

Revised July 2023

B'NAI MITZVAH

Handbook



CONGREGATION
B'NAI ISRAEL

WELCOME

Dear B'nai Mitzvah Family,

Mazal tov on reaching this huge milestone!

The year of preparation culminating in the bar/bat mitzvah is often one of the most enriching and challenging in a family's life. We ask our students to stretch themselves to learn new skills, to wrestle with their Torah portion, and to discover for themselves what it means to assume a full place in the Jewish People.

Knowing that this can feel like a lot to handle—we at CBI are here for your family every step of the way. We want to work with you as your partners to make the experience of becoming a b'nai mitzvah as wonderful, growthful, and joyous as we know that it can be. We look forward to getting to know your whole family in a new way and forging lifelong memories together.

This handbook is designed to give you insight into what it means to become a b'nai mitzvah at CBI, what our expectations for you are, and what policies and procedures you need to know about as you plan. We know that every family is unique, so please don't hesitate to speak with us about any questions or concerns you may have.

Abraham, the first Jew, was told "*lech lecha*," to go out and find himself. The b'nai mitzvah journey offers the same invitation to each student, to learn more about who they are and what they are capable of. It's very exciting and we look forward to sharing it with you.

B'simcha - in joy!

Rabbi Adam Greenwald
Cantor Amy Robinson Katz

OUR VISION FOR B'MITZVAH AT CBI

We believe that b'nai mitzvah is a precious opportunity for our kids to engage deeply with the prayers, texts, and customs of our tradition and claim their place in our Jewish community. Our b'nai mitzvah program celebrates the individuality of each young person *b'asher hu sham*, where they are, with their unique collection of aptitudes, gifts, and challenges. We do not believe that one size fits all. Nevertheless, we encourage all our students to stretch themselves to the extent of their ability to acquire ritual skills, wrestle with the words of their Torah portion, and discover personal meaning in becoming b'nai mitzvah. We support them with a substantial investment of community resources, including a two-year family education curriculum, a synagogue provided tutor, and lots of one-on-one time with CBI clergy. Our b'nai mitzvah students emerge from this process with a sense of pride in themselves, empowered to fully participate in Jewish life at CBI and at any synagogue in the world, and inspired to continue their own journey of learning and growth.

A CBI b'nai mitzvah is a joyful celebration not just of each individual child's accomplishment, but of the continuation of our Jewish family story *l'dor va'dor*—from generation to generation. We teach our kids that the Shabbat service of their b'nai mitzvah is both **theirs** and belongs to the rest of the community – for the celebration of other simchas, the supporting of those in need, and the regular, weekly experience of honoring Shabbat through prayer and study.

MINE AND OURS

At CBI, we celebrate b'nai mitzvah in the context of our regularly scheduled, weekly Shabbat service. That means that this special day belongs **both** to your family, and to our whole congregational family. Many of the aliyot and special honors will be reserved just for you, but we will also hold some open for others in the community who may be celebrating their own *simcha* or remembering a loved one. We take delight in watching our b'nai mitzvah students lead much of the service but will also have moments when we are led and taught by our Cantor and Rabbi. Our goal is to celebrate your student's accomplishment and also to make sure the whole community gets the full Shabbat experience that CBI provides each week.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

CBI clergy and staff are here for you for any questions or concerns that come up while you prepare for your b’nai mitzvah. You are always welcome to contact any of us, and we will do our best to help you. Below is a list of the contacts you will need most as you go through this process as well as the primary areas of responsibility for each person.

Congregation B’nai Israel

2111 Bryan Avenue
Tustin, CA 92782
(714) 730-9396

CBI Clergy and Staff	Contact For
Rabbi Adam Greenwald agreenwald@cbi18.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing your D’var Torah • Any additional support you need
Cantor Amy Robinson Katz akatz@cbi18.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling your B’nai Mitzvah date • Selecting a Tutor • Honors • Help with Torah, Haftarah, Tefillah • Questions about the Service
Samantha Hoffman, Dir. Family and Community Learning shoffman@cbi18.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBI Religious School • Family Education
Sheri Galante, Youth Director youth@cbi18.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Machar, Kadima, USY • Camp B’nai Ruach
Sam Brown, Executive Director exdir@cbi18.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBI Membership • B’nai Mitzvah Fees • Arrangements for Kiddush Lunch • CBI Facility Rental • Vendors • Appointment for Photoshoot • Flowers/Décor, Deliveries

I'M HAVING A B'NAI MITZVAH?

