

# YOUR KOL AMI B'NAI MITZVAH

Congregation Kol Ami Welcomes You to the Middle of Your Journey



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Welcome to the middle of the journey. Why the middle? Because one does not move from being a Jewish child to a Jewish adult overnight. The Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony follows many years of Jewish learning and experience and precedes on-going studying and celebration within the Jewish community.

We have chosen to challenge and celebrate with our 13-year-olds spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and even physically. We do this by allowing them a privilege and responsibility that in Judaism belongs only to adults, inviting our b'nai mitzvah to come before the congregation and read from the Torah. With love, study, and great support from both family and community, they are allowed to stand on the bima and lead us in worship, carry our sacred scroll through the congregation, and chant from the Torah. The B'nai Mitzvah also share their intellectual gifts by teaching us from the weekly Torah portion when delivering their "D'var Torah."

Quite often, parents will describe this time of watching their child on the bima as a moment when they actually see a transformation take place. "They literally seem to grow up before our eyes, right there on the bima." The Bar/Bat Mitzvah often demonstrates a grace, maturity and confidence that they have not fully revealed before.

In the following pages you will see how Kol Ami joins with you in celebrating the middle of this Jewish journey. Together we join in welcoming you to this wonderful part of your Jewish life.

Looking forward to a joyous experience,

Rabbi Tom Weiner & Cantor Danny Mendelson

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# B'NAI MITZVAH TIMELINE

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What is a Bar or Bat Mitzvah? Where does this tradition come from? The answer is relatively straightforward, and it is important not to lose sight of the central meaning of this moment in a young person's life. All cultures have found unique and meaningful ways to recognize that a person in their early teens is beginning a serious transition into adulthood. Most cultures have a way of recognizing the changes that occur physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Our ceremony for recognizing this entrance into adulthood is called the Bar Bat Mitzvah. Welcome to the middle of the Journey.

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## **SPRING (4TH GRADE)**

- Parents receive email invitation to intro B'nai Mitzvah meeting
- Parents attend an introductory informational meeting and to request a date
- Parents submit date selection via an online application

## **FALL (5TH GRADE)**

- Receive date in the mail, sign intent and pay deposit
- Reserve Kol Ami facilities for kiddush or for afternoon or evening party usage

## **DECEMBER (6TH GRADE)**

- Receive email invitation to **4 Required B'nai Mitzvah Workshops** where you will meet and interact with the other 6th grade B'nai Mitzvah families
  - January Workshop:** Held during Religious School on a Sunday
  - February Workshop:** Saturday morning learning service and Kiddush brunch
  - March Workshop 1:** Saturday Group Mitzvah project
  - March Workshop 2:** Held during Religious School on a Sunday

## **9 MONTHS PRIOR TO YOUR CHILD'S DATE**

- Clergy Assistant, Ginny Herron-Lanoil, will contact you to set up your first meeting with Cantor Danny (both the student and parent). Schedule your meeting as soon as you can—this will provide you with the most time options. The B'nai Mitzvah fee of \$1,500 must be paid prior to this meeting. The fee covers 15 tutoring sessions and materials, security for the Saturday service, Friday night oneg and flowers in the vestibule.

## 7 MONTHS PRIOR TO YOUR CHILD'S DATE

### Initial Meeting with the Cantor

**One or both parents are required to attend this meeting.** Your child is assigned a tutor and will receive their study materials (including Torah portion, study book, and Siddur) as well as an electronic file of the prayers that Cantor Danny has made. Download all of your files immediately as Dropbox only keeps them accessible for a short period of time.

After this 30-minute initial meeting, your child will meet four more times with Cantor Danny for 20-30 minutes each. This ensures that your child is on track with learning their Torah portion and prayers.

### How Summer affects B'nai Mitzvahs

If summer is in the middle of prep (Sept-Feb B'nai Mitzvah), everything starts two months earlier (initial contact at 11 months prior; initial Cantor meeting at 9 months prior).

