

North Suburban Synagogue

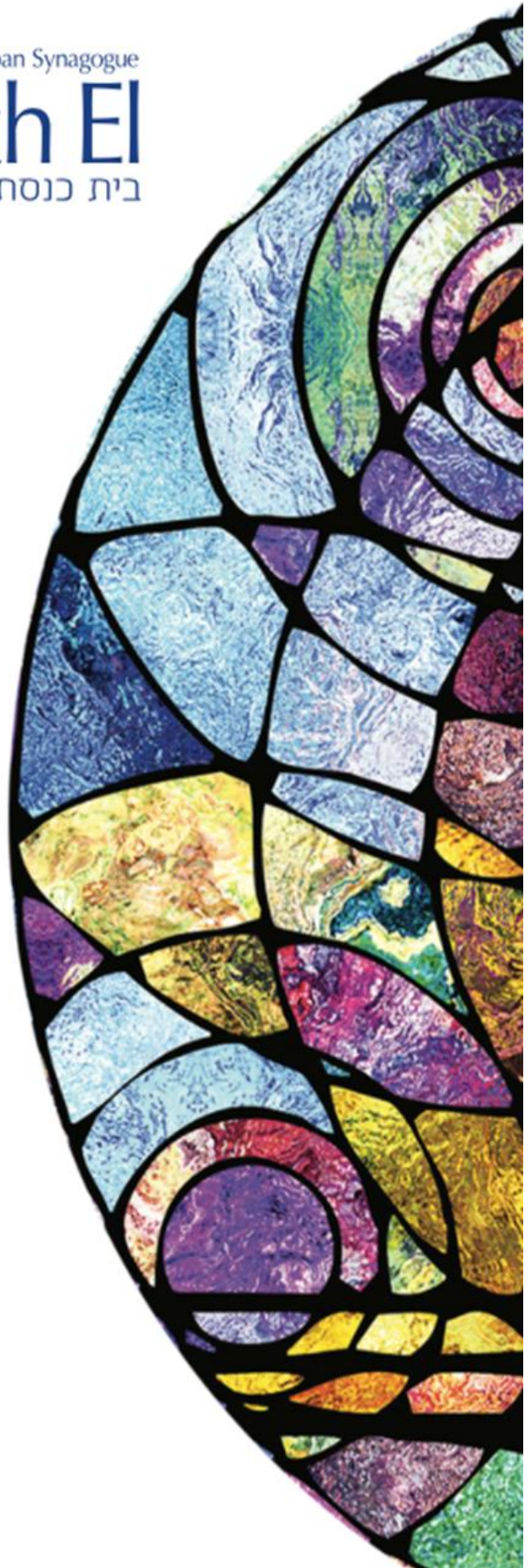
Beth El
בית כנסת בית אל

....ושנתם לבניך
ודברת בם

....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 Tzedek (social action) 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 steppingstone 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:

- ✓ Foster community amongst your B'nai Mitzvah Cohort
- ✓ 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 social action Tzedek projects within our community
- ✓ Teach repeatable synagogue skills
- ✓ Reinforce Jewish literacy

This Handbook is designed 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:

<https://www.nssbethel.org/lifecycle/bar-bat-mitzvah/>.

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.

Mazel Tov,

Hazzan Jacob Sandler and the NSSBE B'nai Mitzvah Team

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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Rabbi Benjamin Azriel, Executive Director

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Ali Drumm, Director of Congregational Learning

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Kathy Stinson, Assistant Executive Director

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Lori Solomon, Executive Assistant

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Ronit Ripes, B'nai Mitzvah Liaison Chair

Phone 847-274-8086 | Email rripes@yahoo.com

Zelda's Catering

Phone 847-674-0033 | Website zeldascatering.com

B'nai Mitzvah Timeline and Course of Study

B'nai Mitzvah Preparation Class (AKA Sunday Vav Class)

Vav Class is a joint program between the Cohen Religious School (CRS) and the B'nai Mitzvah program.

Sixth grade students enrolled in the CRS are required to attend the Vav Class with at least one parent/guardian on Sunday Mornings at 9:00am.

Sixth grade students enrolled in a Jewish Day School are invited and encouraged to join each Sunday at 9:00am with at least one parent/guardian.

All Sixth-grade students (CRS and Day School), along with at least one parent/guardian, are required to join "Moving Traditions" days which will happen on 5-6 Sundays of the year. You will be sent those dates in advance of the school year – please add them to your calendars.

The Vav class has two key components. *Tefillah* (prayer) and a class taught by our amazing clergy. Each student will have the chance to learn with each Rabbi and the Hazzan throughout the year.

Moving Traditions

Moving Traditions B'nai Mitzvah program is a new model of Jewish education for students and parents that speaks directly to the psychological, spiritual, social and developmental issues that pre-teens face as they prepare for and celebrate their B'nai Mitzvah. The Sixth-grade program consists of family sessions as well as student-only sessions. The interactive family sessions take place on Sunday. They are designed for pre-teens and their parents (or guardian) to learn together, to listen to one another's perspectives, and to enrich the meaning of the B'nai Mitzvah as a lifecycle ritual. This will be led by Anna Besser.

