

# Bnai Mitzvah Handbook



Everything you need to know  
(logistics, tutoring, planning, requirements,  
& whom to contact with questions)  
for your child's upcoming Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah

Congregation Neveh Shalom  
2900 SW Peaceful Lane  
Portland, Oregon 97239  
503-246-8831

Updated Oct 2022

<http://nevehshalom.org/bar-bat-mitzvah/>

*Whoever teaches his children teaches not only his children, but also  
his children's children, and so on to the end of generations.*

Talmud Kiddushin 10a

# CNS Bnai Mitzvah Process—Timeline

## Scheduling Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah:

- Dates are scheduled as a group according to birth year (not by grade). For example, in **December 2022**, all families with students **born in 2012**, who are eligible for **Bnai Mitzvah in 2025**, will receive an email regarding date requests.
- This email will contain a link to a Google Form to make your date request
- Complete and submit the online form
- Jan/Feb - Receive follow-up communications from JoAnn/Cantor regarding date, if needed
- Receive letter confirming date by end of February

## Bnai Mitzvah Parent meeting:

- October: Receive invitation in fall of 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grades from Mel & JoAnn
- November meeting with Clergy, Fred Rothstein, Mel Berwin & JoAnn Bezodis
- Receive Parent Handbook with all information at meeting (also available online)

## Tutoring:

- Receive communication from Cantor regarding tutoring one year prior to Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah. Cantor assigns tutor and provides family with tutor contact info.
- Tutor connects with family and begins scheduling weekly meetings with student, provides binder with parsha/haftarah information. Tutor provides progress reports to Cantor and decides, in consultation with family and Cantor, which parts of service student will lead.
- Mel & Lani administer payment for tutoring program in 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grades, or 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> grades for PJA families.

## Coordinating Event:

- 6 months before Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah, JoAnn meets with the family to walk through the process:
  - provide a fillable form for honors and list other participants
  - discuss location of services, rehearsal protocol, catering info & options
  - schedule meetings for your child to meet with Cantor Bitton and Rabbi Kosak four times (at weeks 20, 14, 8 and 4 weeks out from the big day). Rabbi Posen keeps her own calendar and will reach out to schedule meeting with her families beginning 10 weeks out from the event. JoAnn includes dvar Torah guidelines to families in the tutor binder and again by email following her meeting with the parents.
- 6 weeks before JoAnn & Brian request all information for publication, catering, and special requests from the family.
- 1 week before, JoAnn/Brian confirm all information for service.

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## Glossary

### Bar, Bat and Brit Mitzvah

- The gendered terms Bar and Bat Mitzvah literally mean "son or daughter of the covenant."
- Brit Mitzvah is a gender-neutral term recognizing the child's covenant status.
- refers to either the person ("*We call the Bar Mitzvah to come up to the Torah*") or to the occasion ("*I went to a lovely Bat Mitzvah last week*").
- is not properly used in context as a passive experience ("*I was Brit Mitzvahed in 2002*") but rather we talk about the transition of this rite of passage ("*I became a Brit Mitzvah*").

### Bnai Mitzvah

- the plural of Bar Mitzvah or Bar and Bat Mitzvah ("The twins will become bnai Mitzvah next year.")

### Bnot Mitzvah

- the plural of Bat Mitzvah ("They were the first Bnot Mitzvah at our synagogue")

### Simcha

- any joyous occasion ("The last simcha in our family was my sister's wedding")

### Bima

- the stage in the sanctuary which the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah ascends to lead services or read Torah

### Dvar Torah, also called "Drash"

- literally "a word of Torah". Refers to the short talk (speech) the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah delivers to the congregation on Shabbat

### Aliyah

- literally "to go up." Refers to coming up to the Torah or bimah for an honor such as blessings before and after a Torah reading or raising (hagbah) and dressing (gelilah) the Torah

### Gabbai

- individual who helps facilitate the Torah service and stands on either side of the Torah to assist readers. Plural: gabbaim

# Contacts at Neveh Shalom

**Rabbi David Kosak**

503-246-8831 ext.143

[dkosak@nevehshalom.org](mailto:dkosak@nevehshalom.org)

**Rabbi Eve Posen**

503-246-8831 ext. 136

[eposen@nevehshalom.org](mailto:eposen@nevehshalom.org)

**Cantor Eyal Bitton**

503-246-8831 ext. 116

[ebitton@nevehshalom.org](mailto:ebitton@nevehshalom.org)

- BM tutor assignments
- BM rehearsal
- Order-of-Service, honors, Torah readers
- Personalizing the service; special needs

**Mel Berwin**

Director of Congregational Learning

503-293-7306

[mberwin@nevehshalom.org](mailto:mberwin@nevehshalom.org)

- educational requirements
- tutor fees

**JoAnn Bezodis**

Clergy Assistant & Building Administrator

503-246-8831 ext. 111

OR 503-293-7317

[jbezodis@nevehshalom.org](mailto:jbezodis@nevehshalom.org)

- BM date setting
- Clergy appointments
- Facility use & fees
- Tutor Binders; Torah/Haftarah printouts

**Brian Rohr**

Communications Coordinator

503-246-8831 ext. 133

[brohr@nevehshalom.org](mailto:brohr@nevehshalom.org)

- Chronicle announcement

**Allen Levin, In-house Caterer**

503-849-2605

[centurycatering@msn.com](mailto:centurycatering@msn.com)

- Catering menu & fees

## What does a Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah mean at Neveh Shalom?

At Neveh Shalom, the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah is both a joyous and a momentous occasion for our youth to celebrate their physical maturity, intellectual growth, moral responsibilities, and capacity to sanctify life and time. This occasion is an important milestone in the journey of Jewish learning and ritual practice, but certainly not the endpoint.