### Schedule Rabbi and Cantor Meetings

At the end of your first meeting with the Cantor, you will coordinate with the Clergy Assistant, Ginny to schedule ALL meeting times for both the Cantor and the Rabbi. Please make scheduling these meetings a priority by being flexible as this process can be complicated with everyone's busy schedules. **Rabbi and Cantor meetings as well as tutor sessions cannot be scheduled during Religious School hours. There are also no clergy meetings during the summer, but tutoring MAY be available.** Tell Cantor Danny your child's summer availability. Do not worry, there is plenty of time allotted for them to be fully prepared.

#### Ginny will also provide families with:

- A musician info sheet that provides options for instruments you can include in your service and their rates
- A scheduling sheet with all of your Clergy appointments
- A security code for the door for easy access
- A confirmation email a few days prior to each appointment. Please confirm this email as soon as possible. If you do not receive an email by the day before your appointment, please call the Clergy office.

### Rabbi Meetings

At their first 30-minute meeting with the Rabbi your child will begin to explore their parsha and its meanings, discuss the mitzvah project, and review the need to attend services. **One or both parents are required to attend this first meeting.** Students will continue to meet with the Rabbi, individually, to discuss the meaning and personal experience of their B'nai Mitzvah, practice and finalize the delivery of their D'var Torah as well as practice all Hebrew and English prayers by reviewing the entire service.

## SHARED SERVICES

We want to emphasize that both children will have the same size role as if they had separate services. Each leads the service, at times together and at times separately. Each child will chant a full and separate Torah portion, recite their own d'var Torah, and complete an individual mitzvah project.

In the 3-4 weeks leading up to the B'nai Mitzvah, There are four meetings when both students will have to be jointly scheduled and attended with the Rabbi and/or Cantor. These meetings help the students and both families become more familiar with each other and help coordinate their roles. This is especially true at the back-to-back honors/music meeting with the Cantor and the Rabbi and the final rehearsal. We understand It can be a challenge to coordinate everyone's schedules to find mutually agreeable times, so we encourage you to be available and accommodating when scheduling these important appointments.



# B'NAI MITZVAH TIMELINE cont'd

## 7 MONTHS PRIOR TO YOUR CHILD'S DATE CONT'D

### Tutoring Sessions

After your initial meeting with the Cantor, your tutor will contact you to arrange a day/time for meetings. During their 15 sessions together the tutor will work with them on their blessings, the chanting of their Torah portion and additional prayers. Kol Ami is confident that 15 sessions are sufficient for your child to learn their portions; however, parents will be contacted if it becomes apparent that extra sessions (at an additional cost) are needed. If your child has special needs that require more time for preparation, please notify us 15 months prior to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah to make accommodations.

### Tutoring Preparation

It is important that your child completes the assignments, and always has their materials (Torah book, Torah copy, recordings and green siddur) with them each time they meet with their tutor. If you need to cancel one of your child's tutor sessions, please notify them 24 hours in advance and they will schedule a make-up session. If you do not notify the tutor 24 hours in advance, the missed session will count as one of the 15 scheduled sessions.

## 1-6 MONTHS PRIOR TO YOUR CHILD'S DATE

- ☐ Tutor Lessons (completed 3 weeks prior to date).
- ☐ Intermittent Clergy meetings (D'var prep/honors selection/music selection)

## FINAL MONTH PRIOR TO YOUR CHILD'S DATE

- ☐ Four Clergy Meetings
- ☐ Final rehearsal in the Sanctuary, the week leading up to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah
- ☐ Submit certificates of insurance to the Executive Director, Jess Lorden, for all of your vendors

### MEETING REQUIREMENTS FOR PARENTS

- First 30-minute meeting with the Cantor and the first 30-minute meeting with the Rabbi
- 1-hr back-to-back Rabbi/Cantor meeting to discuss Honor list and to select melodies/songs for the service.
- Final hour long rehearsal the week leading up to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah
- Friday night service, the night before your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah, where your immediate family will have the honor of lighting the Shabbat candles on the bima and your child will lead kiddush.