Tallit/Tefillin

Becoming a B'nai Mitzvah means taking on the responsibility of the *Mitzvot* (Commandments). One very tangible *mitzvah* is the practice of wearing a Tallit and Tefillin during daily prayer. We will have the opportunity each Sunday to practice this mitzvah, learning about the meaning and symbolism contained in these ritual items and wearing them.

Tefillin can be purchased from our Sisterhood Gift Shop, and we have extra pairs available on Sunday mornings for those who don't readily have access to a pair.

At Beth El, our male students and parents are required to put on Tallit and Tefillin each Sunday during Tefillah. It is our hope that **all** our students, regardless of gender identity, will take advantage of the opportunity to try this mitzvah each week.

B'nai Mitzvah Skills 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 2-3 times per year depending on the size of the cohort and timing of the B'nai Mitzvah that year.

Students will learn the skills needed to chant the Haftarah, as well as the Haftarah blessings. This class will prepare them for their private B'nai Mitzvah lessons, which will start shortly after they complete the B'nai Mitzvah Skills class.

B'nai Mitzvah Tutoring

Approximately 1 year before the B'nai Mitzvah, your child will begin meeting one on one with their assigned tutor. Building off the skills they learn in the B'nai Mitzvah Skills Class, students will prepare their Haftarah and its blessings, Torah Blessings, *Ashrei*, *Shehecheyanu*, *Kiddush* as well as the *Maftir* Torah reading. After that, they're encouraged to continue learning additional skills as time allows. Some possibilities include additional Torah readings, different parts of the prayer service, such as Torah Service, *P'sukei D'Zimra* (preliminary psalms), or Kabbalat Shabbat. See Hazzan Sandler if you're interested in learning Shacharit, Musaf or Friday night Maariv.

Through tutoring, every student is given weekly assignments. Regular attendance, completion of all assignments, and home study are **essential** to your child's success. The expectation is to spend 20-30 minutes **daily** preparing for lessons. Please make sure your child arrives promptly and 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, but rather reschedule or inquire about a virtual lesson.

Children with Special Needs or Learning Differences

We know that some 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 Hazzan Sandler.

Parents of children with special needs or learning differences, please contact Hazzan Sandler early on so we can 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 both meaningful and successful! We rely on your open communication and partnership to ensure we meet your child's needs effectively. Thank you!

Meetings with the Hazzan

All students will have meetings with Hazzan Sandler at approximately 1, 3 and 6 months prior to your B'nai Mitzvah. The purpose of these is to check the progress of your child's studies as well as to answer various questions that come up. Additional check-ins may be requested either by parents or on the recommendation of your tutor. At least one parent is required at all check-ins and students are to bring all their study materials.

Studying Torah and Writing a D'var Torah

An important and meaningful part of preparing for a B'nai Mitzvah is engaging in the study of students' B'nai Mitzvah portion. Each student will study their Parasha with Rabbi Alex Freedman and prepare a D'var Torah, in which they share some of what they learned, and how they personally connect to the portion. They will deliver their D'var Torah from the bimah as an introduction to the Torah reading on the day of their simcha. It will also be distributed to the community both in print that morning and electronically in the weekly email during the week before their simcha.

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 quarterly 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 Lori Solomon at lsolomon@nssbethel.org.

Final Rehearsal/ Pre-B'nai Mitzvah meeting with the Rabbi

All students will have a final rehearsal with Hazzan Sandler (typically on the Wednesday prior to their B'nai Mitzvah at 8:00 pm). They usually take about an hour. Anyone local who you have invited to read Torah should make every effort to be present, or they must schedule another time to be heard by one of our Hazzanim.

Please note: This is *not* the appropriate time for your photo shoot—please schedule that for another time with Hillary Wenk at hwenk@nssbethel.org.

All families will be contacted to schedule a pre-B'nai Mitzvah meeting with one of our Rabbis, including both the student and parents, during the week leading up to the ceremony.

Becoming a B'nai Mitzvah: Living Our Jewish Values

Attending 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! Your experience will help you plan for your simcha, enabling you to guide your friends and family about expectations during the B'nai Mitzvah. This year is also a chance to create precious memories of time in Shul as a family that will remain with your children throughout their lives.

Junior Congregation

Another great opportunity for students and their families to experience Shabbat in shul is at Junior Congregation. Junior Congregation is a venue designed for learning and practicing leading the *tefillot*, reading Torah and understanding the flow of services.

Celebrate Each Other

We especially encourage you to attend, in person or virtually, the Shabbat services in which your cohort is marking their turn to join the community of Jewish adults. **We further encourage you to reach out to your cohort to include them in whatever way you can in any celebration you are having.** Our community is made up of students at several public schools and day schools, families have known for years and families you have not yet had the chance to meet- and the simcha of a B'nai Mitzvah is one thing connecting us all! Whatever type and size of celebration you are planning, you could proactively reach out to the parents of the other members of the class and grade to wish them and their child a mazal tov on this incredible occasion!