Actually, you are *becoming* a b'nai mitzvah! Your bar/bat mitzvah marks the day that you are considered responsible for following the *mitzvot* (commandments) and principles of the Torah. Up to this point, your parents acted on your behalf, but now it's up to you to decide how you will practice Judaism. In the eyes of Jewish tradition, you are an adult – you can be counted in a minyan, you can be called to the Torah for an aliyah, and you can legally own property (though not in the State of California)!

According to rabbinic tradition, boys become bar mitzvah at age thirteen, while girls become bat mitzvah at twelve. As an inclusive, egalitarian community, we aim to create a tight knit cohort of students going through the process together, so we strongly encourage all students to celebrate b'nai mitzvah at thirteen. We also realize that the traditional Hebrew terms “bar” and “bat” may not fit every student. We want every person to feel included in the rituals of b'nai mitzvah regardless of gender identity.

WHAT DO I NEED TO LEARN?

At CBI, we have a tradition of robust Jewish learning. We are proud to train our b'nai mitzvah students to be confident participants and leaders in our community. The components of our program include the following:

CHANTING TORAH: Learn the Torah blessings recited when called for an aliyah, and chant a portion from the Torah scroll with the traditional *trope* (melody)

CHANTING HAFTARAH: Learn the blessings before and after the Haftarah and chant your Haftarah text with the traditional *trope* (melody)

WRITING A D'VAR TORAH: Study your Torah portion and deliver a teaching reflecting personally on its themes and lessons. You will deliver your *d'var torah*—literally “words of Torah”—from the bimah.

LEADING TEFILLAH—Learn to lead select parts of the Shabbat morning service.

DOING A MITZVAH PROJECT—every CBI b'nai mitzvah student devotes themselves to a mitzvah project as an expression of the Jewish values of *tzedakah* (philanthropy) and *tikkun olam* (healing the world).

CURRICULUM

Each student is unique, and the amount that you will lead depends upon both individual ability and (more importantly) your commitment to meeting with our clergy and your tutor, as well as devoting many hours of regular practice. B'nai mitzvah at CBI is not a competition of who can do the most, but we do encourage all our students to challenge themselves to learn all they can. We have prioritized our curriculum to help students and families to set achievable goals.

Page numbers listed below are from the *Lev Shalem Siddur* which we use on Shabbat. If you have any questions about our curriculum, please reach out to Cantor Katz.

PRIORITY #1

- ☐ Torah Blessings & Chanting*
- ☐ Haftarah Blessings & Chanting*
- ☐ D'var Torah
- ☐ Shema/V'ahavta (pg. 155)
- ☐ Tallit Blessing
- ☐ Mitzvah Project

PRIORITY #2

- ☐ Torah Service
 - Ein Kamocha (pg. 168)
 - Beh Ana Rachetz (pg. 170)
 - Ashrei (pg. 181-82)
 - Y'hal'lu / Hodo Al Aretz / Mizmor L'David (pg. 183)
 - Uvnucho Yomar / Eitz Chayim Hi (pg. 184)
 - Chatzi Kaddish

PRIORITY #3

- ☐ Birchot Hashachar (pg. 103-4)
- ☐ Baruch Sheamar (pg. 122)
- ☐ Musaf
 - Amidah: Avot/Gevurot, Kedusha (pg. 185-7)
 - Kaddish Shalem (pg. 203)
 - Ein Keloheinu (pg. 204)
 - Aleinu (pg. 205-6)
- ☐ Adon Olam (pg. 211)

** The exact number of Torah and Haftarah verses will be determined with your tutor!*

REQUIREMENTS

Your b'nai mitzvah is a special day for you, your family, and the greater CBI community, and it is just the beginning! Our program is designed to prepare you for Jewish life and leadership. Our hope for every student is that your b'nai mitzvah is the start of years of meaningful involvement at CBI and in the Jewish community at large. With that in mind, we require each b'nai mitzvah family to meet the following requirements:

- ❑ Be members of CBI
- ❑ Students must be Jewish as recognized by the standards of the Conservative Movement and must be enrolled in either CBI's Religious School or attend a Jewish day school. *If you have questions about this, please contact Rabbi Greenwald.*
- ❑ Students should have foundational training in Hebrew prior to starting their tutoring. CBI recommends that each student have either (a) three years of Jewish education prior to beginning their tutoring, or (b) sufficient private study to be able to read basic Hebrew phonetically.
- ❑ All b'nai mitzvah families, regardless of whether they attend CBI's Religious School or Jewish day school participate in monthly family education sessions on Sundays in the 6th and 7th grade years.
- ❑ For at least nine months prior to your b'nai mitzvah, all students are required to attend CBI Shabbat morning services at least twice a month, along with a parent. Services begin at 9:30am and typically last until noon. Families are encouraged to attend together and stay for kiddush lunch following the service. Each b'nai mitzvah student will receive an attendance card to collect a sticker for each service they attend. **Within the year leading up to your big day, you need eighteen stickers!**

WRITING YOUR D'VAR TORAH

We believe that young people have profoundly important Torah to share. The d'var Torah writing process is one of the most significant pieces of what it means to become b'nai mitzvah, and will take just as much effort as learning to chant Torah and Haftarah or lead Tefillot. By wrestling with a piece of our foundational text and discovering new insights and questions in it, you are joining in our people's sacred legacy as interpreters and lovers of Torah.