# MITZVAH PROJECT

*We encourage students to begin their Mitzvah projects after the final 6th grade workshop with hope that that they will continue well beyond their B'nai Mitzvah, encouraging them to become lifelong compassionate citizens of the world.*

When a child becomes a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, it signifies that s/he is accepting the responsibilities and Mitzvot (commandments) of a Jewish adult. Your child should start thinking about and planning their Mitzvah project at least one year in advance.

## These can include:

- Tikkun olam (repairing the world)
- Tzedakah (justice, righteousness-most commonly thought of as charity)
- Bikkur cholim (visiting the sick)
- Gemilut chasadim (acts of loving kindness).

A Mitzvah project is a volunteer project where a student helps make the world a better place. The project should be engaging and meaningful to them. It can utilize their skills and interests (for example art, music, sports). It can be on a topic that is personally powerful (the homeless, cancer, children, animals). It can be done with other students, family, friends, or alone.

Some students create their own Mitzvah opportunities. Others join in existing programs or volunteer opportunities. Each project should have an individual stamp on it—how can you add something unique, special or original? If you are collecting items, how can you expand the project to be more than just acquiring things from friends? Ultimately, the Mitzvah project is the responsibility of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah as an evolving young adult.

Students must begin their Mitzvah projects prior to becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah. It is our hope that if they choose something of great personal interest and concern they will find the time extremely fulfilling and will continue well beyond their B'nai Mitzvah. We want to create and encourage lifelong compassionate citizens of the world.

## EXAMPLES OF PAST MITZVAH PROJECTS

Volunteering at the **Children's Hope Chest**—they provide help to children in our community suffering from poverty, abuse, neglect, and illness

Volunteering as a Buddy at the **Miracle League of Westchester**, and helping disabled children enjoy playing baseball

Volunteering in the food pantry at the **Carver Center** in Port Chester

Volunteering at the **SPCA of Westchester**, a no-kill animal shelter in Briarcliff Manor

Working with **Kids' Klokset**, a program that provides children and families in need with donated clothes and related items free of charge

Walking the dogs and helping to socialize the cats for adoption at the **Paws Crossed Animal Rescue** in Elmsford

Playing piano every Sunday for the residents of the Memory Care Unit at **The Kensington** assisted living residence in White Plains

Homework helper at the **Carver Family Center** in White Plains

Volunteering at a soup kitchen at the **Trinity Episcopal Church** in Ossining

Reading to the children of the **Coachman Center**, which provides community services to homeless families

Collecting clothing donations for The Teen Boutique, organized by the **Family Services of Westchester**

Cooking for the Homeless at **Congregation Kol Ami**

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# THE B'NAI MITZVAH SERVICE

Each and every Bar/Bat Mitzvah service is special at Kol Ami. Whether your child is flying solo or sharing with another student, the experience will be fulfilling and each child will have their opportunity to shine. Kol Ami makes every service individual to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and their family through the service lead participation, Torah chanting, D'var Torah and parent blessing. You will also be given opportunities for personalization through music choices and honors selections. Some Bar/Bat Mitzvah add an extra expression of their personalities through music, with instruments or song, or art. There are also ways to embed service and tzedakah into your celebration. This can be done by arranging with your caterer to donate leftover food, having a theme or centerpiece idea that gives back, such as school supplies or canned food drive.

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## FRIDAY NIGHT KABBLAT SHABBAT SERVICE

B'nai Mitzvah families participate in the Kabbalat Shabbat service the Friday evening prior to the B'nai Mitzvah by lighting Shabbat candles on the bima. All B'nai Mitzvah will lead Kiddush as well. This is an opportunity to be embraced by the entire Kol Ami community. The Kabbalat service starts at 6:15pm on Friday nights and the candle-lighting is one of the first parts of the service—so you will need to be on time. Kiddush ends the service.