Ushering

At Beth El, we call upon members to serve as ushers. Ushers welcome in guests, close the doors at certain points in the service, and help people find their way in the synagogue.

We ask our B'nai Mitzvah families to serve as ushers prior to their simcha. You will be contacted about ushering responsibilities via email. Please do not ignore this email. If you cannot fulfill your ushering commitment on the scheduled date, it is your responsibility to find another B'nai Mitzvah family to 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 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 etc.).

Additional Opportunities to Celebrate

While most of the excitement is sure to occur on Saturday morning, here are a few opportunities to extend the joy a little further:

Thursday Morning Minyan – your child is invited to come 7:30am on Thursday before their simcha and lay tefillin for the first time as B'nai Mitzvah. They could also read the weekday Torah reading, if they've learned it.

Friday Night – your family is encouraged to bring in that special Shabbat with the community by joining for Kabbalat Shabbat and Ma'ariv. The B'nai Mitzvah is invited to lead Friday Night Kiddush as well. Contact Hillary Wenk, Director of Engagement, to reserve a room for a Friday Night Dinner.

Tzedek Projects/Community Service

To make the B'nai Mitzvah celebration and year of study more meaningful, each student is required to perform 3 Tzedek projects between the beginning of Sixth grade and the B'nai Mitzvah. This is part of living our Jewish values. *See information at the end of the booklet, "Tzedek Project and Resource Guide."*

B'nai Mitzvah Spiritual Twinning

We encourage you to arrange a spiritual twinning to add a special dimension to this meaningful event in your child's life. Your participation in these projects provides a way to connect with children who were not able to celebrate their B'nai Mitzvah during historical tragedies of our people. 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 Program offers B'nai Mitzvah students the opportunity to honor one of the 1.5 million Jewish children who were murdered in the Holocaust before having the chance to celebrate their own Bar or Bat Mitzvah. By dedicating your B'nai Mitzvah to one of these children, you are making a powerful statement about the importance of remembrance, learning from the past, and carrying forward Jewish tradition.

Participants receive the name, birthday, photo (if available), and biographical information of the child they are honoring. During your ceremony, the clergy may announce the child's name from the bimah, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum will provide a certificate recognizing this meaningful mitzvah.

A minimum donation of \$36 is requested. Families may also choose to create a personalized fundraising page so that friends and relatives can contribute to honor of the B'nai Mitzvah.

To sign up, please complete the form at:

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

For more information or help setting up a fundraising page, visit:

<https://give.ushmm.org/campaign/chain-of-memory-program/c382586>

Contact:

Michelle Leon, Development Assistant

Midwest Regional Office, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Email: mleon@ushmm.org | Phone: 312-282-0173

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 information: <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/>

October 7th Twinning

In the aftermath of October 7th, 2023, many in the community continue looking for ways to support Israel, and honor those who were killed. Some recent students have elected to twin with a child who didn't survive 10/7 and, like the Holocaust Twinning programs described above, allow that child to spiritually celebrate a Bar/Bat Mitzvah alongside them. In this way, we connect to Israel, and the greater Jewish people. The Rabbis will publicly acknowledge your child's 10/7 twin as they are called to the Torah as a B'nai Mitzvah.

If you are interested in twinning, please contact Lori Solomon, lsolomon@nssbethel.org, who will help you choose a child with whom to twin. This may be in addition to any of the above Holocaust Twinning programs, or an alternative.

Your Family's Participation in Our Services

B'nai Mitzvah Liaisons

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, but it also offers you the opportunity to connect with another member of the synagogue community. 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 Ronit Ripes, B'nai Mitzvah Liaison Chair at ripes@yahoo.com.

Join Team Torah – Family Torah Readings

Your family and friends are invited to read Torah! If you are interested in this special honor, please be in touch with Hazzan Greenberg. Having family members participate in this manner enhances the simcha. PDF's and recordings can be provide as needed. All Torah readers will need to chant their parsha for the Hazzanim in advance, either in person or virtually.

Honoring Family and Friends

There are several ways your family is encouraged to actively participate in the Shabbat morning service. The following honors can be assigned to family and friends:

Aliyot: Each B'nai Mitzvah family is given four Aliyot— the honor of reciting the blessings before and after a Torah reading. The B'nai Mitzvah Aliyah is in addition to those four. 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 (regardless of gender identity) is honored with an Aliyah at a time.

Opening the Ark: You are welcome to invite family members or close friends to open the ark. This can be a group of 2-6 people.

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

For Younger Siblings and/or Cousins: 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: We offer several 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 the Executive Assistant, Lori Solomon, lsolomon@nssbethel.org 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.

