



Parent Handbook 2022-2023

(Amended with Covid-19 Guidelines and Protocols)

The J2M Team

**Cantor Marcos Askenazi, Rabbi Mario Rojzman, Rabbi Ed Farber
and Dr. Gaby Rascovsky (Director of Lifelong Learning)**

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***Mazal Tov* on beginning the process towards becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah!**

Mitzvah is often defined as a "good deed," which can manifest in many ways, like giving to charity or volunteering at a social services organization. **Mitzvah** also means a positive commandment, something we do because it brings value to our lives and feeds our spiritual appetite. The B'nai Mitzvah year blends the meaning of the word **Mitzvah** and extracts from it the beauty of our tradition, fulfilling the Mitzvah, the act of becoming a B'nai Mitzvah, and performing acts of kindness in the process. The most important act of kindness we perform during the B'nai mitzvah process is to ourselves, accepting the Mitzvah of self-care. While your children will continue to be in your care, they begin to learn critical thinking skills during this particular stage of life. Their social-emotional skills are strengthened as they develop a deep sense of empathy and awareness, especially around their issues, challenges, and, ultimately, the realization of their successes. The B'nai Mitzvah year is a Mitzvah you give to each other. As a family, your journey together, supporting each other with love. We want to thank you for allowing us to share in your journey, partner with you in educating your child, and celebrate with you during this most exciting time. Please know that we are here to be a resource for you and, together support you in your vision for your child's B'nai Mitzvah. We look forward to standing with you on the **Bimah** as your child becomes a B'nai Mitzvah, proclaiming the words "Ze hayom asah Adonai, nagilah v'nismecha bo, "This is the day God made for us, let us rejoice in the moment.

B'Shalom,

Rabbi Mario Rojzman

Rabbi Ed Farber

Cantor Marcos Askenazi

To the J2M Families:

Shalom! We would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to “Journey to Mitzvot” B’nai Mitzvah Experience, known as J2M. Our J2M team looks forward to an exciting educational journey and a rich experience that includes a "home/shul" connection.

Our goal is to provide a program of excellence in a safe, loving, and nurturing environment where your child will blossom.

We hope this handbook is helpful in addressing questions about preparing our families for the B’nai Mitzvah iconic moment in their Jewish lives. We thank you for choosing us to celebrate your simcha and for entrusting us with your children!

Looking forward to a year of new learning experiences to treasure in our hearts new discoveries, learning and growth.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gaby Rascovsky
Director of Lifelong Learning



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Philosophy

- Beth Torah Benny Rok Campus strives to help our children develop positive attitudes toward their Judaism, to give them a sense of commitment to their tradition and to the practices of North American Conservative Judaism.
- Our program wants to work with your entire family. We see our task as empowering you to help your children live more meaningful Jewish lives.
- We believe that the B'nei Mitzvah experience is a shared journey between the Synagogue and family; by partnering together, we can create meaningful Jewish experiences for our children.
- "Living Jewishly" is a cooperative; one that enhances the beauty of our tradition when the synagogue and our families work in concert.
- J2M is not just a program, it is a community within the congregation. BTBRC's spiritual and educational leadership is here to encourage you and be a source of support as you prepare for your bar/bat mitzvah.

Goals

- At the completion of the J2M program, students should be able to enter any synagogue, participate in the services, and understand and read the prayers.
- Becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah does not mark the conclusion of one's studies, rather it indicates acceptance of the adult responsibility of continued study. Talmud Torah, the study of Torah, is a goal that we hope our students will begin at Beth Torah and continue throughout their lives.
- Students should be able at the end of their educational process to feel connected to *Klal Israel* (Jewish People), American Society and the State of Israel as entities that require their love and commitment.
- It is our goal that through activities, students will create their own social Jewish network that will enable them to widen their existent social network from school.
- To connect students to meaningful Jewish experiences that help them understand they are part of a global Jewish community. Through art, music, food and celebration we will explore rich traditions from Jewish communities all over the world.

We encourage you to take the time to attend to shul events with your child and know that parents are always encouraged to attend Shabbat services with their children. The best way to instill the love of Judaism in your child is to do Jewish things with your child that they will enjoy. These Jewish memories will last a lifetime and bring Judaism to the next generation.

Curriculum

J2M – or “Journey to Mitzvot” – is a special program that is unique to Beth Torah.