**B'nai Mitzvah services are held only on Saturdays**

## SATURDAY SERVICE B'NAI MITZVAH RESPONSIBILITIES

Each Bar/Bat Mitzvah joins with the clergy as a shaliach tzibur (a service leader). Students have learned about and practiced the Hebrew prayers for this responsibility during their Religious School years. All other prayers are reviewed with their tutor and the Cantor.

### The basic Hebrew prayers expected of the B'nai Mitzvah:

- The Tallit blessing
- Elohai Neshama
- Barechu
- Shema/V'Ahavta
- Mi Chamocha
- Amidah—Avot v'Imahot & G'vurot
- Chant Torah and the appropriate blessings (before and after)
- Kaddish

### D'VAR TORAH (B'NAI MITZVAH SPEECH)

Following the chanting of Torah, B'nai Mitzvah will deliver a brief (3-4 minute) teaching drawn from the Torah portion. This will be written by the B'nai Mitzvah, who will be guided through this process via meetings with the Rabbi.

*Please be mindful that all prayers and readings are divided equitably between two students when they share a service. Students will also chant the same amount of Torah whether they share a service or are alone.*



# THE B'NAI MITZVAH SERVICE

## PARENT AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

### PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- ☐ Get your child to meetings at Kol Ami regularly and on time
  - ☐ Encourage and help your child to schedule regular times to practice
  - ☐ Practice your Torah blessings
  - ☐ Write Parent blessing
  - ☐ Communicate concerns with tutor and or/clergy
  - ☐ Write and submit a bio for your child and include their mitzvah project. See previous months of the Connection for samples.
- 
- ☐ Attend Religious School for a minimum for four (4) consecutive years preceding the Bar/Bat Mitzvah
  - ☐ Be actively enrolled in and attend Religious School at the time of Bar/Bat Mitzvah
  - ☐ Attend eight (8) services at Kol Ami with parent(s) or guardian during the school year preceding the ceremony. This will help tremendously when you are planning your own celebration. It is suggested that you attend each of the various Shabbat services at least once. We also suggest Festival services such as Sukkot, Simchat Torah and Purim.
    - **Friday evening** – Kabbalat Shabbat service (6:15pm in the Sanctuary)
    - **Saturday morning** – B'nai Mitzvah service (10:00am in the Sanctuary)
    - **Saturday evening** – B'nai Mitzvah service (5:00pm in the Sanctuary)
  - ☐ Attend all tutor and Clergy meetings fully prepared. Practice regularly and according to your tutor's instructions
  - ☐ Lead Hebrew prayers in the siddur (prayer book) with reasonable fluency
  - ☐ Learn and chant the Hebrew blessings before and after the readings of the Torah
  - ☐ Learn and chant your assigned portion from the Hebrew text of the Torah scroll
  - ☐ Prepare and present a D'var Torah (speech) on your portion with assistance from the Rabbi
  - ☐ Be fully engaged in a Mitzvah Project the year leading up to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah
  - ☐ Attend all four, 6th Grade B'nai Mitzvah Workshops
  - ☐ Attend, with your immediate family, the Friday night service before your Bar/Bat Mitzvah where you will lead the community in lighting Shabbat candles on the bima and your child will lead Kiddush.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator

Pam Pass  
949-4717 x 124  
bnaimitzvah@nykolami.org

### Meetings and Workshops

Ginny Herron-Lanoil  
949-4717 x 114  
GinnyHerron-Lanoil@nykolami.org

### Facilities Rental, B'nai Mitzvah Dates and Logistics

Jess Lorden  
949-4717 x 101  
jessicalorden@nykolami.org

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# HONORS FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

At this time of your family's rejoicing together, you will have an opportunity for friends and family members to participate in the service. We welcome Non-Jewish family members to participate in all Honors. We strongly recommend that you and your family attend other Kol Ami B'nai Mitzvah. Doing this will enable you to see different options so that you can best personalize your service. We have noted what is typical, and we are happy to discuss variations to accommodate your family's needs. Use the space in the margins to write down your Honor names and bring this sheet with you to your scheduled Honors meeting with Rabbi Weiner.