Gender-Inclusive Language: Hebrew is a gendered language with nouns and adjectives being considered grammatically masculine or feminine. At Beth El, we celebrate B'nai Mitzvah students, their families and guests, of any gender identity. All those being called to the Torah for an aliyah, are called up in Hebrew. When providing the Hebrew name(s) to be used, please let us know if gender-neutral language is needed and/or preferred.

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.

Please see Double B'na Mitzvah FAQ sheet for more details.

Minhagei Shabbat - Shabbat Etiquette

1. All men must always wear a kippah 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. Use of cell phones is prohibited throughout the service as well as during the Kiddush luncheon throughout the building.
4. We are pleased to offer several engaging services for our youth and their families. Junior Congregation, for children in second through sixth grades, begins at 10:30 a.m. Our Tot Shabbat Service for families with babies through first grade begins at 11:00 a.m. Children are welcome to remain in 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. This includes the use of e-cigarettes or vapes.

Use of Synagogue Facilities

To reserve our facilities, please contact Hillary Wenk, Director of at hwenk@nssbethel.org. Reservations require a signed agreement and a deposit.

- Please make sure to reserve your room and event prior to having outside vendors contact the synagogue.

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, particularly those of Shabbat and kashrut (dietary customs):

- Items that you may wish to bring to the synagogue for use during the B'nai Mitzvah celebration (personalized kippot, centerpieces, flowers ect.) must be brought into the synagogue building either before Shabbat (no later than 2 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 Michelle Fetea
- 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.

Photography Sessions

Photos are a meaningful remembrance of this important family simcha. Please reserve your specific time slot by filling out the Shulcloud form <https://nssbe.shulcloud.com/form/B'nai-Mitzvah-Picture-Date-Request>. Please make sure the times you choose also work for your photographer. Hillary Wenk will get back to you with your confirmed time. Pictures may be scheduled during normal weekday business hours and start no later than 4pm. Pictures scheduled for Fridays must be complete by 1:30pm. This will ensure that the sanctuary is available and a member of our staff can help handle the Sefer Torah. Please note that photography of any kind is prohibited on Shabbat.

Shabbat Kiddush and Catering

The congregation provides a standard Kiddush following Shabbat morning services, which includes the items listed below along with all necessary service utensils. **A portion of the B'nai Mitzvah fee covers the sponsorship of this standard Kiddush for the congregation, including up to 50 guests.**

Families are responsible for any additional guests beyond 50. The final guest count must be submitted **at least two weeks in advance**, and families will be billed at the current per-person rate for guests over 50. For the 2025–2026 fiscal year, the rate is \$15 per additional guest; **please note that this rate is subject to change.**

B'nai Mitzvah families may also choose to enhance the Kiddush with **additional menu items at an extra cost**. For details on menu options or pricing, please contact Michelle Fetea, Events Manager.

The Kiddush typically includes bread, preceded by the Hamotzi blessing led by the B'nai Mitzvah and followed by Birkat Hamazon led by the clergy. The Board of Directors of NSS Beth El reserves the right to update Kiddush policies, with families receiving timely notice of any changes.

If you wish to use a caterer other than Zelda's, select a different kiddush menu, or upgrade your kiddush, please notify our Events Manager at least **one month before your event date**. Alternative caterers are subject to approval by the Executive Director and will incur a kitchen fee equal to 4% of the total catering bill.

Tzedek Project and Resource Guide

*Simon, the son of Rabbi Gamliel says:
"It is not what one says, but rather what one does
that makes all the difference in the world."
Pirkei Avot*

Why do we do a Tzedek project?

Part of becoming a *B'nai Mitzvah* is preparing yourself to take your place as an adult in the Jewish community. As a symbol of your commitment to take on the responsibilities of a Jewish adult, you will be expected to perform three *Tzedek* projects. The word *Tzedek* (from the root *tzadi, dalet, kuf*) means to do justice, to do the right thing. We were created to do righteous acts in this world and pursue justice (Genesis 18:19 and Deuteronomy 16:20). Therefore, doing acts of *Tzedek* are not optional; we are obligated as Jews to do righteous acts. You may be more familiar with the term "*tzedakah* project" but this implies/suggests that what you're doing is directly related to the giving of charity (*tzedakah*) which might be a part of your project, but the overall goals we have are to increase justice and right behavior in the world.

Why three Tzedek projects?

According to Jewish law, once something is done three times it is considered a permanent thing. This is called a "**chazakah.**" Doing something once is good. Doing something twice shows that we are building towards a habit. Once we have done something three times, we have connected to it and connected it to the way we function in the world. We have shown that this type of responsibility is a real part of our lives and is a sign that we will continue making this an ongoing part of the way we relate to the world. The number three represents permanence. That's why we do things in threes, since it adds strength to our acts.

Beginning your project:

You will each choose your own *Tzedek* projects based upon your interests and observations in the world. For example, if you are concerned about the poor or hungry people in our society, you may decide to volunteer your time serving food in a shelter or collecting food to donate to a food pantry. It is our hope that you will continue pursuing *Tzedek* for your whole life.

