



B'NAI MITZVAH HANDBOOK





A MESSAGE FROM THE AES CLERGY

Dear Parents,

One of our greatest joys as clergy is getting to know your children, and to learn and grow together. We embrace their passions and take pride when they first stand on the bimah, taking ownership of their Jewish identity. At Anshe Emet, we understand that each B'nai Mitzvah is a celebration of the accomplishments of the entire family. We look forward to embarking on this remarkable journey together.

At Anshe Emet, we recognize that no two children are precisely the same. Each child has their own strengths and challenges. It's our honor and pleasure to learn from you about your child's gifts, challenges, and needs.

We believe that your child is going to make our world better—and we look forward to celebrating their transition as they become an adult in the eyes of the Jewish people.

It is our hope that you use this handbook as one of many of our tools in your “simcha toolbox.” Anshe Emet's staff and clergy are ready to help you as you navigate this special time.

We are so excited for the privilege of sharing this significant Jewish journey with your entire family.

Mazel Tov!



**Michael S.
Siegel**
Senior Rabbi



**David
Russo**
Rabbi



**D'ror
Chankin-Gould**
Rabbi



**Rachel
Brook**
Senior Cantor



**Elizabeth
Berke**
Cantor

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THE JOURNEY

THE JOURNEY

OUR GOALS

- Create a personalized B'nai Mitzvah experience for each student that is spiritual and meaningful, which deepens your child's connection to Jewish tradition and Jewish life.
- Create a sense of community amongst B'nai Mitzvah families, especially facilitating relationship building between students and parents from Anshe Emet Synagogue's various communities.
- Study the nature and structure of prayer and ritual, developing competency, confidence, and inspired connection to Jewish prayer through practical instruction and experience.
- Emphasize our Jewish commitment to improving the world (Tikkun Olam) through social action/social justice work.
- Cultivate a love of Torah study by exposing our students to meaningful Torah study that relates to their lives.

THE MEANING & CUSTOMS

The term B'nai Mitzvah (literally, "sons or daughters of the commandment") is a title given to all Jews upon reaching age 13 to signify that they are now eligible and responsible for the performance of the mitzvot, assuming personal responsibility for their religious, moral, and spiritual behavior.

Although no ritual or service is necessary to establish this status, the B'nai Mitzvah celebration, over the past few centuries, has emerged as a way to demonstrate commitment to Judaism. Before the congregation, family, and friends, the young person's transition from childhood to responsible Jewish adulthood is a time of celebration. A B'nai Mitzvah celebration occurs as part of our regular congregational services.

THE PLANNING

We hope that as your child prepares to celebrate their B'nai Mitzvah that you and your family will be able to prepare as well. Whether it is celebrating Jewish rituals like lighting candles on Friday night, engaging in Torah study as a family, or reading from the Torah, we would love to support you as your family creates shared Jewish experiences and opportunities to learn together.



ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

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MEMBERSHIP

We are so happy to share this special time in the life of our members.

Membership in good standing at Anshe Emet Synagogue is required to begin the B'nai Mitzvah journey.

For membership information you can contact **Amy Karp**, Director of Engagement and the Malkin Family Program Director, at **773.868.5139** or akarp@ansheemet.org.

DATE SELECTION

A meeting for parents of children who are 9 and/or in the 4th grade is held in the fall, going over the whole B'nai Mitzvah process, and introducing the form for parents to complete indicating their date preferences for the simcha. We do ask for the Hebrew birthdate of your child, which you can figure out using the HebCal date converter (hebc.com), so that we can make sure the B'nai Mitzvah is scheduled at the appropriate age. Because of our growing community and the finite number of Shabbat morning services, sharing a service between two families is common and increases the joyousness of the occasion.

After receiving the form responses and doing a first draft of a calendar, the B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator meets with Temple Sholom, Mishkan, and Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel to draft the calendar of B'nai Mitzvah dates two years from that time. B'nai Mitzvah dates are then released to families in the spring, usually after Pesach. Our B'nai Mitzvah cycle is August through June.

Please contact **Naomi Richman**, B'nai Mitzvah and Music Team Coordinator, at nrichman@ansheemet.org for more information.