In our congregation, all young people, regardless of gender, celebrate becoming Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah after their 13<sup>th</sup> Hebrew birthday. The preparation includes participating in the academic and social structure of our ALIYAH Jewish Learning Program from the early years through 7<sup>th</sup> grade, in order to gain a strong background in the foundations of Jewish culture and practice, including solid skills in Hebrew reading and comprehension, celebrating holidays and observances throughout the year, learning about the Jewish life cycle, gaining a foundation in Torah stories, and learning about important mitzvot such as giving tzedakah and helping those in need in our community. Most students also work with a private tutor provided by Neveh Shalom for the year leading up to Bar Mitzvah, to practice the particular prayers they will lead, learn Torah and Haftarah chanting skills, and personalize the service to the needs of their family.

Tutors help to prepare the students, and our Cantor and Rabbi also meet with the family and student during the year leading up to the ceremony. For each Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah at Neveh Shalom, yes, there is a template, but every celebration ultimately is unique to the child and family. Each young person participates in religious services in a way that demonstrates his or her skills and abilities to function as an adult member of the Jewish community. This generally includes reading from Torah and Haftarah (the Prophets), leading parts of the Shabbat or daily service, and giving a brief dvar Torah (talk about the Torah portion).

The Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah is an important milestone not only in the life of a young person and his or her family, but also for the community. We celebrate when a young person steps before the congregation to lead the community in prayer and to teach Torah. The event is not a private family affair, but a rite of passage observed amidst the regular ritualized worship tradition of our community. As such, there will be times when other life cycle events will be acknowledged and celebrated during the worship service, such as aufrufs (when a bride and groom receive an aliyah), baby-namings, and the recognition of birthdays and anniversaries.

In addition, our custom at Neveh Shalom is for the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah family to invite the entire Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah class to the service and celebration, and to welcome the congregation to the Kiddush lunch following Shabbat morning services.

# What does a Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah mean in your family?

Although many of us share the “naches” (joy) when a child becomes Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah, every family has its own story, and every milestone has its own particular meaning in the life of that family. You are encouraged to consider and discuss as a family what that meaning is.

- Who in your family has had Bnai Mitzvah? Who has not?
- What is special about this child’s milestone in your family?
- What does this milestone mean to your child?
- What changes when your child becomes a ritual adult?
- Will your 13-year-old take on new responsibilities at synagogue or at home? What will these be?
- What do you as parents want to learn or know for your child’s bar mitzvah? Are there synagogue skills or Torah skills you would like to learn?
- Who are the people in your family that you would like to honor through this ceremony?

Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah Preparation

## Scheduling a Date

Bnai Mitzvah at Neveh Shalom are scheduled approximately two years in advance.

- Each year Bnai Mitzvah are scheduled as a group according to **birth year** (not by grade). For example, in **December 2022**, all families with students **born in 2012**, who are eligible for **Bnai Mitzvah in 2025**, will receive an email regarding date requests.
- This email will contain a link to a Google Form for your response.
- Complete and submit the online form, indicating your top three date preferences. Note any concerns you have about your child’s or family’s special circumstances, whether regarding special needs, date requests that differ from a traditional Shabbat service, a conversion that needs to happen before this occasion, etc.
- Cantor Bitton, in consultation with other Neveh Shalom staff, assigns dates based on those requests. Considerations include clergy availability, Jewish holidays, and the best fit for each family (for example, not assigning the longest Haftarah of the year to a child who has difficulty with Hebrew). If needed, you will receive follow-up communications from JoAnn or Cantor Bitton during this process in January or early February.
- A confirmation letter with your assigned date will be sent to you by the **end of February**. At this point, your date is confirmed on the Neveh Shalom calendar—tell your friends and family to save the date!



## Expectations & Preparation

### **Membership & Educational Expectations**

Becoming a Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah at Neveh Shalom is a privilege of membership and of participation in our ALIYAH Jewish Learning program. According to Board policy, students are expected to be enrolled from 1<sup>st</sup> grade through 7<sup>th</sup> grade unless they have created an alternative arrangement with our Director of Congregational Learning. All Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah families must be members in good standing in order to begin the Bnai Mitzvah tutoring program. Students whose lack of enrollment or attendance has caused lagging skills in Hebrew reading may incur additional tutoring fees prior to or during the year-long Bnai Mitzvah tutoring process.

### **Bnai Mitzvah Meeting:**

All families in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades will be invited to our annual Bnai Mitzvah meeting, usually held in October, which allows upcoming Bnai Mitzvah families to share information, meet with the Clergy, and meet other recent Bnai Mitzvah families happy to mentor those new to the planning process.

### **Synagogue Attendance:**

The best preparation for your family's special occasion is to join the community by participating as a family regularly at Shabbat morning, Friday evening, or daily morning minyan services during the years and months leading up to your child's Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah. Your participation in religious services says something very powerful to your children about the importance of community, tradition, and life-long learning. Also, there is no such thing as "crashing" a Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah service or Kiddush lunch! Come as a family to as many Bnai Mitzvah as you are able to—it will be a huge help as you discuss what you imagine for your own child's ceremony and celebration.

