



TEMPLE
MICAH

B'NAI MITZVAH HANDBOOK

DEAR FAMILIES,

Mazel tov on reaching this milestone! It is our privilege to join you in celebrating this occasion.

This handbook is filled with guidance to help you prepare for the momentous occasion ahead. As you browse its contents, you will encounter sections designated "@Home," intended to initiate meaningful discussions within your family. We cannot emphasize enough the collaborative nature of the b'nai mitzvah process between our synagogue community and your home. We appreciate your family's commitment to embracing the wisdom of our sages who taught, "Al tifrosh min ha'tzibur," "Do not separate yourself from the community." Join us!

*The Temple Micah
B'nai Mitzvah Team*



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PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

HEBREW AND CHANTING PROFICIENCY

In order to begin b'nai mitzvah tutoring, which begins 6-8 months before the b'nai mitzvah, students must demonstrate proficiency in decoding, reading Hebrew texts, and pass a readiness assessment test. Our [Machon Micah curriculum](#) is designed to help students prepare for all of this.

Parents are expected to ensure that students regularly attend Machon Micah, actively participate in E-vrit Hebrew tutoring, complete homework, and practice Hebrew at home 10-15 minutes each day during the B'nai Mitzvah tutoring process.

At the end of both 4th and 5th grade, parents will receive a written assessment, identifying their student's Hebrew-reading progress and providing additional resources for students who are not meeting benchmarks. At the start of 6th grade, students will take the readiness assessment to determine whether they are ready to begin b'nai mitzvah tutoring. Students will have multiple opportunities to retake the assessment, and we will work with families to develop plans for success.

We hope that by providing transparency regarding what students are learning, our expectations for each year, and their progress, together, we can ensure that each child is supported and able to achieve reading fluency.

DOES MY CHILD HAVE TO ATTEND MACHON MICAH?

Yes, your child is required to be enrolled in AND attend Machon Micah and E-vrit. We also strongly encourage 5th and 6th graders to attend our monthly Shabbat programming. Through in-person classes and online tutoring, students are able to study and master the Hebrew skills needed to prepare for their b'nai mitzvah, while also socializing and engaging with the Temple Micah community.

B'NAI MITZVAH DATE

Students are given B'nai Mitzvah dates in the **spring of their 4th grade year**. Dates are assigned to students in order of age; the oldest student in the class will be assigned the first available date for that year, and the youngest the last. Twin siblings will be given the same date, but no other students will be asked to share their ceremony with another family. Should the assigned date not work for any reason, families are invited to switch dates with another family. All B'nai Mitzvah services at Temple Micah are held on Shabbat morning; there are no evening b'nai mitzvah.

Families who enroll in the Machon Micah program after 5th grade will generally not be assigned a date right away. Please expect that it will take a year before a date can be assigned. This gives us time to assess the child's needs, and allows the family to integrate into our community.

LEARNING REQUIREMENTS

TORAH AND HAFTARAH

Students will be assigned to a one-on-one Torah tutor 6-8 months prior to the b'nai mitzvah. Students at Temple Micah chant roughly 20 verses of Torah, which in many cases is only a small fraction of the total verses found in their portion. In consultation with a tutor or rabbi, each student is asked to choose a section of verses that they find most meaningful, compelling, or thought-provoking to focus on as they work toward this goal. If you wish to begin studying before your child begins tutoring, you can make an appointment with a rabbi to begin selecting your child's verses.

In addition to chanting Torah, students will chant a portion from the week's Haftarah reading and chant the blessings before and after their Torah and Haftarah readings. These blessings are available on the ["b'nai mitzvah"](#) page on our website, and will be taught during Machon Micah and E-vrit.

Reviewing the materials at home with your child daily will greatly assist in your child's success. Listening to them read and chant out loud (even if you do not know Hebrew) is part of the preparation process. Not only does this create a supportive environment, but it helps build confidence for chanting in front of people on the day of their ceremony.

