Dear Valley Beth Shalom B’nai Mitzvah Families,

We are delighted to begin the B’nai Mitzvah journey with you and your child(ren). This is a pivotal moment in your Jewish lives - a milestone, a rite of passage, and a cherished tradition throughout the generations.

As a B’nai Mitzvah family, you can expect a meaningful, smooth, and memorable experience at Valley Beth Shalom, supported by our clergy, staff and lay leaders at every step. Our B’nai Mitzvah program is a cohort-based model: you will join with 10-15 other families at designated times throughout the year, engaging in special educational and social programs with our clergy and with each other. Through this format, we hope you will build close connections and friendships, while also having an opportunity to support one another.

Our B’nai Mitzvah students will become deeply familiar with some of our tradition’s most central Shabbat prayers; learn to chant Torah; engage in a Mitzvah Project; study the meaning of their Torah portion and examine its relevance to their own lives; and write and present their own D’var Torah (speech). We hope that throughout this process, our students will also learn about themselves, their interests and passions, and their connection to their Jewish heritage.

Skills training will be one-on-one, individualized and tailored to meet the needs of each student, with our team of expert tutors. Cantor Rafii oversees the B’nai Mitzvah Program, and our B’nai Mitzvah Coordinator will be your point of contact for all logistical questions and planning. Our clergy are here for you every step of the way, to guide our students as well as their parents through this soul-fulfilling journey.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us at any time. We are looking forward to sharing this beautiful experience with you and your family. Mazal Tov!

B’shalom,

Rabbi Nolan Lebovitz, Senior Rabbi
Rabbi Ed Feinstein
Cantor Jacqueline Rafii, Cantor and B’nai Mitzvah Director
Cantor Phil Baron
Cantor Hershel Fox
Yossi Dresner, Ritual Director
Lisa Leib, B’nai Mitzvah Coordinator and Clergy Department Manager
Matthew Weintraub, Executive Director
B’nai Mitzvah Timeline

3 Years Prior
- Receive date assignment packet via email
- Provide top 2 date choices and submit deposit
- VBS will confirm date

6-9 Months Prior
- Mitzvah Project Planning Meeting with Cohort

5 Months Prior
- Check-in meeting with Cantor Rafii

6 Weeks Prior
- Receive Honors sheet in PDF form
- Submit payment for any enhancements to Thursday morning breakfast and/or Shabbat Kiddush lunch

3 Weeks Prior
- Begin practicing with tutor at the Torah
- Confirm guest count with B’nai Mitzvah Coordinator for each service (Thursday, Friday and Saturday)
- Submit B’nai Mitzvah headshot to Coordinator for Mitzvah Announcement

1 Month Prior
- Submit completed Honors sheet
- Book photo session (some families choose to book this for after the Thursday morning minyan)
- Confirm VBS synagogue membership and B’nai Mitzvah fees are fully paid (must renew membership in June of B’nai Mitzvah year)

1-2 Weeks Prior
- Dress rehearsal with officiating Cantor (remember to bring tallit, kippah, binder, printed copy of speech, and siddur)

Thursday Morning Minyan (7:30 am)

Friday Evening Shabbat Service
(6:00 pm Traditional Service or 6:30 pm Rimonim Service)

CELEBRATE!!!
B’nai Mitzvah Training with Tutor

Each B’nai Mitzvah student will meet with their assigned tutor in a one-on-one, 30 minute weekly training session, in person at VBS (or online if approved in advance by Cantor Rafii). These sessions will begin 6 months prior to the date of your celebration. Cantor Rafii will assign and set your child up with their tutor.

Parents are encouraged to attend the first student-tutor meeting.

Consistent practicing in between lessons is essential. We recommend at least 15 minutes every day, or 30 minutes 3 times a week. Parents, please stay on top of your child(ren) to practice - this is the single most important factor in determining success and comfort with the prayers and Torah/Haftarah readings. Some ideas are scheduling consistent daily time to practice (e.g. after dinner on lighter homework nights, and on weekends); rewarding regular practice and improvement; and sitting with your child(ren) whenever possible to observe and support practicing.