### **PJA Families:**

Members with children at PJA must be enrolled for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade Judaics program (Sunday mornings 9-12) and 7<sup>th</sup> grade Tichon program (Wednesday evenings 6:30-8:30pm).

### **Special Needs:**

We have a commitment to work and celebrate with every family and child. If you have concerns about your child's ability to learn the traditional parts for Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah, please be in touch with Mel Berwin or Cantor Bitton to discuss your concerns. Our Bnai Mitzvah tutors are very experienced at working with all types of learners (two are professionally trained in Special Education), and there are a number of alternatives to the traditional Shabbat Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah ceremony if you feel that a different environment would be more appropriate.

# ALIYAH: Educational and Social Preparation

## K-6<sup>th</sup> Grade as Preparation for Bnai Mitzvah

While our ALIYAH program's primary aim is to help Jewish kids feel at home in Judaism throughout their lives, there are many aspects of the program that helps prepare kids for Bnai Mitzvah, beginning in Kindergarten. In our Hebrew program, students learn Hebrew language (decoding, fluency, and comprehension) and participate in our youth-led prayer community. We teach how the service is structured, the meaning of the prayers, and the choreography of the service. In addition, our Judaics program provides students with an excellent overall understanding of important Jewish traditions, including holidays, lifecycle rituals, religious concepts, and values such as giving tzedakah and caring for those in need. In short, they learn and experience the value of participating in the Jewish community, so that their Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah is all the more meaningful as they commit to engaging in Jewish life as a ritual adult.

## The 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Program

The 6<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum is geared toward Bnai Mitzvah preparation.

- In Hebrew, the students learn the prayers of the Torah Service, including the songs that accompany the taking out and returning of the Torah to the Ark, and the blessings before and after reading from the Torah during an aliyah.
- The Judaics curriculum focuses on Leadership, from many perspectives: leadership of the synagogue (meeting with the president of the synagogue and the teenage president of our USY group); tzedakah as a form of leadership and thinking about a tzedakah- or volunteer-focused Bnai Mitzvah project; inclusion as a form of leadership; and their own leadership, as they facilitate the Chanukah, Purim, and Lag BaOmer celebrations for the younger children in ALIYAH.
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade is also when our PJA students join their classmates if they haven't already, and it is a fun and important bonding year for the class as they head into an exciting year of celebrating together.
- Perhaps most importantly, we host a 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Family Program, a monthly program for 6<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents on Sunday mornings designed to bring our pre-Bnai Mitzvah families together for learning, discussion, and social time. These are the families that will attend your child's Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah and we want everyone to have a chance to meet and to become more invested in this important community!

## The 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Program

7<sup>th</sup> grade is also a required part of the Bnai Mitzvah program. Students have graduated from Sunday mornings and attend only on Wednesday evenings (6:30-8:30pm); many enjoy coming to our optional Wednesday evening dinner (6:00-6:30). This year of gathering continues the teens' learning and growing as a community. The focus of their 7<sup>th</sup> grade seminar is the many ways that Jews express their commitment to, and involvement in, the Jewish community over time. Our 7<sup>th</sup> graders meet monthly with older adults from our congregation to share stories while engaging in Jewish projects from art to text study to cooking in an intergenerational context.

## Bnai Mitzvah Tutoring Program

Students enrolled in our ALIYAH Program with a confirmed Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah date work with one of our professional tutors in weekly sessions for the year leading up to the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah. These one-to-one sessions are scheduled for one half hour per week at a mutually agreed upon time between you and the tutor. If you have a request for your child to work with a specific tutor, or if you would like to tutor your child yourself, please be in touch with Cantor Bitton.

Our tutors follow a template for the service, but also individualize the experience based on the student's skills and interests. Among the parts of the service that students can learn are:

- Torah tropes and the recitation of their Torah portion
- Haftarah tropes and the recitation of their Haftarah portion
- Blessings before and after the Torah and Haftarah readings
- Shabbat morning Torah service
- Other selected prayers such as Ashrei, Ein Keloheinu, Aleinu and others...
- Kiddush and other Friday night prayers

In the 5 months before the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah, students will meet with Cantor Bitton four times to assess their progress. Cantor will supervise students using these check-ins and tutor feedback through the final rehearsal on the Friday morning of their Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah weekend.

### **A Note About Tutoring Fees**

The fees for the year-long tutoring program are in addition to annual ALIYAH tuition. The total cost of the tutoring program is \$1400. Families are charged \$700 along with 5<sup>th</sup> grade tuition and \$700 with 6<sup>th</sup> grade tuition so that by the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah year, the tutoring fees are already taken care of. Requests for a different payment plan can be discussed with Mel Berwin.

### **A Special Opportunity: Morning Minyan and the Tefillin Program**

A generous family in our community has made this offer: any 6<sup>th</sup> grader who attends a weekday morning minyan (Sunday-Friday morning) on a regular (weekly) basis for a year, is granted a set of tefillin at his or her Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah. This incentive is meant to encourage our young daveners to join a hidden gem of our congregation—a warm and welcoming community of our most committed prayer participants. Many of these morning “minyanaires” are of an older generation, and the relationships that our young people build with them is priceless. In addition, families who have participated in the tefillin program remark that a weekly service (and maybe breakfast out) before school was cherished quality time for both parent and teen.

