

# B'nai Mitzvah Handbook

Everything you need to know for your child's upcoming  
Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah Celebration



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

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## **Contacts at Neveh Shalom**

### **Rabbi Eve Posen**

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

503-246-8831 X136

### **Rabbi Cantor Eyal Bitton**

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

503-246-8831 X 116

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

### **Michelle Caplan**

Assistant Executive Director

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

503-293-7313

### **Lizzy Garrat**

Operations & Facilities Manager

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

503-246-8831 X114

### **Mel Berwin**

Director of Congregational Learning

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

503-293-7306

- Educational requirements

### **Shaina Zins**

Communications Coordinator

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

503-246-8831 X133

- *Chronicle* announcement

### **Century Catering**

**Allen Levin**

503-849-2605

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

- Kiddush
- Catering menu & fees

## **MAZEL TOV!**

Dear B'nai Mitzvah Families,

Mazal tov as you prepare for this special moment in your family's life. The entire Congregation Neveh Shalom community shares in your joy, and it is a privilege for us to walk alongside you and your child on this meaningful journey.

Becoming Bar, Bat, or Brit Mitzvah marks an important milestone in a young person's Jewish life. It celebrates their growing responsibility, their voice in our tradition, and their ability to help lead our community in prayer and learning. At the same time, it is not an endpoint, but a beginning, another step in a lifelong path of Jewish learning, practice, and connection.

At Neveh Shalom, our students prepare as part of a cohort based on their birth year, and each child works closely with a dedicated tutor who helps guide them through their preparation. Along the way, they will become familiar with core Shabbat prayers, learn to chant Torah and Haftarah, explore the meaning of their Torah portion, and craft their own D'var Torah to share with the community.

While this simcha is deeply personal for each family, it is also a moment for our entire kehillah. When a young person steps forward to lead prayer and teach Torah, we celebrate together as a community.

We look forward to partnering with you and sharing in the joy of this sacred milestone.

B'Shalom,

Rabbi Eve Posen  
Rabbi Cantor Eyal Bitton  
The Leadership of Congregation Neveh Shalom

## Glossary

### **Bar, Bat, and Brit Mitzvah**

Literally “son/daughter of the covenant.” *Brit Mitzvah* is a gender-neutral term. The phrase refers to both the **person** and the **occasion** marking their transition to Jewish ritual adulthood at age 13.

### **B’nai Mitzvah**

Plural of Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah.

### **B’not Mitzvah**

Plural of Bat Mitzvah.

### **Simcha**

A joyful celebration (e.g., wedding, Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah).

### **Bimah**

The platform in the sanctuary where services are led.

### **D’var Torah (Drash)**

A short talk about the week’s Torah portion delivered by the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah.

### **Aliyah**

An honor of coming to the Torah to recite blessings before and after a reading.

### **Gabbai**

A service leader who assists with the Torah reading. Plural is gabbaim.

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## Reflecting as a Family

Each Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah has unique meaning for the family.

### **Consider discussing:**

- Who in your family has celebrated a Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah?
- What makes this milestone meaningful for your child?
- What new responsibilities might your child take on?
- Who would you like to honor during the ceremony?

## B'nai Mitzvah—Timeline

### ***2 Years Before (December – April)***

- Receive email invitation to request dates
- Submit date request form
- Receive confirmed date and fee schedule
- Attend B'nai Mitzvah orientation meeting

**Program Fee:** \$1,800 (due one month before event)

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### ***12 Months Before***

- Family meeting with the Cantor scheduled at 20, 14, 8, and 4 weeks out
  - Tutor assigned and weekly sessions begin with outreach by Tutor
  - Receive Torah/Haftarah materials
  - Schedule clergy meetings
    - *Rabbi Posen* will reach out to schedule D'var Torah meetings beginning 10 weeks out from the event
  - Contact Century Catering for Kiddush options
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### ***6 Months Before***

- Receive **Honors Form** (honors, service participants, child bio for program booklet) options
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### ***1 Month Before***

- Submit guest count for Kiddush
  - Provide information for synagogue publications
  - Final rehearsal scheduled
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### ***Day Before***

- Final rehearsal at synagogue with clergy

## Expectations & Preparation (Please read carefully)

### Membership & Education

Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah at Neveh Shalom is a **privilege of synagogue membership and participation in the ALIYAH learning program.**

Students are expected to be enrolled in Jewish learning from **1st–7th grade**, unless alternate arrangements have been made.

