

# Or Ami

congregation

you're **home**



## *BMitzvah* Guidebook

Rabbi Paul Kipnes | Cantor Kyle Cotler | Rabbi Lana Zilberman Soloway

*Richard Rutkin, President*

### **CONGREGATION OR AMI**

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*Dear BMitzvah Family,*

*BMitzvah* – our new term for your child, this service, and this process – elevates the growth inherent in preparation for their first *aliyah* (ascension) on the path to becoming a Jewish adult. Your child will *Be [the] Mitzvah*, becoming the vessel for Jewish values, Jewish living, and the Jewish future.

As you embark on the sacred journey toward the *simcha* (joyous moment) of *BMitzvah*, you illuminate your child's and your family's embracing of Torah, Jewish tradition, and our *kehillah kedoshah* (meaningful community). The child and family takes their place in the unbroken chain of transmission that began at Mt. Sinai. You become transmitters and receivers of our inherited values.

A highly emotional journey, it will be filled with hope, nervousness, some anxiety, but mostly joy. As a family, you are about to experience one of the most significant Jewish spiritual adventures of your lifetime. We will be by your side during the whole journey.

You will be among the first congregants to celebrate with Cantor Kyle Cotler, our new cantor. Under his guidance, we will be transforming the *BMitzvah* preparation process, so it becomes more personalized and technologically attuned. Working together, breathing through the yet-to-be-determined changes, we will all benefit from an even more meaningful process.

Preparation for the *BMitzvah* ceremony is exceedingly significant, encasing moments of vulnerability. It represents a journey of hard work and dedication.

We hope this *BMitzvah* guidebook, by describing the process, will relieve some of the anxiety and thereby increase joy in your *BMitzvah* experience.

We encourage you to read through this guidebook, and to use it as a reference book often. Since some synagogue policies may change between now and your child's *BMitzvah* date, you will want to be in touch with the rabbis and the office as your date approaches to learn about these updates.

Mazel tov! (Congratulations!) May this be only one of many family *simchas* (joyous moments) we share together!

*With Excitement,*

*Rabbi Paul Kipnes*

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## Who To Contact?

### **Rabbi Paul Kipnes**

(818) 880-4880 | rabbipaul@orami.org

Leads the *BMitzvah* program, oversees policies, officiates at *BMitzvah* services

If you have any questions about the service, ritual, or preparation process, or if I am officiating at your child's service, please contact me.

### **Cantor Kyle Cotler**

(818) 880-4880 | cantorkyle@orami.org

Oversees the musical and tutoring portion of the *BMitzvah*, officiates at *BMitzvah* services  
I will reach out about scheduling your tutoring and rehearsals.

### **Rabbi Lana Zilberman Soloway**

(818) 880-4880 | rabbilana@orami.org

Works with students on their *D'var Torah* (speech), officiates at some *BMitzvah* services.  
I will reach out about scheduling sessions to write your speech.

### **Icela Alcala**

#### **Rabbi Kipnes' Executive Assistant and Administrator of the *BMitzvah* Program**

(818) 880-4880 | icela@orami.org

Administers the *BMitzvah* program, and oversees date changes, coordinates photography, reception rentals

For synagogue usage questions, to change a date, or other issues, please contact me.

### **Lisette Tuohy, Bookkeeper**

(818) 223-1228 | lisette@orami.org

Handles all financial issues related to *BMitzvah*, partnership, and religious school  
For questions about financial issues, please contact me.

## *Henaynu: We Are Here for You!*

### *From Rabbi Paul Kipnes:*

Placing the sacred Torah in your child's hands creates something intensely spiritual for all in attendance. Before that can occur, your child will learn to chant and understand a section of the original Hebrew Torah text. They will also lead the prayer service and deliver a *d'var Torah* (speech) on the lessons they learned. I will help you and your child understand the meaning of this moment. We look forward to getting to know your child and your extended family and to working on the *d'var Torah* (speech). We will have our first family meeting together three months before the *simcha* (joyous occasion). At the *BMitzvah* ceremony we will celebrate together, binding your family with our Jewish traditions.