THE MICAH HAFTARAH PROJECT

The Hebrew word "Haftarah" means additional, and is used to describe a supplementary reading to accompany the Torah reading on Shabbat. Historically, these writings from the Hebrew Prophets were chosen to lift up an idea from the Torah portion itself or from its place in the cycle of the Jewish year.

At Temple Micah, through our work on the Haftarah Project, we have expanded the options for Haftarah selections. Guided by these same principles that the Haftarah should be in conversation with the Torah text, the Jewish calendar, and the rhythm of our lives, we have chosen new readings from the Prophets and Writings to accompany each Shabbat. Each Haftarah has a short description, summarizing the reading and our reasons for choosing it. Our hope is that the Haftarah Project selections serve to expand our understanding of Torah, our lives, and our responsibilities to one another and the world.

@HOME:

It is interesting to explore how ancient texts from our tradition can show us ways of thinking about our world today. Look closely at ages 13, 15, and 18 in the excerpt to the right. Why do you think these are specific ages, when everything after them is by decade?

As a family, try coming up with new answers together for each age:

5 is the age for _____

10 is the age for _____

13 is the age for _____

2,000 YEARS AGO... this was the Jewish path of life. The excerpt below is from Rabbi Yehuda ben Teima in Pirkei Avot, the "Ethics of the Fathers."

"Five years is the age for the study of scripture, Ten is the age for the study of Mishnah, Thirteen is the age for observing the mitzvot, Fifteen is the age for the study of Talmud, Eighteen is the age for the wedding canopy, Twenty is the age for pursuit, Thirty is the age for full strength, Forty is the age for understanding, Fifty is the age for giving counsel, Sixty is the age for mature age, Seventy is the age for a grey head, Eighty is the age for superadded strength, Ninety is the age for a bending stature, One hundred is the age at which one is as if dead, passed away, and ceased from the world."

15 is the age for _____

18 is the age for _____

THE TUTORING PROCESS

TORAH/HAFTARAH TUTORING

Students will meet with a Torah/Haftarah tutor for **45 minutes each week**. Generally, tutoring will take place **in person on Thursdays at Temple Micah**, though occasionally a tutoring session may be online. These tutoring sessions will start approximately six to eight months before the B'nai Mitzvah date, with the goal of completing about 25 individual sessions. On occasion, students may start a earlier to accommodate disruptions over the summer or where additional Hebrew support is needed. If a student needs additional Hebrew support and is not regularly attending Machon Micah and E-vrit tutoring, the cost of any additional sessions will be passed on to the family.

- Please plan to be available for a weekly tutoring session on Thursdays at Temple Micah. Most tutoring will take place between 4:00 and 8:00 pm; though depending on the number of students and schedules, we may schedule some tutoring sessions on other days.
- The b'nai mitzvah team will reach out to you one-two months prior to the start of tutoring to schedule tutoring sessions.
- It is expected that students will make steady progress in preparation for their B'nai Mitzvah. It is the **student's responsibility to practice 10-15 minutes daily and to complete the homework given to them**. It is the tutor's responsibility to keep the parents informed of the student's progress.

D'RASH (SPEECH) MENTOR

In coordination with a d'rash mentor, the student will prepare a speech (or mini-sermon) to deliver during their B'nai Mitzvah ceremony, offering their interpretation of the weekly Torah portion.

The student will also prepare a short introductory statement for their corresponding Haftarah with their assigned rabbi. Families are encouraged to help their child discuss and practice their d'rash at home.

- Students will be assigned a d'rash mentor from our congregation. We are fortunate to have many talented writers in our community, who have offered their time to serve as mentors. We are thrilled to offer this opportunity to deepen community relationships as our B'nai Mitzvah students prepare for their special day. Students and their families will be connected with their assigned mentor to arrange meetings to help the student prepare their d'rash.

NOTE: Please plan to have at least one parent available to join the student's first individual session with their Torah/Haftarah tutor and their d'rash mentor. It is expected that the student will be accompanied by their parent(s) so that everyone can meet, ask any questions they may have, and start the process "on the same page."

