

TOURO SYNAGOGUE RELIGIOUS SCHOOL



PARENT'S MANUAL

SCHOOL YEAR

2011-2012



Ben Bag Bag said:

“Turn the Torah over and over
for everything is in it.

Look into it,
grow old and worn over it,
and never move away from it,

for you will find
no better portion than it.”

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL WEB PAGE
for calendars, schedules, grade level curricula, and photos
<http://www.tourosynagogue.com>
select Education then Religious School

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D. CONTINUING EDUCATION

Jewish education continues beyond Religious School. Adults, as well as children, benefit from exposure to new ideas and areas of interest. Our Synagogue offers a fully integrated program of continuing education.

Touro Synagogue offers a variety of additional programs geared to adults with different interests, as well as subjects and topics in conjunction with your child(ren)'s Religious School curriculum. Why not learn with your children? More information can be obtained through the Synagogue Bulletin, or from the Synagogue Office.

Access our on-line Synagogue Monthly Bulletin on our website:

www.tourosynagogue.com

Access our Religious School Page at:

<http://www.tourosynagogue.com>
select Education, then select Religious School

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B. SUMMER CAMPS/ISRAEL PROGRAMS

A Jewish summer experience offers an intense exposure to the ideals and values of the Jewish community in a unique setting. We are fortunate to be in the region of Henry S. Jacobs Camp, an affiliate of the URJ, the umbrella organization for the Reform Movement.

Additionally, we receive all of the information for the summer trips to Israel from the URJ *NFTY in Israel* programs. We will pass on all of the information as it comes to us. If you are looking for something in particular, please let us know. We encourage all of our students to take advantage of these fine programs. Financial assistance is available through the Jackie Wolff Scholarship Fund as well as the Edie and Paul Rosenblum Gift of Israel Experience. Please direct your request to the Rabbi or to the Director of Education. All requests will be kept confidential.

C. HOLIDAY OBSERVANCE – SYNAGOGUE AND HOME

Our curriculum is designed to teach our children all about holidays and observances that are part of the Jewish tradition. We realize that this tradition cannot be practiced nor transmitted in a vacuum. It is important for families to experience these observances and traditions in an individual, as well as communal setting. We encourage you to engage in these observances in your home, and to join the Synagogue family when we celebrate together. Throughout the year, there are opportunities for family worship, and there are many well-publicized programs. Join us!

I. THE FOUNDATIONS

The Director of Education is available to assist new families with Religious School enrollment.

You may contact the Religious School office for confidential financial assistance if necessary. Please be aware that the Synagogue Board policy regarding school registration is that members must be either current on all dues and fees etc. or under arrangement with the Executive Director before registration can be processed.

IV EDUCATION, ETCETERA

It is our philosophy that education occurs both inside and outside the Religious School. Judaism is a way of life and therefore needs to be encountered through a variety of experiences and modes. We take this philosophy very seriously and, as a result, the following programs are included as part of our Synagogue Educational Program.

A. SOFRIM /MADRICHIM

Confirmation and past Confirmation students in our congregation are welcomed into the world of teaching, serving as Sofrim/Madrachim (teaching assistants) on Sunday mornings.

The high-school students benefit from the experience of working in the younger grades, and the school benefits from having the teens share their talents. Sofrim (and those Madrichim who choose to) are paid staff members, and serve as wonderful role models for our younger students.

Anyone interested in being a part of the Sofrim/ Madrichim program should contact the Director of Education.

A. OUR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

וּשְׁנַנְתֶּם לְבָנֵיכֶם

In our Torah it is written and in our prayers we recite: **“and you will teach them diligently to your children.”**

It is this scriptural basis that provides the inspiration for our school. Learning is not the mere acquisition of subject matter. Real learning is a process of personal growth and development. Our school is a caring community where everyone learns and participates in a variety of programs and activities. Our program emphasizes structured classes and warm relationships, where our students will develop a positive Jewish identity through a comprehensive exploration of Judaism. An emphasis is placed on learning within the context of the family, and parents are considered an integral part of the education program.

B. OUR EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Touro Synagogue strives to provide Jewish education in accordance with the guidelines set by the Reform Movement. The deepening of Jewish knowledge and experience, through education and participation in Synagogue life, strengthens faith in God, love of Torah, connection to Israel, and identification with all Jewish people.

