



North Suburban Synagogue

Beth El

בית כנסת בית אל

....ושנתם לבניך
ודברת במ

....and you shall teach
them to your children
(Deutoronomy 6:7)



B'nai Mitzvah Program Handbook



Dear Families,

Welcome to the B'nai Mitzvah Program at North Suburban Synagogue Beth El! This is a unique and memorable time in the life of your family and we are delighted to be on this journey with you.

The curriculum of our program goes beyond the customary skills of Torah/Haftarah reading and prayer chanting. Through family education programs, Shabbat experiences, and Mitzvah projects, our program offers your family a chance to feel the rhythm and depth of Jewish life. It is our hope that by taking advantage of the full B'nai Mitzvah Program, your child's B'nai Mitzvah will be a stepping stone to a more meaningful connection to Judaism in your home and within our community. Simply stated, the goals of the B'nai Mitzvah Program are to:

- ✓ Bring families together and create a stronger community*
- ✓ Model that Jewish learning is a life-long process*
- ✓ Empower parents to be their children's Jewish teachers*
- ✓ Demonstrate the beauty of Shabbat and communal prayer*
- ✓ Involve families in Mitzvah projects within our community*
- ✓ Teach repeatable synagogue skills*
- ✓ Reinforce Jewish literacy*

This Handbook is designed as a tool to help you organize and understand the many elements of our B'nai Mitzvah program. You may also access this information on the synagogue website: www.nssbethel.org.

NSS Beth El is committed to serving people of all gender identities. This handbook uses "B'nai Mitzvah" to reflect the beautiful diversity of our Jewish community, including gender diversity.

We at Beth El are looking forward to getting to know your family over the next year and beyond. The entire B'nai Mitzvah Team is committed to making your family simcha meaningful and enjoyable.

Important Contacts

Rabbi Michael Schwab

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Rabbi Alex Freedman

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Hazzan Jacob Sandler

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Hazzan Jenna Greenberg, Ritual Director

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Kathy Stinson, Events and Operations Manager

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B'nai Mitzvah Time Line and Course of Study

B'nai Mitzvah Preparation Class

All sixth grade students whether enrolled in Jewish Day School or the Cohen Religious School are required to attend our Vav class family education program on Sunday mornings from 9:00-12:00, led by the Rabbis and Hazzan Sandler as a core part of our B'nai Mitzvah program. Attendance at this class is required for all students and at least one parent/guardian. All boys and fathers are required to bring tallit and tefillin; others/ everyone else is encouraged to participate in these mitzvot but are not required. The class begins each week with a breakfast followed by an abbreviated service during which time families learn melodies for prayers, explore the meaning and construct of the liturgy, and eventually participate in a Shabbat morning service. Following our service students and parents will participate in clergy-led sessions that will focus on Life Cycle events, hard questions Jews ask and Parashat HaShavua (weekly Torah Portion).

Trope Class

Approximately one year before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date, all B'nai Mitzvah students are required to take a B'nai Mitzvah Skills class taught by Hazzan Jenna Greenberg. It will be held in the evenings on Zoom and offered in the fall, winter and spring. Students will learn the skills needed to chant the Haftarah, as well the Haftarah blessings. This class will prepare them for their private B'nai Mitzvah lessons, which will start shortly after they complete the Trope class.

B'nai Mitzvah Tutoring

As the major part of students training, students will receive private lessons, included in your B'nai Mitzvah fees. We have a dedicated group of tutors who can meet a variety of learning styles. Approximately one year prior to your B'nai Mitzvah you will be contacted by the synagogue so we may know how long your child will be away during summer break, if applicable. This information is necessary both as a check against our records, as well as to ensure we match your child with the most appropriate tutor and an on-time start date.

On a one-to-one basis, the Haftarah is studied in depth, and the tutor assists the student in applying these notes to their particular

Haftarah portion. Once your child has mastered their entire Haftarah and if time allows, the student may begin to prepare to read Torah by learning Torah cantillation. The cantillation is then applied to the appropriate Torah portion.