## Planning the Ceremony—General Information

### Meeting with the Rabbi & Cantor

Our rabbi, whether David Kosak or Eve Posen, is looking forward to meeting your family. He or she guides students through studying the Torah portion and writing a dvar Torah (short speech teaching a lesson about the portion). The rabbi is designated based on the date of your child's Bar/Bat/Brit mitzvah. Rabbi Posen officiates on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Shabbat/Saturday of each month. Rabbi Kosak officiates at all others. JoAnn Bezodis schedules appointments with Rabbi Kosak. Rabbi Posen keeps her own schedule. **NOTE: Rabbi Kosak & Cantor Bitton keep rigid schedules and are only available to meet with students on Mon, Wed, and Thurs.** Thank you in advance for your flexibility.

### Friday Morning Rehearsal

The morning of the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah weekend, families usually meet with Cantor Bitton from 10:30-11:30am for a final rehearsal. Family members reading Torah or coming up for an aliyah should also plan to attend this rehearsal. Many families have photographs taken before or after the rehearsal. Candid photos taken **during** rehearsal should **NOT** interrupt or disturb the rehearsal session.

### Photography

Flash photography is prohibited on Shabbat (both Friday night and Saturday) and Festivals. This includes the time during our services, your kiddush luncheon, and anytime on the premises before Shabbat is over. Photography without flash is permitted on Shabbat at your kiddush luncheon/reception only. For video recording via our live-stream broadcast, please contact JoAnn Bezodis. If you plan to use a professional photographer for family photos before Shabbat, please inform JoAnn so that time in the sanctuary or chapel can be scheduled. Many families schedule a photography session on Friday morning, before or after rehearsal.

### Which Sanctuary Will Our Services Be Held In?

Most services are held in Stampfer Chapel, which holds up to 185 people, or in the Main Sanctuary, which is suited for up to 400 people. Service location subject to availability.

### Bnai Mitzvah are Community Events

Bnai Mitzvah are a very special part of our community and are considered community events. Other occasions may coincide with your simcha such as baby-namings, special synagogue events, or aufrufs (calling a bride and groom to the Torah) and may include honors during the service. JoAnn Bezodis will inform you in advance. When planning your services, plan for at least 40 "regular" congregants in addition to your invited guests.

### Gifts to the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah

During the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah ceremony, your child will receive a certificate of Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah and a copy of the Tanakh presented by the congregation. Your child will also receive a Kiddush cup, given jointly by the Men's Club and Sisterhood. It is appropriate for your child to acknowledge the presentation of these gifts with thank you notes.

**Babysitting**

Babysitting for Saturday morning services is available between 9:30 and noon by reservation only. Reservations must be phoned in to the office (503-246-8831) by Wednesday at noon preceding the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah weekend. This service is available at no charge unless the hiring of an additional sitter is necessary for your family and guests. You will be charged for the additional sitter at the rate paid by the synagogue that morning.

**Throwing Candy**

The tradition of throwing candy after the reading of the Haftarah is a sweet one! If you like this option, the synagogue will provide you with a couple baskets of soft, kosher candy wrapped individually for friends in the front rows to throw gently, and younger kids to come collect and enjoy. Please do not provide candy purchased on your own. The Rabbi or gabbaim will see that the baskets are distributed to the family in advance of the throwing moment.

# Overview of Shabbat Services

## Order of Service for Friday Evening (6:15-7:30 pm)

Opening prayers or songs

Tallit (prayer shawl) Presentation (by parents or grandparents to Bar/Bat/Brit mitzvah)

Kabbalat Shabbat (Welcoming the Sabbath) service

L'chu N'ranana

Lcha Dodi

Tov L'hodot

Dvar Torah (short sermon) by Rabbi

Ma'ariv (evening) service

Barchu

Ahavat Olam

Sh'ma

V'Shamru

Amidah

Kiddush

Aleinu

Mourners Kaddish

Yigdal or Adon Olam

## Typical Order of Service for Saturday Morning (9:30-12:00)

Psukei D'Zimra (preliminary service, starts at 9:15am)

Shacharit (morning service, begins at 9:30am)

Barchu

Sh'ma

Amidah

Torah service

Prayers for taking out the Torah (and Torah procession)

Blessings and Chanting of the Torah (7 sections plus Maftir, or last paragraph)

Wrap the Torah and put aside

Chanting the Haftarah with blessing before and after

Prayers while Torah is out (prayer for congregation, for peace, Ashrei)

Prayers for replacing the Torah scrolls (Torah procession)

Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah's Dvar Torah (addressing the congregation)

Rabbi's charge to Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah & presentations

Rabbi's Dvar Torah

Musaf service (final service of Shabbat morning, including Amidah)

Concluding prayers (Ein Keloheinu, Aleinu, Mourners Kaddish, Adon Olam)

Kiddush and Hamotzi

## Friday evening and Shabbat Morning Services

### Friday Evening Service - Optional

The Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah family may choose to attend the Friday evening service which begins at 6:15pm. The Friday evening service lasts approximately one hour. The Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah may lead several prayers including the Kiddush for Erev Shabbat.

- Blessings and prayers of the Friday evening service can be found on our website: (<http://nevehshalom.org/bar-bat-mitzvah/>)

### Tallit Presentation

Many families choose to present their child with a tallit during the Friday evening or Saturday morning service. At this time, a short presentation may be given by one or both parents about the significance of this moment in the life of your family, or the tallit you are presenting. While this is an opportunity for parents to express their pride and love, please keep in mind your remarks should be no more than 5 minutes in length.