Families must be **members in good standing** before tutoring begins and remain members through the B'nai Mitzvah year.

Students needing additional Hebrew preparation may require extra tutoring.

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### B'nai Mitzvah Orientation

Families with students in **5th–6th grade** attend an annual orientation meeting to learn about the process and connect with clergy and other families.

### Synagogue Attendance

Families are expected to **attend Shabbat services periodically** during the year leading up to the B'nai Mitzvah so **students become comfortable with the service.**

Participation helps students become comfortable with the service and strengthens their connection to the community.

### PJA Families

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

### Special Needs

Neveh Shalom is committed to celebrating every child. Tutors and clergy work with families to adapt preparation or ceremony formats as needed.

Please contact **Rabbi Cantor Bitton or Mel Berwin** with any concerns.

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## ALIYAH: Educational and Social Preparation

### K-6<sup>th</sup> Grade as Preparation for B'nai Mitzvah

The ALIYAH program helps students build a lifelong connection to Jewish life while preparing for their Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah.

Through Hebrew learning and Judaics, students:

- Learn Hebrew decoding, fluency, and comprehension
- Participate in youth-led prayer experiences
- Learn the structure and meaning of the Shabbat service
- Study Jewish holidays, traditions, lifecycle events, and values
- Explore mitzvot such as **tzedakah** and caring for others

This foundation helps students approach their Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah as a meaningful step toward Jewish adulthood and community participation.

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

The 6th grade curriculum focuses specifically on B'nai Mitzvah preparation.

### Hebrew Learning

Students learn prayers from the Torah service, including:

- Blessings for Torah aliyot
- Songs for removing and returning the Torah to the ark

### Judaics

The theme of the year is **leadership**, including:

- Leadership in the synagogue community
- Tzedakah and community service projects
- Inclusion and responsibility
- Planning holiday programs for younger ALIYAH students

### Community Building

6th grade is an important bonding year as students prepare to celebrate together. Students from **PJA** also join the cohort if they have not already.

### 6th Grade Family Program

Monthly Sunday morning gatherings for 6th graders and their parents provide opportunities for:

- Learning and discussion
  - Meeting other B'nai Mitzvah families
  - Building community among the cohort
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## The 7th Grade Program

7th grade participation in Tichon (teen program) is a **required** part of the B'nai Mitzvah program.

Students meet **Wednesday evenings (6:30–8:30 pm)**.

Students learn alongside grades **8–12** and can choose from courses such as:

- Jewish text and tradition
- Art and storytelling
- Jewish history and current events
- Social justice

Students also participate in community events and holiday celebrations.

Teens are encouraged to continue in **Tichon** and/or the **Madrichim leadership program** after their B'nai Mitzvah year.

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## Scheduling a Date

B'nai Mitzvah dates are scheduled **approximately two years in advance**.

1. Families receive an email requesting date preferences based on **birth year (not grade)**.
2. Submit the online form with your **top three date choices** and note any special considerations.
3. **Rabbi Cantor Bitton** assigns dates based on requests, clergy availability, and the synagogue calendar.
4. Confirmation letters and the **B'nai Mitzvah fee invoice** are sent by March.

Once confirmed, your date is placed on the synagogue calendar.

## B'nai Mitzvah Guide/Tutor Program

Students work with a professional B'nai Mitzvah Guide **for approximately one year before their Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah.**

- Weekly **30-minute one-on-one sessions**
- Scheduled at a mutually convenient time
- Families may request a specific guide or arrange to tutor their child themselves.
- Families should support regular practice at home between B'nai Mitzvah lessons. **Consistent practice is essential** for students to feel confident leading the service.

Tutoring prepares students to lead parts of the service, which may include:

- Torah chanting
- Haftarah chanting
- Torah and Haftarah blessings
- Shabbat Torah service
- Selected prayers (Ashrei, Ein K'Eloheinu, Aleinu, etc.)
- Friday night prayers and Kiddush

Lessons are tailored to each student's abilities and interests.

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### B'nai Mitzvah Fees

The B'nai Mitzvah program fee is **\$1,800**, in addition to synagogue membership and ALIYAH tuition.

This fee covers:

- One year of tutoring
- A digital recording of the service

Payment must be completed **one month prior to the event.** Payment plans may be arranged through the Accounting Office.

