

A Bat/Bar Mitzvah Guide to Our Shabbat Service

Vayak'heil Exodus 35:1-38:20

P'kudei Exodus 38:21-40:38

Haftarah Ezekiel 45:16-25

27 Adar 5770 March 13, 2010

Congregation Rodeph Sholom
New York

WELCOME

Thank you for sharing this joyous Sabbath Service (*Shabbat*) with us as our child accepts the responsibility of her/his Jewish heritage and becomes a *Bat/Bar Mitzvah*. Having wonderful family and friends to share this day makes it all the more special.

Bat/Bar Mitzvah is not something a young Jewish person does, but something s/he becomes at the age of thirteen (twelve in some communities). By most accounts, *Bar Mitzvah* observance did not become customary until the 16th century, and the first *Bat Mitzvah* in North America did not take place until 1922.

Jews, along with other religious groups, share a belief in the particular power of ritual. Rituals make a group distinctive and help to transmit identity from generation to generation. *Bat/Bar Mitzvah* means that a thirteen-year-old Jewish child is old enough to perform the religious commandments of Jewish life known as *mitzvot* and become a Daughter or Son of the Commandment. The ceremony which affirms the adult status of a *Bat/Bar Mitzvah* contains some of the most powerful of Jewish symbols and rituals. When a Jewish child becomes a *Bat/Bar Mitzvah*, s/he reads a section from the *Torah*, the Five Books of Moses, which is the record of Covenant between God and all the generations of Israel. In this way, a young woman or man demonstrates publicly the willingness and ability to be counted in the community of responsible Jewish adults.

At this stage of life, in personality and character development, when one is beginning to search for her/his own unique and personal identity, Judaism distinguishes that person and calls that individual by name out of the congregation, thus linking Jewish identity with personal identity and with a sense of wider purpose, with a community beyond the individual self. This sacred link is observed with family and friends, with love, expressions of congratulations, and appreciation for the child, all of which provide the young individual with a strong sense of worth.

We celebrate a *Bat/Bar Mitzvah* with dignity, beauty, and warmth and with great joy in the knowledge that we are continuing traditions of our ancestors who brought their children to the way of God, and to the service of the best and the highest.

We welcome you to our service and thank you for sharing it with us. Your presence adds a sense of *shalom* for our family and synagogue community. *Shalom* means more than the English word “peace” implies. It encompasses wholeness and completeness.

(Please note that definitions for words in italics are at the back of this pamphlet. Also each description refers to the relevant pages in *Miskan Tefillah*.)

OUR SERVICE

Blessing for the donning of the *Tallit* (p. 72)

Child and parents come up onto the *bimah*, and the parents wrap the *tallit* around their child as s/he says the blessing and wears the *tallit* for the first time as a Bat/Bar Mitzvah.

Opening Prayer *Mah Tov* (p. 74)

We open with *Mah Tov* (pg.74), “How fair are your tents, O Jacob, your dwellings, O Israel.” These opening words are taken from the Book of Numbers 24:5.

It is not easy for us to put aside our everyday concerns and become a community given over to prayer. Therefore, our service begins with a prayer which helps us to make the transition from ordinary space and time into sacred space and time.

Verses of Song *P'sukei D'zimrah*

After the morning blessings, and before the main body of the service, come Psalms of praise, an elaborate expression of gratitude and tribute to God. Concentrating on this section's words and the themes they invoke helps to focus our mind and spirit on the sanctity of our worship.

The Psalms are followed by the *Chatzi*, or Reader's *Kaddish* (p. 106). The *Kaddish* sounds different from other prayers because it is primarily in Aramaic. *Kaddish* is a hymn of praise to God and a prayer for the speedy establishment of God's sovereignty on earth. *Kaddish* concludes with a prayer for peace. The *Kaddish* serves different functions in our worship service. Here it separates the initial section where we prepare for our worship. After the Readers' *Kaddish*, we are ready to move to the main body of the service.

The *Sh'ma* and Its Blessings (pp. 108-123)

This section of our service has six prayers. First is the *Bar'chu*, the call to worship which serves to summon the congregation to attention and response. In it we bless God.