We are aware that students (and parents!) are very busy with school and extracurricular activities. Nevertheless, this is a sacred, once in a lifetime experience and opportunity – and it is temporary! For these 6 special months, we ask that you make accommodations in your and your child’s schedule to ensure that your child practices regularly, and shows up on time and reliably to tutoring sessions.

We ask, out of respect to our tutors, that you please provide at least 48 hours notice before canceling a scheduled tutoring session.
Services and Celebrations

The B'nai Mitzvah journey extends long before and after the Saturday morning or Mincha (afternoon) Shabbat service. Your entire family is strongly encouraged to also attend Thursday morning minyan at 7:30 am (the Thursday before your B'nai Mitzvah), where you will learn to wrap tefillin, receive a special blessing, and practice leading the prayers for a small group; as well as Friday evening minyan at 6:00 pm (Traditional Service) or 6:30 pm (Rimonim Service, the second Friday of each month), where you will practice leading additional prayers and usher in Shabbat with the community.

Please see service orders below, which include a list of the prayers and readings for which our B’nai Mitzvah prepare, as a reference.
# THURSDAY MORNING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prayer/Blessing/Item</th>
<th>Page in Siddur Sim Shalom</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sh’ma &amp; V’ahavta, and L’ma’an Tizkeru</td>
<td>112-113</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Avot &amp; Gevurot</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Parents present/discuss Tallit</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Torah Blessing before reading</td>
<td>142</td>
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<td>5. Torah readings (Aliyot) 1, 2, and 3</td>
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<td>6. Torah Blessing after reading</td>
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<td>7. Ashrei</td>
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# FRIDAY EVENING

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<td>1. Candle Lighting Blessing</td>
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# SHABBAT MORNING

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<td>3. Parents present tallit</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Tallit Blessing</td>
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<td>5. Parents’ speeches (5 minutes total, maximum)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. L’Dor Vador - passing the Torah from generation to generation</td>
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<td>7. Torah readings (Aliyot) 1, 2, and 3</td>
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<td>8. Torah Blessing before reading</td>
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<td>9. Torah reading - Maftir</td>
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<td>10. Torah Blessing after reading</td>
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<td>11. D’var Torah / Speech</td>
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<td>12. Blessing Before the Haftarah</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Ashrei</td>
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<td>3. Tallit blessing</td>
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<td>4. Torah readings (Aliyot) 1-3</td>
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<td>5. Blessing before Torah reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Torah reading (Aliyah) 4</td>
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<td>7. Blessing after Torah reading</td>
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<td>8. D’var Torah / Speech</td>
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<td>9. Haftarah - OPTIONAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Amidah (Avot and Gevurot)</td>
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<td>11. Hamotzi</td>
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More about Thursday Morning Minyan

The Torah is read four times each week:

- Saturday Mincha/afternoon (when the week’s portion is read for the first time)
- Monday morning
- Thursday morning, and
- Saturday morning

The Thursday morning minyan is a beautiful, meaningful morning. All B’nai Mitzvah students* and their families are invited (and strongly encouraged) to attend the Thursday morning minyan prior to their Shabbat service, which begins Thursday at 7:30am. Breakfast is served to the community, and families have an opportunity to purchase breakfast enhancements if they wish.

Students whose services are on Saturday morning are able to read from the Torah on Thursday morning (as the Torah portion is the same as the one they will read on Shabbat), to lead some of the prayers they have learned, and to receive an Aliyah.

* B’nai MItzvah students whose services are on Saturday afternoon are able to lead some of the prayers they have learned, and to receive an Aliyah, at the Thursday morning minyan. If a student would also like to chant their Torah portion at morning minyan, they are invited to instead attend the Monday morning minyan following the Saturday of their B’nai Mitzvah, at 7:30 am. Breakfast is not served after Monday morning minyan.

Our Ritual Director, Yossi Dresner, runs our morning minyan services. Our office will be in touch with you to make arrangements with him to attend minyan. You can reach Yossi directly at (818) 530-4012.
More about Friday Evening Shabbat Service

On the Friday evening before your child’s B’nai Mitzvah date, your family is invited and strongly encouraged to participate in their Shabbat Evening Service.