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*We welcome  
Non-Jewish family  
members to  
participate in all  
Honors.*

## 1. ALIYOT

An Aliyah is the honor of being called up to the Torah to recite the blessings before and after the chanting of the scroll. Each Aliyah may be recited alone or in groups. The honor of reciting the blessings is offered those who are at least of Bar/Bat Mitzvah age.

There are typically 3 aliyot (see #6 for exceptions), the third of which is chanted by the B'nai Mitzvah. The amount is the same whether it's a shared service or not. Below is the typical list:

**First Aliyah:** Grandparents, Aunts/Uncles, and Siblings (13 and up)

**Second Aliyah:** Parents

**Third Aliyah:** Bar/Bat Mitzvah

## 2. HAGBA'AH (LIFTING) AND G'LILAH (DRESSING)

At the end of the Torah service, the Torah is lifted and turned to face the Congregation (teen or adult strength is required here), then wrapped and dressed. One person for lifting and multiple helpers for wrapping and dressing is typical. G'lilah is great for younger family members like siblings and cousins.

## 3. OPENING AND CLOSING OF THE ARK

The ark is open twice during the service—when taking the Torah out of the ark and when the Torah is being returned. At the beginning of the Torah service the honorees will stay up on the bima during the hakafa (while the Torah is being carried around the synagogue) and close the ark when the Torah is brought back up on the bima.

# HONORS CONT'D

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## 4. TEFILLAH—LEADING HONORS FOR SIBLINGS

Throughout the service, there are opportunities for siblings to participate. Some families choose to have the siblings lead a tefillah (prayer)—typically, either Elohai Neshama or the Shema. These honors are divided equitably for a shared service.

## 5. OTHER HONORS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE

Throughout the service, there are opportunities for readings from the siddur, musical pieces, appropriate poems, etc. to enhance the service. This honor is shared equitably for a shared service. Please consult with the Clergy regarding your choices.

## 6. FAMILY MEMBERS CHANTING AND READING FROM THE TORAH

Typically, the B'nai Mitzvah chant 3 aliyot. If you have a family member or close friend who is able to read/chant Torah with confidence and facility, you may choose to have him/her chant an aliyah. This must be discussed with Cantor Danny at the initial meeting to coordinate this honor. Cantor Danny will assign the verses and provide a recording. Please note that any Torah chanters or readers must read directly from the Torah scroll so advance preparation is essential.

## 7. PASSING THE TORAH FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

Before B'nai Mitzvah begin reciting their Torah portions, the Torah is passed down through the generations—from great-grandparents to grandparents to parents to the B'nai Mitzvah. For a shared service, this is performed twice, with each family having their own special moment.

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## PARENT BLESSING

We invite parents to bless their children, but please remember that the major speech of the day is your child(ren)'s. This isn't a time to summarize their accomplishments; it's a time to speak to their heart and to bless them going forward.

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# THE B'NAI MITZVAH SERVICE

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## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

### SERVICE INFORMATION

Shabbat morning services begin promptly at 10:00 a.m. We suggest indicating 9:45 a.m. on your invitations to ensure the prompt arrival of guests.

Shabbat evening services begin promptly at 5:00 p.m. We suggest indicating 5:15 p.m. on your invitations

Services are usually held in the Temple's main Sanctuary, which can be expanded to accommodate all your guests.

At Kol Ami, we are blessed with an incredible musical team. Our Music Director, Alex Hopkins, plays piano at every Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. Cantor Danny will supply you with contact information at your first meeting and you can email her for specific details and rates for including additional musicians which may enhance the beauty of your service. As the date approaches, one of your meetings with the Cantor will be choosing musical selections for your service. We advise that you contact Alex, for all arrangements, at least 3 months prior to your date. For a shared service, families should make this decision together.