The Journey to Mitzvot has been carefully curated to help you and your family get you ready for the celebration of your becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Together, you and the J2M team will share in the journey of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

You will be responsible for your Jewish journey – who you are as a Jew, how you take part in community events, and what is important to you as a Jewish person in the modern world.

In the sessions, the entire B’nai Mitzvah class will meet to explore and experience how Judaism relates to their lives and what it means to be a Jew. We will explore:

- ✓ **Important rituals** such as *Kippah, Tallit, Tefillin, Mezzuzah*.
- ✓ Shabbat rituals
- ✓ **Jewish values** such as:
 - Commitment to the **State of Israel**
 - Our **obligation to help those in need** in our community and society
 - T’filah (prayer)
 - Family dynamic and interpersonal relationships
 - **Shabbat**
 - Caring for the **environment** and natural world

J2M affords for the entire family the opportunity to participate together in learning about the process of becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. During the year, you will find activities that are exclusively for the students and programs that invite parents to participate.

Individual Tutor Sessions

The B’nai Mitzvah program at Beth Torah includes a private tutor session (30 minutes/week) with one of our tutors who specialize in Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation. The individual tutoring sessions will be scheduled during the first meeting with one of our dedicated professionals.

Timeline for individual Tutor Sessions

- **10-12 months before Bar/Bat Mitzvah date:** First meeting with a member of our clergy or education team
- **8-9 months before Bar/Bat Mitzvah date (approx.):** Individual tutoring sessions begin

Please note that, while not required, we strongly encourage parents to explore the option of a private Hebrew teacher who will help each student learn the Hebrew alphabet and strengthen the Hebrew reading skills. The Beth Torah tutor helps the student practice the prayers, Torah Portion, Haftarah and rituals that pertain to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service selected. They will explore in depth understanding the traditions observances and practices.

Individual meetings with the clergy

We are proud to have the Beth Torah clergy team play an integral role in synagogue and educational programs. Their involvement and participation enrich our children and family's spiritual life. As we get closer to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah day, the number of encounters with our Rabbis and/or Cantor will increase. These meetings (generally 3-4 during the year prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah) are intended to help create strong connection with our families and B'nai Mitzvah students.

Family Engagement Opportunities

"Family" plays an important role in Jewish life; our programs are a result of a partnership between the families and the synagogue. **You are part of the Beth Torah Family**, as partners in our Jewish journey we invite you to participate in our Shabbat worship experiences. Our Friday night "Shabbat B'Yachad" is a soulful, spiritual and musical experience that will leave you spiritually nourished and uplifted. Our Jewish holiday celebrations are exciting, engaging and often include music, food and community celebration.

Our Staff

Rabbi Mario Rojzman
 Rabbi Ed Farber
 Cantor Marcos Askenazi
 Dr. Gabriela Rascovsky

Understanding the Calendar

The J2M calendar highlights a combination of four types of learning opportunities:

- **Green:** Regular Day in person session at Beth Torah
 - **Blue:** field trip
 - **Yellow:** family program
- The sessions are carefully planned on a dynamic model.
 - The calendar is color coded to ease its understanding to families (see calendar [here](#)).



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- Every month offers a combination of different learning modalities and family experiences opportunities.
- Kabbalat Shabbat services are highlighted in yellow as we expect the families to fully immerse in synagogue life and Jewish practices. Attending Friday night services and/or Shabbat morning, weekday Minyan and/or any Jewish holiday celebration is strongly encouraged as it will help shape the Jewish identity in our children.

J2M meets on Tuesdays 5-6 p.m.

J2M sessions are held from August-May regardless of when the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony falls. J2M is often held in conjunction with Kadima, our Middle School youth program. Occasionally, J2M family activities may be facilitated on a Sunday or on Shabbat.

Arrival/drop off (5 p.m.)

- Drop-off will take place in front of the building entrance.
- Parents are welcome to stay on campus and connect with each other. We will provide coffee and wifi.
- Parents may drop off in the carpool circle or park in our parking lot.
- Safety is our TOP priority:
 - While we are happy to welcome you and your child to BTBRC, it is important that you arrive as close to the scheduled time as possible. We are lucky to have ongoing events, programs and activities which generate vehicle and pedestrian traffic and we must remain mindful of the safety and security of each family.

Dismissal/pick up (6 p.m.)