The Torah and Haftarah blessings, Ashrei, and the Shabbat morning Kiddush are frequently reviewed. If a student has mastered all of the above, including a significant amount of Torah reading, and if time allows, they may learn to lead part of the Shabbat service, including Torah service and/or P'sukei D'zimra, the early morning service on Shabbat day. Additionally, students will have the opportunity to learn Kabbalat Shabbat or Ma'ariv (the later part of the Friday night service).

We know that on occasion students require extra assistance – either because of learning differences or particular difficulties with the material. In either case, if you feel your child needs extra help, please make an appointment with the Hazzan or our Ritual Director. As well, our Cohen Religious School offers a Hebrew Resource Center on Thursdays between 4:00-6:00PM.

Attendance and Assignments

Throughout the B'nai Mitzvah program, every student is given weekly assignments. Regular attendance, completion of all assignments, and home study are essential to your child's success. While the amount of study time varies from child to child, your child is expected to spend a minimum of 20-30 minutes daily preparing for class or lessons. The length of time spent practicing is less important than making sure practice is a daily occurrence, as long as students are completing their assignments on time. Since individual lessons are scheduled every half-hour, please make sure your child arrives promptly. If for any reason your child cannot attend a session, please contact the tutor as early as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made. If your child is sick, please do not bring them for lessons-either reschedule or inquire about a zoom lesson.

Double B'nai Mitzvah

In the case of double s'machot (celebrations), each student will recite approximately half of the Haftarah, as well as have the opportunity to prepare readings from the Torah. Each child will learn both the blessings before and after the Haftarah and an Aliyah to the Torah, Ashrei, and Shabbat morning Kiddush. Each will be called for an Aliyah to the Torah, and participatory family honors will be divided evenly between both families. Speak with your liaison for more information.

Children with Special Needs or Learning Differences

At Beth El, it is our mission to offer all students who wish the opportunity to celebrate B'nai Mitzvah. Parents of children with special needs or learning differences should contact Hazzan Sandler or Hazzan Greenberg early on so we have the opportunity to plan properly for your child's best success. Our clergy, professional staff and tutoring staff are committed to working with you to make sure your simcha is meaningful and the pathway there meets the needs of your child.

Meetings with the Hazzan

All students will have periodic meetings with Hazzan Sandler at approximately 1, 3 and 6 months prior to your B'nai Mitzvah, the purpose of which is to check the progress of your child's studies and together create a plan for your child's best success. Additional check-ups may be requested either by parents or at the recommendation of your tutor. At least one parent is required at all check-ups and students are to bring all of their study materials.

School Tefilah and Junior Congregation

As part of our Cohen Religious School curriculum, students will learn the prayers of the Shabbat morning service in tefilah class with Hazzan Greenberg and with their teachers. The material is applied and reinforced during Junior Congregation (every Shabbat morning). As the students master these skills, they will have the opportunity to participate in leading Ashrei and Shir HaKavod, and other prayers from the bimah in our Sanctuary service, as well as for their peers in Junior Congregation. We strongly encourage students to attend Junior Congregation regularly, where they can lead prayers, read Torah, gain comfort and confidence in synagogue skills in grades 2-6. Parents are always welcome to attend!

Torah Study/D'var Torah

An important and meaningful part of preparing for a B'nai Mitzvah can be engaging in the study of students' B'nai Mitzvah portion. This study of the child's Torah or Haftarah portion can be the basis for a D'var Torah, a reflection on the traditional text and its relevance to the child's life. Each student will study their Parasha with Rabbi Alex Freedman and prepare a D'var Torah which they will deliver from the bimah as an introduction to the Torah reading on the day of their simcha, and which will be distributed to the community both in print that morning and electronically in the weekly email during the week of their simcha.

Tzedek Projects/Community Service

To make the B'nai Mitzvah celebration and year of study more meaningful, each student is required to perform a Tzedek project, either one-time or on-going, during the course of the B'nai Mitzvah year. This is part of living our Jewish values.