MEETINGS WITH THE RABBI

Each student will be assigned to one of our Temple Micah rabbis, who will be officiating the service and will meet one-on-one with the student four or five times in advance of the B'nai Mitzvah date. During these sessions, the rabbi will ensure final preparations for the service. These sessions will begin approximately two months before the ceremony and someone from the Temple will contact you to schedule sessions.

Should you or your student wish to speak with a rabbi before you are assigned to one, please reach out to any of our rabbis to schedule a meeting with them directly.

FORMING A QUESTION

In their meetings before the B'nai Mitzvah service, the student will pose a question to their rabbi, which will become the basis for the rabbi's sermon during their B'nai Mitzvah. This question can be about anything related to the human experience.

EXAMPLES OF PAST QUESTIONS:

- What is the most important story in the Torah?
- What happened before creation?
- What does Judaism say about...?

Family discussion is encouraged to help the student develop an appropriate question.

B'NAI MITZVAH RUN-THROUGH

In the final week before the B'nai Mitzvah, your rabbi will meet with you for a full run-through of the service and its elements. This meeting is always scheduled on the Thursday afternoon immediately prior to the B'nai Mitzvah, at 3:30 pm, unless other arrangements are made with the officiating rabbi. The B'nai Mitzvah student and parent(s) must be present; other service participants do not need to attend.

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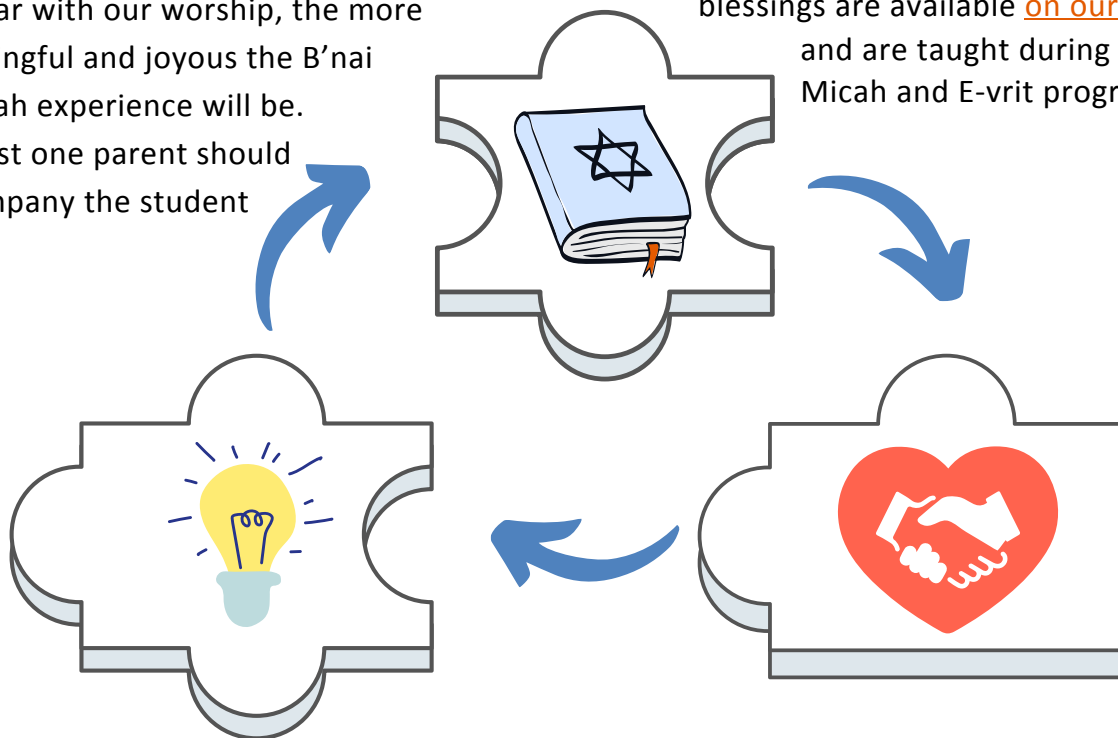
ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