- See Parents' Speech and Blessings on page 20

### Shabbat (Saturday) Morning Service—Overview

Services on Saturday morning begin at 9:30am and families are requested to arrive on time. Friends and family members who have an aliyah or another honor should arrive no later than 9:30 and sit in the front section so that they can be easily identified. The gabbai (service helper) may need your assistance to identify these individuals. This service includes several parts including the morning service, the Torah service, the dvar Torah (an explanation by the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah of the Torah portion and its personal relevance), and the ending service. The service concludes around noon, and it is traditional that the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah family hosts a Kiddush lunch for their guests and congregants following the service.

- Blessings and prayers of the Saturday morning service can be found on our website: (<http://nevehshalom.org/bar-bat-mitzvah/>)

### Order of Service Handout for Friday Evening and Saturday Morning

An Order of Service (one-page handout) is printed for Friday night and Saturday morning. As the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah family for the weekend, you are entitled to honor your family, guests, or friends by including them as participants in our service, and to personalize the handout with your child's name and photo (or other design). Details will be collected using the online Honors form, see next page. To see a sample handout, request one from JoAnn Bezodis.

### Special Programming

Occasionally on Shabbat, we have special events that may impact your Friday evening service time and/or the number of people expected to attend the service. If your simcha falls on one of these event dates, we will be in touch with you well in advance.

## Honors

There are several opportunities for your relatives and guests to participate in our Shabbat morning service, and many families consider this a way to honor special people in their child's life. Those friends or family members who will be reciting a blessing or prayer may want to practice with your tutor or may be asked to attend the Friday morning rehearsal. You will be sent an online Honors form to list those who will be participating in the service. JoAnn will review the online Honors form with you.

- The blessings for coming up to the Torah as an aliyah are on our website:  
<http://nevehshalom.org/bar-bat-mitzvah/>

Here are some more details on the honors that can be given out for your child's Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah:

Aliyah—coming up to the bimah during the Torah service to recite the blessing before and after one of the 7 Torah readings.

Reading Torah—chanting one of the seven sections of Torah in the traditional trope from the Torah scroll (without vowels or cantillation). This is an honor for those who have learned this skill. Torah readers not from our congregation should make sure to set a phone or in-person meeting with Cantor Bitton so that he can hear them rehearse the part. As early as you would like, you may contact Cantor to obtain a list of the Torah readings, request photocopies of the text, and/or an mp3 or CD recording (please allow two weeks to process your request). Cantor will help you with the reading assignment and will gladly send the information directly to your friend or family member if you provide him with the names, street and email addresses. ***Your complete list of Torah readers must be provided to Cantor no later than two months before your Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah date.*** If there are still Torah readings that have not been assigned, Cantor will confirm with you, then ask one of our regular Torah readers to read the unassigned portion(s).

Sitting on the Bimah-- If you plan to use the Main Sanctuary you may ask a family member or tutor to sit with your child. Honoring someone with "sitting on the bima" is not applicable in the Stampfer Chapel due to the configuration of the room.

Community Prayers – there are 3 prayers that fall into this category: 1) The Prayer for our Country, 2) The Prayer for the State of Israel, and 3) The Prayer for Peace. These prayers may be recited in English and therefore can be an honor for a family member or friend who does not know Hebrew or is not Jewish.

### Greeter Requirement

On weekends when there is no Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah, Neveh Shalom provides one or two Greeters to welcome our community to the synagogue. On Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah weekends, this is an honor for the family to perform. It is recommended that you ask 1-2 ADULT FRIENDS OR FAMILY MEMBERS who are familiar with CNS to fill this role. Parents of students in your child's Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah class are a good option.

- See "Shabbat Greeters" on page 21



### **Participation of non-Jews in Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah Ceremonies**

We offer numerous avenues for non-Jews to participate in our congregational life. There are several ways in which a non-Jewish parent, grandparent, other relative, or friend can participate in the service. These include the tallit presentation, sitting on the bimah with the child, leading the Community Prayers, and opening the ark. The non-Jewish parent of a Bar/Bat/Brit mitzvah is welcome to accompany the Jewish parent on the bimah when the Jewish parent recites blessings over the Torah during an aliyah. This is our current policy, but other ideas are being discussed by the Ritual Committee and leadership. Please be in touch with the rabbis or cantor for updated information.

## **Attire & Decorum**

### **Proper Attire**

It is customary to dress respectfully and modestly when in a sanctuary. Please remember that everyone, *especially the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah and anyone else participating in the leadership of the service*, should dress in an appropriate and modest manner when participating in a religious service. Bare shoulders or midriffs are not considered appropriate, nor are short, tight or suggestive clothes. The ideal for all shul-goers is dressier than day-to-day clothes but nothing that calls attention to oneself or one's body.

### **Kipot and Tallitot**

All self-identified men must wear a Kipah or other head covering when entering the sanctuary. Self-identified women are encouraged to wear a head covering, especially if they will be on the bimah. Kipot are available in the foyer. Should you choose to purchase personalized Kipot, you may order them through the Sisterhood Gift Shop or several sites online. Allow six weeks for printing and delivery. Additionally, a tallit and head-covering must be worn by the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah and family members when reading from the Torah, having a Torah-related honor, or leading parts of the service. Covering our head acknowledges our entrance into a sacred space; the tallit symbolizes our obligation as Jews to the mitzvot and to each other. Please direct any questions to Rabbi Kosak.