The *Sh'ma* is found in The Book of Deuteronomy 6:4. When we recite the *Sh'ma*, we are affirming our faith that despite the apparent fractured and conflicted nature of our world, there is a unity that permeates the universe and connects all things to each other and our historical tradition and faith in God of history.

Immediately following the *Sh'ma* is the *V'ahavtah*, a key reading that also follows the *Sh'ma* in the Torah itself. It enjoins us to reciprocate God's love for us. We are reminded at the end of this powerful prayer that the God who requires these things is the same God who redeemed us from slavery in Egypt, a fitting introduction to the next and final blessing in this section of the service – that of Redemption, or *Geulah*.

Geulah, is a prayer which speaks of God as our redeemer. It ends with an uplifting song called *Mi Chamocha*. Here is the primary example of God's power and the Jewish belief of a God of history who helps us better our world.

The Amidah (pp. 124-141)

Also known as the *T'filah* (prayer) or the *Sh'moneh Esreh* (*The Eighteen*), the *Amidah*, which means "standing," is the very heart of the prayer service. After talking about God during the *Sh'ma* and Its Blessings, we now speak with God during the *Amidah*. We preface the *Amidah* with an opening meditation, a line from Psalm 51. This is one of the most profound moments in the service. With a few words, we let go of our egos so that we may be open to the encounter with God that is reflected upon in the *Amidah*.

The last three blessings of the *Amidah* are of thanksgiving (pp. 138-139).

The *Amidah* ends with perhaps the most comprehensive prayer: that God, the source of everything, grant us *shalom, peace, wholeness and completeness*.

Silent Prayer (p. 142-143)

At the end of the *Amidah* is an opportunity for silent prayer.

Torah Service Seder K'riat Hatorah (pp.244-257)

The service for the reading of the *Torah* is the central event of the Shabbat morning service. The choreography and blessings of the Torah reading serve as a reenactment of the revelation at Sinai, as it is recounted in the Torah, continuing the focus on the entire community of Israelites. Every week in each synagogue Jewish

congregations read a particular portion of the Torah so that the entire Torah is read in a annual cycle. Each week's portion is called in Hebrew the *parasha*.

Blessings, prayers, and other readings surround the central event that is the reading from the *Torah*. In Jewish tradition it is essential that we try and understand the words of Torah as they may apply to our life and times. We have a long tradition of recording these interpretations in our sacred literature. Each child who becomes a Bat/Bar Mitzvah adds her/his voice and interpretation to their portion of the Torah during this service. These thoughts are offered in a reflection known as a D'var Torah.

During the Torah reading service we utter a series of short prayers praising God's might and mercy (pp. 244-249). Then the scroll is carried out among the community in the *Hakafah* (p. 248), the procession through the sanctuary. The *Torah* is paraded through the congregation so that all may show their devotion to it. It is customary to do so by touching one's prayer book, finger, or *tzitzit* to the *Torah* and then kissing whatever was used to touch the scroll. We turn and face the *Torah* as it is carried around the throughout the sanctuary so that our backs are never to it.

The reading of the particular Torah portion is bracketed by two blessings. Reciting these blessings and reading from the scroll is an honor called an *aliyah*, which describes the act of being called up to the *Torah*. In our congregation, loved ones who are called up to the Torah may sometimes read a blessing in English. During the Torah reading, the *Torah* is surrounded by a group of people the entire time it is open emphasizing yet again the communal nature of the Jewish community's relationship with each other and our religion.

A part of the week's *parasha* is either read or chanted from the scroll.

The reader uses a *yad* (a pointer in the shape of a hand) to follow the text and must be well acquainted with the Hebrew and Aramaic since there are no vowels to indicate a pronunciation and no grammatical punctuation marks. Chanting is done according to a cantillation system called **trope**. The trope marks, each representing a musical

phrase, are absent from the scroll, so the reader must study and know the cantillation along with the Hebrew and Aramaic in preparation for chanting *Torah*.

After the *Torah* readings and blessings, the *Torah* is honored and its text shown to the congregation. We stand as the *Torah* is lifted high so that the congregation may see three columns of text.