### *From Cantor Kyle Cotler:*

Many months of preparation are about to unfold. With courage, patience, strength, and love, your child will grow. Savor each accomplishment. Surely the ceremony itself will prove to be an auspicious moment in the life of your child, family, and community as together we celebrate, and affirm our ancient heritage and tradition, in a vital and meaningful way.

Remember, though, that the real meaning of becoming a *BMitzvah* is one of beginning – not completion. Your child is taking first steps on the path to Jewish adulthood. Thinking of it as the end of Jewish education is antithetical to its original purpose.

### *From Or Ami's BMitzvah Team:*

Or Ami's *BMitzvah* Team is honored to work with the *BMitzvah* students. Our mission is to create a learning ambience which is enjoyable and make it as easy as possible for each of our students. Even though the process may seem intimidating, each student will excel in ways that will amaze you! We will help your child reach their full potential and assist you all in making everyone comfortable with all aspects of the process.

## *Countdown to Bmitzvah Timeline*

### **2½ Years Prior**

- Schedule date with Congregation.
- Begin process of selecting and reserving location for reception.

### **12 Months Prior**

- Begin Mitzvah Project

### **9 to 12 Months Prior**

- Begin 12-week *Taste of BMitzvah Class*. Contact Icela Alcalá, Rabbi Paul's Executive Assistant, to find out when your student's class begins.

### **8 Months Prior**

- Call Lisette Tuohy, our bookkeeper, to discuss the various fees.
- Call Icela Alcalá, Rabbi Paul's Executive Assistant, to discuss Friday night service responsibilities.

### **6 Months Prior**

- Arrange tutoring schedule and begin individual tutoring.

### **4 Months Prior**

- Schedule appointment with the Rabbi for family meeting and to begin *d'var Torah* (speech) preparation.
- Buy a *tallit* and *kippah* to wear at the service.

### **Minimum One Month Prior**

- Schedule meeting with the Cantor 1-2 weeks prior to the service.

### **1-2 Weeks Prior**

- Attend meeting with the Cantor.
- Send a guest list (alphabetized by last name) to Icela Alcalá.

### **1 Week Prior**

- Provide Rabbi with copy of parent (1 page, double-spaced) speeches for approval.

### **Friday Night Before a Saturday Ceremony**

- Attend *Shabbat* services: *BMitzvah* leads a prayer, and the family lights *Shabbat* candles. Congregation presents gift.

### **Day of *BMitzvah* Celebration**

- Don't worry (we are here)! Be happy! Breathe and enjoy!!

*Please understand that these deadlines are for your benefit. Everything will go very smoothly if things are done in advance. We all need lead time to do the best job. We greatly appreciate your cooperation with the above schedule.*

# Glossary

## Many Words You Want to Know

**Bmitzvah:** Our preferred term for the ceremony, your child, and this process, because throughout the process, we guide your child to *Be [the] Mitzvah* (be a kind person connected to Jewish tradition).

Formerly known as:

**Bar Mitzvah:** Literally “Son of the Commandment,” this term refers to the person and not to the ceremony.

**Bat Mitzvah:** Literally “Daughter of the Commandment,” this term refers to the person and not to the ceremony.

**B’nai Mitzvah:** Literally “Children of the Commandment,” this term applies to many people when at least one is male.

**B’not Mitzvah:** Literally “Children of the Commandment,” this term applies to many people when none of them are male.

**Aliyah:** During the *Torah* service, certain guests will be called up to the pulpit (*bimah* in Hebrew) to bless the *Torah* before and after each section is read. *Aliyah* literally means “going up.” It is a special honor to receive an *aliyah*, usually reserved for those particularly close to the *BMitzvah*.

**Bimah:** This refers to the raised platform area in the front of the sanctuary. Some people call it the *pulpit*.

**Confirmation:** Confirmation is a ceremony in which a class of Jewish young adults in 12<sup>th</sup> grade confirm their allegiance to Judaism and the Jewish people.

**D’var Torah:** A speech that discusses the meaning of the *Torah* portion, the connection to the *BMitzvah*’s life, ideas about God and Judaism, explanation of the Mitzvah Project, and thank you’s to the family.