### **Synagogue Decorum**

When you step into the sanctuary on Shabbat, you are stepping out of everyday activities and into a sacred space. It is a time to enjoy the holiness of Shabbat as well as to show respect for the Rabbis, the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah family, and the congregation. You will probably be inviting many adults and children who are unfamiliar with our customs and facility. In order to ensure security, decorum and enjoyment for all who come to worship and celebrate, we request that children be supervised at all times. Smoking is prohibited on synagogue premises at all times. Cell phones and other electronic devices should be turned off while at the synagogue. Writing is prohibited on Shabbat and Festivals. Applause is not appropriate at any time during the service. Instead, express appreciation with the phrase, "Yasher Koach" (strength be to you). Business attire is appropriate for all worshippers and guests. Many families choose to send a letter to guests before the occasion to explain these rules and also what the guests (especially those unfamiliar with our synagogue services and customs) might expect.

# Planning the Celebration

## Invitations & Chronicle Announcement

### Invitations

Invitations can be as formal or informal as your family chooses. Both paper and email invitations are common. Here are some considerations when creating your invitation list:

- It is expected that *all students invite the entire Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah class to the ceremony and celebration*. Consider wording your invitation so that the families of the class also know they are invited to the ceremony. Some families handle this with a follow up email.
- It is a courtesy when sending invitations to include Rabbi David and Laura Kosak, Rabbi Eve Posen and Mr. Duncan Gilman, Cantor Eyal Bitton & Michèle Tredger, and any other Neveh Shalom clergy, staff, or teachers who have been meaningfully involved in your child's education or Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah process.
- Addresses for the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah class and for teachers and staff can be requested from the Education Office. All other member addresses can be obtained from the synagogue directory (online).
- All invitations should indicate when your service begins on Friday at 6:15pm and on Saturday (9:30am).
- As mentioned above, some families choose to send an informational letter to guests to explain more of the customs of the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah service and our synagogue.

### CNS Chronicle Announcement

A form will be emailed to you a few months before the Chronicle deadline by Brian Rohr so that you may include information about your child in our synagogue publication. You may include a photo (either black and white or color, any size); names of parents, siblings, grandparents and great-grandparents; school name and grade; hobbies and interests.

## Luncheon, Cookie Table, and Challah

### The Kiddush Luncheon

The Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah family traditionally hosts a festive luncheon following the Shabbat morning service in honor of their child. This is held in Birnbach Hall, which can be decorated to fit the occasion. It is **strongly requested** that luncheon festivities be kept at the synagogue, to include the congregation and to maintain the Shabbat atmosphere. Allen Levin of Century Catering is the synagogue's in-house kosher caterer and will plan the menu with you. Our kitchen is strictly kosher. No food, other than cookies, may be brought in from the outside. Families are expected to plan on 40 congregants in addition to your count and cost for the luncheon. This communal luncheon is integral to the warmth and hospitality of Shabbat at Neveh Shalom.

### **Cookies for Your Shabbat Luncheon**

A sweet tradition at Neveh Shalom—the Cookie Tables. It is our custom that the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah family, friends, and relatives bake sweets at home in advance for the Kiddush Luncheon. While this is not required, friends consider it an honor to bake for your simcha (joyous event), and to help assemble the sweets onto trays on the Friday morning of your weekend. While we understand that this tradition can cause angst among some families, we have found that often there are a couple of parents who volunteer to be “Cookie Captains” for the class and will help to coordinate this part of the celebration with you. Alternatively, or as a supplement to the home-baked items, our caterer can provide treats, or Kosher dessert can be bought from Safeway or other stores that sell kosher cookies.

- See the Neveh Shalom Baking Guidelines on page 25

### **Challah for Saturday Morning**

Challah will be provided by our caterer each week. It can also be baked by family or friends. The Challah is only needed on Saturday at the conclusion of services before the Kiddush luncheon.

## **Decorations**

### **Flowers for the Bimah (optional)**

Flowers for the bimah in the Main Sanctuary may be provided by the family and must be delivered on Friday, before or during the rehearsal. There are large glass vases available should you elect to create your own floral arrangement(s). Please coordinate with JoAnn Bezodis.

The Stampfer Chapel does not have adequate space allowance for large floral sprays so most families opt out.

### **Decorations and Centerpieces for the Kiddush**

You are welcome to decorate the tables in Birnbach Hall as part of the celebration of your simcha. Decorations and centerpieces for Shabbat should be in keeping with the spirit of the day. Items that are inappropriate for use on Shabbat and Festivals (cameras, writing implements, money, and candles) should not be used in your theme or décor. When in doubt, check with JoAnn Bezodis. Mylar confetti may **not** be used as part of your decorations, upstairs and/or downstairs. Fresh cut flowers and kosher candy are popular choices.

## **Extending your Celebration & Gift Shop as Resource**

### **Extending your Celebration at Neveh Shalom**

Some families choose to host a Friday night dinner for their out-of-town guests, family, and friends following the service. This is a lovely way to begin your weekend of celebration. The dinner would begin around 7:15pm, shortly after the conclusion of services. Our Atrium can accommodate up to 40 people. Larger families might consider using the Birnbach Hall.

Families often choose to celebrate their Saturday evening party in the Birnbach Hall. The room is extremely versatile and can accommodate smaller or larger crowds with an accordion room divider. It “dresses up” beautifully with the rental of proper lighting, draping, festive balloons, or romantic candles. JoAnn Bezodis can share photos of previous events held in the Birnbach Hall to give you some creative ideas.

