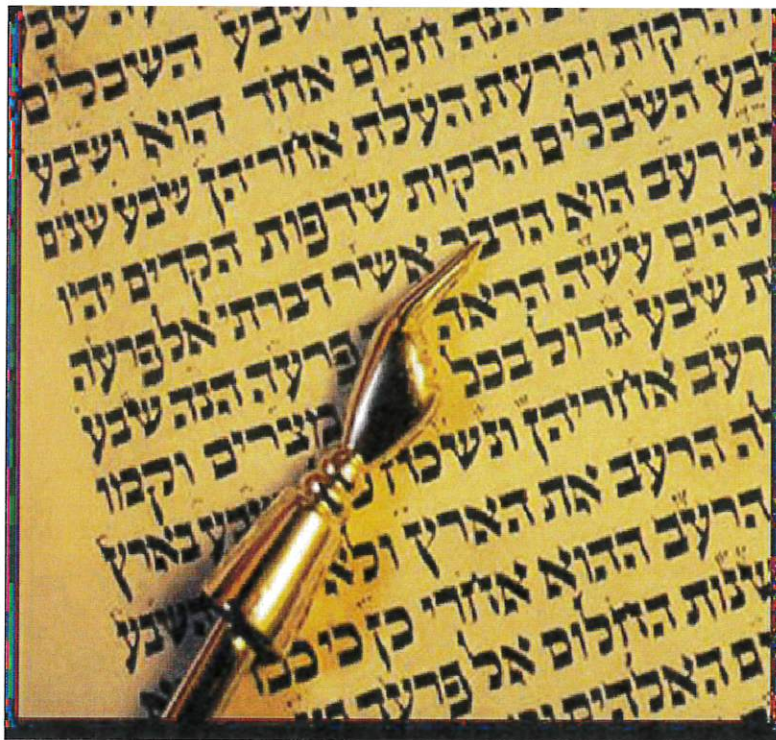


# Everything You've Always Wanted to Know About B'nei Mitzvah...



## ... and Beyond!

Temple Beth Shalom

Santa Fe, New Mexico

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### THIRTEEN THOUGHTS ABOUT B'NEI MITZVAH

1. B'nei mitzvah means "children of the commandment." It is interpreted to mean a young adult who is subject to the commandments and takes responsibility for their enactment.
2. Students do not *have* b'nei mitzvah. They are not bestowed upon a student. Rather, students *become* b'nei mitzvah. It is a life cycle event that occurs automatically when a child reaches the age of thirteen.
3. Your child, although in the process of growing up, still needs your love, help, and guidance.
4. B'nei mitzvah refers to the ceremonies that publicly honor the children who have reached the "age of commandment."
5. The b'nei mitzvah ceremonies mark the "rite of passage" that is the beginning of a child's road to maturity.
6. The b'nei mitzvah ceremonies acknowledge a young person's commitment to their religious responsibilities within our community.
7. The b'nei mitzvah ceremonies recognize that a young person has attained a certain degree of knowledge about Judaism.
8. The b'nei mitzvah ceremonies do not signify the end of Jewish education but rather an occasion for renewed commitment to further Jewish learning.
9. The b'nei mitzvah ceremonies are most meaningful when the parents play an active role in the child's Jewish education and b'nei mitzvah preparation.
10. The b'nei mitzvah ceremonies help to instill a sense of poise, self-worth, and accomplishment in a young person.
11. The b'nei mitzvah ceremonies should be the focal point of the celebration. The religious nature of the occasion must be paramount, not a party.
12. The b'nei mitzvah ceremonies are not only focused on the child or the family. It is an important day for the whole TBS community and the entire Jewish people, who are welcoming the student into our community as a responsible, maturing Jewish young adult.
13. B'nei mitzvah is a special way of preserving our Jewish heritage.

## LETTER TO THE PARENT

Dear B'nei Mitzvah Parent,

*Mazal Tov!* We are looking forward to sharing this happy and exciting event in your family. This Handbook will help you prepare for your child to become a b'nei mitzvah (child of the commandment) at Temple Beth Shalom. We are extremely proud of our b'nei mitzvah program and its emphasis on the spiritual meaning of this experience for the child, family and community. We know that your child's b'nei mitzvah will be an important and meaningful rite of passage for your entire family, and we are here to respond to your needs and concerns.