**G’lilah:** The people who have the honor in the *Torah* service of dressing the *Torah* scroll after it has been lifted by the *Hagbah*.

**Haftarah:** Following the reading from the *Torah*, a passage is often read from another portion of the Bible. The *Torah* portion and the *haftarah* are usually connected by a common theme or literary style.

**Hagbah:** Person who has the honor in the *Torah* service of lifting the *Torah* scroll high for all to see.

**Havdalah:** The ceremony, on Saturday evening, which separates *Shabbat* from the rest of the week.

**Kiddush:** *Kiddush* is both a prayer and an act. As an act, it is the sanctification of *Shabbat* usually done with wine or grape juice. *Kiddush* is also the prayer over wine on *Shabbat* and holidays.

**Kippah:** (Plural is **Kippot**) This head covering (also known in Yiddish as *yarmulke*) is a sign of reverence for God. At Or Ami, the wearing of the *Kippah* is optional, although the *BMitzvah* customarily wears them.

**L'dor Vador:** Meaning “from generation to generation”, this phrase captures the symbolism of the Torah passing ceremony.

**Maftir:** (Last **Aliyah**) The concluding section of the *Torah* reading which is chanted by the *BMitzvah*.

**Mitzvah:** (Plural is **Mitzvot**) Sometimes thought of as a “good deed,” *mitzvah* is a commandment, an obligation stated in the *Torah*. The rabbis count 613 *Mitzvot* in the *Torah*.

**Oneg Shabbat:** Literal translation is “Sabbath pleasure.” In practice, it refers to the sweets we savor after *Shabbat* services on Friday evening.

**Parashah:** Also called the *sidrah*, the *parashah* is the *Torah* portion assigned to be read each *Shabbat*.

**Se'udat Mitzvah:** Sharing a meal with the community to celebrate is rooted in Jewish tradition. The feast is a joyous way of emphasizing the religious significance of the *BMitzvah Mitzvah* service.

**Siddur:** (Plural is **Siddurim**) The Hebrew word *siddur* means “order,” and is applied to the prayerbook, which contains a specific order of the prayers. Our *siddur* is called *Mishkan T'filah* (Tent of Prayer).

**Simcha:** A joyous occasion.

**Tallit:** (Plural is **Tallitot**) This prayer shawl is worn by Jewish adults in fulfillment of the commandment in the *Torah*, “You shall attach *tzitzit* (fringes) to the four corners of your garments.” The fringes are knotted in such a way that they remind us of all the *Mitzvot* in Judaism.

**Talmud:** Ancient Jewish text containing explanations and commentaries on the *Torah* law by early Rabbis, completed around the year 500 C. E. in Babylonia.

**Torah:** (Literally, “teaching”) The *Torah* really has two meanings. In its broadest sense, *Torah* refers to the entire body of Jewish law, lore, and teachings. In its narrowest sense, *Torah* refers to the scroll on which are written the five books of Moses (*Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy*). Every *Shabbat* a consecutive portion of the *Torah* is read and studied.

**Tzedakah:** The giving of money or goods to those in need. *Tzedakah* translates as “justice” or fairness. Traditionally families make a gift of *Tzedakah* in honor of *simchas*, including becoming a *BMitzvah*.



# *Eligibility and Preparation Requirements*

## **1. Jewish Education:**

A minimum of four consecutive years (grades 4-7 or their equivalent) of regular attendance in a Jewish Religious Education program is expected as well as the satisfactory completion of its academic requirements and attendance requirements. Congregation Or Ami requires 80% attendance each school year to satisfy the attendance requirements for *BMitzvah*.

Completion of the 7th grade year in MAKOM78 (our teen program is required regardless of the *BMitzvah* date. Students are required to attend a twelve-week *Taste of BMitzvah* (prayer) class held 9-12 months prior to the *BMitzvah* date.