The *Torah* is then held while it is dressed. The *Torah* reading is followed by a reading from the *Haftarah* (or “conclusion”) The *Haftarah* is a selection from the Prophets, and the *Haftarah* and *Torah* portions are usually related thematically. Like the *Torah* reading, the reading or chanting of *Haftarah* is bracketed by two blessings that praise God, and thank God for the *Torah*, for the prophets, for prayer, and for the gift of Shabbat. (pg. 254) Traditionally, the chanting of the *Haftarah* is given to the young woman or young man becoming a *Bat* or *Bar Mitzvah* as part of their privilege and responsibility as a *Bat/Bar Mitzvah*.

We now return the *Torah* to the Ark with prayers that are thematically the same as those *with* which we removed it earlier (p. 256). First, we praise God in the words of Psalm 148. Next we quote Proverbs 3:17-18, declaring the wisdom of the *Torah* to be a “tree of life.” Finally, with a prayer called *Hashiveinu*, we beseech God to turn to us and help us return to God.

Conclusion (pp. 282-287)

Aleinu is one of Judaism’s oldest prayers. It declares *God’s ultimate and universal role*. (p. 282) The *Aleinu* has three parts. First we declare that it is our duty to praise God and recognize the greatness of our Creator. Therefore, we bow in awe and thanksgiving before God. Second, we acknowledge that all is God, and there is nothing else. Third, we look forward to a time in the future when redemption occurs.

The final prayer in the service is the Mourners’ *Kaddish* (p.294). The *Kaddish* which began as an expression of the desire to sanctify God’s name in public, came to be said by and for mourners. There are different traditions for reciting *Kaddish*. In

our synagogue, just before the *Kaddish* is recited by the entire congregation, the Rabbi names those who have recently died and those whose *yartzeith* (anniversary of death) falls on this Shabbat or during this week.

With the end of the *Kaddish*, the service is over. It is customary, however, for the congregation to join in a hymn (pp. 321-322) and remain standing for a final benediction.

The congregation then joins together for the *Kiddush* and the *Motzi* (pp. 300-302), blessings over the wine and the bread, before eating.

Key Terms & Definitions

Abraham and Sarah: In the Jewish tradition, Abraham is called *Avraham Avinu* or "Abraham, our Father" and Sarah, Abraham's wife, is our matriarch. God promised Abraham that through his offspring, all the nations of the world will come to be blessed (Genesis 12:3)

Aleinu: Prayer consisting of two passages (*Aleinu* and *V'al Kein*) and a follow up paragraph (the *Al Tirah*) recited at the conclusion of each of the three daily prayer services. The *Aleinu* praises God for allowing the Jewish people to serve God, and expresses their hope that the whole world will recognize God and abandon idolatry.

Aliyah: Reciting blessings and reading from the scroll is an honor called an *aliyah*.

Amidah: ("Standing"), also called, *Tifilah* ("Prayer") and The *Shemona Esre* ("The Eighteen") is the central prayer of the Jewish liturgy. The many laws concerning the *Amidah's* mode of prayer are designed to focus one's concentration as one beseeches God.

The Ark: The Holy Ark holds the Torah scrolls.

Bar'chu: The call to worship which serves to summon the congregation to attention and response. -

Bar Mitzvah: Bar Mitzvah literally means “Son of Commandment”. It designates a male who is age 13 and older, as an adult in the eyes of the Jewish community who is responsible for upholding the mitzvot.

Bat Mitzvah – Bat Mitzvah literally means “Daughter of Commandment”. Like a Bar Mitzvah, a Bat Mitzvah is an adult in the Jewish community responsible for the mitzvot, (commandments) however this occurs at the age of 12.

B'nei Mitzvah: Plural form

Bimah: The elevated platform from which the service is conducted and the Torah is read.

Cantor: Tradition dictates a distinctive musical mode for each service. The Cantor is entrusted with the unique musical heritage of the Jewish people, expressing spiritual leadership through song and sacred chant. The Cantor's musical capacities are integrated with extensive Judaic knowledge.

D'var Torah: Literally word of Torah which is a reflection on the meaning of the Torah and/or Haftarah Portions for the individual speaking. In Jewish tradition it is a responsibility for each person to question Scripture, try to understand its relevance for each of us in our time and place and how it might inform our actions.