TUTORING

Approximately 12-14 months before the B'nai Mitzvah date, our clergy will work with you to pick a tutor match at the B'nai Mitzvah intake meeting. All arrangements after picking the tutor match will be made privately with the tutor, including scheduling and payments.

TROPE CLASS

In addition to tutoring, your child will participate in a Torah trope class, where they will learn the most common Torah cantillation melodies and learn basic prayers and blessings.

Religious School Students

If your child is in the Joseph and Belle Braun Anshe Emet Religious School, trope class will take place in 6th grade during class.

Day School Students

If your child attends a local Jewish Day School where trope is taught in the curriculum, then your child is exempt from Trope classes at Anshe Emet, although they are welcome to attend if they wish.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

FAMILY PARTICIPATION PRIOR TO THE B'NAI MITZVAH

Prior to the B'nai Mitzvah, the student and their parents are encouraged to:

- Serve as ushers on **Shabbat** morning for the B'nai Mitzvah occurring directly before their own (typically the week before but can be several weeks prior depending on scheduling).
- Attend morning **minyan** service the week of the B'nai Mitzvah. Morning minyan begins at 7am and lasts approximately 45 minutes.
- Attend the Friday night **Shabbat** service the Friday before their B'nai Mitzvah. The student will participate by leading the Friday night **Kiddush**. At that time, they will receive a personalized Kiddush cup.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION AND HONORS AT THE B'NAI MITZVAH

We will work with you in the weeks before this special day to assist with honors and participation for family members. Honors could include ark openings, special readings, and aliyot, and will be discussed with clergy members.

FEES

- The B'nai Mitzvah fee is \$1,800 which includes the cost of J2M, our Torah trope classes, family programs, administration of the B'nai Mitzvah program, materials for your child's simcha, and a high-resolution video of your child's service. A \$600 deposit is non-refundable and required to hold your B'nai Mitzvah date and will be deducted from the total fee. The B'nai Mitzvah fee is paid 6 months before the B'nai Mitzvah date.

Please contact **Michelle Brown** at mbrown@anshemet.org if you'd like to establish a payment plan.

- The Kiddush Luncheon Fee is \$1,400 and covers a portion of the community cost for our communal kiddush luncheon. (Additional costs apply to guests and menu upgrades.) The remainder of the kiddush costs are subsidized by Anshe Emet.
- The Mincha Facility Fee is \$500 and covers the maintenance and security costs of having the building open during this time on Shabbat afternoon. If a family opts for a mincha service, the Kiddush Luncheon fee is waived.

- **Please note: Tutoring is not included in the B'nai Mitzvah fee.**

We work with several qualified private tutors in our community and these fees are paid directly to the tutor. Tutoring fees may vary. During your family's intake meeting, a clergy member will work with you to determine the tutor who would be a great match for your student.

We never want financial concerns to stand in the way of your family's simcha. Please feel free to contact **Mimi Weisberg**, Executive Director, for scholarship information or to make other financial arrangements: mweisberg@anshemet.org.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

FOR OUR INTERFAITH FAMILIES

As a synagogue, we commend interfaith couples who raise their children as Jews and are sensitive to the unique challenges of parenting a child in a religion different than one's own. We encourage both parents to participate in all parent meetings and programs of family education and to attend services together.

Participation in these meetings, and the J2M program, can be particularly beneficial for those who have not grown up in the Jewish tradition to better understand Jewish teachings and the significance of the B'nai Mitzvah as a life cycle event. Parents of a different faith will have many opportunities to meaningfully participate in this wonderful simcha.

JOURNEY TO MITZVOT (J2M)

Our Journey to Mitzvot (J2M) signature program began in memory of Felicia Levy as a tribute to her love and concern for Jewish family education. The purpose of J2M is to assist our B'nai Mitzvah students and families in becoming full participants in adult Jewish life.

J2M is anchored by the three pillars of Judaism: Torah study, Jewish prayer, and acts of loving kindness. 6th grade students and their parents are invited to join together to meet other families who are similarly preparing for their B'nai Mitzvah.