We strongly encourage students to continue in our teen education programs through Confirmation and beyond. *BMitzvah* is a milestone on the road of Jewish education, not an end, but the beginning of deeper learning and observance. As such, **students must be enrolled in and attending our MAKOM78 (upper grades Jewish learning classes) at the time of their tutoring and *BMitzvah* service. In the event that such classes have concluded for the summer or have not yet begun, students must be enrolled for the following year.**

## **2. Taste of *BMitzvah* (Prayer) Class**

Our *Taste of BMitzvah* (Prayer) Class prepares the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students for their *BMitzvah* training. Often held on Tuesdays or Thursdays from 4:00 to 5:00 pm. Groups of ten to twelve students will meet for an hour a week for twelve (12) weeks. Groups are organized so students begin at least nine months before their *BMitzvah* date. Class times and dates will be assigned and announced approximately a year before your *BMitzvah* service. See the Financial Commitment Page for Tuition costs for this required program. Please contact Lisette Tuohy for financial questions ([lisette@orami.org](mailto:lisette@orami.org)) and Icela Alcalá ([icela@orami.org](mailto:icela@orami.org)) for class questions.

## **3. Tutoring:**

We have many *BMitzvah* teachers for Congregation Or Ami. They prepare our students for their *BMitzvah* service. Individual study begins a minimum of six months prior to the Service date. *BMitzvah* preparation requires 22 weekly sessions of one-half hour each followed by 4 sessions of one hour each.

(Please note: This 26-week course of study assumes **basic proficiency in Hebrew reading and the chanting of appropriate prayers**. If your child has not completed three full years of Religious School in grades 4, 5, and 6 prior to beginning of *BMitzvah* preparation, **special approval by Rabbi Kipnes will be required**, and additional tutoring at the family's expense may be necessary.)

Students must study (per individual instruction) for a minimum of 20 minutes per day. If study is missed for one day, then 40 minutes must be put in the following day. The goal is daily reinforcement, not oppressive homework. Even if parents do not know Hebrew, they can listen for fluency, as well as give encouragement, and boost confidence. If the child is stumbling over the material, more practice time may be required. If any “life” issues are affecting the child’s ability to study or concentrate, or if they become anxious about the work, please inform the *BMitzvah* Teacher ASAP.

*BMitzvah* tutoring fees are paid directly to the teacher. You will also pay an additional fee of 2 hours for the *BMitzvah* tutor’s involvement on the day of the *BMitzvah* service.

#### 4. **Mitzvah Volunteer Hours:**

In recognition that becoming a *BMitzvah* involves assuming responsibility, **each *BMitzvah* student is expected to complete a 10-hour mitzvah project PRIOR to your family meeting with the rabbi.** This means that you need to complete the mitzvah project at least 2 months before your service. The mitzvah provides the student with an experience of volunteerism, particularly targeted to helping those in need.

This ten-hour project may not be fulfilled using time credited toward community service requirements for school or other groups. However, the mitzvah project may be comprised of additional hours in the same setting. **All mitzvah projects must be approved by our *BMitzvah* Project Coordinator.**

We strongly encourage students and parents to work together to plan and carry out the mitzvah project. In this way, the student recognizes the abiding value of helping others even as the parental involvement reinforces the significance of the endeavor.

We are proud to partner with Tzedek America and utilize their robust program, **Mitzvah Project Central (MPC)**. It is a hub of information and advisors that is available to help you plan your mitzvah project. MPC provides...

- A curated list of local non-profit organizations which will accept our *BMitzvah* students as volunteers
- A curated catalog of non-profits who are interested in engaging with our *BMitzvah* students for in-person and virtual projects
- Online portal for students to record and Tzedek America to track their mitzvah project, hours served, money or items collected
- A comprehensive Mitzvah Project Orientation
- Weekly Zoom office hours to give individual attention to our *BMitzvah* students
- Guidance for documenting and sharing the project
- A means to connect *BMitzvah* students with others who have similar interests to work in tandem

...and much more. *BMitzvah* students are automatically enrolled in MPC and there is no additional fee. Information on how to access MPC will be sent to you by Tzedek America once your *BMitzvah* student has a *BMitzvah* service date.