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### Morning Minyan & Tefillin Program

A generous community donor sponsors a special program:

Any **6th grade student who attends weekday Morning Minyan regularly for one year** will receive a **set of tefillin** at their Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah.

This program encourages students to:

- Participate in weekday prayer
  - Build relationships with members of the synagogue's daily minyan community
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## Planning the Ceremony

### Meeting with the Rabbi & Cantor

Students meet with clergy to prepare their **D'var Torah**, a short teaching about their Torah portion.

Rabbi Posen and Rabbi Cantor Bitton officiate at all B'nai Mitzvah services. Clergy assignments are based on the event date.

*Note:* Clergy are generally **unavailable Tuesdays** and use **Fridays for Shabbat preparation and rehearsals**.

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### Friday Rehearsal

Families attend a final rehearsal **Friday morning (10:30–11:30 am)** with the rabbi and cantor.

Family members participating in the service (aliyot, Torah reading, etc.) should attend.

Many families schedule **professional photos before or after the rehearsal**.

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### Photography

Because of Shabbat observance:

- **Flash photography is not permitted** on Shabbat or festivals.
- Non-flash photography is allowed **only during the Kiddush luncheon**.
- Professional photography should be scheduled **before Shabbat**, usually Friday morning.

Families will receive a **video recording of the livestreamed service**.

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### Service Location

Services are typically held in:

- **Stampfer Chapel** (up to 185 guests), or
- **Main Sanctuary** (up to 400 guests)

Location is based on attendance and availability.

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### B'nai Mitzvah as Community Events

B'nai Mitzvah services are community celebrations. Other synagogue events (such as baby namings or aufrufs) may occur during the same service.

Families should expect **approximately 30–40 congregants** in attendance in addition to invited guests.

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### Candy Throwing

Following the Haftarah, it is customary to gently throw **soft kosher candy** in celebration.

The synagogue provides the candy. Please **do not bring your own**.

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### Gifts from the Congregation

The Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah will receive:

- A **certificate of Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah**
- A **Tanakh** (Hebrew Bible)
- A **Kiddush cup** from the Men's Club and Sisterhood

A thank-you note to these groups is appreciated.

## Friday Evening and Shabbat Morning Services

### Overview of Shabbat Services

Each student's participation is individualized; some may lead additional prayers depending on their comfort and preparation.

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

- Opening prayers, **tallit presentation** by parents/grandparents.
- Kabbalat Shabbat songs: **Lecha Dodi, Tov L'hodot**.
- D'var Torah by Rabbi
- **Ma'ariv**: Barchu, Ahavat Olam, Sh'ma, V'Shamru, Amidah, Kiddush, Aleinu, Mourner's Kaddish, Yigdal/Adon Olam.

### Friday Evening Service Participation (Optional)

The Friday evening service, or **Kabbalat Shabbat**, welcomes Shabbat with song, prayer, and community. Families may choose to attend, and the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah can participate in several ways.

- Blessings and prayers of the Friday evening service can be found on our website: (<http://nevehshalom.org/bar-bat-Mitzvah/>)
- Friday night services begin at 6:15 pm; the third Friday of the month, they begin at 7:00 pm.
- Services are ~1 hour 15 minutes.
- Stampfer Chapel usually, Main Sanctuary if large crowd.
- Summer Erev Shabbat may be outdoors in Upper Plaza.

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

#### Shabbat (Saturday) Morning Service—Overview

A Shabbat morning B'nai Mitzvah service generally includes several key sections. Each part has its own rhythm and purpose, and the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah plays a central role in many of them.

- Family/guests with honors arrive 9:15 am.
- Psukei D'Zimra, Shacharit, Torah service (7 readings + Maftir), Haftarah, D'var Torah.
- Musaf, concluding prayers, Kiddush lunch.
- Blessings and prayers of the Saturday morning service can be found on our website: (<http://nevehshalom.org/bar-bat-Mitzvah/>)

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

- One-page handouts for Friday night & Saturday morning
- Families may honor participants or personalize with child's name/photo
- Online Honors form used for collecting names

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#### Special Programming

- Occasionally, Shabbat or congregational events may affect Friday evening service time, location, or attendance.
- Families will be notified well in advance if their simcha coincides with such events.

## Honors During the Service

Family members and friends may participate in the service through various honors.