LITURGY SCHEDULE

In the months prior to their B'nai Mitzvah service, students will lead parts of the worship service from the bimah, at two different Shabbat morning services. This will give the student an opportunity to become comfortable on the bimah, as well as help the entire family become more familiar with Shabbat morning worship. The more a family is familiar with our worship, the more meaningful and joyous the B'nai Mitzvah experience will be. At least one parent should accompany the student

when it is their turn to lead part of the worship. It is expected that the B'nai Mitzvah student and family will remain for the full Shabbat service. **Students should arrive 10-15 minutes prior to the start of the service and check in with one of the rabbis.**

Prayers that the students are asked to lead are the V'ahavta and Avot/G'vurot. These blessings are available [on our website](#) and are taught during the Machon Micah and E-vrit programs.



MEDITATIONAL READING

The student will select a poem, a passage from a favorite book, or write some words of their own to read during the Friday evening service the night before their b'nai mitzvah. This will be discussed with the rabbi in advance during one of their sessions together.

WHAT IS A DRASH?

Becoming b'nai mitzvah is about sharing your voice in community. Each of us has something unique to contribute to shalshet hakabbalah: the chain of tradition. In writing a drash, the student studies the Torah, asks a question, explores other Jewish answers, and offers the community a new perspective.

LOGISTICAL PREPARATIONS

THE SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE

B'nai Mitzvah services are held on Shabbat mornings at 10:15 am and typically ends at 12:00 pm. The b'nai mitzvah family will meet in their rabbi's office prior to the start of services at around 10:00 am.

The student becoming b'nai mitzvah will then join the clergy on the bimah until after the Torah service, at which point the student will join their family in the congregational seating section.

THE TEMPLE MICAH COMMUNITY

Every worship service at Temple Micah is a community service, including all B'nai Mitzvah, and we encourage congregational attendance. The beauty of our community depends upon a regular weekly Shabbat worship practice; our atmosphere of prayer can be maintained only if there are a number of congregants present who know our customs and participate actively in the service. We strongly encourage all upcoming b'nai mitzvah families to begin attending Shabbat morning services regularly in advance of the b'nai mitzvah.

USHERS

The family is expected to invite five people – three Temple Micah classmates and two parents of Temple Micah classmates, who are familiar with Micah's Shabbat morning worship – to act as ushers for the Shabbat morning service. The families hosting the Friday evening Oneg will usher for the evening service.

BUILDING RENTALS

If you are interested in renting our building space for any evening event (Friday Shabbat dinner or Saturday evening party) held in conjunction with the B'nai Mitzvah, please request a meeting with the Executive Director at least six months in advance.

PARKING

The Temple can reserve a few spots close to the building for the immediate family and for mobility-impaired guests. We will ask families to provide the names for reserved spaces in the weeks leading up to the service.

LOGISTICAL PREPARATIONS

HOLOCAUST TORAH SCROLLS

Two silent survivors of the Holocaust make their home in the Temple Micah sanctuary and inconspicuously attend every service. Two of our temple's Torah scrolls once were owned and used by synagogues in Czechoslovakia that were destroyed during the Holocaust. The scrolls were rescued after World War II and are now on loan to Temple Micah through the Memorial Scrolls Trust. These scrolls serve as a reminder of a community now destroyed, a moving testimony to Jewish resistance, and a remarkable tribute to the Jewish ability to revive and regenerate.



@HOME: ONE OF JUST A VERY FEW



Temple Micah is one of very few synagogues given more than one Czech Torah scroll. Scan the QR code or [click here](#) to learn more about the history of these scrolls.

TALLIT & KIPPAH

The wearing of a tallit or kippah is not required for Shabbat morning worship at Temple Micah. However, many students choose to wear a tallit and/or kippah when they become b'nai mitzvah. Please note that neither a kippah nor a tallit is intended to be worn as a one-time b'nai mitzvah accessory. We encourage families to discuss the meaning behind both of these ritual Judaic objects and create meaningful traditions for both home and synagogue.

