

HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS & GUARDIANS

Agudas Achim Congregation School

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Welcome

We are delighted to welcome you and your family to Agudas Achim Religious School. We look forward to partnering with you in creating a strong Jewish community in Iowa City.

In our educational program, children learn Jewish culture, heritage, history, ethics, spirituality and liturgy so that they will feel confident in a Jewish setting anywhere in the world.

The Community of Agudas Achim

The Jewish community of Iowa City is small and dynamic. While some of our members come from families that have lived in the area for generations, others have come here from ... almost everywhere. With this in mind, we would like to introduce the community of Agudas Achim.

We are a diverse community including people of various backgrounds, family structures, gender identities, and relationships to Judaism, including interfaith couples and Jews by choice. Our community includes people who consider themselves cultural Jews as well as religious Jews.

We are affiliated with both the Conservative and the Reform movements.

The thread that weaves this diverse population together is our commitment to making

community with each other. In a small congregation such as ours, every person's devotion to maintaining the community matters. We are especially grateful to everyone who keeps our school and community active and vibrant.

Introduction to the Educational Program at Agudas Achim

In casual conversation, we refer to our program as “the school,” but in reality it is different from a conventional school. Our program is a *kehilah* (community) for children. Our mission includes fostering friendship among our children, encouraging them to contribute to the common good through *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), and deepening their Jewish identity and understanding of a meaningful Jewish life.

As you will see below, we also prepare students for B-Mitzvah. While most of our students celebrate a B-Mitzvah, some families choose not to participate in the ceremony. We measure our success by the Jewish friendships our students make, how connected they feel to the local and global Jewish community and become adults with moral integrity and a sense of wellbeing and joy in their Jewishness.

The cycle of Jewish holidays structures our curriculum. It is a spiral curriculum, meaning that we return to the same holidays every year but teach new aspects of them each time. We favor collaborative, project-based learning, especially in the older grades. This means that our students are often up and moving, not glued to their seats. Some of our deepest discussions happen when hands are busy. We also encourage the students to contribute to the congregation. For instance, we decorate the congregational *sukkah* every year and provide a Purim spiel. Students learn about *tikkun olam* and create food drives or other projects to benefit the world. In short, our goal is not to teach our children *about* Judaism but to teach them to live a Jewish life.

Judaism is both a communal and a family practice. The more parents are involved in the life of Agudas Achim, the more they celebrate Jewish holidays at home, the more they support their children's Judaism. If you are interested in deepening your Judaism, please speak to the rabbi. We are here for you!

Preparing for B-Mitzvah

In order to include all gender identities, we will use the abbreviation “B-Mitzvah” to include Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah, the gender-neutral Brit Mitzvah, and their plurals.

Preparing students for B-Mitzvah is one goal of our educational program. A student who goes

through the whole program will be familiar with many of the necessary prayers and have some facility in decoding. Once the students have this foundation, the principal will work one-on-one with the students to help them move from being able to follow prayers to being able to lead them. The rabbi will help the students prepare a *d'var torah*, a speech offering insight into their Torah portions and provide them with Jewish formation and a Jewish way of seeing the world. In addition, a tutor will work one-on-one with the students to help them learn to chant their Torah and Haftarah portions. Six tutorial sessions will be covered by tuition to the religious school. Beyond this number, the families are welcome to come to a private arrangement with the tutor to fund additional sessions. It is likely that the family will continue the tutoring relationship beyond the initial six sessions.

Curriculum: *Tefilah* (Prayer) and Hebrew

While our school supports students as they prepare for B-Mitzvah, B-Mitzvah is far from the only goal of the curriculum. We want our children to be comfortable in any Jewish community and feel confident in their Jewish identity. Learning prayers in Hebrew allows them to participate in a Jewish service with confidence wherever they may go. Hebrew unifies Jews around the world. At the same time, learning prayerbook Hebrew presents a challenge, from mastering the alphabet to learning the words and tunes to the prayers.