B'nai Mitzvah Twinning

We encourage you to arrange a twinning to add a special dimension to this meaningful event in your child's life. Your participation in this project provides a way to connect with the Shoah Victims through Bar/Bat Mitzvah Twinning project at Yad Vashem, or with children who did not survive the Holocaust to celebrate their B'nai Mitzvah through the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Chain of Memory program. In recognition of your participation in a twinning program, the Rabbis publicly acknowledge your child's twin as they are called to the Torah as a B'nai Mitzvah.

- **Chain of Memory Program – United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

The "Chain of Memory" project was established so that Bar/Bat Mitzvah children can remember one of the 1.5 million Jewish children who were murdered by the Nazis before being able to fulfill the mitzvah of learning Torah. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah dedicates the occasion to the memory of this child. This linkage symbolizes the importance of remembering the past as well as educating for the future. By participating in the Chain of Memory project, a family will have the opportunity to remember a child who was not able to celebrate his or her own Bar/Bat Mitzvah and be part of the historic events of the United States Holocaust

Memorial Museum. The Midwest Regional Office of the USHMM will provide the Bar/Bat Mitzvah with the name, birthday, picture (if available) and other biographical information on the child who is to be remembered. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah child will receive a certificate from the USHMM recognizing the importance of remembrance and of this mitzvah. You can incorporate this in your service however you choose.

Please fill out the information form:

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/50e1a62bdd544d4dba88ccb90a9fe640>

For more information, please contact the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Midwest, mleon@ushmm.org.

- **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Twinning Program - Yad Vashem, Israel**

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Twinning Program of Yad Vashem The World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Israel is an increasingly popular way to strengthen a child's identification with his or her Jewish heritage by forging bonds with individual children who were murdered during the Holocaust. Choosing to participate in the Program offers the opportunity to remember and learn about the life of a child who was murdered during the Holocaust. The Bar Mitzvah boy or Bat Mitzvah girl will be twinned with a child who did not have a chance to mark his or her own Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The boy or girl being remembered will share something with the child celebrating – a birthday, a name or place of origin. For more info, please go to

<https://www.yadvashem.org/remembrance/bar-bat-mitzvah-twinning-program.html>

- **The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous**

During the Holocaust there were thousands of non-Jews who refused to be passive in the face of the evil they witnessed, rescuing Jews, often at risk to their own lives and the lives of their families. In 1986, Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis established The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous to fulfill the traditional Jewish commitment to Hakarat Hatov, the searching out and recognition of goodness. To this end, the JFR is committed to assisting those Righteous Gentiles who are in need. They are often reluctant to ask for help; they acted without expecting reward then or now. However, as Rabbi Schulweis realized, it is our duty to

support them. Now, as the rescuers age and pass on, the number of rescuers receiving their support is declining, but it is vital that their stories live on.

Students who will participate in Bar/Bat Twinning Program at the JFR will have the opportunity to twin with a Righteous Gentile who saved Jews during the Holocaust. The Bar or Bat Mitzvah chooses a rescuer with whom to be twinned. Each participant will receive a certificate with the name of his or her chosen rescuer.

For more information <https://jfr.org/bar-mitzvah-program/>

Daily Minyan

B'nai Mitzvah students are encouraged to wrap Tefillin (mandatory for boys, optional for others) and have their first Aliyah to the Torah (reciting the blessings) at the Monday or Thursday morning service prior to your date. Breakfast always follows Daily minyan, and sponsoring breakfast is a traditional way to thank the “Minyanaires” for sharing in your simcha. Please contact our Hazzan Jenna Greenberg with questions about morning minyan. Students who learn to chant the first Aliyah of Shabbat morning will also be invited to chant from the Torah during this weekday service. You may also consider joining us the Shabbat afternoon prior to your date for Mincha services for an Aliyah (when students who learn the first Aliyah may also chant Torah), followed by festive singing, the traditional “Third Meal” (Se’udah Shlishit), a brief Torah study and Maariv/Havdalah.