**PLEASE NOTE: While fundraising provides significant funds for volunteer organizations, the mitzvah volunteer hours may be fulfilled only with hands-on volunteering.**

## 5. Shabbat Service Attendance

To ensure that our pre-*BMitzvah* students and their families are comfortable and familiar with Or Ami's service, **6th and 7th grade students are required to attend six Friday night Shabbat services at Congregation Or Ami each year (In-person only)**. Students will receive credit for all Or Ami Friday night and holiday services (excluding High Holy Days). Saturday morning and *BMitzvah* services, and services at other synagogues, do not fulfill this requirement.

Students need to be accompanied by an adult, and must remain through the entire service. Students should "check in" at the welcome desk, and use the **QR code** to sign in for this *BMitzvah* requirement. Also, please say hello to one of the Rabbis or the Cantor following each service. This service attendance requirement must be completed by the family meeting with the Rabbi three months prior to the *BMitzvah* service.

## Other Mitzvah Opportunities

Other ways you can make this moment into a meaningful, value-laden celebration include:

### 1. Table Centerpieces

Instead of flowers (which die soon after the *simcha*), consider using baskets filled with items that can be donated to help others. Some families have made beautiful baskets of books, toys, and stuffed animals, and donated them to homeless shelters, inner city schools or shelters for battered women.

### 2. Remembering a Child Lost in the Holocaust

Remember Us: The Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Project offers an invitation to children preparing for *BMitzvah* to connect with the memory of children lost in the Holocaust before they could be called to the Torah. The Remember Us Project provides the student with the name of a lost child, information about him/her, and suggestions for simple acts of remembrance: doing *mitzvot b'shem* (in the name of the child), mentioning the child in a *d'var Torah*, taking on the mitzvah of saying Kaddish, and/or lighting a *yahrzeit* candle yearly. Learn more at [remember-us.org](http://remember-us.org).

## *Financial Responsibilities*

- **All Temple dues and fees must be current and fully paid in order to schedule your family's *BMitzvah* service date. Please be aware that the congregation's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30 (not September to August).**
- **All partnership financial commitments and religious school fees for the current fiscal year must be paid in full no later than three months prior to the *BMitzvah* date. Upper grades registration fees for the following year must be paid for students whose *BMitzvah* date falls after MAKOM78 classes end in May.**
- ***BMitzvah* Fee:** Each *BMitzvah* family is responsible for paying a *BMitzvah* fee, see below, which supports the *BMitzvah* process including providing each student with his/her own *siddur* (prayerbook), covering administrative costs associated with the program, supporting the security, maintenance and the regular *Oneg Shabbat* on the Friday evening service immediately prior to the *BMitzvah*. **The fee needs to be paid no less than four months prior** to the *BMitzvah* service. As this *BMitzvah* fee covers more than just the *Oneg Shabbat*, the fee needs to be paid even if you choose to offer at your own cost a more extensive *Oneg Shabbat*.
- **Gift to the Congregation:** Many *BMitzvah* families choose to honor their child by making a special gift to Congregation Or Ami at the time of the ceremony. Every synagogue is sustained by the donations of grateful partners. Holy occasions are appropriate to express appreciation to the congregation, which makes these joyous celebrations possible. Please speak with the Rabbi or Development Committee Chairperson about opportunities for meaningful contributions to Congregation Or Ami.
- No extra fee is requested or expected for the participation of the Rabbi or Cantor in your *BMitzvah* service. This ceremony is one of the ways in which your Rabbi and Cantor are available to you as members of the Congregation.
- **Supervision of Youth Fee:** Families inviting more than 30 pre-teen friends need to hire an additional person to supervise the youth. This will ensure that a boisterous group of friends will not negatively affect your simcha. Office staff will arrange for an approved youth supervisor.

### *BMitzvah* Fees Schedule

*(Subject to change)*

*BMitzvah* Fee for one child: \$995

Additional Fee for second child sharing same date: \$355

Taste of *BMitzvah* Class Tuition: \$350

Youth Supervision Fee: \$50 per adult

*BMitzvah* Tutoring Fee: TBD

# What Do I Need to Know about the BMitzvah Service?

## Time and Place:

*BMitzvah* services may be scheduled on a Saturday morning or Saturday afternoon and last between 1½ and two hours. Please note that attendance at all synagogue services will be open to all members of the congregation without special invitation. Your family will select one of the following services:

### Saturday morning – Shabbat Morning Services begin promptly at 10 AM

All Saturday services are held in our own sanctuary. We read 4 to 5 aliyot from the Torah (including the *BMitzvah* student's final one). As a synagogue service, attendance is open to all members of the congregation. However, your reception remains private. The synagogue is available for rental for a *kiddush* luncheon. Call the office for details.