The Temple Micah Judaica shop has a variety of tallitot for sale. Please contact Jill Berman at Judaica@templemicah.org for more information, or stop by at the office during regular office hours. If you shop online, please speak to one of our rabbis before purchasing. **Many of the tallitot available on Amazon or other secular retailers are unsuitable for Jewish worship.** If you are ordering custom kippot, please plan to take them home after the service concludes.

KIDDUSH & MOTZI

The Shabbat morning service concludes with the blessings over grape juice (fruit of the vine) and challah. The b'nai mitzvah family provides the challah; either one 4-5 pound challah or two 2-pound challot, to be shared among the community after the motzi at the conclusion of the B'nai Mitzvah service.

LOGISTICAL PREPARATIONS

HOSTING THE KIDDUSH RECEPTION

It is our custom to welcome the entire congregation to the kiddush following Shabbat morning services. This kiddush reception is your opportunity to share your celebration with the Temple Micah community, as well as with your invited guests.

Our hope is that you create a warm and welcoming atmosphere, allowing members of the congregation and invited guests to celebrate with you and share your joy. We'd like you to view the kiddush you are hosting as an opportunity to deepen your relationship with the Temple Micah community.

WHAT TYPES OF FOOD DO YOU RECOMMEND?

There is no one way to host a Kiddush! Families have used a wide range of caterers. While many families opt for bagels and cream cheese, many others have gone in different directions. We encourage you to do whatever feels right for your family.

We recommend our in-house caterers, [Micah Cooks](#).

FRIDAY EVENING SERVICE

It is customary for family and friends to attend the Friday evening service prior to the b'nai mitzvah and stay for the entire service. Services begin at 6:30 pm. During the Friday service, the B'nai Mitzvah family participates in the leading of the candle blessing, Kiddush prayer, and motzi. In addition, the student will share their meditational reading (discussed above on page 5).

ONEG SHABBAT

Friday Shabbat services begin with a 6:00 pm oneg (snack and schmoozing). The B'nai Mitzvah class coordinates the Friday evening Oneg prior to each of their classmates' B'nai Mitzvah services. With the help of 1-2 parent coordinators, the class organizes its own schedule. The responsibilities include providing the food, setting it up, and cleaning up after services. Every family should be helping with each of these jobs during the evenings they are assigned, typically five times throughout the b'nai mitzvah year.

LOGISTICAL PREPARATIONS

INVITATIONS

ALL members of the B'nai Mitzvah class and their parents should receive an invitation to all students' services. The class directory is available online in ShulCloud. Please remember the invitation should reflect the dignity of the religious ceremony. This is an invitation to a worship service.

For any additional celebrations held outside of Temple Micah, please be sensitive to inclusivity so no one feels left out. If you are inviting a majority of the class, please invite everyone.

DECORUM

If your guests are unfamiliar with Temple Micah, you may wish to let them know what to expect. Your guests, especially younger ones, may need to be reminded of proper attire and decorum. B'nai Mitzvah services are religious ceremonies and should be respected as such.

BEHAVIOR:

All cell phones and electronics should be turned off before the service begins. Texting or using equipment to photograph or video the service is not permitted. Speaking to your neighbor can be disturbing to people who are praying. Please be respectful of the people around you. Please refrain from eating, drinking and chewing gum in the sanctuary.

CLOTHING CHOICES:

We do not have a strict dress code, but we do expect people to dress respectfully for worship services.

BIMAH DECORATION

The family may want to add flowers or potted plants to the bimah during the B'nai Mitzvah weekend. Families who wish to do this must coordinate the delivery (typically on Friday late morning to early afternoon) with the temple office. NO heavily scented flowers, like eucalyptus, lilies, freesia, or forsythia, are allowed. Please be sensitive to the allergies of the congregation and its leaders.

In lieu of flowers, some families have chosen to further enrich their celebration by adorning the bimah with baskets of non-perishable food or other charitable items which are later donated to a charity of their choice.