Kabbalat Shabbat

Students are encouraged to prepare to lead Kabbalat Shabbat. Building on skills learned in earlier years in our Cohen Religious School, students may work with their tutor, Hazzan Greenberg or Hazzan Sandler to learn the entirety of Kabbalat Shabbat (the preliminary Friday evening service), which they may then lead on their B'nai Mitzvah Shabbat, and beyond! Additionally, students may choose to study P'sukei D'zimra, the preliminary service on Shabbat and weekday mornings, to lead from the pulpit.

Attend Shabbat Services

B'nai Mitzvah students and their parents are expected to attend services on Shabbat during the year of the child's B'nai Mitzvah. The best way to become familiar with the content and flow of our services (as well as your role as the family of the B'nai Mitzvah) is by coming to services! These experiences will not only help you

in planning for your simcha in being able to teach your family members and guests as to what to expect during your child's B'nai Mitzvah, but will serve as precious memories of time in Shul as a family that will remain with your children throughout their lives. Additionally, each family is expected to serve as ushers for a complete Shabbat morning service in the weeks leading up to their own simcha.

Ushering

The celebration of a simcha means much to the families and friends involved. To help everyone participate and enjoy the service, it is very important to have ushers who welcome in guests, close the doors at certain points in the service, and help people find their way in the synagogue. It is our practice at Beth El to call upon members to serve as ushers prior to their own upcoming simcha. With this type of participation, you can also be assured that during your simcha everything will run smoothly and your guests will be welcomed. Ushering also allows you and your child to see the choreography of the service and ask any questions prior to your simcha. Throughout the year, the Ritual Committee and Synagogue Office send out notices of ushering responsibilities via email. Please do not ignore this email. If you are not able to fulfill your ushering commitment on the scheduled date, it is your responsibility to find another family to take your place (perhaps by contacting another B'nai Mitzvah family who will trade dates with you). When you serve as an usher, another member of the congregation who has experience in ushering will assist you. There will be an ushering station (in the closet) that includes all of the things needed for a successful ushering experience: "Usher" nametags and a list of things to be mindful of while ushering (when people can/can't enter the sanctuary, how to approach someone who needs a Kippah or a mask, etc.). Ushering is a critical component to the function of the service and we rely on B'nai mitzvah families, as well as other congregants and the Board of Directors to carryout this important function.

Submit Photograph for the Synagogue Bulletin

An e-mail request for a photo will be sent out by the Synagogue Office one month in advance of the deadline. Please send your child's photo and other requested biographical information on time to be included in our Kol Beth El's B'nai Mitzvah Celebration page, and on our Synagogue Information Monitors

the week of your simcha. All photos and information are to be submitted to Abby Lasky at alasky@nssbethel.org.

Final Rehearsal/Interview with the Rabbi

All students with parents will be contacted to have an interview with one of our Rabbis on the week leading to their B'nai Mitzvah. On the same week, students will meet with Hazzan Sandler for a final rehearsal, following evening minyan. Anyone local who you have invited to read Torah should make every effort to be present, or they must schedule another time for our Hazzan Sandler to hear them chant. Please note: This is not the appropriate time for your photo shoot—please schedule that for another time with Kathy Stinson.

Your Family's Participation in Our Services

B'nai Mitzvah Liaisons

Approximately one year prior to your simcha, your family will be paired with a volunteer from the community who will serve as your B'nai Mitzvah Liaison. Your liaison is your peer partner throughout the B'nai Mitzvah process. This partnership not only ensures better communication between the synagogue and your family, it offers you the opportunity to connect with another member of the synagogue community who will be helpful to you throughout the process. Your liaison will remind you of upcoming due dates for various forms and meetings, as well as assist you in filling out forms or answering questions that may arise over the course of the year. If you have any questions, please contact Leah Brajer, B'nai Mitzvah Liaison Chair.