For this reason, we teach *tefilah* using the Onward Hebrew/Hebrew Through Movement Curriculum developed by the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland. This curriculum begins by teaching Hebrew vocabulary starting in the earliest grades. Although the alphabet is introduced in age-appropriate ways starting in Kindergarten, we do not emphasize decoding (sounding words out) until the students have as much Hebrew as possible in their ears. That way, instead of laboriously sounding out unfamiliar syllables, they learn to read words that they already know. Since it takes several years for students to acquire vocabulary, we do not emphasize decoding until the sixth grade.

Acquiring Vocabulary and Facility with Tefilot (Prayers)

Starting in Pre-Kindergarten, we drop Hebrew or Jewish words into ordinary conversation. Our teachers use many of these words in everyday speech at the school. In the Hebrew Through Movement portion of the curriculum, teachers give the students directions in simplified Hebrew. Students follow these commands — running, hopping, twirling and otherwise interacting with their environment — as they learn the names of various objects. For instance, the teacher might ask a student to run to the *shulhan* (table) and point to the *tapuah* (apple) but pick up the *rimon* (pomegranate). In this

manner, students learn with their whole bodies.

We teach *tefilah* directly by singing and chanting prayers, often picking out key vocabulary words in the process. This activity is also an exercise that builds community among the students, who have fun together and affirm Jewish values together.

A note on Hebrew learning

Learning Hebrew decoding skills is a different experience from natural language acquisition, which happens in the vernacular that we speak. Based on modern research into how we learn to read, our program makes the distinction between auditory learning ('putting Hebrew and Yiddish words, phrases and melodies into young students' ears') and visual learning through decoding the Hebrew alphabet. Our staggered approach means your child will learn tunes and words first and will be primed to learn literacy/decoding skills at a later age (age 10-11, around 6th grade) when they are developmentally ready.

Hineh Ma Tov Time, Short Services, and Shabbat Services

Singing fosters joy and builds community while opening a direct path to memory. We will ask students to sing prayers and Jewish songs at several points in the curriculum.

School opens every Sunday at 9:15 with "Hineh Ma Tov Time," during which all students assemble in the sanctuary to sing songs (in Hebrew or English). At noon, the school assembles again for a fifteen-

minute service, sometimes student-lead. These short services allow students to practice leading the prayers in public years before their B-Mitzvah. Our hope is that students will gradually and naturally memorize the prayers as they become comfortable on the bimah. We also strongly encourage families to attend services with their children as frequently as possible to reinforce this important pre-B-Mitzvah learning. The rabbi is available for family support and encouragement around service attendance and familiarity.

How Parents Support their Children's Hebrew Learning

We warmly invite parents to join their children for the fifteen-minute service at the end of each school session. Children love showing their parents what they have learned, especially if they are leading a prayer. By joining the congregation, the parents show their support for their child's learning and their commitment to the community.

Beyond attending these short services, the most important thing parents can do to support their children is to bring them to religious school events and to Shabbat services. These services have the same role in our curriculum that recitals play in a music program. They are the goal of practice, a demonstration of skill, and a community event.

In most years, the school holds two Shabbat services, a Simchat Torah service, and an event in the Sukkah.

Judaics Curriculum

We teach Judaics through hands-on activities and projects. We strive to equip students to lead an active, thoughtful Jewish life with an understanding of Jewish tradition.

The Judaics curriculum includes Jewish ethics, practices, stories, and a small amount of history. The core of the program is a Jewish Education Center of Cleveland series on Jewish holidays. Under the rubric of the holidays, we explore moral questions, Torah stories and other aspects of Jewish life and thought in an age-appropriate manner. The Judaics program dovetails with the *Tefilah* program in teaching key Hebrew vocabulary.

The curriculum opens our children's horizons, giving them a sense of the interconnection of Jewish communities worldwide. Students learn about this diversity through crafts, foods, maps, pictures, and songs. In addition, students debate ethical dilemmas as seen through a Jewish lens. Each year has a slightly different focus depending on the interests of the students and the teacher.