Your d'var Torah writing process begins with a family meeting with Rabbi Greenwald typically 4-5 months prior to your b'nai mitzvah. Expect to meet 3-4 more times to continue to study the portion and refine your d'var Torah. Your final draft, which should be around 800 words, should be completed by your b'nai mitzvah rehearsal, approximately two weeks prior to your date.

MITZVAH PROJECT

During the year of preparation for your b'nai mitzvah, we ask that you not just study, but that you put your study into action by engaging in a Mitzvah Project. We invite each student to dedicate at least ten hours to a community service project of their choice and reflect on their experience while meeting with Rabbi Greenwald and Cantor Katz ahead of the service. Please let us know what project you choose or ask us to provide you with a list of suggestions.

PREPARATION TIMELINE

2 YEARS PRIOR

- Finalize the date of your b'nai mitzvah and receive confirmation from CBI.

10-12 MONTHS PRIOR

- Fill out our **B'nai Mitzvah Information Form** and schedule a meeting with Rabbi Greenwald and Cantor Katz to go over the b'nai mitzvah process and discuss all questions and concerns.
- If you would like to hold your private b'nai mitzvah events at CBI and book our facilities for your celebration weekend (Friday night dinner, Saturday night party, etc.), please contact the CBI Executive Director.
- Select a mitzvah project and get started!

9 MONTHS PRIOR

- If you haven't started already, begin regularly attending Shabbat morning services (at least twice a month) to begin familiarizing yourself with the service and the prayers. Remember that you need eighteen stickers on your Shabbat attendance card before your b'nai mitzvah date!
- Start participating in Daveners Clinic!
- Cantor Katz will create a B'nai Mitzvah Learning Plan for you and reach out about selecting a b'nai mitzvah tutor. Then, you will begin receiving your materials. Weekly tutoring sessions should begin 8-9 months before your b'nai mitzvah.

4-5 MONTHS PRIOR

- Progress Meeting #1 with Cantor Katz—be ready to demonstrate what you have learned so far. Keep studying with your tutor, and practice daily!
- D'var Torah Meeting #1—attend the first meeting with Rabbi Greenwald and your parents to learn about the process of writing your d'var Torah.

3 MONTHS PRIOR

- Progress Meeting #2 with Cantor Katz—be ready to chant your Torah and Haftarah portions, and their accompanying blessings.
- D’var Torah Meeting #2—attend second DT meeting with Rabbi Greenwald, identifying which of the questions you are going to write on.
- Keep studying with your tutor, and practice daily!
- Keep attending Shabbat services at CBI and collecting stickers for your attendance card!

2 MONTHS PRIOR

- Progress Meeting #3 with Cantor Katz—be ready to chant your Torah and Haftarah portions, their accompanying blessings, and any tefillot you have been working on with your tutor.
- D’var Torah Meeting #3—attend third DT meeting with Rabbi Greenwald. Expect to dig into your rough draft and work on refining your question and finding more sources. Write a second “almost final” draft and send it to the rabbi.
- Finalize your rehearsal date!
- Contact CBI Executive Director to finalize details for the Shabbat Kiddush luncheon to be held on your b’nai mitzvah day
- Let Cantor Katz know if any family members other than the b’nai mitzvah student are interested in chanting Torah at the service. We ask that visitors who chant Torah at CBI adhere to our community’s standards of preparation.

1 MONTH TO GO!

- D’var Torah Meeting #4—attend your final d’var meeting with Rabbi Greenwald to finalize and prepare you as you write the final draft.
- Start the B’nai Mitzvah Booklet Questionnaire

2 WEEKS PRIOR

- Submit the completed **B’nai Mitzvah Booklet Questionnaire** and **Honors List**
- Turn in the final draft of your D’var Torah to Rabbi Greenwald
- Rehearsal Day! Since photography is not allowed in our sanctuary on Shabbat, many families like to use their rehearsal as a time for formal photos and/or videotaping of the b’nai mitzvah student.

YOUR B’NAI MITZVAH DAY

- Breathe. You got this.