The B’nai Mitzvah student will help lead some of the prayers for the evening. Services are led by our Ritual Director, Yossi Dresner. Family members are invited to light Shabbat candles as Shabbat begins. Some families choose to host a Shabbat dinner at the synagogue after services. Please feel free to contact our Director of Catering and Events at LA Kosher, Elon Kviatkovsky, to help you coordinate a beautiful catered dinner at VBS: (818) 789-7588.

If your child’s service falls on the second Friday of the month, your family will be invited to participate in our monthly Friday evening musical Rimonim Shabbat Service. Learn more at vbs.org/rimonim.

More about Saturday Morning/Afternoon Shabbat Service

This is your family’s big day! Today your child will read from the Torah and become a B’nai Mitzvah, either at the Shabbat Morning Service or afternoon Mincha Service.

KIPPOt If you would like to provide personalized kippot for your guests, contact our preferred vendor, kippah.com, or order your kippot from the vendor of your choice.

CANDY We will provide your family with a basket of individually wrapped soft kosher candies, which are traditionally thrown at the conclusion of your child’s Torah reading.

KIDDUSH A small portion of your B’nai Mitzvah fee is contributed to our Kiddush Lunch Fund. If you are interested in enhancing your Kiddush for an additional fee, please see the following informational flyers or visit our Kiddush informational webpage at vbs.org/kiddush.
Kiddush Contribution

Kiddush Contribution & Enhancement Options

We are delighted to help you share your simcha, mark a special moment or commemorate a Yahrzeit with our community with the following Kiddush Contribution & Enhancement Options.

Following Shabbat services, you and your guests will be invited to enjoy our Weekly Cold Kiddush Lunch. In addition, we often mark special occasions at Thursday Morning Minyan. We encourage you to contribute to our Kiddush Fund to help cover the costs to feed our community each week.

Click here to contribute and be recognized for your Kiddush Contribution

If you would like to enhance our Thursday Morning Kiddush and/or Shabbat Morning Weekly Cold Kiddush Lunch for our community members and your special guests, please see the Enhanced Menu Options below.

Thursday Morning Kiddush Enhancements

Serves up to 50 people

Thursday Morning Kiddush*
Served every week as a courtesy to our community and guests
Valued at $250

Coffee Cake or Muffins (rotation)
Hard Boiled Eggs
Coffee, Hot Tea, Water

*B’nai Mitzvah Fee contributes $250 towards the Thursday Morning Kiddush and the Weekly Shabbat Cold Kiddush. Enhancements are an additional fee.

Enhancement Menu Options

Options include Thursday Morning Kiddush items plus the following:

Bagel Breakfast Enhancement
$500

Bagels & Cream Cheese
Sliced Tomatoes, Cucumbers and Onion
Whole Fruit
Orange Juice

With purchase of Bagel Breakfast Enhancement:

Smoked Salmon (Lox) Enhancement
$500

Sliced Smoked Salmon (Lox)
Capers
Shabbat Morning Kiddush Enhancements
Serves up to 300 people

Weekly Cold Kiddush*
Served every week as a courtesy to our community and guests
Valued at $3,600

Bagels & Cream Cheese
Sliced Tomatoes, Cucumbers and Onion
Tuna or Egg Salad (rotation)

Whole Fruit
Cookies and/or Brownies
Coffee, Hot Tea & Water
White Linen

*B’nai Mitzvah Fee contributes $250 towards the Thursday Morning Kiddush and the Weekly Shabbat Cold Kiddush. Enhancements are an additional fee.