All 6th grade B'nai Mitzvah candidates and their parents or guardians are encouraged to attend all J2M program sessions. This important experience is part of a series and for this reason, we ask your family to commit to attending all the sessions. J2M meets on five Sunday mornings from approximately 9:15 am-11:30 am during the academic year, and on one Friday night for a Shabbat dinner.

FOR FAMILIES WITH MOBILITY CHALLENGES

Please let us know if anyone in your family will need any special accommodations and we will try to meet their needs to the best of our ability. We have an accessible entry into our main lobby, located by the Sukkah. Our main sanctuary is accessible via the ramp down the Hall of Memories. Malkov Chapel is accessible via a ramp.

Large print Siddurim and hearing enhancement devices are available upon request for Shabbat morning services. You may inquire about these items at our front desk.

A young woman with long dark hair is smiling warmly at the camera. She is holding a large, dark blue embroidered cloth. The cloth features intricate embroidery, including a large tree with green leaves and a brown trunk, and various colorful flowers in shades of pink, purple, yellow, and white. The background is a dark, patterned wall with gold-colored designs. The overall scene is brightly lit, highlighting the woman's face and the details of the embroidery.

CLERGY MEETINGS

CLERGY MEETINGS

INTAKE MEETING

Approximately one year prior to your simcha, the student and parents will meet with the cantor for an intake meeting. If you are sharing the date with another family, you will attend together. At this meeting, we will gather preliminary information about your family and talk about expectations and hopes and dreams for this important occasion. The student will receive a binder which contains the prayer and Torah/Haftarah texts, and you can bring any questions you have about the upcoming year. If you do not yet have a tutor, this is also when the cantor will suggest some tutors to consider.

D'VAR TORAH AND CHESSED PROJECT

Approximately 6-9 months prior to the B'nai Mitzvah, your family will begin to meet with one of the Rabbis of Anshe Emet to discuss developing a B'nai Mitzvah **Chesed Project** to engage in the mitzvah of **gemilut hasadim** (acts of loving kindness) and the process of writing a **D'var Torah** (a brief talk exploring a theme of the student's choosing, demonstrating research into traditional Jewish sources). Students will be assigned to a Rabbi and notified by email. Subsequently, a student will meet 4-5 times with their assigned Rabbi. At least one parent must plan on attending each of these meetings along with the B'nai Mitzvah candidate.

Once the D'var Torah has been finalized, all families will meet with Rabbi Siegel. This should occur 2-3 weeks prior to the B'nai Mitzvah date, after families have completed their meetings with their assigned rabbi.

CANTOR/BIMAH REHEARSALS

Each B'nai Mitzvah will have the opportunity to rehearse with our cantors in the Sanctuary, beginning 4-6 weeks before your simcha. These meetings are intended to create a level of comfort and connection on the bimah. In the week leading up to the B'nai Mitzvah date, the family will have a one-hour dress rehearsal in the Sanctuary, led by one of our cantors. Photography sessions can be scheduled preceding or immediately following the rehearsal.

All clergy appointments can be scheduled by contacting Naomi Richman: nrichman@ansheemet.org



OPTIONAL ENHANCEMENTS



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BIMA DECORATION

Anshe Emet furnishes bimah florals every week. We welcome your sponsorship of these flowers and your input on color/design. The pulpit may also be decorated with usable items that can be donated to charity (e.g., food baskets of kosher canned goods). All items must be **heckshered** with an Anshe Emet approved kosher symbol and approved by **Kim Carter**.

Please note:

Sunkist Fruit Chews are the only candy that should be thrown at the end of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.

KIPPOT, PROGRAMS, AND TALLIT

Kippot / Programs

If providing Kippot and/or programs for the day of the B'nai Mitzvah, please deliver all materials to Anshe Emet (Kim Carter) no later than the Thursday prior to the simcha.

Tallit

The Tallit is a ritual garment that is worn when praying and reading Torah. It is recommended to purchase a tallit to be worn at the service and will also be a part of the B'nai Mitzvah's life going forward for Shabbat mornings, Yom Kippur, and other holidays.

FRIDAY NIGHT SHABBAT DINNER

Friday night **Shabbat** dinner is a wonderful opportunity to begin your simcha weekend with family and friends. Anshe Emet has several options available to accommodate a small intimate dinner for 10, a larger celebration for 200, or any size in between. Dinner can be held before or after **Shabbat** services. Anshe Emet is the ideal location for everyone to join.