### Common Honors

#### Aliyot

Individuals are called to the Torah to recite blessings before and after a reading.

#### Opening the Ark

Participants open the ark before the Torah service begins.

#### Torah Passing

A symbolic passing of the Torah through generations before it is given to the Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah.

#### English Readings / Prayers

Family members may be invited to read selected English passages.

#### Guidelines

- All participants must be **Jewish adults (age 13+)** for Torah blessings.
- Non-Jewish relatives may participate in **other honors or readings**.
- Final honors are approved by the clergy.

Families will submit their honors list several months before the event.

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## Attire & Synagogue Decorum

Appropriate attire reflects the dignity of the occasion and respect for the sanctuary.

### During Services

- **Kippot** are required for men and boys; optional for others.
- **Tallitot** may be worn by Jewish adults and teens.
- Guests are encouraged to dress **modestly and respectfully**.
- Guests are asked to remain seated during the Amidah and Torah readings and to enter or exit the sanctuary between service sections when possible.

### Sanctuary Guidelines

- No flash photography
  - Phones should be silenced
  - Food and drinks are not permitted in the sanctuary
  - Children should remain with parents if they become disruptive
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### Livestream

B'nai Mitzvah services are livestreamed for guests who cannot attend in person. The synagogue provides families with a recording of the service afterward.

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### Parents' Speech & Blessings

- Present tallit as a symbol of new leadership
- Share pride and commitment to Jewish tradition
- Limit remarks to ~5 min; practice beforehand

## Planning the Celebration

### Chronicle Announcement

- Submitted 2–4 weeks before deadline; includes photo, family names, school, hobbies.

### Invitations

- Invite cohort and staff/teachers involved
- Include service start times and optional explanatory letter
- Addresses provided by Education Office or synagogue directory

### Luncheon, Cookie Table, and Challah

- **Kiddush Lunch:** Hosted in Birnbach Hall by B'nai Mitzvah family; kosher only
- **Catering Options:** Basic, upgraded, or approved external kosher caterer
- **Cookie Table:** Home-baked or kosher store-bought; coordinated by "Cookie Captains"
- **Challah:** Provided by caterer or baked by family/friends

### The Kiddush Luncheon

The Bar/Bat/Brit Mitzvah **family hosts/sponsors 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. **Allen Levin of Century Catering** will plan the menu with you and review the associated fees. This communal luncheon is integral to the warmth and hospitality of Shabbat at Neveh Shalom. In addition to your guest head count for the kiddush luncheon, anticipate approximately 40 members of our community will attend the kiddush. We encourage the B'nai Mitzvah family to sponsor kiddush for our entire community on the day of their celebration. **Our kitchen is strictly kosher.** No food, other than cookies, may be brought in from the outside.

## Catering Your Simcha at Neveh Shalom

**There are three options available: Catering fees are billed separately by Century Catering.**

1. **"Basic Kiddush"** - This provides a basic lunch for your guests and is provided by Century Catering. 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 you have agreed upon with Century Catering. We encourage all B'nai Mitzvah families to sponsor the entire kiddush lunch which includes approximately 40 congregants who attend services. Modifications may not be made to the "Basic Kiddush" menu.
2. **"Upgraded Kiddush"** - Century Catering can help you upgrade the basic kiddush lunch. If you would like to add a hot dish, special salad or additional lunch item, please contact **Allen Levin of Century Catering.**
3. The family may choose to use a **kosher caterer who has been approved by CNS and has a licensed business (including a food handlers license)**. There is a separate contract for the family and caterer, which addresses details such as notifying staff, arrangement of kitchen space, and additional fees for our facility's use. Please contact our Neveh Shalom office for details.
4. **NO OUTSIDE FOOD**, apart from home baked goods, may be brought into the facility for serving at a simcha-based event. Self-catering is not permissible.

**In the event an 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.**

### **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*.

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### **Decorations**

- Families coordinating decorations or vendors should work with the Operations & Facilities Manager to schedule access to the space.
  - Bimah flowers optional; Stampfer Chapel has limited space
  - Kiddush tables may be decorated, adhering to Shabbat guidelines
  - Mylar confetti is prohibited
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### **Extending your Celebration at Neveh Shalom**

#### **The Atrium for Friday night dinner (optional)**

- Friday night dinner in Atrium (optional, up to 40)

#### **Use of the Birnbach Hall for Saturday evening Celebrations (optional)**

- Saturday evening party in Birnbach Hall (100–300+ guests)
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### **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.