Through the B'nei Mitzvah year, your child will better identify with their Jewish heritage and community, gain recognition of personal achievement through study, and develop a sense of self-confidence. Judaism is not just a religion, but a way of life. By learning Judaism's customs, literature and prayers, a young person can share more fully in our rich tradition. Equally important is the ritual passage that celebrates the transition from childhood to adult membership in the congregation. We recognize, as did our ancestors, the importance of ceremony in our lives. The b'nei mitzvah ritual is a link in an unbroken chain made up of thousands of years of Jewish tradition. Each ceremony can be understood as a symbolic renewal of Abraham and Sarah's covenant with God and the start of a young adult's life of Jewish decision-making.

As each teen affirms their commitment to lead a responsible Jewish life, the Jewish people as a whole is renewed and strengthened. Your membership in the Temple Beth Shalom family reinforces your child's sense of belonging in our community. **TBS membership is a requirement for celebrating b'nei mitzvah, as is at least two years of registration and participation in the Religious School.**

At Temple Beth Shalom, preparation for the b'nei mitzvah is a time for individual instruction and experience. Our children have the opportunity to expand their understanding of Judaism above and beyond their current awareness. It does not signal the end of their education, but rather the beginning of adult Jewish learning. Please contact Ellen Zieselman or Director of Education Brian Serle for more information about the Hochberg Academy, our innovative 8th-12th grade program.

Let us know how we can be of assistance as you begin your journey.

Shalom,

Neil Amswych, Rabbi

Brian Serle, Director of Education

Wendy Steinberg, Executive Director

### GENERAL POLICIES

- **In order to celebrate b'nei mitzvah at TBS, the family must be members in good standing of Temple Beth Shalom. You and the Director of Education will decide on a date for the ceremony.**
- All b'nei mitzvah services will take place during regular Saturday morning services and will be scheduled a minimum of a year in advance.
- **You and your child need to attend services a minimum of 6 months before the ceremony.. Attendance is required at least two times per month, at either Friday and Saturday services or both.** Service attendance will be tracked by checking in (“kerchunk”) after each service.
- The ceremony will include your child leading worship, reading Torah and giving a D'rash.
- It is customary for the family to attend the Friday night service the night before the ceremony, and for the families of the religious school classmates to provide the oneg.
- Your family will attend and participate in the *Kabbalat Shabbat* service on Friday night. The student customarily helps conduct the Shabbat morning service, in addition to reading from the *Torah* and *Haftarah* (Prophets), and delivering a *D'rash* (short sermon). **These expectations are flexible for children with special needs.** Please discuss any concerns with the Rabbi or Director of Education well in advance.
- Music for the Shabbat morning service is provided by the Temple. Your child is provided with a copy of the Mishkan T'filah siddur. We use Shabbat morning service #1 in the siddur. If you have particular tunes that you would like included for some of the prayers or songs that aren't listed, please **speak to Rabbi Neil or the Director well in advance** to make sure these can be included in the Saturday morning liturgy.
- **NO photography is allowed during Shabbat services.** Photography is allowed and encouraged during the final rehearsal at 10:30 am on the Friday morning before the ceremony. It is our practice to stream all Shabbat services, and a copy of the service may be available to download after the service. Of course, internet outages and challenges are beyond our control.
- **Outside Jewish professionals may only participate in a service if previously approved and invited by Rabbi Neil 3 MONTHS in advance.** You will be entirely responsible for any additional costs accrued.
- A *tallit* (prayer shawl), and *kipah* (yarmulke – head covering) can be worn by all genders. There are tallitot and kippot for sales in the TBS gift shop or online; please inquire with the office staff.
- **TBS office hours: M-Th 9:30am – 4:30pm ; F 9:30am – 3:00pm**

**EXPECTATIONS:**

- **If any of these expectations are not met, the date of the ceremony may need to be rescheduled.**
- The student will be registered in Religious School for a minimum of two years before celebrating b'nei mitzvah at TBS.
- By the end of 6th grade, the student should be able to:
  - correctly identify Hebrew letters by name and sound;
  - correctly read vowel sounds;
  - write Hebrew in block printing;
  - decode (accurately read) liturgical Hebrew;
  - translate selected Hebrew roots.
- If these benchmarks are not met, a private Hebrew tutor may need to be hired at the parent(s)' expense, in consultation with the Director of Education.
- The student must attend two Shabbat services per month, alternating between Friday evenings and Saturday mornings, beginning 6 months before the ceremony. The student and at least one parent will participate in all scheduled B'nei Mitzvah Family Learning workshops in 6th grade. Depending on the size of the class, there will be 2-3 workshops on Sunday mornings.
- It is highly recommended that a parent who is unfamiliar with Hebrew register to take an Adult Hebrew class in order to be able to more fully support the child's preparation.