The Eternal Light: The light above the Ark is kept burning at all times. Its symbolic source is the flame in the ancient Tabernacle whose light burned continuously, and it represents the constant presence of God's spirit in the community.

Geulah: This prayer speaks of God as our redeemer. It ends with an uplifting song called Mi Chamocha.

Haftarah (or "conclusion") The *Haftarah* is a selection from the The Book of Prophets. The Haftarah and Torah portions are usually related thematically

Hakafah: The procession through the synagogue with the Torah prior to the Torah reading service.

Hashiveinu: a prayer in which we beseech God to turn to us and help us return to God.

Kaddish: (Aramaic: "holy") refers to an important and central prayer in the Jewish prayer service. The central theme of the Kaddish is the magnification and sanctification of God's name. In the liturgy, several variations of the Kaddish are used functionally as separators between various sections of the service and at the conclusion of the service as a prayer for those in mourning or observing the anniversary of a loved one's death. It is believed to help us acknowledge and reflect upon our loss along with asserting a feeling of life's value and meaningfulness.

Kiddush: A prayer whose name is taken from the root for holiness. It is recited over wine or grape juice and it proclaims the holiness of the Sabbath or a holiday.

Kippah: In the tradition of Reform Judaism, a person upon entering the synagogue may wear a *kippah*, or *yarmulka* (skull cap). This covering is a sign of respect and is worn by many during the service and as long as they are in the synagogue. *Kippot* (the plural of *kippah*) are available in the lobby outside the sanctuary.

Mi Chamocha: This song is the primary example of a belief in God's power and the Jewish belief of a God of history who has and will intervene to help us better our world.

Mitzvah/Mitzvot: Literally a commandment or commandments, the obligations which Jews are responsible to undertake.

The Motzi: (lit. "take out" or "bring forth"). The blessing, thanking God "Who brings forth bread from the earth," recited before eating bread or matzah.

Parasha: The weekly Torah portion; also called Sidrah or Sedrah or Sidra

Rabbi: The word rabbi literally means teacher. The rabbi's major function is to instruct and guide in the study and practice of Judaism. The Rabbi is chosen by a congregation to be its interpreter of the Jewish tradition and its spiritual leader.

Readers' Kaddish or Chatzi: a prayer in praise of God that separates sections of the service and here signals the end of the preparation.

Shalom means more than the English word "peace" implies. It encompasses wholeness and completeness

Sh'ma: Prayer proclaiming the Jewish belief in One God. The cornerstone of Jewish Faith, it is recited twice a day, once in the evening and once in the morning

Siddur: Another name for the Jewish prayer book. The word contains the consonants s-d-r, which form the Hebrew word meaning "set in order, arrange."

Tallit or Prayer Shawl: This is the garment which may be worn by adults during the service. In a Reform Jewish congregation it is the choice of each adult. It has its origin in the commandment in the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Numbers: "*Bid them make fringes on the four corners of their garments throughout their generations.*" The purpose of the *tallit* is to serve as a reminder of the commandments, which are symbolized by the strands and knots of the fringes.

T'fillah (prayer), the Amidah, which means "standing," is the very heart of the prayer service

The Torah Scrolls: The Torah is comprised of the Five Books of Moses. It is a scroll whose form is the same as in ancient days. The *Torah* is the foundation, core, and holiest part of Scripture for Jews. A scribe writes it on parchment. The scribe prepares the parchment and ink. The calligraphy of each letter is a work of art. No imperfections can be in the scroll. The parchment is placed on wooden handles known

as “trees of life,” and then it can be rolled. The scrolls have no punctuation, no vowels, and no musical notation. The reader must memorize all of this. Each Shabbat we read a set portion of the *Torah*. The section of the week is called the *Sidrah*.

Tzitzit: The fringe of the Tallit, often used to touch the Torah as it is processed around the sanctuary.

V'ahavtah: A key reading that enjoins us to reciprocate God's love for us. We are reminded at the end of this powerful prayer that the God who requires these things is the same God who redeemed us from slavery in Egypt.

Yad: A pointer in the shape of a hand to follow the text

Yartzeith: The anniversary of a loved one's death.

Shabbat Shalom