We believe that Judaism contains answers to the challenges and questions confronting us daily, and that an educated Jew can successfully discover these answers. Linked to these goals, our educational programs embrace experiences and learning activities that encourage children and adults to become:

1. Jews who affirm their Jewish identity and bind themselves inseparably to their people by word and deed.

2. Jews who bear witness to the *Brit* (the Covenant between God and the Jewish People) by embracing Torah, and by the study and observances of *Mitzvot* (commandments) as interpreted in the light of historic development and contemporary thought.
3. Jews who affirm their historical bond to Eretz Yisrael, the state of Israel.
4. Jews who study and cherish Hebrew, the language of Jewish people.
5. Jews who value and practice *Tefillah* (prayer).
6. Jews who further the cause of Justice, Freedom and Peace by pursuing *Tzedek* (Righteousness), *Mishpat* (Justice) and *Chesed* (Loving Deeds).
7. Jews who celebrate Shabbat and Festivals and observe Jewish ceremonies marking significant occasions in their lives.
8. Jews who esteem their own person and the person of others, their own family and the family of others, and their own community and the community of others.
9. Jews who express their kinship with *K'lal Yisrael* (community of Jewish people) by actively seeking the welfare of Jews throughout the world.
10. Jews who support and participate in Synagogue life.

Such Jews will strengthen the fabric of Jewish life, ensure the future of Judaism and of the Jewish people, and approach the realization of their divine potential.

E. CELL PHONE / PERSONAL ELECTRONICS POLICY

Students are permitted to bring cell phones and other small electronic devices to Religious School. However, upon arrival at Religious School **ALL** cell phones and personal electronic devices will be:

- ◆ Turned off or silenced
- ◆ Placed in a classroom basket for safekeeping
- ◆ Available for pick up at dismissal time

There will be no texting or calling during Religious School hours. This is to ensure the best use of classroom learning time.

F. REGISTRATION AND FEES

Registration instructions and our fee schedule can be found on our on-line registration form. Students already enrolled in our school will receive next year's registration instructions automatically at the end of the school year. Please access the registration form on-line, as directed, and complete it as soon as possible **before** the deadline, to ensure your child's space for next year.

New Touro Synagogue members may only enroll their children in our Religious School *after* their membership dues are paid.

The *bigdei kodesh*, the holy clothing of the High Priests was meant to elevate them, to give them special status and honor and to distinguish them from the rest of the people.

While it is important for all our students to feel comfortable in their Religious School and in our synagogue while learning, it is also crucially important that we not become too informal. Our synagogue is different from other places. It is special and holy. And Jewish learning is special and holy, too.

Touro Synagogue Religious School has a Code of Kodesh - our holiness code, our dress code. Students must arrive at Religious School in a clean and prepared manner dressed in:

- √ Shirts free of advertisements, obscenity, or symbols
- √ Long pants or knee length shorts
- √ Appropriate shoes - no shower shoes

- X NO** short shorts; **NO** tank, tube, spaghetti strap, or crop tops

Proper dress for worship is also expected, especially any time one is standing on the bima. Please assist Touro Synagogue Religious School in this effort.

C. OUR SCHOOL STANDS ON THREE PILLARS

AL SHLOSHA D'VARIM

עַל-שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים
הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד:

We love Judaism! Our teachers, our curriculum, our Educator, our Cantor, and our Rabbi strive to instill this warm commitment in our students. In order to do this most effectively, we depend on **THREE PILLARS: TEAMWORK, COMMITMENT AND COMMUNICATION.**

TEAMWORK exists when parents, teachers, students and professional staff work together to reach our goals. Each member of the team must be committed to our educational enterprise to fulfill the goals of the school.

COMMITMENT goes beyond classroom teachers. In addition to a full staff of qualified teachers and assistants we rely on the commitment of parents to help make our programming strong and successful. We need parents who are willing to be called upon.

COMMUNICATION at all levels is essential to the overall success of our program. As parents, you know your children better than anyone, and it is crucial that we remain in contact with you so as to best meet your children's needs. We value your input, suggestions and constructive criticism. Additionally, we will communicate with you through many modes, primarily through emails * with links to our online web page. **

* Please keep us informed of any changes to your contact information, especially your email.

