

# CONGREGATION TIKKUN OLAM B'NAI MITZVAH POLICY

Congregation Tikkun Olam  
Board of Trustees  
Revised November 15, 2005

**PURPOSE** This policy has been adopted by the Board of Trustees to uniformly establish the minimum requirements for a student to be considered for B'nai Mitzvah by Congregation Tikkun Olam (CTO) as well as to help identify the family's responsibilities.

It has been said, "Bar/Bat Mitzvah is not an individual, but a family, and not one day, but a year, if not a lifetime. What affects one member of a family profoundly affects the others." The Central Congregation of American Rabbis (CCAR) recognizes the value of encouraging young Jewish males and females to pursue the observance of B'nai Mitzvah. Among the benefits of this practice are:

- intensified study of Hebrew
- familiarity with Jewish liturgy
- strengthening the Jewish identity
- binding the family to Jewish life and the congregation
- instilling Jewish values and responsibilities

Jewish tradition calls for the B'nai Mitzvah to be thirteen years of age; the actual event can take place anytime after the thirteenth birthday based on the student's training and ability. The CCAR and CTO feel it is necessary to meet certain standards - such as Hebrew and Jewish education, Hebrew proficiency and attendance at worship services - in order to mark this occasion publicly in a service. It is possible that not all potential B'nai Mitzvah candidates will have been long term Congregation Tikkun Olam School (CTOS) students. If this is the case, the CTO Board of Trustees, in conjunction with the CTOS staff, will determine the candidate's readiness for B'nai Mitzvah training as outlined below.

## **CONGREGATION TIKKUN OLAM (CTO) REQUIREMENTS**

1. Family of B'nai Mitzvah candidate must be a member in good standing for the entire fiscal year during which the B'nai Mitzvah will occur, and whose annual dues are paid in full at least one week prior to the B'nai Mitzvah.
2. B'nai Mitzvah candidate must be a current CTOS student who is in good standing for the entire fiscal year in which the B'nai Mitzvah will occur, and whose annual school fees are paid in full at least one week prior to the B'nai Mitzvah.
3. Since the CTOS curriculum is designed to prepare students for their B'nai Mitzvah, the candidate must attend at least 90% of the CTOS sessions for one year prior to their B'nai Mitzvah. B'nai Mitzvah candidates must meet the requirements of CTOS and the independent B'nai Mitzvah tutor as to their proficiency in the following in order to proceed with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah:
  - a. Candidate must be familiar with the Shabbat prayers in "*Gates of Prayer*" (CTOS)
  - b. Candidate must be capable of leading Shabbat prayers (CTOS)
  - c. Candidate must be capable of reading sufficient Hebrew to learn the necessary Torah and Haftarah portions (CTOS and tutor)
  - d. Candidate must be familiar with basic Jewish customs as they relate to Shabbat, Shabbat services and B'nai Mitzvah (CTOS)

Compliance with items listed above can be attained by continuing attendance in CTOS or in the case of new students, at the discretion of the CTOS instructors.

4. CTO B'nai Mitzvah candidates must attend a minimum of four (4) Friday night Shabbat services during the year preceding the B'nai Mitzvah in order to become familiar with the service; attendance will be taken. Failure to meet this requirement will result in a postponement of the B'nai Mitzvah.

## THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH SERVICE

1. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will lead, at minimum, a portion of the B'nai Mitzvah service.
2. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will chant or read a portion of the weekly Torah paraschot in Hebrew, ideally the length of the three aliyot.
3. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will recite the prayers before and after the reading of the Haftarah in Hebrew.
4. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will chant or read their portion of the Haftarah in Hebrew.
5. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah will prepare and deliver a speech which he or she has written. The speech will include (at minimum) a welcome to guests, a description of the Torah and Haftarah portions and a word of thanks to all who made the ceremony a reality. The B'nai Mitzvah speech must be given to CTOS staff for review and comment at least two (2) week prior to the date of presentation.
6. It is customary for family members to participate in the B'nai Mitzvah service, either in Hebrew or English, as well as to perform two of the three Torah *aliyot*. The B'nai Mitzvah will perform the third *aliyah*. More than three *aliyot* are possible if desired.

Many, not necessarily all, families may wish to give their Bar/Bat Mitzvah a *tallit* (prayer shawl) as part of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. Arrangements will be made in the service for this presentation, usually by the parents but can also include grandparents.