**EXPECTATIONS: Year Leading Up to Ceremony**

- The student will be registered in Religious School and regularly attend both Wednesdays and Sundays for the entire 7th Grade year.
- The student will attend a minimum of two Shabbat Services per month, including some Saturday morning services. The student will be expected to participate in a leadership role at services as frequently as possible.
- The student and at least one parent will attend some Shabbat morning Torah Study sessions.
- The student and parent(s) will meet with Rabbi Neil one year before the ceremony to discuss the journey ahead. The student may also meet with Rabbi Neil one month after the ceremony to discuss life after b'nei mitzvah.. There may be other meetings in between as scheduled.

### TIMELINE for STUDENTS

*This timeline is aspirational. We work together to stick as closely to this timeline as possible, aware that sometimes the needs of students may require some flexibility.*

- Director of Education Brian Serle will schedule all b'nei mitzvah dates in consultation with the parents and the student. The date will be confirmed only after the parents meet with Wendy, the Executive Director. **After this, date changes will be made only in writing.**
- Approximately **TEN months** before the scheduled date, the student will begin to work privately with a tutor assigned by the Director of Education.
- Assessments of the child's progress will be made by the Director of Education at the following points: **EIGHT months, SIX months, FOUR months, THREE months.**
- By **FOUR months** before the date, the student will be working with Rabbi Neil to complete their *D'rash* and their introduction to the Haftarah.
- By **THREE months** before the date, the student will have become proficient in their *Torah* portion, and will practice reading out of the scroll with their tutor, Rabbi Neil or Director of Education.
- By **TWO months** before the date, the student will have completed and started practicing delivery of the *d'rash* and their introduction to the Haftarah.
- **ONE DAY BEFORE:** On Friday morning, from 10:30am-12:00 (approx.) all participating family members, including those with honors, will meet with the Rabbi and tutor for a rehearsal of the ceremony.
- The **Friday night** before the ceremony, during the *Kabbalat Shabbat* service, the family will be given the honor of lighting the Shabbat candles and the b'nei mitzvah will lead certain prayers. After the ceremony, there is a special circle where the b'nei mitzvah's classmates gather to share some blessings together – **it is essential that every student in the B'nei Mitzvah class come to the *Kabbalat Shabbat* service on the Friday Night before all the Saturday services with B'nei Mitzvah ceremonies** to make their unique ceremony as full and meaningful as possible.
- The **B'nei Mitzvah service begins at 10:30 a.m. Shabbat morning.**

## **TIMELINE for PARENTS**

### **1 YEAR BEFORE – AS SOON AS DATE IS SCHEDULED**

- Schedule initial meeting with Wendy Steinberg, our Executive Director, to begin discussing logistics. The subsequent stages of the process for either the student or the parents cannot happen until this meeting has occurred.

### **10 MONTHS BEFORE THE DATE**

- Meet with Faith Norwick to schedule all the necessary meetings with Rabbi Neil to be held throughout the process.

### **9 MONTHS BEFORE THE DATE**

- Submit the required form to Wendy to reserve the Social Hall for a reception on the day of your event, if desired. It is not required to have a luncheon at the Temple on the day of the B'nei Mitzvah. However, after this time, the availability of the space can no longer be guaranteed.

### **3 MONTHS BEFORE THE DATE**

- If you wish, discuss with Rabbi Neil the participation of outside Jewish professionals.
- Meet with Faith to discuss your personalized pamphlet.
- Submit your student's photo and statement for the bulletin.
- Meet with Rabbi Neil to start working on the Parent's Prayer.

### **1 MONTH BEFORE THE DATE**

- Submit the Service Honors form with all the names of participants. Make sure that you include the full Hebrew names for those being called up for Aliyot.
- Meet with the Director of Education to discuss music preferences for the service.
- Notify Wendy if the Oneg setup needs to be different from usual.