TUTORING & DAVENERS' CLINIC

CBI's tutors dedicate a tremendous amount of time to each individual student and work to be available to your family at times that work best for you. We ask that every student and family respect their tutor's time and expertise by keeping all appointments, arriving on time, and showing up prepared and ready to learn.

Our all-inclusive tutoring fee is based on a maximum of thirty sessions which is usually more than enough for most students. Tutoring sessions generally last 30 minutes each, give or take, depending on what is being covered that day. If you find that you need more than thirty sessions, our tutors may be available for an additional fee.

In addition to working with a private tutor, CBI offers monthly Daveners' Clinic sessions. These 25-minute sessions happen just before the Shabbat service begins on Saturday morning (9:00-9:25am). All past, present, and future b'nai mitzvah students as well as their parents and other congregants are invited to participate and sharpen their skills! Check the CBI website for dates.

FEES

Our b'nai mitzvah fee is \$1,800. This includes thirty tutoring sessions, each lasting approximately 30-minutes, multiple meetings with our clergy team, family education classes, and administrative support from our office.

In addition, each family will need to make arrangements with our Executive Director for the Shabbat kiddush luncheon to be held on the day of your b'nai mitzvah ceremony, using our in-house caterer or another approved kosher caterer. Please note that, as CBI cherishes our weekly opportunity to enjoy Shabbat together as a community, all luncheons are planned with the estimated total number of synagogue attendees in mind.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Though CBI does not permit photography or videography during Shabbat—including services, meals, or other on-site events held on Shabbat—please contact our Executive Director if you would like to schedule a photoshoot before or after your b'nai mitzvah date.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

Congregation B'nai Israel abides by the standard of Shabbat conduct outlined by the Conservative Movement. Within our walls, we try to create a holy space that feels very different than the ordinary week.

- We respectfully ask that you refrain from using electronic devices, including phones, within the synagogue or on the public grounds during Shabbat.
- All food must be provided either by our in-house catering service, or an approved caterer who meets our community's kashrut standards. Any food served on Shabbat, must be cooked prior to sundown on Friday night.
- We are not a strictly suit and tie community—this is Southern California after all!—but we do ask that all our guests, of any age, dress modestly and appropriately for a house of worship. All men should wear a kippah (head covering), and Jewish adults are encouraged to wear a tallit.

We appreciate you helping us maintain a sacred atmosphere for our whole community.

B'NAI MITZVAH HONORS

Your family will have the opportunity to honor important people in your lives during the Shabbat service. Each b'nai mitzvah family is entitled to offer **four** aliyot (honors to the Torah) to individuals, couples, or small groups. All people coming up for an aliyah should be Jewish and over the age of 13.

Non-Jewish parents and immediate relatives may also come up to the Torah to accompany those who are reciting the blessings. Please complete the **Honors Form** with the English and Hebrew names of those receiving aliyot and return to the Cantor.

Additionally, your family will have the opportunity to offer honors for:

- Opening and Closing the Ark
- *Hagbah & Gelilah*—lifting and dressing the Torah
- Prayer for Our Country (pg. 177, read in English)
- Prayer for the State of Israel (pg. 178, read in Hebrew)

Ours is an egalitarian community, so honors may be given to either men or women. When coming up to the bimah, participants must wear a head-covering and are encouraged to wear a tallit (prayer shawl).

SPECIAL DETAILS FOR YOUR DAY

FLOWERS

Families often beautify our sanctuary with flowers which are placed on each side of the bimah. Flower deliveries should be made no later than 1:00pm on the Friday prior to your simcha. Flowers may be delivered prior to 8:00am on Shabbat morning, but families may incur an early access fee.

B'NAI MITZVAH BOOKLET

Your guests and our community members will learn about your hopes and dreams, your most meaningful educational moments, your concerns about the world, and your family's honors and blessings in your B'nai Mitzvah booklet. One month before your celebration, you will receive the B'nai Mitzvah Booklet Questionnaire. Take your time with these questions. We want you to give people an idea of who you really are. Completed booklets must be returned to the office two weeks before the b'nai mitzvah ceremony.

PARENT'S BLESSING

We Jews love to *shep naches* (take delight in) our kids—and there's nothing more lovely than blessing your child at this sacred occasion. That said, we know that we could all write a book about how great our kids are, so some guidelines are helpful. Parents' blessings should be no more than 250 words and must be submitted to the office in advance for printing in the B'nai Mitzvah Booklet.