** Access our RELIGIOUS SCHOOL WEB PAGE for calendars, schedules, grade level curricula, and special events: <http://www.tourosynagogue.com>
Select Education and then select Religious School

D. OUR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The Touro Synagogue Religious School offers a comprehensive program for grades Pre-K through 10 grade and beyond. The program in our school is based on the URJ Chai (Learning for Jewish Life) curriculum and on our own spiral Holiday Curriculum, which builds on what students have learned in the past, and introduces new concepts and ideas appropriate to the student's cognitive development.

JUDAIC STUDIES

Each grade level participates in a myriad of learning experiences integrating Bible/Torah, Being Jewish, the Hebrew language, Israel and Jewish Holidays. The students are challenged to think about the place of God, of the Synagogue and of the Jewish community in their lives. They are presented with primary Jewish resources, become involved in action programs and develop the skills to question and think creatively. The Touro Synagogue Religious School Judaic Studies program prepares our students for lifelong Jewish learning.

HEBRAIC STUDIES

Students are touched by Hebrew throughout their Religious School experience. This contact may be in the form of direct, formal Hebrew study, or it may be informal through music, worship and the use of Hebrew words for concepts of Jewish religious experience. The main focus of the Hebrew program is designed to provide students with the ability to participate in a Synagogue setting. There is an emphasis on mechanical reading skills and vocabulary recognition as related to *Tefillah* and *Tanach*. The Hebrew language is seen as a central thread linking World Jewry, past, present and future.

B. SNACKS

Families are asked to support our weekly snack time by sending a voluntary donation to offset our costs. On occasion, parents will be asked to help provide snacks, and guidelines will be provided at that time as to what snacks are appropriate.

In response to the needs of students with severe allergies, we wish to provide a peanut free snack environment. All snacks served will be peanut free and not manufactured in plants that process peanut products. We ask that you please check all labels before sending any snack to school.

C. EMERGENCIES

In the event of a personal emergency, please contact the school office and we will assist you in the best way possible.

For weather-related school closings, we will do our best to contact you personally and announce our cancellation on the local television news.

D. DRESS CODE

The Torah portion, Tetzaveh, tells us of the detailed garments of the High Priest:

The robe was made of a weaver's craft, entirely of turquoise wool. On the hem of the robe they made pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet yarns, twisted finely woven linen. They made the bells of pure gold, and they placed the bells amid the pomegranates on the hem of the robe, all around . . . They made the frontlet for the holy diadem of pure gold, and incised upon it the seal inscription: "Holy to the Lord." They attached to it a cord of blue to fix upon the headdress above - as the Lord has commanded Moses.

You create a safety hazard for your child and others when you block the driveway or signal for your child to run into the street to meet your car.

DO NOT INSTRUCT YOUR CHILD to come to the St. Charles Avenue corner.

If you choose to park in the front of the building, please come around on foot and collect your child.

DO NOT INSTRUCT YOUR CHILD to cross the street alone or to walk home alone.

If your child is to walk home or take the streetcar unattended, a signed note must be turned in to the Director of Education stating your consent.

EARLY PICK UP

If your child needs to be picked up early from class for any reason, you must:

— Send a note to your child’s teacher, or to the Religious School office.

AND

— Report to the 2nd floor Religious School office to fill out a release form.

We will send someone to get your child(ren) from the classroom. A child will only be released to a custodial parent or person(s) so designated on the school registration form, unless written notification is received by the school office.

TEFILLAH

Tefillah (prayer) is an important part of being Jewish. All classes have the opportunity to meet with the Rabbi and Cantor for a prayer service and a discussion based on prayer itself, a forthcoming holiday, or current events.

LEARNING TOGETHER

Family education at Touro Synagogue Religious School is designed to promote Judaism and Jewish practices as a way of life. Our programs help our families to become more involved in Jewish life and in our school. A parent who attends a Religious School program demonstrates that Jewish learning is a lifelong process and is family-centered.

Each year, grades PK-6 offer a family activity where parents are invited to participate in an interactive day of learning. Family learning opportunities are offered as an alternative to “Open House,” and are offered on different days for each grade in order to avoid overlapping the family days of siblings in other grades. Be sure to watch for information regarding family learning opportunities for you and your children!