Please read the following *Tzedek* requirements:

1. Participate in three hands-on projects or one project in which you volunteer three times. One project may involve collecting items or fundraising.
2. Write one short paragraph reflection for each of your *Tzedek* Project volunteer experiences. On the next page you will find an outline to guide you in writing your reflections.
3. Projects can be done between now and the date of the B'nai Mitzvah.

We look forward to helping you with this phase of your Jewish learning and action demonstrating your role as a Jewish adult.

Hazzan Jacob Sandler
Rabbi Michael Schwab
Rabbi Alex Freedman
Ali Drumm, Director of Congregational Learning

Tzedek Project Reflection Outline Guide

Your Name:

Organization where you volunteered:

Location:

Dates:

Guiding questions to help get you started:

1. What did you do? Please include some details.
2. Why did you choose this project?
3. What did you learn and how did you grow from this experience?
4. Which Jewish values are connected to your *Tzedek* project? (You may use quotes from the *Tanach*, *Talmud*, or class material)
5. Describe the meaning this has for you.
6. Would you recommend this volunteer work to others and why/why not?

Your reflection paragraph doesn't need to be more than 5-10 sentences- we just want to understand what you did and what it meant to you. Email the paragraph to Hazzan Sandler at jsandler@nssbethel.org.

MAJOR COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

JUF TOV Volunteer Network

30 South Wells Street, Chicago IL 60606

(312) 357-4978

www.juf.org/tov

The Tikkun Olam Volunteer (TOV) Network is JUF's connection point for people who want to donate their time to help others in need. If you wish to volunteer in the Jewish and larger communities, please contact **TOVTeen@juf.org**. This guide gives several options for service projects that are appropriate for Bar and Bat Mitzvah families.

http://www.juf.org/pdf/tov/BBM_Guide.pdf

Also check out this wonderful resource:

JUF Teens B'nai Mitzvah Project Guide:

<https://jufwebfiles.org/pdf/teens/Bnai-Mitzvah-Project-Guide.pdf?v=1.0>

United Way of Lake County

330 South Greenleaf Street, Gurnee IL 60031

(847) 775-1011

www.liveunitedlakecounty.org

United Way of Lake County is **preparing our children to succeed in a changing world** by focusing on education and building safe and stable families. This agency conducts information and referral services and is the main fundraiser which supports the social service agencies in Lake County. Contact United Way for information about agencies in need of volunteers.

ENHANCE YOUR CELEBRATION WITH JEWISH VALUES

The inclusion of guests

- Consider inviting your entire class to your B'nai Mitzvah celebration, highlighting the value of inclusion in our community.
- Consider inviting people from the community that you don't know such as isolated senior citizens, widows or widowers, people with significant disabilities to your B'nai Mitzvah celebration.

Food

- Support Israel by purchasing Israeli made food products.
- Donate leftover food to the ARK or local food pantries.
- Include people experiencing hunger in your celebration by donating to *Mazon* (www.mazon.org).

Judaica Items

- Purchase beautiful items such as a hand washing cup, *challah* cover, *yad*, *bentchers*, candlesticks, *Kiddush* cup, *kipot*, *tallit*, *havdalah* set, and *tefillin*. Our Sisterhood Gift Shop contains many Israeli and American-made Judaica items. **The Gift Shop is open Sundays from 9:00 am – noon when religious school classes are in session. If you would like to make an appointment for a different time, or shop virtually, contact either Sulie Holt suliekaroholt@gmail.com (847-558-3389) or Judy Hirsch judyhirsch724@gmail.com for help.** Our profits help provide our on-going financial gifts that support many vital initiatives within our synagogue.
- Beautiful hand crocheted and inexpensive *kipot*, *mezuzzot*, *challah* covers, and Shalom pencil cases can be purchased from Maya Works in support of Mayan craftspeople in Guatemala. Proceeds buy food and crops as well as enable their children to attend high school. Visit www.Mayaworks.org.

Centerpieces

- Create decorated baskets filled with items that can be donated afterwards to the appropriate organization in need.
- Purchase flowers or plants and donate to a nursing home.
- Urban Flowers- florist sponsored by Thresholds. Urban Flowers is a non-profit, full-service florist employing people struggling with mental illness. www.Urbanflowerschicago.com or call (312) 377-3993 to place an order.

ASSISTING PEOPLE EXPERIENCING POVERTY

“And if your brother becomes poor, and his hand falters beside you, then you shall strengthen him” -Leviticus, 25:35.

The ARK

6450 N. California Avenue, Chicago IL 60645

Dawn Lieberman, (773) 973-1000 x283, ark@arkchicago.org

www.arkchicago.org

The ARK provides free social services for those in need, including crisis intervention programs for the mentally ill, legal assistance, and health care. Volunteer opportunities include working in the food pantry, delivering holiday food, assisting at ARK events, serving dinner, and more.

