



## TEMPLE ISRAEL SANCTUARY

The Ark, which is the central focus of the sanctuary, houses the *Torah* scrolls. Its doors are carved with the Burning Bush. This represents a particularly moving moment in the early history of our people, when Moses accepted God's mission and led the Jewish people out of Egypt to Sinai. The brilliantly hued tapestry within the Ark represents the form of the Ark doors. The Hebrew letter *Shin*, which signifies the word *Shaddai*, meaning God, is sculpted into the center of the Ark doors.

The Ten Commandment Tablets appear above the doors of the Ark. They represent the fulfillment of God's promise to Moses at the Burning Bush and are the guiding precept for the daily life of every Jew. The Eternal Light, symbolic of the Jew's ongoing spirit, is placed above the Tablets. From its form, a torch, we infer light permeating darkness, just as the Torah has illuminated the life of every Jew throughout the ages.

The stone mosaic wall on either side of the Ark symbolizes the wings of an angel. Light filtering through the stained glass skylight casts different colors on the simple white stones. The Menorah, the seven branched candelabra, recalls the first menorah in the Tabernacle in the desert and later in Solomon's Temple.

The stained glass windows above the sanctuary balcony offer a symbolic celebration of the Jewish holidays. They begin on the west with the *Rosh Hashanah* window, representing the Jewish New Year. Second, is the *Yom Kippur* window which commemorates the Day of Atonement. Next is the *Sukkot* window celebrating the harvest and our people's wandering through the wilderness. The *Chanukah* window in the middle illustrates symbols connected with the celebration of this festival of religious freedom. The next window shows symbols of *Purim*, a festival associated with the Jews of Persia being saved from destruction. The *Passover* window depicts a holiday of freedom and the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. The east window celebrates *Shavuot*, which reflects the giving of the Ten Commandments.



## TEMPLE ISRAEL

MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

### BAR AND BAT MITZVAH

The term *bar/bat mitzvah* means son/daughter of *mitzvah*. According to Judaism, at the age of 13 an individual can now take on additional religious privileges and responsibilities. *Mitzvot*, literally commandments, are the responsibilities of a Jew. Before reaching the age of bar or bat mitzvah, children voluntarily perform mitzvot. Following *bar/bat mitzvah*, *mitzvot* become obligatory. In this regard, the idea of fulfilling the commandments suggests accepting responsibility as an adult. This is sacred and deserving of celebration.

The central idea in Jewish tradition has been that young people come of age around the age of thirteen. It should be noted that even if no public ceremony takes place, a Jewish boy or girl becomes a *bar* or *bat mitzvah* at the appropriate age. *bar/bat mitzvah* is an important milestone in what we hope will be a lifetime of Jewish learning and living.

Although *bar mitzvah* has occurred for several centuries, *bat mitzvah* is a twentieth century development. The first recorded *bat mitzvah* was celebrated by Judith Kaplan Eisenstein in 1922. The practice did not become commonplace until the 1950s, first in Reform congregations and later in Conservative synagogues.



## TORAH

The *Torah* is the most precious possession of the Jewish people. It symbolizes the moment when God met the Jewish people at Mount Sinai and made a covenant with them. *Torah* can refer to the Five Books of Moses, the Scrolls, or the totality of Jewish learning.

The *Torah* also symbolizes all that the Jewish people hold sacred - stories, laws, history, and poetry. When a Jewish child reads from the *Torah* for the first time, he or she is enveloped in its heritage, in its power, in the awe and wonder of the relationship with God that began at Sinai. He or she is saying to the community, I am now thirteen years old. I am ready to engage fully in the covenant with God by being responsible for performing the religious obligations of Jewish life.

The Torah scrolls are housed in the Holy Ark. Each of the scrolls contain the Five Books of Moses, the first part of the Jewish Bible. Each *Torah* scroll, called in Hebrew *Sefer Torah*, is handwritten by a scribe on parchment. A *Torah* scroll is often adorned with a silver crown and breastplate to show reverence for the treasure of wisdom that it contains. Jews show their respect for the *Torah* by standing when the Ark is open. The *Torah* is always handled with great care.

A portion of the *Torah* is read on each Sabbath. Every temple, or synagogue, will read the same *Torah* portion on any given week. Portion by portion, the *Torah* is read from beginning to end and then begun again.

## MORNING SERVICE FOR SHABBAT

The morning service begins with the cantor leading the congregation in a Shabbat song. Following the song, our service continues in the prayer book with the *Barchu*, the formal call to worship. After the *Barchu*, we continue with prayers praising God for creating and sustaining the world and for giving the *Torah* to the Jewish people.

The congregation together recites the *Shema*, the Jewish declaration of faith in the Oneness of God. Immediately following the *Shema*, the congregation reads the *Vahavta*. This prayer directs us to always love God, to teach our children the prayers and history of our people, and to follow God's commandments and teachings by living an ethical life. This portion concludes with a prayer and song thanking God for delivering us from slavery in Egypt.



The *bar/bat mitzvah* celebrant is then called upon to lead the congregation in saying the central prayers of our worship service, the *Tefilah*. On Shabbat it contains seven basic themes: Heritage, God's Power, God's Holiness, Holiness of the Shabbat, Responsibility of Worship, Thanksgiving and Peace. Following these prayers, we have a moment of silent meditation.

Thereafter begins the most significant part of the entire service, the *Torah* service. This section begins with a sermonette by the rabbi based on the portion of the week. Then the *Torah* is removed from the Holy Ark and is passed from generation to generation to the *bar/bat mitzvah*, in a gesture that symbolizes the passing of the tradition from one generation to the next. The rabbis, with the *bar/bat mitzvah*, lead a processional carrying the *Torah* scrolls around the sanctuary, allowing the congregation to acknowledge the *Torah's* presence. The highlight of the *Torah* service is when the *bar/bat mitzvah* reads a section of the *Torah* portion from the *Torah* Scroll. Before each segment of the *Torah* portion, people chosen by the *bar/bat mitzvah* family are sometimes given the honor to chant or read the blessing before and after the reading of *Torah*. This honor is called an *Aliya*.

Next the *bar/bat mitzvah* reads the *Haftarah*, a prophetic selection from the Hebrew Scriptures. The *bar/bat mitzvah* then delivers a *D'var Torah*, which expresses a lesson they derived from their *Torah* portion. At this point the *Torah* is returned to the Ark, followed by the rabbi's personal words to the *bar/bat mitzvah* and recitation of the Priestly benediction.

The service continues with a prayer for those who are ill, called the *Mi Shebeirach*. This is followed by the *Aleinu*, also called the Adoration. We pray for the speedy arrival of the Messianic Age when war, bloodshed, and cruelty will be overcome and peace and love will prevail.

After the *Aleinu*, one of the rabbis recites the names of the Temple Israel members and relatives who died at this time in years past. As well, the names of the Temple Israel members who died during the past week and month are mentioned. The congregation then rises to recite the Mourner's *Kaddish* as a way of remembering them. This powerful and moving prayer is connected with mourning, but contains no mention of death. Rather, it is a glorification of God, a positive reaffirmation of faith at time of deep bereavement.

Our service concludes with persons special to the *bar/bat mitzvah* being called upon to lead us in *kiddush* and *motzi*, the prayers recited before partaking of wine and bread.