### MUSIC

This simcha is a joyous event which is inseparable from our congregation's worship. Please help us to make this Shabbat both "Sa-me-ach" (joyous) and "Kadosh" (holy).

### RESPECT IN THE SANCTUARY

**We therefore call your attention to the following:**

- The clothes we wear in synagogue should be modest and appropriate. Everyone attending should dress for the religious service when coming to synagogue.
- Personal conversation should be kept to a minimum; greeting of family and friends should take place before or after services.
- We refrain from smoking inside and outside the synagogue near the building.
- Cell phones should be turned off before entering sanctuary and should remain off for the entire service. They should be put away (in a pocket or purse, underneath the chair, etc.) and not be visible during the service.
- **No photographs are allowed during the service.**

# THE B'NAI MITZVAH SERVICE

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION CONT'D

*Even if you don't know them personally, many of our children's Religious School classmates have been on this Jewish Journey with them. While it is certainly not mandatory, we encourage you to consider including RS friends. You are also welcome but not obligated to invite the Clergy, tutor or any staff members to your Simcha. Please understand if they are not able to make it.*

### PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO RECORDING

You are allowed access to the sanctuary for photographs 90 minutes prior to the start of the service. If you have a shared service, you must coordinate timing with the other family. All photography equipment must be removed no later than 30 minutes prior to the start time of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.

**Before the Morning service:** from 8:30-9:30am

**Before the Afternoon service:** from 3:30-4:30pm

- Torahs may only be handled by the clergy or other authorized Temple personnel.
- Photography and video-recording are not permitted during the service.
- A certificate of insurance from your photographer must be submitted to the Executive Director one month prior to your service.

### FLOWERS

Kol Ami does not have flowers on the bima, but the temple provides flowers for the table in the vestibule leading into the sanctuary. The cost for these flowers is included in your B'nai Mitzvah fee.

### PROGRAMS

Providing programs is a nice way to include everyone in the service, particularly if you are hosting non-Kol Ami or non-Jewish guests. A welcome, general information, explanations of the service components, honorees, and loved ones not in attendance are several things you might want to include. If you decide to have a program, please leave a copy in the office for us to share with other families.

### TALLIT AND KIPPAH (YARMULKE)

All of our B'nai Mitzvah wear tallitot and are encouraged to wear kippot. Plain kippot are supplied by Kol Ami, but families may wish to provide personalized kippot for their guests. Jewish participants in the Torah service are encouraged to wear tallitot, which are symbolic of the mitzvot in which the Jewish people "wrap ourselves." Many choose to wear a family heirloom.



# THE B'NAI MITZVAH SERVICE

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION CONT'D

*In the spirit of your  
child reaching a state  
of maturity and  
responsibility, encourage  
them to also make a  
personal contribution to  
a charity of their choice  
from some of the money  
that they received as gifts.*

### WORSHIPPERS AT THE SERVICE

Our services are not private and worshippers are welcome at all Shabbat services at Kol Ami. The B'nai Mitzvah are considered a significant part of our Shabbat worship experience. Also present will be ushers (parent volunteers and members of our Board of Trustees) and a Board member who will make presentations from the bima during the service and will extend congratulatory wishes and gifts to the students at the end of the service.

#### **Your child will be presented with:**

- A copy of the Plaut Torah Commentary (from the Men's Council)
- A Kiddush cup (from the Women of Reform Judaism—our Sisterhood)
- A certificate for \$3,250 from the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) to be redeemed toward a NFTY trip to Israel during the student's High School years (Kol Ami will match this gift with an additional \$250)
- A free 1-year membership to the Jewish Museum in NYC (from the Religious School)

### USHERING

All parents of B'nai Mitzvah students are required to serve as ushers for our B'nai Mitzvah services. We take ushering responsibilities very seriously and ask that you do the same—the B'nai Mitzvah family is counting on you! Please come prepared to do the job that is required: part greeter, part disciplinarian, and above all, a symbol of the respect that we wish to give our service and our congregational community.