#### **Hours:**

Monday and Wednesday:	11:00 am – 1:00 pm
Friday	10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Sunday	9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Contact Jennifer Kalenscher 503-893-0822 or Dana Sirkin 503-680-5877 for more information, special orders, and additional hours.

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### **Shabbat Greeters**

- Provide two greeters for Friday night & Saturday morning
- Responsibilities: hand out prayer books & service handouts, direct guests, distribute kippot
- Sign-up via [Sign-Up Genius](#)
- Greeter Guide [video link](#)

## Baking Guidelines for Cookie Bakers

Some families cater desserts for Shabbat lunch, while others participate in the volunteer-run Cookie Table tradition. Friends and family bake or provide treats to create a beautiful dessert display. Anyone can participate—local or not, Jewish or not.

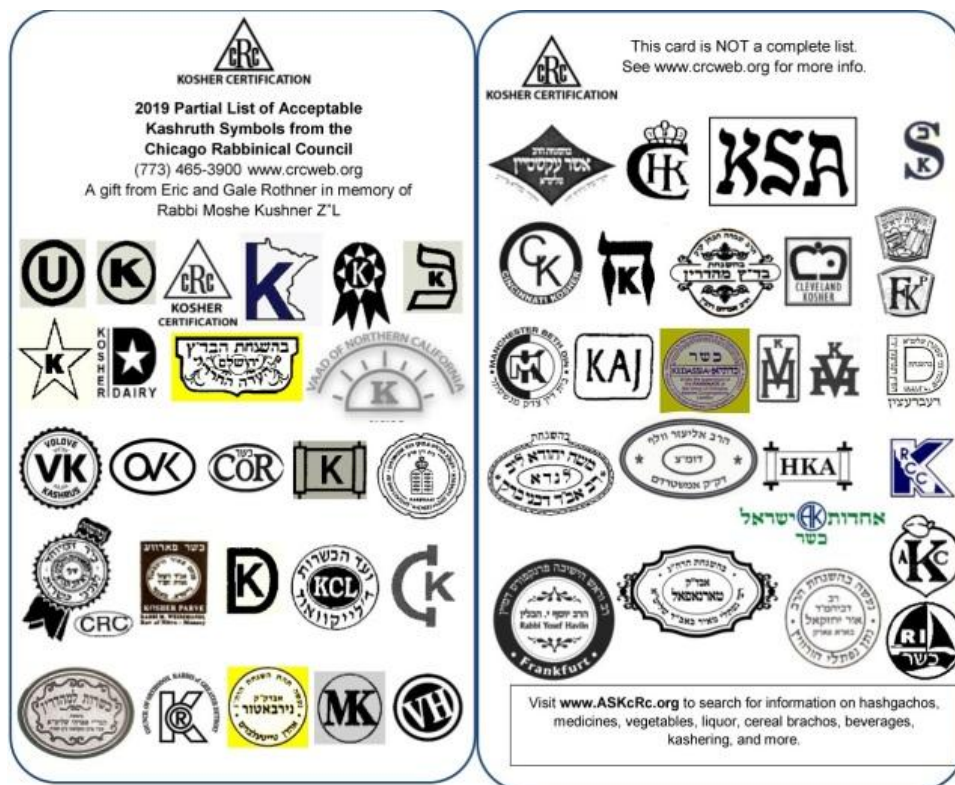
### UTENSILS

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

- Non-kosher home: use disposable utensils or glass (not Pyrex), or items purchased for use to bring baked goods to the synagogue.
- Use metal or glass utensils by washing them very thoroughly, then rinse 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.
- Cover utensils with aluminum foil so that food does not touch the utensil.

### INGREDIENTS

- Fresh fruit, vegetables, and nuts are kosher. **Please label cookies that have nuts.**
- Basic ingredients are kosher.
- Use only butter/margarine/shortenings/oils that are 100% vegetable with a kosher mark.
- Check for **blood spots in eggs**. Break one egg at a time into a separate container. Discard eggs and swap out the container.
- All other purchased/processed ingredients must be in a package with a kosher mark such as ©.



### PURCHASED BAKED GOODS

Purchased baked goods: must have kosher certification (©, K in triangle, etc.).