Complete Family Torah Reading Form

Following your 6-month check-in with the Hazzan, you will be sent a link to an online form on which you may request for family members to participate in the Torah reading—a wonderful way to enhance your simcha. All requests are due no later than 90 days prior to your B'nai Mitzvah date. Beyond 90 days out, the synagogue will assign Torah readings to members of the community. Please speak with your assigned Liaison if you have questions while filling out the form.

Your family is encouraged to actively participate in the Shabbat morning service. You may do this in several ways:

Aliyot: Each B'nai Mitzvah family is given four Aliyot—the honor of reciting the blessings before and after a Torah reading. Additionally, the B'nai Mitzvah is also given an Aliyah. If multiple siblings are celebrating on the same service, additional Aliyot may be made available to your family. Please keep in mind that only one individual (male or female) is honored with an Aliyah at a time. Contact your assigned Liaison for more information.

Opening the Ark: You are welcome to invite family members or close friends to open the ark. Generally, each family may speak with your Liaison for more information.

Reading Torah: Your family and friends are invited to read Torah! If you are interested in this special honor, please be in touch with Hazzan Greenberg who can assist in the learning process. There are several other resources (like torahreaders.net) to help family and friends prepare for their Torah reading. Having family members participate in this manner enhances the Simcha! All Torah readers will be listed two to three weeks in advance. Those reading Torah are encouraged to attend the B'nai Mitzvah rehearsal. If a family member lives out of town and wants to read Torah, arrangements can be made for us to provide materials, as well as to listen to them chant by phone or video chat.

English Readings: Each B'nai Mitzvah family may elect to have one family member lead the congregation in an English reading. The readings for the United States Armed Forces and the Israeli Defense Forces are located on the inside back cover of the Siddur and are recited after the Torah and Haftarah are read.

Closing Prayers: In order to engage younger members of your family, we invite them to lead Ein Keloheinu and/or Shir HaKavod. Hazzan Greenberg or Hazzan Sandler can assist in preparing these prayers, as well as providing recordings and study materials.

Accessibility: Please note that our facility is very accessible. We offer a number of ADA-compliant restrooms, ramps up to our bimah and into our Library, a hearing loop in the Field Family Sanctuary, Paset Lounge, and Blumberg Auditorium, assistive-listening devices in the Sanctuary, and large-print prayer books. Please contact your liaison or Jeff Baden, Executive Director, if you know in advance that special accommodations may be necessary for you or your guests. Anyone requiring special services may speak with an usher on the morning of your service.

Minhagei Shabbat- Shabbat Etiquette

1. All men must wear a kippah at all times while in our building. Jewish men 13 and over are asked to wear a tallit (prayer shawl) while in the Field Family Sanctuary or the Sager Bet Hamidrash. Kippot and tallitot are available outside the Sanctuary doors.

2. Please dress modestly. When planning your simcha, one should be mindful of the principle of tz'niyut, or modesty. It is important that you, your family and your friends be dressed appropriately for this special occasion. Appropriate modest dress includes dresses or skirts/tops for girls/women that hit at the knees or lower and having shoulders covered (cap sleeves or longer). Boys/men should wear pants and short sleeves or longer. If you have any questions about appropriate dress, please contact your B'nai Mitzvah Liaison.

3. In order to help us preserve the spirit of Shabbat and the sanctity of our synagogue, please refrain from taking photos/videos and use of electronic equipment anywhere in our synagogue building. Phones should be turned off.

4. We are pleased to offer a number of engaging services for our youth and their families, in the School Wing of our building. Junior Congregation for children in second through sixth graders begins at 10:30 a.m. Our Family Shabbat Service for families with babies through first grade begins at 11:00 a.m. Children are encouraged to attend the Field Family Sanctuary during the service; however, to both maintain a safe environment and out of respect for those worshipping, children should not congregate in the hallways outside of the sanctuary or in the front foyer. Please help us maintain decorum and safety by knowing where your children are at all times.