The honor of *Hagbah* and *Galila* (holding and dressing the Torah after the Torah service), if you wish, may be given to Jewish family members or close Jewish family friends who are older than 13 years of age. Assigning the honor of *Hagbah* should take into consideration that the Torah when held prior to dressing can be awkward and heavy.

7. The B'nai Mitzvah experience is enhanced when students perform a *Tzedakah* project. To this end, we strongly encourage each candidate to plan and actively participate in a suitable service project benefitting either the congregation, local community, or the greater Chicago area Jewish community. Assistance in choosing a project can be offered by the CTO Board.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR THE FAMILY OF THE B'NAI MITZVAH

1. The family is responsible for picking the date **and** receiving the approval of the CTO Board of Trustees as to the suitability of the date before any additional plans can be made. After confirmation of the date, CTO can advise the family of the Torah portion and Haftarah usually recited that particular week (see contract).
2. If the family wishes to conduct the service and/or reception at the Congregational Unitarian Church (CUC), CTO will confirm the date for the B'nai Mitzvah with the CUC. It is customary for the family to make a donation of \$350.00 to the Congregational Unitarian Church for the use of the facilities. The first half of this donation is a non-refundable deposit of \$175.00 required to confirm and hold the date. The remainder of this donation is due one week prior to the B'nai Mitzvah service (see contract). Conditions of forfeiture of this deposit include; but not limited to:
  - Cancellation of the date after an agreement with CUC has been made
  - Lack of sufficient attendance by the B'nai Mitzvah candidate at CTO Shabbat services and or scheduled CTOS sessions
  - Lack of ability to meet the B'nai Mitzvah requirements as determined by the independent B'nai Mitzvah tutor.
3. CTO will advise the family as to the availability of independent B'nai Mitzvah tutor(s) and will confirm the date for the B'nai Mitzvah with the independent B'nai Mitzvah tutor. It is the family's responsibility to work out a contract and payment schedule with the independent B'nai Mitzvah tutor.

4. Since CTO does not employ the services of a full or part time rabbi, arrangements need to be made with the CTO Board of Trustees for a leader of the B'nai Mitzvah service at least six months in advance. The B'nai Mitzvah service can be lead by any one of a number of people; the family may select one of the following options: 1) a visiting rabbi of the family's choosing, 2) the B'nai Mitzvah tutor, or 3) CTO can provide (subject to availability) a lay leader to conduct the service. Options #1 and #2 will be the family's responsibility to arrange and compensate. If the family chooses to use the CTO-provided lay leader and the lay leader's availability is confirmed, a donation of \$200 is to be made to one of the congregation's dedicated funds - Torah, education or general. The first half (\$100) of this donation is due at signing of the contract and the balance one week prior to the B'nai Mitzvah (see contract).
5. CTO will provide prayer books, *kippot* (unless commemorative *kippot* will be provided by the family), Torah, Torah cover, *yad* and Ark for an administrative fee of \$200, which will be deposited in the congregation's general fund. The first half (\$100) of this fee is due at signing of the contract and the balance one week prior to the B'nai Mitzvah (see contract). CTO owns approximately 75 copies of "*Gates of Prayer - Shabbat and Weekdays*". If additional prayer books will be needed, CTO Board must be notified at least six months in advance so as to make suitable arrangements.
6. The family is responsible for all flowers, decorations and printed materials to be used during the B'nai Mitzvah service.
7. Any and all activities, ceremonies or special ceremonies to be conducted during the B'nai Mitzvah service and which involve CTO property and/or the Congregational Unitarian Church must be cleared in advance with the CTO Board of Trustees.
8. The B'nai Mitzvah family will be responsible for any missing or damaged prayer books, damage to the Torah, Torah cover, *yad* or Ark during the service or any rehearsal, as well as for any damage to Congregational Unitarian Church property.
9. B'nai Mitzvah services conducted at the Congregational Unitarian Church are by their nature, open to all CTO members, CUC members and any interested parties in general. If a reception (Oneg or kiddush) is to be held at the CUC after the service, it is generally accepted practice that it should be open to all attendees. A private reception elsewhere is the family's prerogative.
10. If the B'nai Mitzvah's family wishes to become more familiar with the concept or significance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service or the family's responsibilities, a separate session with either a member of the CTO Board or the B'nai Mitzvah tutor can be arranged. It is recommended this discussion be held three to four months in advance of the actual date. If the CTO Board member is to conduct this session, please advise the CTO President or Vice President. If the independent tutor is to be utilized, the family will make its own arrangements directly with the tutor.