### Saturday afternoon – Havdalah Services begin promptly at 4 PM

All Saturday services are held in our own sanctuary. This is generally referred to as a *Havdalah* service which concludes with the Havdala ceremony that ends *Shabbat*. We read 4 to 5 aliyot from the Torah (including the *BMitzvah* student's final one).

In addition to participating in a Saturday morning or afternoon service, **your family is expected to attend services the Friday night before.** (In some instances, the family may need to attend a service earlier in the month. Please check with Rabbi Kipnes to confirm.) On that evening, the family will be honored, and the ***BMitzvah* will lead the Congregation in a prayer.** The *BMitzvah* will also be presented with a congregational gift. *For all services and all times – Friday and Saturday – we invite the community to join us for worship.*

## Honors For Family Or Friends During The Service:

### 1. Aliyot

During Saturday services, we have four or five *aliyot* for family/friends (including the student's own blessing). The final *Aliyah*, called the *maftir*, is for the *BMitzvah* student. *Aliyot* may be apportioned in groups. Anyone who is called up for an *aliyah* must be 13 years of age or older. It is expected that people called to the *Torah* wear a *tallit*. Non-Jewish relatives are invited up to the bima with Jewish relatives. Please speak to Rabbi Kipnes to see how fully we welcome non-Jews.

A transliteration and translation of the *Torah* blessings (for before and after the Torah reading) as well as .mp3 (music files) are online on our *BMitzvah* Toolbox ([orami.org/bmitzvah-toolbox](http://orami.org/bmitzvah-toolbox)). Please make copies of the blessing pages and have your honorees **practice the blessings** so that they can recite them with ease at the Service. People coming up for an *aliyah* need to learn the blessings. We encourage the *BMitzvah* student to help family members learn the blessings; it is not too often that our children have the opportunity to teach their parents.

## 2. Opening the Ark

Two adults may be designated to open the doors. We invite adults of any religious affiliation to participate in this honor.

## 3. Undressing Torah/Dressing Torah - G'lilah

One to four people may dress the *Torah* after it is read. Often the younger siblings or relatives of the *BMitzvah* are accorded this honor. We invite siblings or relatives of any age and religious affiliation to participate in this honor.

## 4. Adult to Sit with and Supervise Teenage Guests

Often our teenage guests need to be reminded to be respectful during services. If you anticipate inviting more than 30 teenage guests, you will be expected to hire a synagogue-provided chaperone to ensure they behave in a manner respectful to the occasion. In general, this will cost \$50 for the service. If teenage guests disrupt services with talking or inappropriate behavior, the adult supervisor will need to ask them to step outside and will need to supervise them. Teens who do not sit with parents are expected to sit on the right-hand side when facing the bimah. It is expected that someone supervise the teens during the second half of the service.

## Blessing by the Parent(s)

Most parents choose to speak to their child during the ceremony. Parent(s) speeches take the form of a blessing to the child. **They are to be no more than 1 page, double-spaced in length. The blessing should focus on the special qualities or values of the child. A written copy of the parent's blessing must be given to and approved by the Rabbi one week prior to the ceremony.** After the rabbi approves the speech, print out the speech in 18-point font to ease reading.

## Candy

The custom of throwing candy was meant to shower the young person with sweetness. Unfortunately, guests (including adults) have proven unable to refrain from using it as “target practice”. As this could result in serious injury, **throwing candy is NOT permitted.**

## D'var Torah (Speech) of the *Bmitzvah*

The *BMitzvah* will give a *d'var Torah* speech five to seven minutes long. The speech includes a summary of *Torah* portion; discussion of how it relates to the “real life” of the *BMitzvah* student; explanation of the meaning of becoming a *BMitzvah*; description of the *Mitzvah* project; and thank you's. The Rabbi will assist with writing the speech and will review the speech, edit, make suggestions, and approve the *d'var Torah*.