- Students will meet parents at the carpool rotunda. Alternatively, if you choose to stay on campus during J2M, you may pick your child up from the main entrance.

Field trip sessions

Will be informed 2 weeks in advance. Stay tuned to email and Remind communication.

Family sessions

Will be informed 2 weeks in advance. Stay tuned to email and Remind communication.

Virtual sessions (if applicable)

Zoom session information will be provided to the participants at the beginning of the program.

Late Drop off

Please, notify the office if a student is running late. A staff member will assist you in the drop-off area with check in upon arrival.

Early pick up

BTBRC understands that scheduling can be a challenge for families and we will work with you to make sure you can access our facility when the need arises. Should you need to pick up your child early, please call the office or Cantor Marcos at 347-537-9612.

Security Procedures

The safety and security of your child is our priority. All individuals entering the buildings must wear a Beth Torah Benny Rok Campus badge. Our campus is gated and monitored by cameras and our security personnel.

Security at Dismissal

- Only a parent or other designated individual may pick up a child from Beth Torah. Names of designated individuals are listed on the Carpool Pick-Up Form. Children will not be released unless the administration has written permission from the parent. Please note: designated individuals must show a valid picture ID.
- If someone not listed on the Carpool Pick-Up Form is picking up your child, written notification is necessary. Please email Morah Gaby at grascovsky@btbrc.org, Ruth Brandt at rbrandt@btbrc.org or Laura Peimer at lpeimer@btbrc.org
- Please notify the office if you are carpooling with other families for drop off or pick up.
- Download from the website the carpool pass.

Emergency Weather Closing Procedures

Emergency and notification information will be sent out by email messages.

Beth Torah will follow Miami-Dade County Public School closings for weather emergencies. Re-opening of the building is at the discretion of the administration. If dangerous weather conditions develop during the Program, it may be necessary to dismiss classes early, without advance notice. If the weather appears threatening, you will be notified via email. If there is a power outage which precludes our ability to contact parents, we will do our best to make those contacts as soon as possible.



Emergency Procedures/Drills

Fire Drills and Emergency Procedures are essential for ensuring the safety of all students, faculty, and staff. All J2M students are required to follow the instructions and guidelines for the numerous types of emergency procedures. Students must always follow directions, walk silently and in an orderly manner, remain quiet and calm, go to their assigned waiting area, line up quietly, stay with their teacher and class, and listen for further directions.

Communications

Beth Torah Benny Rok Campus uses emails (Constant Contact, Outlook, Shulcloud) to communicate and share images from your child's day in an effort to always keep you connected.

We have adopted the Remind app as a one-way communication for quick messages and reminders. It is not a chat; it is to receive quick reminders, messages or links.

Download the remind app and join the J2M 5783 GROUP. You may also go to <https://www.remind.com/join/b66264> to sign up for the Remind group.

We encourage parents and staff to communicate primarily with the program facilitator and/or Morah Gaby for any concerns, keeping in mind the following:

- Group leaders or facilitators will check emails daily, but after the end of the program.
- Please refrain from sending last minute emails for special arrangements. If you would like to communicate a message immediately, please call the Religious School office at (305) 932-2829, x7852 or x7836.
- Please refrain from sending any communication on Shabbat or Jewish holidays.

This handbook is also available under the J2M tab of Beth Torah's website, www.btbc.org. You will find additional important information posted there throughout the program year, including calendar updates and upcoming session information.

Parent-shul Communication

Please call the office at (305) 932-2829, x7852 or x7836 if:

- Your child is sick.
- Your child will be absent.



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- Your child or anyone you have been in contact with has developed a communicable disease (COVID-19, flu, etc.).
- Your child or anyone in your home will be traveling (foreign or domestic), as per our COVID-19 protocols.
- Your contact information has changed.
- You wish to change or add emergency contact numbers.
- Your pick-up person has changed - even for one (1) day. We will not release your child to anyone (other than the parent) without written permission.

Dress Code Policies and Synagogue Attire

During the week, we request that students come neatly attired.

When attending synagogue services or other synagogue events, please dress appropriately for the occasion. Please refrain from wearing flipflops or shorts for Shabbat services.

Virtual classes' etiquette: even though you may be alone in your room, you are not. We interact on the screen together. Please monitor your children. While attending class in pajama bottoms is a tempting option, we want to make sure that we present ourselves in the best way possible (at least from the waist up). Make sure students wear a clean shirt, run a brush through their hair, brush their teeth and put on deodorant ... no, they cannot smell you through the screen but that is just good common hygiene.