- Organize a food drive.
- Food Basket Program – Shop and deliver food to a client family.
- Café Ark – Help to serve 40-50 Ark clients a delicious multi-course dinner
- Thanksgiving – Volunteers are needed to serve and entertain guests at each of the lunches. In addition, you can deliver meals and groceries to those who are unable to attend.
- Chanukah Gift Wish Program – Volunteers shop and deliver gifts to matched recipients. There is a \$36 commitment for each recipient.
- Purim – Deliver *Shaloch Manot* (gifts of food) and *Matonot Le'evyonim* (gifts to those in need.)
- School supplies drive – Organize and coordinate school supplies in May.

Chesed Chicago: - This organization was founded to provide small amounts of financial support and food distribution in Chicago and now includes a clothing donation location (where NSSBE participants annually in their coat drive.)

<https://www.chesedchicago.org/> - (847) 679-7799

BRINGING JOY TO THE ELDERLY

"They will continue to be fruitful in old age; they will be full of life and flourishing."

Psalms, 92:15.

CJE - SeniorLife (Council for Jewish Elderly)

Bernard Horwich Building

3003 W. Touhy Ave.

Chicago, IL 60645

<https://www.cje.net/volunteer>

CJE provides counseling and programs for those ages 60 and older and their families. Volunteer opportunities include friendly visiting, assisting with a Shabbat luncheon, pet therapy, and special events (i.e. helping at a Bingo game). Donations of centerpieces, flowers, plants, bingo prizes, and board games are always appreciated. Volunteers are needed to help with activities, play reading, leading arts and crafts, singing performances, giving a talk on a hobby, playing games, assisting at holiday programs or services, giving manicures, serving food, and decorating for parties including birthday parties.

Whitehall of Deerfield Healthcare Center

300 Waukegan Road, Deerfield IL 60015

(847) 945-4600

www.whitehallofdeerfield.com

Sunrise of Highland Park

1601 Green Bay Road, Highland Park, IL 60035

Jennifer Greenberg, Activity and Volunteer Coordinator (847) 681-1620

<https://www.sunriseseniorliving.com/communities.aspx>

WORKING WITH CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

"Rabbi Akiva used to say: Beloved is the human being—for the human was created in the image of God."

-Pirke Avot 3:14.

Keshet

610 Academy Drive Northbrook, IL 60062

847.205.1234 - www.keshet.org

Keshet enables Jewish children and young adults to participate as fully as possible in the mainstream of Jewish life. Throughout the year, there are many opportunities for volunteers to participate in a variety of activities and special events, helping raise funds and increase community awareness for Keshet.

- **Keshet's Special Olympics** program challenges its athletes to do their very best in both individual and team events, with winners competing on the statewide level.
- **Jerome and Freda Joseph Keshet Buddy Baseball** allows boys and girls with special needs the opportunity to play ball by pairing them with "buddies" from all over the Chicago area.
- **Buddy Bowling** is a fun time for children and young adults with developmental disabilities as well as for anyone wanting to volunteer in an exceptionally rewarding program. Teenagers from all over the Chicago area volunteer their time to serve as "buddies" for our participants during the game, helping them bowl and interacting with them. Their primary responsibility is to encourage their buddies, keep them safe, and share in the excitement of the game.
- **Canning Day** has volunteers setting up outside of supermarkets in the north suburbs to collect cans.

GLASA

Great Lakes Adaptive Sports Association

400 E. Illinois Rd, Lake Forest, IL 60045

847-989-7743.

www.glasa.org

Assist children who are either physically or visually impaired in sports programs. Student must be at least 14 years old. However, if they are younger (12-13 years old) and they have experience with sports, they can come with their parents.

FEEDING THE HUNGRY

“And if you show sympathy to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted; then your light will rise in the darkness.”

– Isaiah 58:10.

Beth El Thanksgiving Mitzvah Project

Usually held on the Sunday before Thanksgiving

Sign up in advance to drop off, pay for, pack and deliver the food boxes to families at a school in Waukegan. Registration opens annually in November. Participants have the opportunity to shop for items to donate, pack them in person, deliver the packed boxes, or donate funds to the project.

Maot Chitim of Greater Chicago

7366 N. Lincoln Avenue, Suite 301, Lincolnwood IL 60712

(847) 674-3224

www.maotchitim.org

Maot Chitim of Greater Chicago provides food to poor Jewish people in Chicago and its surrounding suburbs for Passover and Rosh Hashanah so that they may observe the holidays in a traditional and dignified manner. Volunteers are needed to assemble boxes, pack perishable and non-perishable food, and deliver food packages. Locations will vary, and students will need to be at least 12 years old. For more information, or to find out on which days volunteers are needed, contact volunteer@maotchitim.org.