MUSIC

Music is such an important part of Judaism and also a part of our Religious School day. Each week, students in our school, under the direction of the Cantor, will learn the tunes to traditional favorites and prayers, and also the newest melodies from NFTY, the National Reform Youth Movement.

TZEDAKAH AND SOCIAL ACTION

לא עֲלֶיךָ הַמְּלָאכָה לְגַמּוֹר
וְלֹא אַתָּה בֶּן חוֹרִין לְהִבְטֵל מִמְּנָה

"Lo alecha ha-m'lacha ligmor, v'lo ata ben chorin l'hibatel mimena" . . . You do not have the obligation to finish the task, but neither are you free to desist from it. (Pirke Avot, Cpt.2).

Tzedakah fulfills one's human responsibility to support justice, equality, and the right to live in a way that allows for human dignity and respect.

Tzedakah is more than giving charity out of the goodness of one's heart, it comes from a sense of obligation to the moral force instilled in us.

WE COLLECT TZEDAKAH EVERY WEEK IN RELIGIOUS SCHOOL— so all students should arrive with an appropriate amount for tzedakah so that together we can help repair the world.

We also impart a general sense of commitment to social action through a variety of special projects and hands-on learning experiences throughout the year.

II POLICY

In order to maintain the quality of our school program, Touro Synagogue, under the direction of the Religious School Committee has established standards for achievement and behavior in all grades. We regard these policies seriously. Yet, we understand that unusual circumstances sometimes arise that necessitate flexible responses from us. We are here to help you and your family participate fully in our program, and will try to accommodate your special needs wherever possible. Please understand that our program relies on your cooperation as our partners.

SCHOOL HOLIDAYS AND VACATIONS

Touro Synagogue develops its academic calendar with attention to area secular schools calendars . Jewish holidays are observed as well.

As you schedule your family vacations, please consult the on-line Touro Synagogue Religious School Calendar to ensure that your child will not miss class sessions.

Access our RELIGIOUS SCHOOL WEB PAGE for calendars, schedules, and grade level curricula:
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select Education and then select Religious School

DROP OFF AND PICK UP

To ensure the safety and well-being of all of our students, we ask that you observe the following procedure:

Drop Off:

Drop students at the General Pershing Street entrance to the Synagogue before 9:00 a.m. Please use good judgment as to whether or not your smaller children need to be escorted to their rooms. **Do not leave your car unattended in the line of traffic.** The traffic line moves and is clear within 5-7 minutes, as long as everyone remains in their car.

Pick Up:

Students will be dismissed at 11:30 a.m. through the **General Pershing Street door only, and will remain in the designated area:**

Until your car has reached the front of the traffic line at which point they will be placed in your car.

Or you arrive on foot and escort them to wherever you are parked. We ask that you remain in your car, in the traffic line.

III PROCEDURE

A. SCHOOL HOURS

Grades K-8th meet Sunday mornings from 9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Pre-K , 9th and 10th Grades meet every other week throughout the year. See the on-line Religious School calendar for the dates:

<http://www.tourosynagogue.com>.

Select Education and then select Religious School

GUEST POLICY

Although we do not encourage guests at Religious School due to liability issues, we do recognize that there are occasions when out of town friends and relatives may want to accompany a student to Religious School.

Touro Synagogue Religious School is able to welcome guests under the following conditions:

1. **The Religious School family notifies the Educator in ADVANCE of Sunday morning with the guest's name and other pertinent information in case of emergency.**
2. The classroom teacher will be notified of a guest for that day and will expect the named guest only. This will allow the teacher to prepare accordingly.
3. Guests are asked to participate in our program with respect.
4. Unannounced guests may be turned away at the door.
5. **No guests will be allowed to attend field trips.**

A. ACHIEVEMENT

Proper attention and participation in class will ensure academic proficiency in the material covered each year. Progress reports are sent home mid-year and at the close of the school year. The teacher's comments, as well as the marks given, are an indication for parents as to the progress of the student.

Rabbi Leo A. Bergman Award

The Rabbi Leo A. Bergman Award is given each year to a member of the 6th-grade class based on faculty recommendations. Eligible candidates are those who have an exceptional attendance record, have consistently exhibited a commitment to their Jewish studies, and have lived up to the principle of Kavod, throughout the **4th, 5th and 6th grades**.