## Dress Code for the Bimah

Please dress respectfully for participation on the *Bimah*. Our policy towards attendees reflects our Jewish understanding that each of us is made in the image of God. That image is contained in many different shapes, sizes, and colors. Consequently, we do not want to prescribe or proscribe certain attire. For services, we expect that all of our attendees will choose clothing that, whatever its form, tells a story of being ready to enter a sacred space of prayer and community. We hope that clothing will enable participants to feel present in services, comfortably and without distraction. We are happy you are here, no matter what you wear.

Recognizing that different attire is appropriate for different contexts, our clothing should be attuned to the occasion, suitable for the location, respectful of the other people participating, and reflective of our self-image. These factors are particularly important for service leaders to consider, so the *BMitzvah* student and their families especially should take them into account.

That said, generally, bare midriffs, t-shirts or polo shirts, low cut dresses or blouses, sagging pants, and mini-skirts at a Shabbat service do not usually reflect the holiness of the moment. Shirts must be tucked in and jeans, tuxedos, and sports attire (i.e., sweats or jogging suits) are not appropriate. Comfortable shoes should be worn; very high heels are not appropriate.

## Kippot/Tallitot

The wearing of a *kippah* (head covering) or a *tallit* (prayer shawl) is optional in our congregation, but highly encouraged, however, the *BMitzvah* must wear a tallit. We encourage Jews receiving an *Aliyah* to wear a *kippah* and a *tallit*.

## Photography and Videography

**Within certain guidelines, still photography is permitted during or after the service.** Photography is **not permitted before** the service in the synagogue. **Photographer must remain in the back of the sanctuary and may NOT use a flash.** Families should pose for still pictures after the Service. Some families may wish to take pictures in the sanctuary in the days prior to the *BMitzvah*. Please contact Icela Alcala to check availability and make arrangements to reserve the sanctuary.

**Congregation Or Ami's LiveControl system is the only videography allowed.**

View the service at [oramiLIVE.com](http://oramiLIVE.com). The family will receive an online digital version of the service to download. Outside videographers are not allowed during *BMitzvah* services.

## Siddurim

We use our congregational prayer book – *Mishkan T'filah* – at all services.

## Order of Prayers for BMitzvah Service

### SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE:

Tallit Presentation/Blessing  
Shehecheyanu  
Chatzi Kaddish  
Bar'chu  
Sh'ma/Listen  
V'ahavta  
Mi Chamocha  
Avot v'Imahot  
G'vurot  
Kedusha  
V'shamru  
Sim Shalom  
Passing Torah from generation to generation  
K'riat HaTorah (Torah Reading)  
Mi Shebeirach Healing Prayer  
Parents' Blessing  
Haftarah  
D'var Torah (*BMitzvah* Speech)  
Rabbi's Blessing  
Aleinu  
Kaddish  
Oseh Shalom

### FRIDAY NIGHT & HAVDALAH SERVICE:

Tallit Presentation/Blessing  
Shehecheyanu  
Chatzi Kaddish  
Bar'chu  
Sh'ma/Listen  
V'ahavta  
Mi Chamocha  
V'shamru  
Avot v'Imahot  
G'vurot  
Kedushat Hashem  
Shalom Rav  
Passing Torah from generation to generation  
K'riat HaTorah (Torah Reading)  
Mi Shebeirach Healing Prayer  
Parents' Blessing  
Haftarah (Havdala only)  
D'var Torah (*BMitzvah* Speech)  
Rabbi's Blessing  
Aleinu  
Kaddish  
Havdalah

*The Rabbi and Cantor may insert appropriate readings,  
prayers, and/or songs in the services*

### Recommended Reading

- Helman, Diane, *The Mitzvah Project Book: Making Mitzvah Part of Your Bar/Bat Mitzvah ... and Your Life*
- Leneman, Helen: *Bar/Bat Mitzvah Basics*, Jewish Lights Publishing
- Kushner, Lawrence: *Book of Miracles - A Young Person's Guide to Jewish Spirituality*
- Salkin, Jeffrey: *Putting God On The Guest List*, Jewish Lights Publishing



## ***Who Shall I Ask?***

***There are no foolish questions!***

### **Rabbi**

The Rabbis are available to address any issues regarding the *BMitzvah* process. While Rabbi Kipnes has overall responsibility for the *BMitzvah* process, other rabbis also work with students toward *BMitzvah*. In most cases, begin by reaching out to Rabbi Kipnes.