Kim Carter, Director of Hospitality, can help with any planning needs and can be reached at kcarter@anshemet.org.



THE CELEBRATION

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KIDDUSH LUNCHEON

At Anshe Emet, the B'nai Mitzvah is a celebration for the entire community. As a result, we ask that the B'nai Mitzvah family plan to join the congregation for the Kiddush Luncheon with their guests. **Tables may be reserved for friends and family in the Blum Community Hall.**

POLICY REGARDING ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES AT KIDDUSH

Some families choose to do a l'chaim at Kiddush with alcoholic beverages. While we're happy for you to celebrate in this manner, please note that as part of our Safer Synagogues Initiative, all alcoholic beverages must always be monitored by an adult. Minors are not permitted to drink alcohol, and the monitor will be responsible for securing the alcohol in a locked area after Kiddush (or alerting maintenance staff to secure the alcohol).

POLICY REGARDING INVITATIONS TO CLASSMATES

It is the policy of both Bernard Zell and the Joseph and Belle Braun Religious School that **ALL** classmates be invited to your child's B'nai Mitzvah. If your child attends another school, please check the policy of that institution.



THE CELEBRATION

ADDING JEWISH VALUE TO YOUR CELEBRATION

We are pleased to offer guidance as you prepare for your B'nai Mitzvah. Below are some suggestions for ways to enhance your celebrations surrounding the simcha and to infuse Jewish life and meaning into every facet of your family's journey.

INVITATIONS

Some helpful language to include:

Use the word “simcha”

(Please share our simcha when...)

Invite guests “to worship”

(Please join us to worship and celebrate...)

Include your child's Hebrew name

in addition to their English name.

Parsha

Use the Torah portion assigned to your child.

Use the Hebrew date and Jewish symbols

Magen David (star), menorah, lions, scrolls, tallit, etc.

Plant trees in Israel

There are special invitations with lovely JNF certificates.

MUSIC & ENTERTAINMENT

Hora

It's fun to lift your child in a chair—siblings, too.

Klezmer

Some Klezmer groups do both social dance music as well as Israeli & Klezmer music.

Israeli Dancing

A cappella groups

MEALS

Motzi

Say the blessing over the bread.

Birkat HaMazon

Say the blessing after the meal. Ask special friends or family to participate in Birkat HaMazon. Provide booklets for your guests. (Our recommendation: *B'kol Echad: In One Voice (English and Hebrew Edition)*).

Kippot

Provide kippot for your guests.

THE CELEBRATION

PARTY

Havdalah

Gather guests to recite Havdalah on the dance floor at the beginning of the celebration.

Shabbat Dinner

Host a special intimate dinner for close family and out of town guests before services. Remember challah, candles, grape juice, and a Kiddush cup.

Tzedakah

Use special cards which note that a contribution has been made in your guest's honor to a charity.

Mazon

The ARK

Theme Ideas

Connect to Jewish characters, tzedakah, Israel, holidays, a Torah portion, a Jewish value, etc.

GIFTS

Israeli Bonds/JNF Tree Certificates

Encourage your friends to consider this option.

Gift of Israel

Friends and family can deposit funds into a special interest-bearing account created in the B'nai Mitzvah's name through JUF, and JUF contributes \$180 if \$1,000 is deposited. Enroll your child at: juf.org/israel_experience/gift_of_israel.aspx.

Tzedakah

Encourage your child to share a portion of monetary gifts with a favorite charity. Tell your guests which one your child is supporting.

Anshe Emet

Honor your child and the synagogue with a mitzvah plaque or contribution to the B'nai Mitzvah Endowment Fund.

Ritual Objects

Start a collection of items such as menorahs or Kiddush cups.

LASTING MEMORIES

Scrapbook

Make a scrapbook for or with your child to include a family tree, photographs of ancestors, invitation, copy of Torah portion & Haftarah, greeting cards with special messages from guests, newspaper or chronicle clippings, etc. Let each member of your family dedicate a page.