### **FRIDAY, DAY BEFORE (Note: THE TEMPLE OFFICE CLOSSES AT 3 P.M. on Fridays.)**

- **10:30 A.M. – 12:00 (approx.)** Rehearsal with Rabbi Neil, tutor, and all participating family members and friends (and photographer, if desired).
- **BEFORE 3 P.M.** Flowers for the Bimah and all Oneg supplies – supplied by the parents - must be delivered.
- **6:00 P.M.** Arrive for Kabbalat Shabbat Service.
- **6:30 P.M.** Kabbalat Shabbat Service begins. Family lights candles, student leads certain prayers, class will provide Oneg afterward.

### **SATURDAY, DAY OF CEREMONY**

- **10:00 A.M.** Family meets in Library with Rabbi and tutor
- **10:30 A.M.** Service begins



### LOGISTICS and FEES

- The **b'nei mitzvah fee** (\$900.00) will be charged to family during the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. This is in addition to Religious School tuition. ***The b'nei mitzvah fee must be paid in full before a date will be scheduled.*** The child is then entitled to up ten months of weekly private lessons with one of our tutors, as needed. In addition, they will be able to access YouTube digital files with recordings of the prayers and Torah verses. They will also receive an *Etz Hayyim chumash* (Torah book). **In special circumstances**, a child needing extra hours of Hebrew training may require the help of a private tutor (to be paid separately by the parent), in consultation with the Director of Education.
- There is no charge for the use of the Sanctuary and Social Hall for the ceremony. Rental fees will be charged for additional events . **If such events are planned, contact the Executive Director at least NINE MONTHS before the service date.** After their time, we cannot guarantee the availability of the facilities due to the large number of events and groups renting our facility.
- Custodial services (setting up, opening the building, locking up, and cleaning) will be billed at the rate of **\$40 per hour**. Two hours of custodial time are generally sufficient.
- Security charges: Security is provided by TBS on Friday nights and until 12 pm on Saturdays. If your celebration will be using the building after 12, you will be billed at the rate of **\$40 per hour** for a security guard. **These hours must be scheduled in advance with Wendy.**

### PARENT'S PRAYER

Parents will be invited to compose a personal and heartfelt prayer, to be delivered on the *bima* during the service, expressing praise for the child and parental hopes for the future. Rabbi Neil will assist in this process. **The length of the prayer should be no more than five minutes.**

### FAMILY LEARNING WORKSHOPS and TORAH STUDY

In preparation for the b'nei mitzvah year, families will have the opportunity to learn with Rabbi Neil and education director Brian on Sunday mornings during Sunday School. Depending on the size of the b'nei mitzvah class, 2-3 family workshops will take place during 6th grade, as well as 2-3 Sunday mornings through 7th grade. Families will share a potluck breakfast before the study session. **At least one parent (preferably both) and/or grandparent(s) must attend each family workshop with the student.**

## MITZVAH PROJECT

*The world stands upon three things: on Torah, on prayer,  
and on acts of loving-kindness. (Pirke Avot 1:2)*

At times of rejoicing, Jews always remember those less fortunate. *Tzedakah* (literally “righteousness”) is the sharing of our resources with others who are in need. The b’nei mitzvah year is a marvelous opportunity for the entire family to choose and get actively involved in the child’s Mitzvah Project. The chosen organization or project might be local, national, in Santa Fe, in New Mexico, the USA, Israel or elsewhere in the world. There are generally three parts included in the Mitzvah Project.

- 1) **A donation is made by the family** to an organization that focuses on issues around hunger, such as Mazon. This is often a percentage of the amount spent on the party or the catering, reminding us that while we celebrate, we should always remember those who are unable to even feed themselves a regular meal.
- 2) **The student makes a pledge** to donate a portion of their monetary gifts to a cause that they feel passionate about, usually but not always a cause related to the third part.
- 3) **The student finds a cause that sparks their passion**, often one that ties into a personal interest or a theme of their Torah portion. They then create a project through which they give of their time and energy to benefit that cause. In some ways, this is the most important part because it ends up being the most meaningful to the student.

If you need ideas, speak with Brian Serle or see the copy of “*Tzedakah Resources*” included in the student’s binder.

## HONORS AND ALIYOT

The b'nei mitzvah child is given the first *aliyah* to the Torah. Honors for family/guests include blessings during the Torah reading (*aliyot*), lifting the Torah (*hagbahah* - which takes practice and physical strength), dressing the Torah (*g'lilah* - easy for most people), opening and closing the ark, English translation of the Torah, or leading the congregation in English prayers.

