rental Rates** – please refer to this when considering renting our space for either your event or Kiddish luncheon following services.
- 3) **Ushering Responsibilities** – please refer to this when preparing to arrive for the service you will be ushering.
- 4) **Blank Aliyot Form** – 3 pages, an editable e-copy of this form is available. All submissions must be typed and submitted in e-form.
- 5) **Blank Event Detail Sheet** – your FVJC to-do's!
- 6) **Aliyot Honor Blessing** – you can share this with the folks who will be called to the bimah for an aliyah during the reading of Torah. They can review the blessing before they come to your service.



### B'NAI MITZVAH - YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED!

Please take a moment to provide us with the following information;  
The earlier we receive your input the smoother our combined process will go!

Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Bar/Bat/B'nai Mitzvah Date: \_\_\_\_\_

SOCIAL HALL - RENTING?	YES	NO
If yes, please contact the office immediately to contract the facility and reserve the date. Cost \$425.00		
Please provide the Temple Office with your caterer contact information. <i>Remember we require Kosher style food to be served!</i>		
BIMAH ARRANGEMENTS		
You will provide. If you are providing please arrange for delivery on the Friday before your service. Check office hours to ensure someone will be here to accept them. Your arrangements will be used for the Friday evening service immediately before your Saturday event unless otherwise noted.		
You will rent from FVJC. Please provide a check payable to FVJC. Cost \$72.00		
You will make a donation to MAZON. Your donation to MAZON will be made in your child's name and the MAZON baskets will be displayed on the Bimah during your service.		
ONEG SPONSORSHIP	PLEASE SELECT LEVEL	
You have 3 levels to choose from; your family will be acknowledged in either the weekly service bulletin or with a table card if your Oneg falls on a Kabbalat service. Paper goods, coffee and juice are provided at all levels of sponsorship.		
Level 1 - you provide dessert for the congregation. Please connect with the office to determine the quantity attending. Donation: \$72.		
Level 2 - FVJC will coordinate the refreshments for the congregation, a selection of cookies, brownies and/or cupcakes will be provided. Donation: \$275		
Level 3 - FVJC will coordinate the refreshments for the congregation; in addition to the above a selection of fresh fruits and/or pastry selections will be added. Donation: \$375		
ALIYOT FORM	YES	NO
Have you completed?		
The completion of this form will assist you in creating your service program. Please provide it to the office no later than 4 weeks prior to your event!		
SERVICE BOOKLET/ SERVICE LAYOUT		
1) Have you created? There are samples of morning, Havdalah, Bat, Bar and B'nai service booklets in a binder in the office. Feel free to review them and copy any you are interested in.		
SERVICE ACCOMPANIST		
Pi-Hsun Shih 860-523-0183 or Adrian Durlister (703)898-7206	You are responsible for contracting their services.	

AFTER BAR/BAT MITZVAH – What's Next?

Join our  
**MC Teen program!**

Led by JT Connect!

Social connection, Social action & Jewish learning!

Grades 8-12!

See [www.fvjc.org](http://www.fvjc.org)

for registration and upcoming program info!

There are a number of ways for a post-B'nai Mitzvah student to remain connected to Judaism and our synagogue. These opportunities foster growth in Jewish learning and values that are part of the B'nai Mitzvah process. Our 8<sup>th</sup> grade *Midrashei Chayim* program (Lifelong Learning) meets twice monthly on Sundays and Wednesdays, and encourages our students to participate in community service projects, to help within Religious School, build community and to expand their Judaic knowledge in a familiar atmosphere. It is a first step to continuing on to confirmation with our high school program. 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 B'nai Mitzvah experience can truly be one of growth, sharing, pride and accomplishment, and a stepping-stone to continued Jewish living and learning.



## APPENDIX O: History of B'nai Mitzvah

Throughout history, groups of people have had rituals to celebrate a boy becoming a man and a girl becoming 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 B'nai Mitzvah ceremonies, the child 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 Haftorah portion. The most important part of the rite was a *d'rashah* or *d'var Torah*, a discussion of the Torah or Haftorah 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.



## APPENDIX P: Keeping B'nai Mitzvah in Perspective

**Bar/Bat Mitzvah Is about the Acceptance of Responsibility.** This is the bottom line of *becoming* a Bar and Bat Mitzvah. It is 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 usually 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.

**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.

## This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.