The B-Mitzvah process is described elsewhere in the document under the header 'Guide to B-Mitzvah'.

Post-B-Mitzvah

People who have attended the school at Agudas Achim and had a B-Mitzvah, or who had a B-Mitzvah at another synagogue, are invited to apply for jobs as *madrichim* (teaching assistants) helping the principal and the teachers in the school. These are paid positions with real responsibility.

How Parents Support their Children in Acquiring Jewish Culture

There are many ways to introduce our children to Jewish culture, both in Iowa City and in the wider world.

Participating in synagogue events is a natural way to immerse the whole family in Jewish life. There are also many options beyond the synagogue doors. Kids may experience Jewish culture through summer camps, movies (check out ChaiFlix), books, plays, museums, art, restaurants, and concerts, to name only a few possibilities.

We partner with PJ Library, an organization that distributes free books with Jewish themes to Jewish children. To find out more, contact the synagogue office, where the administrative

assistant will put you in touch with the Library Committee.

The synagogue has a library of children's books available for free. Children are welcome to sit and read in the library or to take the books home.

Cooking with kids is a wonderful way to convey "kitchen table Judaism." The synagogue sometimes offers baking workshops. There are also many wonderful Jewish cookbooks available.

Last, but certainly not least, we recommend Jewish summer camps. Agudas Achim has a special relationship with OSRUI (affiliated with the Reform movement) in Wisconsin, and we can also give recommendations for other camps in the area.

Guide to B-Mitzvah

Mazal tov! Congratulations on bringing your child to the threshold of Jewish adulthood. Your thirteen year-old may not always seem much like an adult, but many children mature deeply in the year that they prepare to become B-Mitzvah. There may be challenging moments as your child prepares. This may be the first time a child has worked toward a long-term goal, practiced speaking and singing in public, and been the focus of a celebration with the whole community.

We hope that the stress never overshadows the joy of celebrating a *simcha* (happy event) with family and friends. This guidebook is intended to help families onboard the process early, reduce the stress, find the joy, and prepare their children to become B- Mitzvah.

B-Mitzvah in bullet points (these will be explained in greater detail further down)

- Enroll your child in the religious school by age 9 or grade 4 at the latest.
- Attend services as a family to familiarize your child with Jewish ritual and build valuable bonds in the community.
- Set a date in the synagogue calendar 1 to 2 years in advance and schedule a meeting with rabbi about selecting the Torah portion.
- 1 year before the B-Mitzvah date, be consistent with attending services with your child.
- Read through the Torah portion in consultation with the rabbi.
- Schedule a meeting with the principal about learning the prayers (liturgy).
- Choose a synagogue-approved tutor to help your child learn to chant the Torah portion and Haftarah portion.
- Closer to the date (approx 6 month out), schedule logistics for the service and luncheon with the synagogue office.

General Principles

These guidelines are designed to help your child have a meaningful and joyous B-Mitzvah. Each requirement is detailed below. We can distill these requirements into a few simple principles:

-Come to services! The best way to learn to lead a Shabbat service is to participate in a Shabbat service as often as possible. This gradual immersion in synagogue services is easier and much less stressful than cramming at the last minute.

- Come back after B-Mitzvah! The B-Mitzvah celebrates an adolescent's admission to religious adulthood. The preparation for B-Mitzvah leads to greater confidence and participation in communal life. B-Mitzvah are invited to share their knowledge with younger kids by working as teaching assistants at the school. They may also continue to participate in Youth Group.

-We are bound to each other by ties of community and mutual responsibility!

The family and the congregation form a community because they commit to supporting each other. For this reason, the guidelines are written to balance flexibility in meeting each family's needs with the standards and obligations necessary to maintain a functioning community.