Enhancement Menu Options
Packages
Packages include Weekly Cold Kiddush items plus the following:

--- Gold Package ---
$3,600
One Hot Dish
One Fancy Salad
Lemonade
Select Linen Color*

--- Platinum Package ---
$6,000 (Save $100)
Smoked Salmon (Lox) & Capers
One Hot Dish
One Fancy Salad
Lemonade
Select Linen Color*

*Linen Color Options: White, Black, Pink, Maroon, Red, Forest Green, Wedgewood Blue, Royal Blue, Violet

A la Carte
A la Carte options include Weekly Cold Kiddush items plus the following:

Smoked Salmon (Lox) Enhancement
$2,500

Fancy Salad Enhancements
$1,800

CHOOSE ONE
Fresh Berry Salad with Balsamic Dressing
Spinach, Fresh Seasonal Berries, Balsamic Dressing

Israeli Salad
Chopped Cucumbers, Chopped Tomatoes, Lemon, Olive Oil

Italian Chopped Salad
Romaine, Cucumbers, Bell Pepper, Garbanzo Beans, Black Olives, Italian Vinaigrette

Fruit Salad
Seasonal Mixed Fruit
Prayers and Blessings

Recordings of the melodies can be found on our website at vbs.org/bmprayers.

1. Friday Night Kiddush   Page 49
2. Tallit Blessing       Page 62
3. Sh'ma/V'Ahavta/L'Maan Tizkru Page 112
4. Amidah               Page 115B for Shabbat Morning
                         Page 234b for Mincha
5. Torah Blessing       Page 142/231
   (when you are called for an Aliyah)
6. Haftarah Blessing (before) Page 146
7. Haftarah Blessing (after)  Page 147
8. Ashrei                Page 151
9. V'Shamru/Kiddush/Motzi Page 315
10. Candle Blessings     Page 301
12. P'Sukei D'Zimrah     Page 83-105
13. Chatzi Kaddish      Page 229

You can find an electronic copy of Siddur Sim Shalom on our website at vbs.org/siddur-sim-shalom.
Torah and Haftarah Readings

TORAH

Torah is chanted using melodies called trope. While students will learn their Torah portions first with vowels and trope symbols, they will eventually master the readings so that they are able to chant them from a scroll (and they will have plenty of opportunities to practice from the Torah scroll).

The Shabbat morning Torah reading consists of eight short passages: Aliyot 1-7, then the Maftir Aliyah as the 8th reading.

The afternoon Mincha reading contains 3 short passages which we normally divide into 4 parts.

Torah readings are from the 5 books of the Chumash (Torah) – Genesis (B’reishit), Exodus (Sh’mot), Leviticus (Vayikra), Numbers (B’midbar) and Deuteronomy (D’varim). Students typically master this reading in 2-4 months.

Please let us know if any of your friends or family members would also like to chant some verses of Torah on the day of your celebration.

HAFTARAH

The Haftarah is selected from the books of the Prophets, and we do not read it from a scroll. The melodies (tropes) for the Haftarah differ from those of the Torah. Students typically master this reading in 2-3 months. (Note: Haftarah readings are optional in the afternoon Mincha service.)

Tutors will provide an audio file to aid your child’s preparation of both the Torah and Haftarah readings.
Mitzvah Project

A Mitzvah Project is a wonderful opportunity for our B’nai Mitzvah students to take part in an important aspect of becoming a Jewish adult: giving back to the community and taking care of those in need. Mitzvah Projects show our dedication to bringing more wholeness into the world. It is an opportunity for our students to take initiative, plan, and express their creativity and compassion – and the whole family is encouraged to participate! At VBS, we offer a special, pre-scheduled Mitzvah Project Planning meeting (attendance is mandatory) with your cohort, which occurs about 7-9 months prior to your child’s B’nai Mitzvah date. At this meeting, your clergy and lay volunteers will guide your family through the Mitzvah Project process.

The Mitzvah Project is expected to be a continuing and long-term project, and it is required for all students.

Photos at VBS

Valley Beth Shalom does not permit photography or videography during Shabbat (Friday evening through Saturday at sundown). However, you are welcome to schedule a photo shoot anywhere on the VBS grounds before or after your child’s B’nai Mitzvah date. Please have your photographer provide proof of insurance.

To schedule a time and place, contact:
Lisa Leib, B’nai Mitzvah Coordinator
(818) 530-4085
Party Planning

We invite you to host your simcha (joyous occasion) on our beautiful VBS campus. If you are interested in hosting a Shabbat dinner, private luncheon or dinner celebration in honor of your child’s B’nai Mitzvah, please contact our catering office for more information. A flyer is included here for more details.