TALLIT

It is customary to wear a tallit when standing at the Torah. Many families like to present their b'nai mitzvah student a tallit of their own as a gift for this special occasion. There are many styles of tallitot, and depending on where you order from, a tallit is sometimes custom made to order. Make sure to give yourself plenty of time and order your tallit several months in advance.

KIPPOT

All Jewish men should wear a kippah in our sanctuary, and as an egalitarian community, we encourage women to do so as well. Many families like to order special kippot for their b'nai mitzvah ceremony. These orders can sometimes take a few weeks, so make sure to give yourself enough time. Both tallitot and kippot are available through our local partner, The Golden Dreidle, located at 725 El Camino Real in Tustin.

CANDY

Yes! We love to shower our b'nai mitzvah with candy after they chant their Haftarah, to wish them a sweet life!

B'NAI MITZVAH INFO FORM

Welcome, b'nei mitzvah family! We are so excited to get to know more about you! Please fill out the information below before meeting with Rabbi and Cantor! Note that you can complete this form electronically at **cbi18.org/b'mitzvah**.

B'NAI MITZVAH STUDENT

Full Name: _____

Hebrew Name: _____ ben/bat _____
(Father & Mother)

Preferred Name/Nickname: _____

Pronouns: ☐ he/him ☐ she/her ☐ they/them ☐ other: _____

Birthdate: _____ B'nai Mitzvah Ceremony Date: _____

Are there any learning needs or styles that you would like us to be aware of for the b'nai mitzvah process?

YOUR FAMILY

Who does the b'nai mitzvah student live with? _____

Parent #1

Name: _____

Phone #: _____

Email: _____

Religious Identity:

- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ No Religion
- ☐ Another Religion
- ☐ Other: _____

Parent #2

Name: _____

Phone #: _____

Email: _____

Religious Identity:

- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ No Religion
- ☐ Another Religion
- ☐ Other: _____

Please include the name(s) and phone number(s) of any additional parents, guardians, or significant adults who will be involved with the b'nai mitzvah process:

Names and ages of b'nai mitzvah student's siblings:

Is there anything else you'd like us to know about your family?

BOOKLET QUESTIONNAIRE

This is an opportunity to share deeply with your community who you are, what you care about, and what this moment means to you. Please take time to answer each question thoughtfully. Write in full sentences because your responses will be included in the booklet as you write them.

Please complete and submit all the questions, including the parents' blessings, TWO WEEKS prior to the b'nai mitzvah ceremony.

Note that you can fill this form out electronically at **cbi18.org/b'mitzvah**.

B'NAI MITZVAH STUDENT

Full Name: _____

Hebrew Name: _____

What is the origin of your name? Were you named for someone?

What does your name mean?

Is there a special story about your name that you want to share?

TELL US ABOUT YOU

What do you care about?

What do you like to do?

What do you dream of doing when you grow up?

What's the most important thing you've ever learned?

WHAT DOES BECOMING A B'NAI MITZVAH MEAN TO YOU?

What do you love most about being Jewish?

What does it mean to you to be becoming b'nai mitzvah?

What gifts and talents do you bring to our community?

How will you make our world a better place?

THANK YOU

Write a paragraph thanking the people who helped you reach this moment, such as your family, teachers, coaches, rabbis, tutors, and anyone else who has had a special influence on you.

PARENTS' SECTION

Parent #1 Name:	Parent #2 Name:
Parent #1 Blessing:	Parent #2 Blessing:

If there are more than two parents, please use this section to add their blessings. Please identify each person with the name and relationship to the b'nai mitzvah student.

B'NAI MITZVAH HONORS FORM

Below are opportunities for you to give honors to close family members or friends on the day of your b'nai mitzvah. The b'nai mitzvah student will receive the maftir aliyah, and CBI will assign additional aliyot for your honorees based on the information you provide below. Please contact Cantor Katz or Rabbi Greenwald if you have any questions! Note that this form is available online at **cbi18.org/b'mitzvah**.

B'MITZVAH STUDENT: _____

B'MITZVAH HEBREW NAME: _____ **ben/bat** _____
 Father & Mother

B'MITZVAH DATE: _____ **PARASHA:** _____

HONORS

OPENING THE ARK: _____
 (Two People)

HAGBAH: _____ G'LILAH: _____
Lifting the Torah *Rolling and Dressing the Torah*

HOLDING THE TORAH: _____

PRAYER FOR OUR COUNTRY (pg. 177): _____

PRAYER FOR THE STATE OF ISRAEL (pg. 178): _____

CLOSING THE ARK: _____
 (Two People)

ALIYOT IN ADDITION TO B'MITZVAH STUDENT

Aliyah	English Name(s)	Hebrew Name(s)	Kohen/Levi?
1			
2			
3			