LOGISTICAL PREPARATIONS

SHABBAT HONORS (SERVICE PARTICIPANTS)

The B'nai Mitzvah family selects individuals to participate in the honors during their Shabbat morning service. We will provide an 'Honors Form' to you about a month before the b'nai mitzvah date. One of the honors is an aliyah, or blessing of the Torah before chanting. Individuals honored with an aliyah must be 13 years of age or older.

During the Torah service, the parents and grandparents are invited to the bimah for the passing of the Torah scroll. At the end of the Torah service, the immediate family of the b'nai mitzvah student is invited to the bimah for a special blessing and to sing the "Shehecheyanu" prayer to express thanks for the sacred occasion.

Typically, student chants five sections of Torah, which corresponds with five aliyot (blessings over the Torah). The first aliyah is assigned by the temple to a community member who is celebrating or commemorating an event. The b'nai mitzvah family may assign aliyah honors for the second and third sections. The fourth aliyah goes to the b'nai mitzvah parents, and the fifth aliyah is reserved for the b'nai mitzvah student. The family also may assign honors for opening and closing the ark, as well as dressing and lifting the Torah.

@HOME: PRACTICING FOR THE ALIYAH

Being called for an aliyah is a very high honor. People who are called to the bimah for an aliyah should practice the blessings before the service. Scan the QR code or visit the "Student Resources" section of the [b'nai mitzvah page](#) on our website.



NON-JEWISH FAMILY HONORS

It is the goal of Temple Micah to create a congregation that welcomes and values everyone, Jew and non-Jew. Many families in our community have non-Jewish members who play a vital and active role in the Jewish life of their family. To that end, we welcome you to open a conversation with your assigned rabbi, or any of our Temple Micah rabbis, about how we might thoughtfully honor and elevate the participation of all members of your family during your child's B'nai Mitzvah service.

LOGISTICAL PREPARATIONS

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO RECORDING

Photography and video recording are absolutely prohibited before and during Shabbat worship services, both Friday and Saturday. Please be aware, however, that we provide live video streaming and archiving of all Shabbat services. A video of the service will be sent to you following your child's b'nai mitzvah.

ON SHABBAT:

You may take photos (or have a photographer take photos) of the blessings over grape juice and challah that take place in the sanctuary at the conclusion of the Shabbat morning service. You may also take photos in the sanctuary following the Shabbat morning service and during the Kiddush luncheon in the social hall. Please let the office know if you plan on using the sanctuary after services for this purpose.

THE WEEK PRIOR:

Some families choose to have a photographer come to the building for a photo session during the week prior to the service. Thursday is a common time to do this, since the family will already be at Micah for the run-through. While there is no photography during the run-through itself, you can take photographs before or after. If you choose to do this, please make appropriate arrangements with the temple office.

Please note that the Torah scrolls are ritual objects and cannot be used during any photo sessions. Additionally, the bimah microphones cannot be moved.

B'NAI MITZVAH FEE

Each family will be charged a B'nai Mitzvah fee. This fee is subject to annual review by the Board of Directors; the fee is \$2500. The temple invests a great amount of resources into the B'nai Mitzvah experience. This fee helps to defray some of the cost of providing this experience, which includes tutoring, individual meetings and run-throughs with the rabbis, and administrative and custodial support. If the staff assesses that your child needs tutoring beyond the traditional six to eight month preparation time, arrangements will be made on an individual basis and additional fees may apply.

NOTE: This fee, which includes payment for your child's b'nai mitzvah tutoring, must be paid in full by the end of the month following the service. You will see this assessed on your account well in advance of the b'nai mitzvah year so you can create a payment plan should you wish.

Please contact our Executive Director if you would like to discuss options for financial aid.

CONTINUING JEWISH EDUCATION

7TH GRADE STUDIES

Students continue in Tuesday Machon Micah in 7th grade even after their B'nai Mitzvah.