## Glossary of Terms

- Aliyah Originally, the prophet, Priest or king read the entire weekly and holiday Torah portion. Later, the reading was divided among the congregation, and each person read his own portion. Since the reader “ascended” the platform (*bima*) to recite the portion, the honor was called an aliyah which means to “ascend” in Hebrew. (“*The Jewish Book of Why*”, Alfred J. Kolatch)
- Aliyot Plural of *Aliyah*
- Haftarah The reading from the Prophets that supplements and follows the Torah reading on Shabbat and holidays, reserved for the B’nai Mitzvah.
- Kippa (*pl. kippot* also *yarmulke* in Yiddish) A skull cap worn by Jews. Some Jews wear it at all times, others only during prayer and mealtime. A concept of reverence to G-d as well as a sign of respect.
- Paraschot The weekly Torah portion. The actual portion is proscribed by a Hebrew calendrical schedule.
- Torah The Five Books of Moses (*Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*), a number of parchment sections hand lettered and sewn together into a continuous scroll which is wound around two wooden rollers called *aytz chayyim* (“tree of life”).
- Tzedakah A selfless deed of charity.
- Yad Hebrew for hand; an object usually fashioned from silver in the shape of a hand with an outstretched index finger. It is used to point out the words being read in the torah without obstructing the view of the reader. A *yad* is used rather than actually touching the Torah while it is being read, an action considered in poor taste and not in keeping with the dignity due a holy object. (“*The Jewish Book of Why*”, Alfred J. Kolatch)

## AGREEMENT

By signature below, both the family of the B'nai Mitzvah candidate and the Board of Trustees of Congregation Tikken Olam (CTO), agree to be bound by the B'nai Mitzvah policy stated in the above document.

1. I (We) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
Printed names of parent(s) or guardian(s)  
Hereby request CTO to reserve \_\_\_\_\_ for the B'nai Mitzvah  
Date of B'nai Mitzvah  
of \_\_\_\_\_.  
B'nai Mitzvah candidate's name

In addition: (Parent or Guardian to initial choice).

2. \_\_\_\_\_ We further request CTO to reserve the facilities of Congregational Unitarian Church for the ceremony and/or reception. We agree to pay \$175.00 (50%) as a deposit upon notification that the date has been reserved, and \$175.00 (balance due) one week prior to the B'nai Mitzvah ceremony,  
**OR:**

\_\_\_\_\_ We hereby waive reservation of the Congregational Unitarian Church for the ceremony and/or reception and will make other arrangements.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ If available, we further request that the B'nai Mitzvah ceremony be conducted by a CTO lay leader at a cost of \$200.00. We agree to pay \$100.00 (50%) as a deposit upon notification that the date has been reserved, and \$100.00 (balance due) one week prior to the B'nai Mitzvah ceremony,  
**OR:**

\_\_\_\_\_ We hereby waive request for a lay leader to conduct the B'nai Mitzvah ceremony and will make other arrangements.

4. \_\_\_\_\_ We further request the use of CTO service materials (prayer books, *kippot*, Torah, Torah cover, *bimah* cover, *yad* and Ark) and agree to pay a fee of \$200.00. We agree to pay \$100.00 (50%) as a deposit upon notification that the date has been reserved, and \$100.00 (balance due) one week prior to the B'nai Mitzvah ceremony, **OR:**

\_\_\_\_\_ We hereby waive request for the use of CTO service materials (prayer books, *kippot*, Torah, Torah cover, *bimah* cover, *yad* and Ark) and will make other arrangements

5. This document contains the entire agreement between the parties as of this date. Any modification of this agreement must be in writing and signed by both parties. Notices required under this agreement can be given by telephone call but not by telephone message.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature(s) of parent(s) or legal guardian(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of CTO President or Vice President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Today's Date

Confirmations: (CTO Officer to Initial when confirmed)

\_\_\_\_\_ The requested date of \_\_\_\_\_ is approved and parent or guardian has been notified.

\_\_\_\_\_ Deposit of \$175.00 for reservation of Congregational Unitarian Church has been received.

\_\_\_\_\_ Deposit of \$100.00 for the services of CTO lay leader has been received.

\_\_\_\_\_ Deposit of \$100.00 for the use of CTO service materials has been received.