5. It is not appropriate to bring gifts to the synagogue on Shabbat, whether checks or packages.

6. There is no smoking allowed on the synagogue premises at any time.

Use of Synagogue Facilities

To reserve our facilities, please contact Kathy Stinson in the Synagogue Office. Reservations require a signed agreement and a deposit.

In keeping with the essence of the tradition of B'nai Mitzvah, we would like to underscore the importance of your celebration reflecting Jewish values and adhering to Jewish law, in particular those of Shabbat and kashrut (dietary customs):

- Items that you may wish to bring to the synagogue for use during the B'nai Mitzvah service (e.g., personalized kippot), Kiddush, Shabbat meals, or after-Shabbat parties, must be brought into the synagogue building either before Shabbat (i.e., no later than 3 p.m. on Friday) or after the end of Shabbat on Saturday evening (Shabbat end-times vary from week to week—please contact the Ritual Director or Clergy for more information). Please arrange all deliveries with Kathy Stinson.
- Jewish tradition treats meals associated with Life Cycle Events (called Se'udot mitzvah, or ritually celebratory feasts) as part of the life-cycle event itself! Ideally, these meals should follow the laws of kashrut (Jewish dietary laws). If this is not possible, such meals should at least be fully dairy or vegetarian. Today, Kosher caterers offer exciting and delicious options you'd find anywhere else! For more information about how NSS Beth El's Circle of Life Catering can enhance your simcha, whether in our beautiful event spaces or at an outside venue, contact Chef Laura Frankel.

Photography Sessions

Photos are a meaningful remembrance of this important family simcha. Please reserve your specific time slot with Kathy Stinson before arranging a photo session with your photographer. Please note that photography of any kind is prohibited on Shabbat.

Shabbat Kiddush and Catering

The congregation provides a standard Kiddush following all Shabbat services. It includes the items indicated below and all associated service utensils. Part of the B'nai Mitzvah fee covers the standard Kiddush following Shabbat morning services. The Standard Beth El Shabbat Morning Kiddush features the following items:

- Tuna salad, Egg salad, Gefilte fish and Horse raddish, Herring in wine sauce, and House Salad
- Tortilla chips and Salsa, Ruffles, and Snack crackers.
- Assorted pastries
- Seasonal fruit
- Child-appropriate snacks at children's tables
- Wine, Grape juice, Apple juice, Scotch and Bourbon
- All tables will be covered in white or black linen and all disposable items will be white or black. Colored linens or disposables may be rented for an additional fee. Monogrammed /personalized items are not allowed.

Links to the standard Kiddush form can be found on our website <https://www.nssbethel.org/lifecycle/circle-of-life-catering/>

North Suburban Synagogue Beth El encourages our B'nai Mitzvah families to provide additional food for the Kiddush following Shabbat morning services. A Kiddush may be extended to include many additional items. A dairy Kiddush with bread can be provided on request if there are no meat luncheons in the building at the time. A Kiddush including bread is preceded by the hamotzi blessing and followed by Birkat hamazon, both led by the B'nai Mitzvah family with the assistance of the clergy. The Board of Directors of NSS Beth El reserves to the right to change the policies relating to an extended Kiddush. B'nai Mitzvah families will receive adequate notice of any such changes.

Kosher Caterers

In order to help us maintain a consistent kashrut policy, we ask that you select from the following list of approved kosher caterers when planning your event at NSS Beth El. Please speak with our Rabbi if you have questions about other Kosher caterers. Kosher restaurants under CRC supervision are permitted to provide food for "drop off" meals if arranged in advance with Laura Frankel.

Circle of Life Catering. 847-432-8900 | lfrankel@nssbethel.org
Dimensions Kosher Caterers. 847-396-9996| dimensionskosher.com
Goldman Segal Kosher Caterers. 847-675-4060| goldmansegal.com
Starr Kosher Catering. 773-465-6247 | starrkosher.com
PaNosh Kosher Catering. 847-947-2100 | panoshcatering.com
Zelda's Catering. 847-674-0033| zeldascatering.com