B- Mitzvah Requirements

Below we list the steps required for families who wish to hold a B-Mitzvah at Agudas Achim. The very first step, enrolling the child in religious school, is the most crucial. Early and consistent attendance allows the child to experience the process in a low-stress manner, to acquire a foundation in Judaism and to make friends with other Jewish kids in Iowa City. Here in Iowa City, children may not meet other Jewish kids at their "regular" school. Agudas Achim is their Jewish oasis, a place where they can make Jewish friends.

In our small synagogue, every person is crucial to building and maintaining the community. As you will see below, we encourage – and sometimes require – families to attend a small number of services outside of normal school hours, to act as ushers for other families' B- Mitzvah ceremonies, to invite the child's religious school class to the celebration, and to include **the** congregation in the service. These requirements are intended to nurture and to preserve the Jewish community for one another and for our children.

Educational Requirements

Children may enroll in the religious school as early as age four. To meet the requirements for B-Mitzvah, children enroll no later than the fourth grade (age 9) and remain through the end of

the year in which they celebrate B-Mitzvah.

The school's curriculum includes a small number of holiday and Shabbat services that take place outside of regular school hours. Families should make every effort to attend all or the majority of these services.

Scheduling Requirements during the Year Preceding B-Mitzvah

The family consults with the rabbi to choose a date for the B-Mitzvah, preferably twelve months or more before the ceremony. Each Shabbat has a particular *parasha* (Torah portion) and accompanying *Haftarah* (complementary reading from the prophets) assigned to it. The rabbi will help the B-Mitzvah select certain verses to read, but the child's *d'var torah* (exposition of the Torah) may draw on the entire Torah portion and selected commentaries. For this reason, the rabbi will discuss the entire *parasha* with the child. The Torah is an ancient text that may include elements that parents find challenging.

Please read the entire *parasha* before committing to a date.

The family confirms with the rabbi that the child will be thirteen years old, or older, at the time of the ceremony. Thirteen is a minimum age for B-Mitzvah. There is no maximum age. The family can always choose to celebrate a B-Mitzvah when the child is older.

The child attends religious school during the B-Mitzvah year while working with the rabbi and the principal after hours. Both in-person and Zoom meetings are possible; most people opt for both. The principal works one-on-one with students to hone their skill at leading prayers. The rabbi teaches interpretation of the *parasha* and helps with the *d'var torah*.

The child works with a tutor to learn the Torah and *Haftarah* portion beginning no later than nine months before the event. Enrollment in the religious school guarantees the student six sessions with a tutor, including a recording of the Torah and *Haftarah* portion.

Once the student has exhausted the meetings with the tutor that are covered by tuition, the family is welcome to make private arrangements with the tutor. If the school is unable to hire a tutor, we will recommend a tutor or the principal will act as tutor.

Before hiring an outside tutor, one neither hired nor recommended by the synagogue, families must consult with the rabbi in order to make sure that the tutor meets the synagogue's standards. These standards include competence in the material, but they also include support for the synagogue's ethical standards and policies, including the synagogue's commitment to gender equality.

The family checks with the synagogue administrator to make sure that they are members in good standing. Synagogue members pay a "fair share" in dues to support the congregation. There is a sliding scale of payment. No one will ever be denied membership based on inability

to pay.

Requirements for the Day of the B-Mitzvah and After

Only the congregational rabbi hired by Agudas Achim may officiate at the B-Mitzvah. Any exception to this requirement is at the rabbi's sole discretion.

It is customary to hold a celebratory oneg (usually sweets and wine) following services on Friday night and a kiddush luncheon after services on Saturday afternoon. The family invites the entire congregation to join them for the kiddush lunch in order to help them celebrate their special *simchah*. The family is

responsible for serving the food and for cleaning up afterwards. Many people hire help for serving and cleaning.

Please note that any food served at Agudas Achim must meet the synagogue's standards of kashrut. In general, meals must be vegetarian/dairy. For more information, see "A Parent's Guide to the Bar-Bat Mitzvah Weekend," which is available through the synagogue office. If there is a party for the B-Mitzvah and friends outside the synagogue, the family invites the child's entire religious school class.