### **Our Gift Shop**

Our Sisterhood Gift Shop, located across from the main office, has many items to help you celebrate your Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah, including tallitot, head coverings, jewelry, personalized Kipot, and beautiful Judaica gift ideas. We can also order kosher candy. We have a variety of items in stock and are happy to order for you from our trusted vendors. Call 503-246-8831 ext. 127 for our hours or call Dana Sirkin, Gift Shop Manager, at 503-680-5877.

## Resources for the Ceremony

### Location of Services

#### Use of the Main Sanctuary/Stampfer Chapel for your Erev Shabbat (Friday Evening) Service:

- ALL Friday night services will occur at 6:15pm and conclude by 7:30pm.
- Most Friday evening services will take place in the Stampfer Chapel unless an unusually large crowd is expected, in which case the service will be in the Main Sanctuary.
- During the summer months Erev Shabbat services are held in the Upper Plaza outside, weather permitting.
- Occasionally on Shabbat, we have special events that may impact your Friday evening service time, service location and/or the number of people expected to attend the service. If your simcha falls on one of these event dates, we will be in touch with you well in advance.

#### Use of the Main Sanctuary/Stampfer Chapel on Shabbat Morning

1. If you are expecting less than 125 invited guests, you may prefer to have your service in the Stampfer Chapel. Room capacity for the Stampfer Chapel is approximately 185 comfortably; we always plan for at least 40 regular congregants every Shabbat morning. Please know that we **cannot add chairs** during the middle of the service as it would be very disruptive.
2. If you are expecting a larger crowd (over 125), then we will hold services in our Main Sanctuary on Shabbat morning.
3. Final decisions regarding your use of space at this service must be made within 2 weeks of your simcha and discussed with JoAnn Bezodis (for scheduling purposes). **The final location decision belongs to our clergy.**

## **Parents' Speech and Blessings:**

### **Presenting the Tallit**

During the Erev Shabbat (Friday night) or Saturday morning service, we invite parents to present their child as a new leader into the community with the symbol of wearing a tallit for the first time. The parents are invited to share a few words expressing their family's joy, reflecting on their pride in their child's accomplishments, and their sincere commitment to passing on the ancient and sacred tradition of becoming a Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah.

Some items for your consideration:

- Please limit your talking time to five minutes or less.
- It's a good idea to write out your presentation and practice reading it a few times in advance. This can be a very emotional moment; preparation will boost your confidence.
- Please speak directly into the microphone. We all want to hear your words of pride and praise so speak slowly and clearly directly into the mic. Do not hesitate to make adjustments to the mic before you begin.
- This is a beautiful opportunity to express to your child and your guests, in the biggest picture, what this moment means for you and your family.

## Shabbat Greeters

Being welcomed upon arrival at simcha and having [Shabbat Greeters](#) is a very important part of the Friday night and Saturday morning service for your B'nai Mitzvah. Your synagogue member friends and family at the door are a great way to welcome your out-of-town guests, child's friends from school and family to the synagogue.

[Coordinate Greeters as you would your cookie bakers](#). Offer to greet for other families and ask them to greet at your event. This can be a powerful way to feel connected to the families in your child's class.

Here are the responsibilities of the Greeter:

- Stack and hand out the Friday night Siddur (blue prayer book) or the Etz Hayim (red prayer book) and Siddur for Saturday, along with a copy of the Order of Service (and any additional handouts).
- Smile and direct guests to the worship space we will be using for the service, as well as bathroom locations.
- Hand out kippot (see policy, page 18)
- Full instructions for greeters can be found in the cabinet labeled "Shabbat Greeters" in the foyer of the Main Sanctuary.

Check out two videos:

1. "A Guide for Visitors to Neveh Shalom," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swhVCUxRjGM> is viewable on the CNS webpage. This video will help orient guests to CNS and our customs. To sign up to greet, go to: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409044eafa62ca5fe3-cnsshabbat>. This is a Sign Up Genius site. It's easy to use and automatically generates reminders.
2. Next watch the "Greeter Guide" video for all of the best tips for greeting! <https://tinyurl.com/greeter-guide>

Review the written [handouts](#) for more information inside the cupboard (labeled Shabbat Greeters) in the Main Sanctuary (where you will also pick up a [name tag](#)).

Remember, you not only help your b'nai mitzvah class, but also the kehilla (community) by allowing the clergy to focus on the important job of assisting the b'nai mitzvah.

Thank you!

Membership Services Committee  
Jennifer Kalenscher, Chair

# Resources for the Celebration

## Location of Luncheon, Facilities

**All Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah luncheons will occur in the Birnbach Hall** unless another major synagogue event precludes this option.

Birnbach Hall and other spaces are available for your Friday dinner and/or Saturday party. We strive to provide a warm, welcome, and comfortable environment for everyone while celebrating this joyous occasion with you. **See Facility Fee Schedule for additional information.**

### Use of the Birnbach Hall

Birnbach Hall can accommodate anywhere from 100 – 300+ guests seated at tables. The large room offers great flexibility and setup options; it can be divided in two with our accordion curtains for smaller crowds and left opened for larger parties. The stage works well for bands and DJ's. The wood floor is perfect for dancing! You and the catering staff can decide which setup works best for your event.

### The Atrium

This is a lovely space to consider holding a family Shabbat dinner after services Friday night. Seating space is limited; 35-40 guest maximum depending on setup. Additional fees apply



## Facility Fees for Kiddush Luncheon for a Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah celebration at Neveh Shalom

It is our intent to provide a cost-effective and comfortable environment for our families, guests, and regular worshippers who attend both the Shabbat morning service and the Kiddush luncheon following. To that end, our luncheons will all take place in the **downstairs Birnbach Hall** after every Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah celebration (unless a synagogue event precludes this such as the Auction). Seating at tables will conveniently be provided for all.