REASON 2 BE

Our 8th-12th grade class (Reason to Be, or "R2B") meets on Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8:00 pm. In this class students participate in discussions, have dinner, socialize, and learn together. Topics include Jewish ritual, Jewish identity in America today, and issues relating to justice work within the Jewish community.

MADRICHIM PROGRAM

All 8th-12th graders are eligible to be madrichim (teacher's aides) on Sundays during Machon Micah. Students in the madrichim program learn valuable leadership and teaching skills and gain job experience. They also may be paid or obtain volunteer hours.

OTHER WAYS TO ENGAGE

In addition to R2B and the Madrichim program, our post b'nai mitzvah students can stay involved in the Temple Micah/Jewish community in several other ways including: reading Torah on the high holidays and Shabbat, volunteering to run Zoom tech during Friday night and/or Saturday morning services, traveling to Israel (summer program or high school semester abroad), staying in touch with the rabbis and other Micah staff.

QUESTIONS?

Please contact the Temple Micah b'nai mitzvah team with questions or concerns about the b'nai mitzvah process. Mazel Tov to your family on reaching this joyous milestone!

CONTACT US
Team Email

bnaimitzvah@templemicah.org

B'NAI MITZVAH CHECKLIST

FOR THE STUDENT

- Learn the Friday evening blessings (candles, Kiddush, and Motzi)
- Learn the V'ahavta, Avot v'Imahot, and G'vurot prayers
- Learn to chant the Torah blessings
- Learn to chant the Haftarah blessings
- Choose Torah verses
- Learn to read Torah verses
- Learn the trope system to chant Torah verses
- Choose, read, and chant Haftarah verses
- Write and practice D'rash (Torah speech)
- Write Haftarah introduction
- Develop a question for Rabbi's sermon topic
- Choose or write a Meditational Reading (for Friday evening)

FOR THE FAMILY

- Confirm tutoring availability with the B'nai Mitzvah team.
- Learn the Friday evening blessings (candles, Kiddush, and Motzi)
- Send invitations
- Plan Kiddush Luncheon (after Shabbat morning service)
- Provide Oneg support for other families (before Friday evening service)
- Select and purchase decorative elements for Bimah, if desired
- Select Ushers for Saturday morning service
- Select service participants and submit Saturday Morning Honors form
- Complete and submit "Logistics Form" providing the temple with information about parking, number of guests, deliveries, etc. about 1 month before
- Acquire tallit and kippah, if desired
- Purchase and bring 5 lb challah for after Shabbat morning service
- Finalize payments on b'nai mitzvah Fee

B'NAI MITZVAH JOURNEY

4TH GRADE

- b'nai mitzvah date is assigned in a special ceremony
- Student is enrolled and attending Machon Micah and E-vrit

6TH GRADE

- Family will attend a b'nai mitzvah informational group meeting with clergy, educators, and staff
- One year out, student will take readiness assessment to ensure that they are secure enough in Hebrew to begin tutoring.

2-3 MONTHS PRIOR

- Provide Oneg support for other families (Friday evenings throughout the b'nai mitzvah year)
- Plan Kiddush Luncheon (after Shabbat morning service)
- Student begins meeting one-on-one with the rabbi

WEEK OF THE SERVICE

- Final run-through of the service on Thursday afternoon at Temple Micah
- Bimah decorations delivered to Temple Micah, if appropriate

CONTINUE WITH US!

- R2B - weekly teen class
- Madrichim Program - paid teacher aide position

5TH GRADE

- Student is studying blessings and learning the structure and leadership roles during the Shabbat services

6-7 MONTHS PRIOR

- Student will begin weekly tutoring with a trope tutor (in addition to E-vrit)
- Student is assigned to one of our Temple Micah rabbis
- Student is connected with a D'rash mentor from within the community

2-4 WEEKS PRIOR

- Select service participants and submit Saturday Morning Honors & Logistics form
- Select Ushers for Saturday morning service
- Refer to the Liturgy Schedule for assigned dates when student will lead selected blessings

MAZEL TOV!

מזל טוב!