The family is invited to act as ushers for the next child to celebrate a B-Mitzvah at the synagogue.

B'nai Mitzvah who have attended the religious school at Agudas Achim will be invited to work as teaching assistants (*madrichim*) the following year. The school is an excellent place to acquire work experience. The school will also provide additional educational opportunities and opportunities to work on community projects for *madrichim* if they are interested.

Special Circumstances

Exceptions to the requirements outlined above are at the rabbi's sole discretion.

Families may find themselves unable to meet these

requirements for a variety of reasons. We will do our best to accommodate families' special circumstances in a way that respects the integrity of the B-Mitzvah ceremony and that allows the child ample time to prepare. Below are common circumstances and standard accommodations to them. Please be aware, however, that all accommodations must be made in consultation with the rabbi and the principal.

Students Who Join the Religious School after the Fourth Grade

Sometimes families delay enrolling children in the religious school for a variety of reasons. We welcome students at any time. We are committed to helping them integrate into the community of the school.

If the family has moved to Iowa City, and the child has attended a Jewish religious school in another town, attendance at that school meets the requirements for B-Mitzvah as outlined

above. The student will simply join the appropriate class at Agudas Achim.

If the student has never attended religious school, or has attended intermittently, the principal may recommend that the family hire a tutor to help the child catch up. The student will enroll in the religious school. The family is responsible for paying the tutor under these circumstances. The school can provide a list of tutors with whom we have worked in the past. The family must consult with the rabbi before hiring a tutor not on this list.

If a child nearing the age of thirteen has never attended religious school, or has attended intermittently, the child may have a lot of material to cover in order to become a B-Mitzvah. In order to give the child time to prepare, the rabbi, in consultation with the principal, may recommend holding B-Mitzvah after the age of thirteen.

As we mentioned above, people who study for B-Mitzvah at an older age often bring maturity and insight to the process that was not available to them when they were younger. There is nothing wrong with holding the B-Mitzvah whenever a person is ready.

Students with Special Needs

We are committed to including every child in the community and to celebrating every kind of B-Mitzvah. Because the school is small, we may not have the ability to accommodate some children with special needs. In that case, the rabbi will wave the requirement that the student attend the religious school.

The rabbi and principal will work with the parents to create a unique option for that child that is appropriate and celebratory.

Homeschooling

We acknowledge that some children do not do well in a classroom setting and that some parents prefer to teach their children themselves.

Parents who choose to teach their child at home should be aware that their child is missing an opportunity to contribute to the community and to build strong relationships with other Jewish children. They should also consider that preparing a child for B-Mitzvah is a demanding task.

Parents who choose this option will meet with the rabbi to agree to a path that will allow their child to prepare for B-Mitzvah, including regular participation in services. Preferably that meeting should take place no later than fourth grade.

Parents who wait until the child is thirteen or nearly thirteen, leave little time to address any gaps in the child's preparation for B-Mitzvah. As above, the rabbi may decide to delay the ceremony so that the child has time to prepare.

Home-schooled students will study with the rabbi in the six months before the B-Mitzvah in order to deepen their knowledge of the *parasha* and craft a *d'var torah*.

If the student requires the help of the principal in mastering tefilot, or if the student requires the help of

a tutor in learning the Torah and Haftarah portion, the family will secure this support by registering for religious school that year.

Home-schooling families must consult with the rabbi before securing a tutor who is not recommended by Agudas Achim.

Conclusion

Every person who has attended the religious school **and** who has followed the steps outlined in this document should approach the

bimah with joy and confidence, knowing that they

have prepared for this moment. From the bimah, they will see a congregation of friends, family, and community members who have supported their learning and whom they, in turn, have supported by attending services and marking life cycle events. Now, as Jewish adults, they have both the rights and the obligations that keep the Jewish community alive.