### Fees\*

#### **Plan 1: USE OF THE FRONT OF BIRNBACH HALL ONLY**

We will provide FULL seating for up to and not exceeding 100 of your family's guests and approximately 40 of our regular congregants for a total of 140. Buffet, cookie and drink tables are included in the setup: **\$360.00**

#### **Plan 2: USE OF BOTH THE FRONT & BACK OF BIRNBACH HALL**

This option must be used if your family guest count exceeds 100. Seating will be provided for all guests plus 40 congregants. There is no limit to your numbers. Buffet, cookie and drink tables are included in the setup: **\$540.00**

### **Additional Spaces and Fees (for events other than Kiddush Luncheon)\***

#### Atrium

Up to 40 guests	\$360.00
Stand up Only	\$140.00

#### Birnbach Hall

Up to 150 guests	\$360.00
150+ guests	\$540.00

**\*Fees do not include linens, catering fees, additional time, or security if needed after hours. Please talk to JoAnn Bezodis about details.**

**\*Fees current as of 9/1/2022, subject to change.**

**\*Payment Policy:** A deposit of 50% is due at the time of Room Reservation. The remaining 50% is due by 1 week prior to your event. Unpaid fees after your event will be automatically charged to your autopay arrangement on file with the synagogue office.

## Catering your Simcha at CNS

This includes Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah, weddings, baby-namings, private rentals, evening parties and anything that is NOT a synagogue sponsored event or program.

There are three options available to our congregants. They are:

1. **The “Basic Kiddush”** - This option provides a basic lunch for guests plus 40 congregants and is provided by our in-house caterer. The Basic Kiddush includes bagels, cream cheese, tuna salad, fresh fruit platters, hot drinks, cold drinks, all paper goods, linens and labor/service for a set number of people, and a set price, which includes 40 congregants. There may be no modifications/ supplementing to this menu. The synagogue will bill the family separately for the use of the facility which includes banquet room space and kitchen use, in addition to the cost of the luncheon.
2. We encourage our families to contract with our in-house caterer, Allen Levin of Century Catering. The synagogue bills the family separately for the use of the facility which includes banquet room space and kitchen use. Catering fees are billed separately by Allen Levin.
3. The family may choose to use a caterer who has been approved by CNS and has a licensed business (including a food handlers license) outside of Neveh Shalom. There is a separate contract for both the family and the caterer which specifically addresses details such as notifying staff, arrangement of kitchen space, and additional fees for the privilege of using our facility. Please contact JoAnn Bezodis for details.
4. NO FOOD, with the exception of home baked goods, may be brought into the facility for serving at a simcha-based event. Self-catering is not permissible.

**In the event the occasional off-site luncheon is also scheduled, the family must plan to provide the “Basic kiddush” (see #1) at a minimum. The family should inform their guests and plan to spend 15-20 minutes at the synagogue after services with the Neveh Shalom community prior to departing.**

This is our policy as of October 2022. Please consult the current Bnai Mitzvah Handbook for any policy updates or changes.

## Baking Guidelines for Cookie Bakers

Dear Home Baker,

Congregation Neveh Shalom has a long tradition of our members contributing baked goods they have lovingly created at home for various events. As Neveh Shalom maintains a strictly kosher kitchen, all food served at congregational events must be kosher and prepared according to the dictates of Halachah (Jewish Law).

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide you with the information you need to follow to enable you to bring baked goods to Neveh Shalom.

### UTENSILS

These guidelines apply to ordinary utensils, pots, and pans; serving dishes, and anything else which touches the food you bring to the synagogue.

- In a non-kosher home, it is ideal to use disposable utensils or glass (not Pyrex), or special utensils, which you have bought for, and use only for, preparing baked goods to bring to the synagogue.
- It is also acceptable to use metal or glass utensils by washing them very thoroughly and then rinsing by pouring boiling water over them. This must be done each time you prepare baked goods to bring to the synagogue. Wood and plastic utensils cannot be koshered in this way.
- It is also acceptable to cover utensils with aluminum foil in such a way that the food you prepare does not touch the utensil.

### INGREDIENTS

- Fresh fruit, vegetables, and nuts are kosher. **If you use nuts please label your cookies for people with nut allergies to avoid.**
- Basic ingredients such as flour, sugar, spices, corn starch, baking soda/powder are kosher
- Use only shortenings and cooking oils that are 100% vegetable with a kosher mark. Use margarine or butter with a kosher mark.
- Eggs are Kosher only if they do not contain a blood spot. Break eggs one at a time into a separate container. Discard any egg with blood spots and discontinue using the container.
- All other purchased/processed ingredients for baking, such as fruit filling, gelatin, chocolate, cocoa, marshmallows and baking mixes must be in a package with a kosher mark such as U.



### PURCHASED BAKED GOODS

If you decide to purchase your cookies, you can find kosher marked items at the bakery of the Safeway on Barbur Blvd. and at most Trader Joe's. When purchasing baked goods, make sure there is a U in a circle U, or a K in a triangle. A partial list of acceptable kosher symbols is in the figure above. Many bakeries, like Elephants, are not kosher. Ask before purchasing.

Thank you for taking the time to bake! We look forward to sharing your delicious cookies at Neveh Shalom.