



B'NEI MITZVAH EXPECTATIONS

Our overarching goal in Temple Sinai's B'nei Mitzvah Program is to foster a sense of Jewish identity, and do our best to ensure that our students continue in the Jewish tradition, see the beauty and value of Judaism in their lives, and attend services / support synagogue life for the rest of their lives. While we understand that the requirements outlined below are significant, our priority is for our students to have a sincere sense of accomplishment, and a feeling of comfort and 'home' in a Jewish service. While these are expected, we are always interested in talking with parents and students about ways to enhance and personalize their experience, increase their sense of connection to Judaism, and to make the service more meaningful to the individual student. If a student has learning challenges or other special needs, we will of course work closely with the student and the family to create a process that is personally demanding as well as positive and meaningful.

HEBREW EXPECTATIONS

We want our students to:

- be comfortable enough reading Hebrew and Hebrew prayers, so that they can go to Reform and Progressive synagogues in the US and around the world and feel at home and able to follow along.
- feel a part of the chain of learning and reading Torah that goes back through the generations.
- have a sense of accomplishment and pride in what they have learned for their bat or bar mitzvah.

To that end, students are expected to learn:

1. **Torah:** Each student is expected to **chant** three aliyot, which means **9-15 verses**, depending on the section chosen.

2. **Haftarah:** Each student is expected to chant **5-10 verses** of **Haftarah**, with the accompanying blessings
3. **Prayers:** Each student is expected to read or sing the following key prayers in Hebrew:
 - Nisim B'Chol Yom
 - Shema and V'ahavta
 - Avot and G'vurot of Amidah
 - V'shamru (for Kiddush on Sat Morning/or in Fri Night service)
 - Aleinu
 - Mourner's Kaddish
4. If a student has worked consistently but has particular difficulty with singing/chanting, the Rabbi and/or Director of Education can suggest *reading* the Torah, Haftarah, and Prayers.
5. If a student comes late to study, the Haftarah can be read in English, and fewer prayers might be required.
6. If a student has particular difficulty reading/decoding language, we will consider with the student and family appropriate, meaningful alternative approaches.

D'VAR TORAH

We want our students to:

- reflect on and engage with questions of ethics, beliefs, and meaning,
- engage intellectually with classic Jewish texts,
- reflect on and explore Reform Jewish values,
- “find their voices” and express their ideas to others, and
- develop confidence in public speaking,

To that end, each student will be expected to prepare a **7–10-minute talk (*D'var Torah*) that explores some aspect of their Torah Portion, an issue of interest to the student and connected to their Torah Portion, and their connection to Reform Jewish belief, values, and/or culture.**

To prepare for the *D'var*, the student will be expected to:

- meet with the rabbi regularly during the months leading up to the service,
- read traditional commentary as found at the website, *Sefaria*,
- read other articles or sources related to their portion or topic
- listen to podcasts relevant to their portion, if available

Students will also prepare a written “thank-you” to go into the program, thanking parents, other relatives, teachers, friends, etc., as appropriate. If they wish, they may do a brief thank you verbally during the ceremony, but not as part of the D’var Torah. (Parental Blessings will be earlier in the service, with presentation of tallit).

MITZVAH PROJECT

We want our students to:

- engage actively in the essential Jewish value of *tikkun olam*, repairing the world,
- gain a sense of agency in effecting change in society through individual and group effort
- develop confidence and leadership skills

To that end, our students will propose and fulfill a **mitzvah project in which they spend at least 20 hours helping others in need.**

Their project should include:

- face-to-face time with the people they help,
- researching/getting to know the community they wish to help

The project should reflect the interests of the students, and the process of deciding on a mitzvah project should engage the student and parents in reflecting on the importance of civic engagement, tzedakah, and in learning about some of the areas of need in their community.

The mitzvah project will culminate in a presentation of information and images that will be found on Temple Sinai’s website.

FAMILY HISTORY AND BELIEF PROJECT

We want:

- Our families to connect and reflect together during the bat/bar mitzvah preparation process,
- Our students, if possible, to reflect on and talk about what is sacred to them and about their beliefs, and to incorporate these into their sense of identity. This is an important part of what it means to be an adolescent and a bat/bar mitzvah.

- To encourage intergenerational connections between our students and their grandparents, and other relatives, by talking about values, beliefs, and history.

To that end, we are asking each student to engage in a Family History and Belief Project, where they talk to family members (both Jewish and non-Jewish) about the family's history, salient events and stories, and about the relative's beliefs and worldview. What do they think is most important in life? What is a line they would never cross? What would they say is 'sacred' in our lives? Do they believe in God, and if so, how would they describe God? One goal is for the student, together with parents and the rabbi, to come up with questions that are of particular interest to them. We also want the parents to let other relatives know about this and get their verbal consent before the student calls or emails directly.

The Family History and Belief Project will culminate in a written record of the conversations, either on a blog, in a report, or a journal/notebook.