If one parent is not Jewish, he or she may come up for an Aliyah and would read a different blessing (*Asher kervanu* instead of *bachar banu*, see later section in binder). This is for immediate family, such as for a non-Jewish parent of the b'nei mitzvah, and is not for extended family or friends. A non-Jewish partner of a Jew with an Aliyah may come up and stand with their partner while the Jewish individual recites the blessing.

Only Jewish extended family and friends may receive the honors of *aliyot*, *hagbahah* and *g'lilah*. There are, however, many ways to include and honor non-Jewish friends and family members. Non-Jewish participants may be invited to open and close the Ark, offer an extra poem, reading, prayer or translation, or be ushers before the ceremony.

Please invite all honorees well in advance, in consultation with the rabbi. If honorees need help with Hebrew, the Director of Education will be glad to assist (in advance).

Each *aliyah* is called to the Torah using Hebrew names. **Please provide all needed information to Rabbi Neil and Faith at least ONE MONTH in advance.** (*Full Hebrew names include the parent or parents, e.g. Yosef ben Avraham v'Miriam, Sarah bat Moshe*).

Younger brothers and sisters who are old enough - and willing - may be given a reading part in the service, or other honors that can be discussed.

A representative from the Board will make presentations to the child on behalf of the congregation. If you would like to request a particular Board member make this presentation, please let the office know at least one month in advance.

## TBS BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENT

We would be delighted to include a photo of your child and a brief statement in our bi-monthly bulletin. The deadline for bulletin submissions is approximately three months before the ceremony. See later in the binder for more information on bulletin submission requirements and deadlines.

## AT THE TEMPLE

**ATTIRE:** The synagogue is a sacred space. Please remind your guests to dress respectfully and appropriately for the occasion.

**FLOWERS:** It is customary for the b'nei mitzvah family to provide flowers for the *bima* at Shabbat services. The arrangement should be around 2 feet tall in order to fill the space (gladiolas are often suggested). You may also wish to provide flowers or centerpieces for the tables on Friday night and Saturday. Flower deliveries must be made before 3 pm on Friday.

**(NOTE: Please be sure that the arrangement is completely unscented!)**

**PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY:** You must make prior arrangements for the exact times that photographs may be taken. The rehearsal on Friday morning is an excellent opportunity to take pictures. **No photographs will be permitted during the service. Cell phones must be silenced and put away.** If you may want a recording of the Saturday morning service, you should have someone record the streaming service from home, if available.

**FRIDAY NIGHT:** The class *oneg* captain hosts the *oneg* on the Friday night before the B'nei Mitzvah ceremony (*oneg shabbat* means "joy of the sabbath" and refers to the refreshments following services). The parents of the student's Religious School class traditionally take turns as *oneg* captains to ensure that each celebration is joyous and stress-free for the family. Depending on other scheduled events, the *oneg* can be set up Friday afternoon or immediately before the evening service. **All deliveries must be made before 3 pm on Friday, at which time the office is closed, and the Sanctuary/Social Hall building is locked.**

- Tables and chairs will be set up by the office staff. If you require a setup different from the usual, you will need to alert the office **at least ONE MONTH** in advance.
- We usually have 50-75 people in attendance on Friday evenings, but check with the office to learn of any special events that evening. Please add your guests to this number to provide an appropriate amount of food.
- TBS can provide reusable, heavy plastic tablecloths for up to 10 tables as well as generic paper goods. If you want cloth tablecloths, or paper goods of specific colors, this needs to be arranged by the family. **Temple policy prohibits the use of styrofoam cups or plates.**

**SATURDAY MORNING:** If you would like a Shabbat morning *Kiddush* following the service, you need to make all the arrangements. You will be responsible for the expense and service. Please consult with Wendy.

### CONNECTING WITH THE TBS COMMUNITY

The 7<sup>th</sup> grade is a time for bonding. We hope that our Religious School students will gain a lifelong connection to one another and to Temple Beth Shalom. As a parent, there is an opportunity for you as well to develop a strong connection to other TBS families.

**All of the children in the child's Religious School class MUST be included on the guest list. The roster is available from the Director of Education.** It also is customary to invite Rabbi Neil, the Director of Education, the Tutor, Temple President, and your child's teachers.