Snacks and Supplies

Please be aware that we are a Kosher campus. All food items we serve are Kosher.

- Snacks will be distributed individually upon arrival.
- We kindly ask parents not to send any snacks unless there is a severe allergic case. In that case items must be in a sealed package and display a Kosher certification.
- If a student brings his/her own reusable water bottle, his/her name should be clearly displayed on the bottle, which must be taken home to be washed following every session.
- Until further notice, water fountains will not be in use.
- Students will receive personal supplies, textbook, notebook, Kippah (when applicable) to use during sessions.
- **Beth Torah and the J2M program adhere to CDC guidelines; therefore, we will adjust the PPE supplies based on CDC requirements (masks, hand sanitizer, etc.).**

Health and Safety on Campus

- All staff and children will wash hands before and after entering the building.
- All classroom surfaces will be wiped down between uses and at the end of the day.

- Our facility will undergo a deep cleaning and disinfecting at the end of each day. We will also clean and disinfect most touch areas throughout the day (every 2-3 hours) including bathrooms, common areas, door handles, light switches, copy machines, physical barriers, etc.
- Campus signage will reinforce the importance of physical distancing expectations and protocols.
- Children who develop symptoms during program hours will be isolated in the office until parents are able to pick up. Children must be picked up within 30 minutes of parental notification.

My J2M packet

Our program requires that certain forms are read and signed by you, the parent (these will be sent via email and are on the website). You will be able to fill or scan the documents electronically and email them back to the office.

Forms must be properly completed, signed and submitted before the beginning of the program and no later than August 26

Completing registration and forms

My J2M forms can be found at www.btbrc.org

Immunization Policy

Beth Torah Benny Rok Campus is mindful about the health of all members of our community. Immunizations are required in order for your child to attend our program and we must receive all up to date forms before August 26. Any student who is unable to be immunized for any medical reason must provide the school with a permanent medical exemption by the State of Florida.

Program Closings

In the event of a force majeure, hurricane or other natural disaster we follow Miami Dade County procedures.

Policy for the Exclusion of Children

All children exhibiting one or more of the following symptoms must stay home:

1. A fever of a 100 or above
2. Cough
3. Shortness of breath
4. Stomach cramping
5. Diarrhea

6. Fatigue
7. Nausea
8. A family member living within your home displays the above symptoms

If a child or staff member presents with any one of the above symptoms consistent with COVID-19, the child or staff member must self-isolate at home until a clearance from the physician is provided.

J2M Rules

1. All students will come to J2M session on time and prepared.
2. Students will show respect for peers and teachers, their person, their possessions and for shul property.

Discipline Policy

Our policy is to reinforce positive behavior, not negative behavior. Staff facilitates the development of self-control in children by using positive guidance techniques, such as modeling and encouraging expected behavior, redirecting children to more acceptable activity and setting clear limits. Teachers' expectations match and respect children's developing capabilities in order to elevate interpersonal problems.

Children are provided many opportunities to develop social skills, such as cooperating, helping, negotiating and talking with the person involved to solve interpersonal problems. Teachers facilitate the development of these positive social skills at all times. We do not believe in punishment, but rather in modeling and redirecting children's behavior.

Every child is entitled to a safe, peaceful environment in which they are assured the opportunity to learn and thrive.

Discipline Procedures

Both staff and students will be treated with respect at Beth Torah. Students are expected to be courteous to their teachers and fellow students and follow the classroom rules.

Disruptive behavior in class will result in

- 1) Warning
- 2) Parent contact
- 3) Parent/teacher conference
- 4) Assignment of specific duties as consequences
- 5) Parent/teacher/director conference
- 6) Parent/ director/teacher/Rabbi conference

Vandalism

We request that students remember that they are attending a synagogue program and conduct themselves accordingly. Parents will be charged for any vandalism caused by their child.

Parent Involvement

Parents play a very important role of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Experience. Therefore, we encourage parent involvement, including attendance at special events.

Non-Discrimination Policy

J2M does not discriminate based on race, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, citizenship status, marital status, disability, or any other protected status.

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received and read the 2022-2023 J2M Parent Manual.

I and my child agree to follow all policies, rules and regulations set forth in the J2M Parent Manual 2022-2023.

Child's Name: _____

Parent's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