ATTENDING SYNAGOGUE SERVICES

We want our students to be familiar with and comfortable in a variety of Jewish prayer settings. We also want them to be comfortable and familiar with the prayers that will be in their bat/bar mitzvah service. To this end, during the year leading up to the bat/bar mitzvah, the student and family are expected to attend 16 services. While we understand how busy our lives are, ideally it would enhance the child's exposure, comfort, and sense of fluency if they attended a variety of services. Here is a guideline to help you:

- 4 (if possible) other bat/bar mitzvah services
- 4 Saturday Morning Services (particularly important since their b'nei mitzvah will be a Saturday morning service)
- 4 Friday Night Services (since as Reform Jews, they will likely attend these most often)
- Pesach Seder
- 2 services at other synagogues, including Conservative, Reconstructionist, Renewal, or Non-Affiliated synagogues

EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS

We want our students to see that their bat/bar mitzvah has a larger context and connection to their family and to Jewish living. The more the parents are involved in a parallel process, the more the student feels supported and connected to family.

To this end, parents are expected to:

- Engage with their children about issues of identity, faith, and values so that this process is made more meaningful for everyone
- **Attend 3 group meetings** of parents with the rabbi. These two-hour workshops-style meetings are to give parents an opportunity to connect with other parents “in the same boat”, reflect on the meaning of the process, and to consider their own spiritual and religious lives and beliefs. These will either be part of a Saturday afternoon/evening Havdalah Service, or on Sunday ‘brunch-time’
- Participate with their children on their Family History and Belief Project.
- Help students get to services, meetings, etc.

NOT REQUIRED BUT STRONGLY ENCOURAGED -

- Consider creating a skit or be part of a Purim spiel
- Include any siblings in discussions, in the service, in the family history project, etc.
- When not attending services on Friday night, to light Shabbat candles, say the blessings and take a moment for Shabbat with their bat/bar mitzvah child
- To light Hanukkah candles with their bat/bar mitzvah child each night of Hanukkah the year before the bat/bar mitzvah
- To attend a seder with their bat/bar mitzvah child , preferably one that includes traditional songs, and includes reading or discussion parts of the Haggadah

EXPECTATIONS for SERVICES AND CELEBRATIONS

- In general, all Temple Sinai members are understood to be invited to the service. If that is uncomfortable for your student or family, please be sure to talk to the rabbi about it when you first meet to talk over the b. mitzvah.

- Families are expected to host an oneg after the Friday Evening Kabbalat Shabbat service, and a light luncheon after the B. Mitzvah service for those that attend. Families also need to arrange for any flowers or special decorations they want for the service and luncheon. If you need logistical or financial help with this, please speak with Stacie or the Rabbi.
- It is a tradition to throw candy at the b. mitzvah after their Torah reading as a celebration of the sweetness of learning. Some students love this; others don't want it. Be sure to talk with your student and the rabbi about this before the service.
- Food in the Social Hall should be kosher style, meaning no pork, shellfish, or meat/milk combined in one dish. Vegetarian or Vegan foods are all kosher-style.
- It is asked that there be some vegetarian or kosher-style option at the evening celebrations in other venues, so that the members of the community that attend and who don't eat pork, shellfish, or meat/milk recipes might find something to eat.



HEBREW EXPECTATIONS

- Torah: Three aliyot, (9-15 verses)
- Haftarah: 5-10 verses of Haftarah, with the blessings
- Prayers:
 - Nisim b'chol Yom
 - Shema and V'ahavta
 - Avot and G'vurot of Amidah
 - V'shamru (for Kiddush on Sat Morning/or in Fri Night service)
 - Aleinu
 - Mourner's Kaddish

D'VAR TORAH

- 7-10 minute talk (*D'var Torah*)** that explores some aspect of their Torah Portion, and their connection to Reform Jewish belief, values, and/or culture.
- Personal thank-yous.

MITZVAH PROJECT

- a **mitzvah project in which they spend at least 20 hours helping others in need.**

FAMILY HISTORY AND BELIEF PROJECT

- Family History and Belief Final Project, a written or digital record of the conversations, either on a blog, in a report, or a journal/notebook.

ATTENDANCE AT SERVICES

16 services.

- 4 (if possible) other bat/bar mitzvah services

- 4 - Saturday Morning Services (particularly important since their b'nei mitzvah will be a Saturday morning service).
- 4 - Friday Night Services (since as Reform Jews, they will likely attend these most often)
- Pesach Seder
- 2-services at other synagogues, including Conservative, Reconstructionist, Renewal, or Non-Affiliated synagogues.

EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS

- Engage with their children about issues of identity, faith, and values;
- Attend group meetings** of parents with the rabbi.
- Participate with their children on their Family History and Belief Project.
- Help students get to services, meetings, etc.

NOT REQUIRED BUT STRONGLY ENCOURAGED -

- Create or be part of a Purim spiel
- Light shabbat candles (when not attending services)
- Light Hanukkah each night of Hanukkah the year
- Attend a seder with their bat/bar mitzvah child

EXPECTATIONS OF SERVICES AND CELEBRATIONS

- We have included a picture and invitation in the Newsletter.
- We've arranged for oneg after Friday Night services.
- Optional: Candy to throw after the reading.
- We've arranged for a luncheon after the Saturday service.
- We've arranged any flowers or décor needed for the service and luncheon.
- I am aware that food in the Social Hall should be kosher style, meaning no pork, shellfish, or meat/milk combined in one dish. Vegetarian or Vegan foods are all kosher-style.