For more information, contact:
Elon Kviatkovsky, Director of LA Kosher Catering
(818) 789-7588

Parent(s)'s Speeches

Shortly after the beginning of the Shabbat service, parents are invited to speak to their children before the congregation. Parents’ speeches should be no longer than five minutes (total), and are a wonderful opportunity to speak to your child about the Jewish values you hold. Your officiating Rabbi will provide more guidance at your first meeting.
Redefining Modern Kosher Cuisine

Reduced Member Pricing

Exclusive VBS Caterer
For all your life cycle events

Now offering Delicious Shabbat Dinner Meals To-Go

818.789.7588
LaKosherCatering.com

Valley Beth Shalom
B'nai Mitzvah Honors

ALIYOT

You will have the opportunity to honor several people with chanting the blessings before and after each Torah reading. In accordance with Conservative Synagogue practices, those being called for an Aliyah must be Jewish and over the age of 13. You/your child will need to provide both English and Hebrew names for those called to the Torah. No more than four people can be called for each Aliyah. Additionally, your family will have honors for the following:

- Torah Remover/Replacer/Carrier (2 individuals)
- Torah Lifter (Hagbah)
- Torah Dresser (Gelilah)
- Ark Openers

Please carefully review the enclosed Sample Honors Sheet and contact us with any questions.
Etiquette

Here are some key expectations to remember when attending services at Valley Beth Shalom. Please share this information with your invited guests:

- Be a mensch! Display respectful behavior during services.
- Please do not use your phone in the sanctuary. If you need to use your phone, exit the room and return promptly to your seat when finished.
- Please refrain from speaking to your friends excessively or loudly in the sanctuary. Please be especially respectful of the parents of the B’nai Mitzvah, the rabbi/leader giving instructions or teaching, and the B’nai Mitzvah student leading the prayers or chanting Torah or Haftarah. The B’nai Mitzvah is teaching us from the wisdom of our tradition.
- Please remember the synagogue is a place of respect and dignity, housing sacred objects like the Torah. Please be respectful of the furnishings and objects of the synagogue, including supervising your children.
- Please remember to wear a kippah and to keep a siddur and a copy of the Chumash with you.
- Follow appropriate dress etiquette (modest and respectful). See below.
- HAVE FUN! THIS IS A GREAT MOMENT TO SHARE AND CELEBRATE WITH THE PEOPLE YOU LOVE!

Dress

Please dress appropriately for your celebration. Dress at synagogue services should be modest. Recommendations for appropriate dress for synagogue include:

- Slacks (no jeans)
- Collared shirts (no tee shirts or hoodies)
- A sweater or a jacket with a tie
- A kippah (head covering), especially if you are on the bimah
- Clothing that is modest and fitted appropriately
- Shoulders covered
- Skirts or dresses no shorter than 3 inches above the knee

Those who have celebrated a B’nai Mitzvah should wear a tallit when attending a service. Head coverings as well as tallitot are available for use from the synagogue.
And... We’re Off!

We wish you a wonderful journey full of blessings, meaning, and joy - and we are so honored to be a part of it.

Please be in touch with anyone on our team at anytime! **MAZAL TOV!**

Contact Information

Rabbi Nolan Lebovitz, Senior Rabbi  
nlebovitz@vbs.org  |  (818) 530-4003

Rabbi Ed Feinstein  
efeinstein@vbs.org  |  (818) 530-4002

Cantor Jacqueline Rafii, Cantor and B’nai Mitzvah Director  
rafii@vbs.org  |  (818) 530-4005

Cantor Phil Baron  
pbaron@vbs.org  |  (818) 530-4058

Cantor Herschel Fox  
hfox@vbs.org  |  (818) 530-4005

Yossi Dresner, Ritual Director  
ydresner@vbs.org  |  (818) 530-4012

Lisa Leib, B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator and Clergy Department Manager  
lleib@vbs.org  |  (818) 530-4085

Matthew Weintraub, Executive Director  
mweintraub@vbs.org  |  (818) 530-4027