A Rabbi's primary concern is that this be a special moment in "Jewish time" for everyone involved. Please share any questions or concerns with Rabbi Kipnes regarding special family circumstances such as special learning challenges, family relationship challenges, interfaith marriages, single parent or blended families, separation or divorce, participation of non-Jewish family members, and other seemingly challenging issues. The rabbis are prepared to help resolve and/or minimize the anxiety or stress related to any issues or dilemmas. Also, the Rabbi will help the student prepare the *d'var Torah* (speech) and parent(s) prepare their blessing of the child.

### **Cantor**

1. Any questions regarding the liturgy (prayer service) or music. Of course, the Cantor is also available to help with any of the concerns mentioned above.
2. Individual student preparation
3. A student's specific learning needs or challenges

### **Your *BMitzvah* Tutor**

1. Individual student preparation
2. A student's specific learning needs or challenges

### **Rachel Fox (Senior Educator / Keshet Principal)**

1. Educational requirements and concerns

### **Icela Alcalá (Rabbi Kipnes' Executive Assistant)**

1. Questions regarding logistics of ceremony or Oneg Shabbat
2. Scheduling or changing *BMitzvah* dates
3. Set up for the service
4. Rental of synagogue for receptions

### **Lisette Tuohy (Bookkeeper)**

1. Synagogue Financial Commitments
2. *BMitzvah* fees

## *How to Sanctify Our Celebrations and Put God on the Guest List*

*adapted from Putting God On The Guest List by Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin*

Judaism's great contribution to the moral vocabulary of the world was that it produced a middle way between extremes, the way of mitzvah and kedushah (holiness). God made us a little lower than the angels, but much higher than the animals. Judaism says that we neither reject nor hoard pleasure. We sanctify pleasure. We sanctify what we eat through *kashrut* (dietary laws), what we own through *tzedakah* (holy giving), what we drink by *kiddush* (blessing the wine).

What do we do? "Putting God on the Guest List" means that God calls to us to conquer, in some small way, the polarities between the sacred and the profane. Early in the planning stages for a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*, it is important for parents to ask, "**What Jewish values do we hope this *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* celebration will embody?**" Make a list of them. Your list may include compassion, dignity, justice, learning, social action, generosity, humility, moderation, a love for the Jewish people and the Jewish homeland. Plan your celebration around these values and stick to them.

One family asked its *BMitzvah* guests to give money to the Jewish Federation to help poor elderly Jews. Another family put emblems of the twelve tribes on the tables at their son's *Bar Mitzvah*. It was their way of teaching about our roots in the land of Israel.

One family bought trees in Israel in honor of its *BMitzvah* guests. Another family asked family members and friends to help light the candles on the *BMitzvah* cake. Such a ritual is not unusual, but they chose to do it in a different way. As each guest came up to light a candle, he or she offered the *BMitzvah* girl a blessing, or a word of encouragement, or a Jewish value that the young woman might embody.

Other families put photos and biographies of important Jewish leaders throughout history on each table at their party or put information about certain charities on each table and asked guests to contribute or learn about the causes. Some families forego the entire culture of catering by having the party at their homes or at a summer camp.

Best yet, many families go to Israel in lieu of a party. They have correctly surmised that their child would soon forget the party, but a trip to Israel does not become a lost memory.

Ultimately, these are the answers: Jewish celebrations that celebrate Jewish values.

The educational and spiritual part of *BMitzvah* can extend beyond the final hymn at the service. It can permeate the lives of our young, and it can enrich what they take with them into the world.