JUF Uptown Cafe

909 W. Wilson Avenue, Chicago IL 60640

TOV Volunteer Network

(312) 357-4762

www.juf.org/tov/cafe.asp

The JUF Uptown Cafe is Chicago's first kosher anti-hunger program for the needy. In addition to providing hot meals in a restaurant-style setting, the JUF Uptown Cafe program brings dignity and hope to people in need. The JUF Uptown Cafe feeds Jews and non-Jews alike and is open three days a week for dinner and on Sundays for brunch. Volunteers serve food and converse with guests at their tables. Volunteers are encouraged to enjoy a meal with guests, as many diners are socially isolated and in need of person-to-person contact. Volunteers ages 12 and over are welcome but, if under 16, must be accompanied by an adult. Volunteers are needed to serve dinner Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and for brunch on Sunday mornings from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. For more information, please call the TOV Hotline at (312) 357-4762.

Beth Emet Soup Kitchen

1224 Dempster Street, Evanston IL 60202

(847) 869-4230, ext. 333

bethemetsoupkitchen@gmail.com

www.bethemet.org

Temple Sholom

3480 N. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago IL 60657

(773) 435-1536

www.sholomchicago.org

Chicago Chesed Fund Food Pantry

7045 N. Ridgeway Ave, Lincolnwood, IL 60712

www.chicagochesedfund.org

Student must be accompanied by a parent.

Moraine Township

777 Central Ave, Highland Park, IL 60035

(847) 432-3240

www.morainetownship.org

Northern Illinois Food Bank- Lake Forest location

(847) 336-3663

<https://solvehungertoday.org/volunteer-opportunities/>

Ages 8+ are welcome.

West Deerfield Township

601 Deerfield Road, Deerfield, IL 60015

(847) 945-0614

www.westdeerfieldtownship.org

Northfield Township

3801 W. Lake Ave, Glenview IL 60025

Pantry Coordinator, (847) 724-8300

www.northfieldtownship.com or www.twp.northfield.il.us

Children under age 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

Lakeview Pantry

1414 W. Oakdale, Chicago IL 60657

(773) 525-1777

volunteers@lakeviewpantry.org

www.lakeviewpantry.org

In order to volunteer with Lakeview Pantry, you must attend a Volunteer Training Session.

Congregation K.I.N.S. Soup Kitchen

Rogers Park, Illinois

More information is available by clicking here:

<https://www.congkins.org/event/momma-chefs-soup-kitchen--kins.html> or contacting Karen at karen@mommachef.com

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger: - www.mazon.org

Inspired by Jewish values and ideals, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger is a national organization fighting to end hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds in the United States and Israel.

HELPING CHILDREN GROW

“No act of Tzedakah is too small to make a difference.”

NA’AMAT USA

847-329-7172

<https://www.naamat.org>

NA’AMAT provides funds to support children, women and families in Israel.

Jewish Community Centers of Chicago

www.gojcc.org

JCC offers a wide range of social, educational, and recreational activities and services. There are multiple city and suburban locations.

Jewish Child and Family Services

Joy Faith Knapp Children’s Center

3145 W Pratt Blvd, Chicago, IL 60645

(773) 467-3778

volunteering@jcfs.org

www.jcfs.org or <http://www.jcfs.org/employment-volunteering>

Please complete Volunteer Interest Form on web site.

Chai Lifeline Midwest

(847) 763-1818

www.chailifeline.org/region/midwest

When a child is born or diagnosed with a serious illness, Chai Lifeline joins the family, providing crucial social, emotional, psychosocial, and financial help that enables each member to cope with the diagnosis, treatment, and long term repercussions of life-threatening or lifelong illness. They sponsor a “Share the Simcha” program for B’nai Mitzvah, Camp Simcha for seriously ill children, holiday programs, and outings.

Tri-Con Day Care Center- our Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Preschool has a special relationship with this organization

(847) 433-1450

www.triconchildcare.com

Project Linus

www.projectlinuschicago.com

Add to the network of caring people who donate their time and talent by providing handmade blankets to children facing medical or emotionally stressful times.

North Suburban Synagogue Beth El Steinberg Preschool Summer Camp Counselors in Training

The NSS Beth El Summer camp provides the perfect combination of summer fun and developmentally appropriate learning and play opportunities. You have an opportunity beginning in Sixth grade to be a CIT (Counselor in Training.) You will work with our teaching staff/counselors to provide an amazing morning preschool summer camp experience. Contact the Steinberg Preschool at 847- 432-2830 for more information.

IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT AND KINDESS TO ANIMALS

“The Rav said: The mitzvot were given in order to tie God’s creatures together.”

Leviticus Rabbah

Lake County Forest Preserves

General office: 1899 Winchester Rd, Libertyville, IL 60048

(847) 367-6640

Forestpreserve@lcfpd.org

Fill out a volunteer interest form online.

Jewish National Fund

(212) 879-9305 ext. 245; www.jnf.org/education

education@jnf.org

JNF has evolved into a global environmental leader, and is also involved in community building, water renewal, research and development, Zionist education, as well as accessibility and therapeutic services for those with disabilities and special needs.

Community Animal Rescue Effort C.A.R.E. for the Evanston Animal Shelter:

[PO Box 691, Skokie, IL 60077 847-705-2653; CAREnorthshore.org](mailto:PO_Box_691@skokie.il.us)

Give companion animals the best chance at the life they deserve through rehabilitation, foster care, adoption and community support that keeps pets with the people who love them.