We warmly invite every person who has attended the religious school and celebrate a B-Mitzvah to return to the school as *madrachim*. We will support their continuing Jewish journey in any way that we can.

Please talk to the rabbi and the principal if this document has not answered all of your questions about the rules that govern celebrating a B-Mitzvah at Agudas Achim.

For more information about the logistics of planning a Bar Mitzvah, including using the synagogue's social hall and kitchen, please see "A Parents' Guide for the B-Mitzvah Weekend."

For more information about the roles of the principal, the rabbi, and the tutor in preparing a child for B-Mitzvah, please see the supplementary section below.

Frequently Asked Questions

When and how often will my child meet with the rabbi?

By preference, students will make appointments to work with the rabbi on Monday(**Rabbi's day off is now Monday so change?**) and Wednesday afternoons between 4:00-6:00. Each tutorial session will last 45 minutes.

What happens during my child's sessions with the rabbi?

The rabbi will explore the entire *parasha* with your child to help your child write a *dvar torah*.

The rabbi will encourage your child to explore challenging questions and to engage with traditional and contemporary Jewish commentary on the Torah. As a result of this conversation, the child will write a *dvar torah* under the rabbi's guidance. The rabbi may ask for several drafts and revisions as your child polishes the speech.

When and how often does my child meet with the principal?

By preference, meetings with the principal will last 45 minutes and take place between 4:00

and 6:00

on Mondays and Wednesdays. But we can be flexible about meeting times, depending on everyone's schedule.

It would be most efficient for meetings with

the rabbi and the principal to happen back-to-back, when possible. **(Again Rabbi is off Monday)**

The principal can also meet with your child over Zoom or a similar platform. But some of the meetings should be in the Sanctuary so that the child has the opportunity to practice on the bimah.

What happens during my child's meetings with the principal?

The principal will coach the student in the mechanics of leading *tefilot* (prayers), including: tunes, the meanings of words and phrases, prayer choreography (e.g. bowing), enunciation, and projection.

A student who has passed through the religious school should already have a solid foundation in

tefilot. These one-on-one sessions help the student

move from being able to follow the prayers and sing in a group to being able to lead the prayers. These

sessions fill in any gaps in the student's knowledge and build confidence.

In addition, the principal may coach a child in learning the Torah and Haftarah portions so long as the child already has a recording.

What happens during my child's sessions with a tutor?

The tutor will meet 6 times one-on-one with the student as part of the religious school curriculum.

During these sessions, students learn the verses of

the Torah and Haftarah that they have decided to read. The tutor will also provide the student with a recording of the Torah and Haftarah verses. This recording will allow the student to continue studying the verses with the help of the principal.

If the family prefers a private tutor from outside the synagogue, the rabbi must confirm that the tutor meets the standards of the synagogue. As outlined above, the rabbi has the right to reject a private tutor who does not meet these standards.

Even if the family engages a private tutor, helping the child write a *dvar torah* remains the rabbi's prerogative.

Not everyone in my family or in my circle of friends is Jewish, can these people be included in the B-Mitzvah ceremony?

Yes! The rabbi will work with the family to honor

all the important people in the child's life. People who are not Jewish may read prayers or

similar inspirational works in English on the bimah. See the “A Parents’ Guide for the B-Mitzvah Weekend” for more details.

Can members of the family play music for the service?

Yes – provided that it is Reform service. Instrumental music is not part of Conservative services. The rabbi would be delighted to coordinate with you in including music in the service.

What is the difference between a Reform and a Conservative service? May I choose which kind of service my child leads?

You and your child may choose either a Conservative or a Reform service; the synagogue is affiliated with both. You may even choose, say, a Reform service on Saturday and a Conservative service on Friday night, or vice versa.

Without going too deeply into the differences, Reform services are more flexible and innovative.

They include more readings in English, instrumental music, and use the prayerbook *Mishkan Tefilah*. *Mishkan Tefilah* offers a number of options for prayers and readings, according to the preference of the family.