B. ATTENDANCE

Then an angel of God called to Abraham from heaven. "Abraham, Abraham!" And he answered, "Here I am." . . . And Abraham named that site Adonai-yireh - on the mount of God there is a vision.

(Genesis 22:11,14)

In this famous portion of the Torah, God is, of course, addressing Abraham about the sacrifice of his son, Isaac. It is the word *Hineini* - "*Here I am*" that we must focus on for Religious School. This is the most important word our students will know as they arrive in class. *Here I am*. I am present.

Absences have become all too prevalent in our school. This is the time to say "*Hineini*" in the classroom and at our activities. To take pride and honor (*Kavod*) in continuity and commitment and be present each week if at all possible.

Continuity is an important factor in a student-learning

process, as is socialization with one's peers in the classroom environment. Students are required to attend 80% (24/30) of all class sessions. Families will be contacted if poor attendance patterns arise and a conference with the Rabbi may be required.

It is the Religious School policy that all students must attend Religious School in Grades 7, 8, 9, and 10, in order to become Confirmands. This policy runs parallel to the mandatory enrollment and attendance required of B'nai Mitzvah students.

If an absence is unavoidable, please consult the curriculum on our Religious School web-page to see how you might facilitate covering the material with your child.

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Select Education and then select Religious School

PERFECT ATTENDANCE

Any student present for all 30 sessions of Religious School will receive recognition for his/her efforts.

HONOR ROLL

Students in grade K-9 are eligible for "Excellence in Attendance" awards, if they have attended 90% of the total number of class sessions. This means being **present** in our school for **27** out of **30** sessions.

*(Equivalent Jewish experiences do not count as absences on the attendance record. *)*

ABSENCES

We understand that it is sometimes necessary for a student to miss a class. Though we prefer our students to attend all sessions, six (6) absences are
10 allowed for: **sickness, family vacations, secular**

*** Board of Trustees Motion**

In June 2009, the Board of Trustees passed a Motion that states:

In order to schedule a B'nai Mitzvah date on the synagogue calendar, members must be either current or under arrangement with the Executive Director to become current on their account, including dues, fees and all other charges.

Furthermore, at the time of establishing a date on the calendar, 50% of the B'nai Mitzvah fee is to be paid.

The balance of the B'nai Mitzvah fee is due, along with any other related charges or fees, not less than 90 days prior to the date of the B'nai Mitzvah.

It is required that members remain current on their account during the entire period of the B'nai Mitzvah training.

well as to answer any questions and to discuss the significance of this special event.

General Guidelines

- ◆ All pre-Bar/Bat Mitzvah students attend Shabbat Club on scheduled Saturday mornings one year before their Bar/Bat Mitzvah date, to begin participating in the Saturday morning service.
- ◆ It is advisable to contact the Synagogue office or Religious School office with any questions, sooner rather than later, to make your Bar/Bat Mitzvah planning as smooth as possible.
- ◆ Helpful and informative Bar/Bat Mitzvah packets are available at the time of the meeting with the Rabbi.
- ◆ Bar and Bat Mitzvah candidates begin their training with the Cantor approximately eight (8) (school) months prior to the date set, and at a point of Hebrew reading readiness, specifically the ability to read Hebrew liturgy.
- ◆ Training for Hebrew reading readiness is accomplished through enrollment in Uptown Hebrew. For further information, contact the Director of Education about Uptown Hebrew enrollment and recommended Hebrew tutors.
- ◆ Students must be enrolled and attending classes in our Religious School to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- ◆ Regular attendance at and participation in Shabbat morning worship is expected in the period before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. It is expected that each student will make a commitment to continue his/her education at Touro Synagogue **through** Confirmation, the ceremony of Jewish Affirmation held on or near Shavuot upon completion of the 10th grade.
- ◆ The fee for Bar/Bat Mitzvah is pre-established. Confidential financial assistance is available if necessary.

school activities and trips, etc. It is the Religious School policy that if a student exceeds the six (6) allowed absences for the year, (as set by the Religious School Committee) the family is expected to meet with the Rabbi and Educator for a conference to discuss the special needs and circumstances of the family that have kept the student(s) from attending Religious School.