Tails of Hope

<https://www.tails-of-hope.org/>

Tails of Hope’s mission is to significantly reduce the number of homeless and euthanized dogs and cats, to improve the quality of life of both pets and shelter animals, and to ensure the compassionate treatment of all living creatures.

Orphans of the Storm:

<https://orphansofthestorm.org/>

Provides medical and physical care for cats and dogs and adoption services.

ISRAEL

All of Israel is responsible for one another.

Friends of the Israel Defense Forces

To help support our Friends of the Israel Defense Forces, contact the FIDF, Central Region Chapter at (312) 372-8500 or Chicago@FIDF.org for information or to make a donation.

- Lone Soldier Support: Bring them a feeling of warmth and community through housing, Shabbat meals, flights home, a 24/7 call center, and more.
- Dignity: Provide financial relief to IDF soldiers whose families are in economic difficulty, gifting them with peace of mind so they can fully dedicate themselves to defending Israel.
- Education: Give at-risk teens a second chance through Project Overcome; soldiers without 12 years of education their high school diploma through Formal Education; or scholarships for higher education through IMPACT!

Israel ParaSport Center

The Israel ParaSport Center, located in Ramat Gan, is a home-away-from-home to close to 2,500 children and adults with physical disabilities. It is a life-changing resource with a truly unique program, a trailblazer in the field of sport rehabilitation since 1960, and the largest program of its kind serving children. Check out the website www.afiscd.org

American Friends of Magen David Adom:

[Your donation](#) to Israel's paramedic and Red Cross service ensures its staff and 27,000 volunteers have the training, equipment, and medical supplies they need to treat injured and ill Israelis.

Hadassah Medical Center – Children's Site:

donation will help Hadassah provide child-friendly facilities to treat children of all ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Chesed Advisory Group / Chesed For Israel

Contact: naomisugar@gmail.com or 781-254-9034. The Chesed Advisory Group partners with individuals, families, foundations, and educational institutions to design and manage impactful giving strategies. Rooted in the belief that we are one nation with one heart; we focus on nurturing the next generation of philanthropic leaders. The Chesed Advisory Group empowers youth and adults to engage in meaningful giving, fostering a lifelong commitment to chesed and community impact.

OTHER IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITIES

Bernie's Book Bank:

847-780-READ or <https://www.berniesbookbank.org/> Bernie's Book Bank sources, processes, and distributes quality new and gently used children's books to significantly increase ownership among under-served infants, toddlers, and school-age children throughout Chicagoland. Volunteer, or host a book drive.

Families Helping Families:

<https://www.fhfchicagoland.org/>

FHFC works with social service agencies and schools in Lake and Cook Counties to meet the needs of children and families experiencing homelessness, poverty, food insecurity, and other challenges.

NSS Beth El Welcomes Refugees

NSS Beth El and HIAS of JCFS Chicago <https://www.jcfs.org/hias> have partnered to welcome refugee families.

More than 40 Beth El members have reached out to volunteer their time and efforts to help this family navigate their resettlement to Chicago with dignity and kindness. **Our urgent need at this moment in time is to raise \$10,000 for HIAS Immigration and Citizenship at JCFS Chicago to resettle this family during their first three months.** To support our efforts, please consider donating: <https://nssbe.shulcloud.com/form/nssbe-refugee-resettlement-donation-form>

Ukraine Relief Efforts:

Read about the incredible work being done to support Ukrainians on the ground as well as the refugees and participate in supporting them and setting them up for a successful future

- JNF (<https://www.jnf.org/our-work/ukraine-relief>)
- JUF (<https://www.juf.org/Ukraine/>)

MAZEL TOV!

B'nai Mitzvah Parent Checklist

a few key to-dos on the way to the big day 🌿



For: _____ Date: _____

☐

3 MONTHS
BEFORE



Reserve the sanctuary for photos

Submit the online picture-date request form — see QR code below.



Scan to open the form, or click here:

[B'nai Mitzvah Picture Date Request](#)

☐

1 MONTH
BEFORE



Finalize Kiddush with Michelle - <mailto:michellef@nssbethel.org>

Coordinate all Kiddush enhancements and food — confirm menu & headcount.

☐

1 MONTH
BEFORE



Watch for the rehearsal email from Lori

Will include the rehearsal date & time.

Usually the Wednesday before, at 8:00 PM — confirm once it arrives.

☐

1 MONTH
BEFORE



Schedule the pre-Mitzvah meeting with the Rabbi

Look for an email from Lori or Rabbi Freedman to set the date & time.

Usually takes place the week leading up to the Mitzvah.

☐

2 WEEKS
BEFORE



Finalize honors with your liaison

Confirm aliyot & other ritual honors assignments with your B'nai Mitzvah liaison.

Add your own reminders:

☐

☐

◆ Wishing you a joyful Simcha! ◆

North Suburban Synagogue

Beth El

בית כנסת בית אל