Conservative services are more traditional in form. They may include some English readings, but most prayer is in Hebrew. For Conservative services we use *Lev Shalem*.

If you don’t know which to choose, we suggest attending both kinds of services to see what you like and comparing the prayer books.

Sometimes people conclude that one kind of service or the other is “easier” or “more authentic.” This is not the case. Both Conservative and Reform Judaism are intellectually engaging, valid interpretations of Judaism.

My family or child is LGBTQ, will they be welcome?

Yes! We are happy you are here to celebrate this great *simchah*. We acknowledge that Hebrew is a highly gendered language in a way that may not be a comfortable fit for all gender identities. We will work with you to create a service that feels right.

I have heard that some communities throw candy during the ceremony. Does that happen at Agudas Achim?

Throwing candy is a way of celebrating and wishing the B-Mitzvah a sweet life. If you choose to follow this custom, please provide the congregation with individually wrapped **soft candy**. Please discourage children from pelting the B-Mitzvah with the candy. We don’t want injuries. Also, alert any non-Jewish guests in advance that they will be throwing the candy. (Otherwise, they usually eat it.)

Watching my child prepare for B-Mitzvah has made me want to deepen or begin my own Jewish education. What should I do?

This happens a lot! Preparing for a B-Mitzvah can be an opportunity for your to learn along with your child. In addition, the rabbi offers a regular Introduction to Judaism class. She is also always available for conversation. To make an appointment, contact the office manager at Office@AgudasAchimIC.org

I will be honored with an aliyah during the B-Mitzvah, but I feel a little awkward about coming up to the bimah, and I'm not sure I know the words.

No worries. The blessings are written out on a large card on the bimah in Hebrew and in English letters. The rabbi will prompt you discreetly from the bimah.

Also, the principal would happy to offer you the opportunity to practice with her in advance.

In fact, we warmly invite families to take an aliyah during a service before the B-Mitzvah in order to get past any lingering nervousness.

Thanks for all of this information, but I have more questions.

No problem! Contact the rabbi at

Rabbi@AgudasAchimIC.org to set up a time to talk.

Tutoring at Agudas Achim

B'nei Mitzvah tutors at Agudas Achim will work with the principal and the rabbi to help students prepare for B-Mitzvah.

The tutor's primary role is as follows.

To prepare a chanted recording of the verses of the Torah and Haftarah that the student will chant at B-Mitzvah to meet with the student one-on-one 6

sessions for a flat fee, which is covered by tuition at

the religious school. The family has the option to hire the tutor thereafter.

The tutor posts rates for private tuition. Tutor writes a brief statement explaining background and educational methods/philosophy so that the family understands what to expect from the tutoring sessions. The tutor will meet with the principal and rabbi before the first meeting with the student.

After the 6th session, the tutor will submit a brief report to the principal and rabbi: what covered, what remains to be done. If the family retains the tutor in a private arrangement, it is a courtesy for the tutor to check in with the rabbi a month before the B-Mitzvah to make sure everything is on track.

In the course of working with the tutor, if parents express unusual contingencies, expectations, or desires affecting the B-Mitzvah, tutor must inform the principal or the rabbi to coach the student in reciting Torah/Haftarah.

To introduce Torah trop or Haftarah trop, depending on the student's needs or interests in accordance with synagogue policy as outlined in the BMitzvah Guide

To coordinate with the rabbi and principal at Agudas Achim so that we can all keep track of the student's progress and the family's needs.

Students who wish to continue with the tutor beyond those 6 sessions may make a private arrangement with the tutor, to be paid by the family at whatever rate they and the family agree to within the guidelines of the synagogue's B-Mitzvah policies.

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Principal & Editor Sonja Spear

The principal is available for conversations by appointment. To make an appointment email: Principal@AgudasAchimIC.org.

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Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz

To make an appointment with the rabbi, contact the office: (319) 337-3813 or email:

Rabbi@AgudasAchimIC.org