It is a **parental responsibility** to notify the school office in writing regarding a planned absence. To avoid confusion at the end of the year, it is also advisable for parents to keep track of attendances and absences at home.

No teacher may personally excuse a student for an equivalent Jewish experience. * All correspondence concerning your child's absence must be directed to the Religious School office for proper record-keeping.

*** Equivalent Jewish Experiences:**

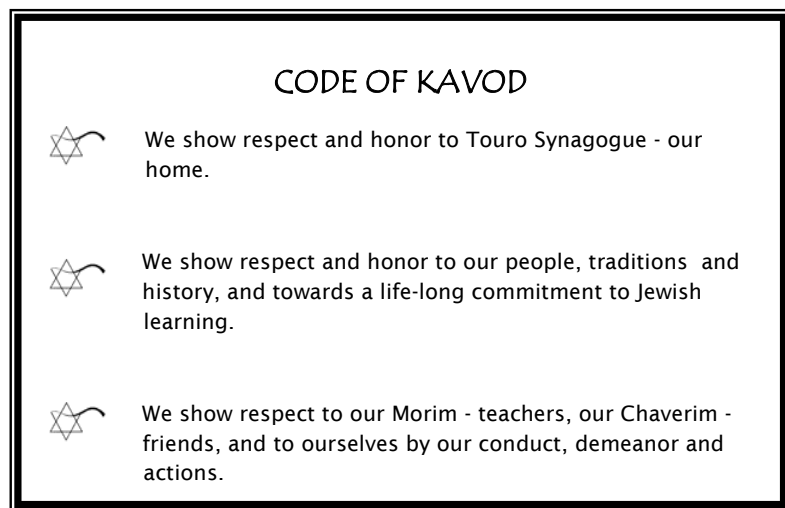
An equivalent Jewish experience is when a student misses Religious School class for such things as: **out-of-town Jewish life-cycle events, Jewish youth group weekends, visits to out-of-town Religious Schools with relatives/friends (for example, "I attended Religious School with my cousin.")**

C. HOMEWORK

Homework is a way to reinforce the content taught in the school, and to show you, the parents, what is taught. While homework may not be given weekly, there will be times when your student brings home a modest assignment. These assignments are to be taken seriously, and should be completed in a timely fashion. Very often, the assignments will be interactive and require parent participation in order to be completed. Additionally, it is the student's responsibility to come prepared to class, i.e. with their completed homework and any supplies deemed necessary by the teacher.

D. CODE OF KAVOD

Touro Synagogue Religious School is proud to promote respect - KAVOD - for our school and institution, for Jewish learning, and for ourselves and others.



E. DISCIPLINE

It is the philosophy of the school that a student's valuable learning time should not be interrupted by a disruptive classmate. All students have a **right** to a good education. Therefore, the **discipline policy** is as follows:

- ◆ Teachers are responsible for the management of their students at all times throughout the Religious School morning. Teachers will make every attempt to be fair in their policies and give ample warnings to any students causing a disruption.
- ◆ When a student's disruptive behavior is interrupting the learning of others the student(s) will be sent to the Director of Education.

- ◆ If it is necessary to send a student out of class repeatedly, the student will meet with the Director of Education to discuss the problem. A plan of action will be determined that will enable the student to work towards behavioral improvement. Parents may be contacted if the student's behavior warrants it.
- ◆ A continuation of the problem would result in a request for a parent conference, or further action as deemed necessary by the Director of Education and the Rabbi.

F. BAR/BAT MITZVAH REQUIREMENTS

Bar/Bat Mitzvah is not the end of formal Jewish education. It can be, however, an important milestone in a student's Jewish life and significant in the lifelong development of Jewish identity. The family also plays a crucial role in this development. The following procedure explains how a family prepares for the experience of Bar/Bat Mitzvah within our congregation.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Preparation Procedure:

- ◆ Students begin learning Hebrew upon entering the third grade at Uptown Hebrew ... Touro Synagogue's mid-week Hebrew School.
- ◆ Bar/Bat Mitzvah dates are usually set on the calendar at the Synagogue office two (2) years in advance of the student's 13th birthday, at the end of 4th Grade. * (see p.15)
- ◆ At least one year prior to the date, students and their parents begin the formal Bar/Bat Mitzvah training. A meeting with the Rabbi and the Cantor is scheduled in order to review the procedure, as