### LET'S PARTY!

Whether to have a party, and how elaborate the party will be, is up to you. You may use the Social Hall for a buffet lunch, a sit-down lunch, a dinner party or an evening celebration, or you may choose another location for your event.

- If you plan to use the Temple for any part of your reception, you must arrange it with the Executive Director. A deposit and completed contract will be required, including insurance that the Temple will be held harmless in the event of an accident.
- If you plan to serve liquor at the party, you must have a bar with a licensed server.

### CATERERS

Temple Beth Shalom observes a Kosher Style policy: **No pork or shellfish products are allowed on the premises.** It is also customary not to mix milk and meat products in the same meal. Vegetarian options are always much appreciated. Please remind anyone providing food about these guidelines.

## B'NEI MITZVAH GLOSSARY

**Aliyah** Literally "going up" or "ascent." It is the term used when one is "called" to the Torah to say the blessings before and after a section is read or chanted. The plural form is **aliyot**.

**Amidah** The essential core set of prayers in the Jewish prayer service. *Amidah* literally means "standing", because these prayers are recited while standing. The first three prayers are known as *Avot* (ancestors) *G'vurot* (God's power), and *Kedushah* (sanctification of God's Name). This part of the service is also known as *Tefillah* (the prayer).

**Bar/Bat Mitzvah** Literally "son/daughter of the commandment." The age (13) at which a Jew begins to become responsible for ethical and ritual decisions. At this age, the child is considered a full member of the Jewish community. In Hebrew grammar, the plural form is B'nei Mitzvah (for boys and girls) or B'not Mitzvah (for girls only). **However, here at TBS, we prefer the more inclusive term B'nei Mitzvah for participants of any gender.**

**Bar'chu** The call to prayer, recited while standing. The Barchu marks the formal beginning of communal prayer. Traditionally, it is chanted as a "call and response." The literal meaning is the command form of the verb "to bless."

**Bima** The elevated platform holding the ark.

**B'rachah** Literally "blessing." This is a generic term, since blessings may be recited before any act, ritual or otherwise. The plural form is **B'rachot**.

**Chumash** From the Hebrew *chameish*, or five. A book which contains the Five Books of Moses, often with commentary and Haftarah portions as well. It is only a subset of the larger Hebrew Bible, which contains many more readings.

**Etz Chayim** Literally a "tree of life." A term used for the Torah, as well as the wooden poles upon which the Torah scroll is wound. This is also the title of the *chumash* that the students receive in their religious school class.

**G'lilah** The act of dressing the Torah scroll after it has been read.

**Haftarah** A reading taken from the Writings or the Prophets. The Haftarah often shares a theme with the Torah portion.

**Hagbahah** The physically challenging act of lifting the Torah scroll, holding it open, and showing it to the congregation after the reading. No blessing is recited.

**Hakafah - Procession** - Carrying the Torah around the congregation during the Torah service.

**Hamotzi** The blessing over bread.

**Havdalah** Ceremony which ritually brings the Sabbath to a close, involving a braided candle, cup of wine, and spices. The rabbi would be happy to lead havdalah at the start of a Saturday night party.

**Kipah** Skull cap (also known as a *yarmulke* in Yiddish). Traditionally worn by men at all times, in the liberal community it is now worn by both men and women. A kipah is optional but encouraged in Reform congregations.

**Kiddush** Blessing over wine on Shabbat and holidays.

**Parashah** The portion of Torah that is read or chanted each Shabbat.

**Sh'ma** This prayer is often seen as a declaration of Jewish faith, and is a key prayer recited in the morning and evening ritual.

**Siddur** Jewish prayer book. The word *siddur* has the same Hebrew root as *seder* (order).

**Tanach** The Hebrew term applied to the Jewish Scriptures (Bible). It is an acronym for Torah (Five Books of Moses), **Nevi'im** (Prophets), and **K'tuvim** (Writings).

**Tallit** Prayer shawl, traditionally worn at morning prayers. May be worn by men or women in liberal congregations. The fringes at the corners are the essential elements, reminding us of the *mitzvot* (commandments).

**Yad** Literally "hand." The pointer that is used when reading from the Torah scroll, so that the parchment is not damaged by touching. Often a yad is shaped like a hand, with a pointing finger.