CALENDAR



**WHEN CHILDREN ARE
9 YEARS OLD
AND/OR IN 4TH GRADE**

- Family makes membership arrangements, if not already members in good standing.
- Family enrolls child/ren in Religious School if they are not enrolled in a Jewish Day School.
- Parents attend 4th Grade Parents Meeting and submit date selection form in Fall.
- B'nai Mitzvah fee of \$1800 is posted to account in Fall; payment of \$600 of the fee is due.
- Family receives date in spring of 4th grade.

WHEN CHILDREN ARE IN 5TH GRADE

- Parents will be invited to an informational meeting in the spring.

WHEN CHILDREN ARE IN 6TH GRADE

- J2M — Fall and winter, for students and parents.
- Date must be finalized in Fall of this year, if not already confirmed.

14 MONTHS PRIOR

- Intake meeting with Clergy (Cantor Berke)

1 YEAR PRIOR

- Begin weekly one-on-one tutoring.
- \$1400 Kiddush Fund fee posted to account.

6-9 MONTHS PRIOR

- Schedule 2 meetings with assigned Rabbi to begin work on D'var Torah and Chesed Project.
- Begin to plan Kiddush Luncheon and/or any reception to be held at Anshe Emet with the Director of Hospitality.
- Continue weekly tutoring.

3 MONTHS PRIOR

- Schedule 2 D'var Torah meetings with assigned rabbi (four meetings total).
- Schedule the dress rehearsal time and photo op.
- Payment of \$1400 toward the **Kiddush Fund** is due.

2 MONTHS

- Submit photo of child/ren and caption with for the synagogue newsletter to Naomi Richman. Caption should include child's name and parents' or guardians' names *exactly* as you would like them to read in the newsletter.
- Schedule final D'var Torah meeting with Rabbi Siegel.
- Confirm Kiddush Luncheon and/or reception details with Kim Carter.
- Schedule 2 rehearsals in the Sanctuary (dress rehearsal and 1-month prior rehearsal with Cantor).

1 MONTH PRIOR

- Rehearsal in Sanctuary with Cantor Brook.
- Schedule morning minyan participation.

1-2 WEEKS PRIOR

- Family serves as ushers for the B'nai Mitzvah on the Shabbat directly preceding their own.
- Dress rehearsal in Sanctuary with Cantor Berke or Cantor Brook.
- Professional Photos prior or following dress rehearsal, if desired.
- Confirm service honors.
- Finalize numbers and payment for Kiddush Lunch.

WEEK OF!

- Attend and participate in morning minyan.
- Attend and participate in Friday Night Services.
- Take a deep breath and enjoy the weekend—you've got this!



QUESTIONS?

WHOM DO YOU CONTACT?

We're here to help...

Rabbi Michael Siegel • 868.5110 • msiegel@ansheemet.org

Rabbi David Russo • 868.5127 • drusso@ansheemet.org

Rabbi D'ror Chankin-Gould • 868.5145 • dcgould@ansheemet.org

Cantor Rachel Brook • 868.5112 • rbrook@ansheemet.org

Cantor Elizabeth Berke • 868.5117 • eberke@ansheemet.org

Your first call for everything B'nai Mitzvah!

Schedule all meetings with Clergy (Intake, D'var Torah meetings with Rabbis, Rehearsals, all questions regarding dates and logistics).

Naomi Richman • B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator
868.5122 • nrichman@ansheemet.org

Financial questions

Mimi Weisberg • Executive Director
868.5123 • mweisberg@ansheemet.org

Membership-related questions

Amy Karp • Director of Engagement & the Malkin Family Program Director
868.5139 • akarp@ansheemet.org

Event planning, catering, day-of needs, public/private reception needs, accessibility needs.

Kim Carter • Director of Hospitality
868.5119 • kcarter@ansheemet.org

To schedule additional meetings with Rabbi Siegel.

Antoinette Nuñez • Executive Assistant to Sr. Rabbi Michael Siegel
868.5120 • anunez@ansheemet.org

To schedule additional meetings with Rabbi Chankin-Gould and Russo; coordinates J2M.

Tamar Brooks • Clergy Administration Coordinator
868.5125 • tbrooks@ansheemet.org

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For Parents of the B'nai Mitzvah Students of Anshe Emet Synagogue



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