Preserving decorum in our sanctuary and the prayerful mood of our services is a paramount value of our congregation. As an usher, you will ensure that all worshippers, adults as well as children, show respect for the sanctity of the services, the leaders, the celebrants, and the Temple facility. Ushering will also provide you and your child(ren) with an opportunity to see a B'nai Mitzvah service in action. You will receive an email asking you to sign up for a date of your choosing, via a Google doc, 6-9 months prior to your child(ren)'s Bar/Bat Mitzvah. If you need to change your date, you must contact another family to switch. More detailed instructions will be emailed as your ushering date comes closer.

### TZEDAKAH AND TIKKUN OLAM

Sharing your joy in the form of tzedakah is always appropriate. It is customary to make a donation to the Rabbi's and/or Cantor's Discretionary Funds, in any amount that feels comfortable and meaningful to you. These funds are used to support tikkun olam, scholarships and to enhance synagogue programs.

Another suggestion is to make a donation to a Kol Ami fund that is important to your family or donate to any charity of your choice. We also encourage your now Jewish adult to continue with their mitzvah project or to commit to another activity where they can continue in the spirit of tikkun olam.

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# JEWISH LIFE AT KOL AMI AFTER YOUR B'NAI MITZVAH

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## UPPER CLASS RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

*I became closer friends with kids who don't go to my school—these are my Kol Ami friends who I get to see each week in Religious School."*

*"Talking with Rabbi Shira every week about poverty and how Judaism views our personal obligation was really interesting. It made me realize even as a teenager, I can work to make the world a better place"*

*"Rabbi Tom is so cool!  
In 10th grade we get to talk about a lot of issues that are important to us now, it's really relevant to our lives."*

*"It's a fun and engaging class that has interesting and relevant topics. Idan really gets kids our age."*

**Director of Youth Engagement**  
Zoë Shannon  
949-4717 x111  
zoeshannon@nykolami.org

The essence of becoming B'nai Mitzvah is accepting the responsibility, the sacred obligation, to be part of and care for the Jewish community. This is not the end of Jewish education but the beginning of a lifelong commitment to Jewish study, tzedakah, and mitzvot. Following B'nai Mitzvah, we encourage our students continue their education through attendance in 8th, 9th and 10th grade programs (leading to Confirmation in 10th grade), followed by our 11th/12th Grade High School program.

### 8TH GRADE

Pam Pass teaches our 8th graders. Exploring issues of racism, hate and anti-Semitism leads to the challenging discussion of the "upstander and bystander." Students will work together to uncover reactions and feelings about the Holocaust as they design, prepare and lead the community service for Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day). A visit by a temple member, who is also a Holocaust survivor, will talk to the group about his personal and emotionally moving experiences as a child during the war.

### 9TH GRADE

Rabbi Shira Milgrom teaches our 9th graders focusing on the Jewish responsibility to global justice while exploring our individual and collective identities as Jewish people. Through text study, debate and dialogue, music, art, and drama we will address issues of justice, responsibility, and social action—challenging ourselves with new questions each week in hopes of discovering answers that are authentic and meaningful. A memorable part of 9th grade is the HUC Soup Kitchen Trip, where our 9th graders serve a meal at the soup kitchen.

### 10TH GRADE

Rabbi Tom Weiner teaches our 10th grade Confirmation class studying ancient and modern texts that help guide conversations on relationships, love, family, sex, politics and decision-making. Each student will choose a modern Jewish novel to read and discuss with the class and they take turns presenting "self-portraits" as the class evolves into a close community. Over a fall weekend, all the members of the class spend a special weekend together at the Confirmation Retreat. Students describe this time as "an incredible and emotional experience" where they create deeper connections that bond the class and Rabbi Tom as a community. The year ends with our Confirmation students leading our congregation for the Shavuot service. A special, private Confirmation dinner and blessing, for students and their families, further deepens connections.

### 11TH/12TH GRADE

Confirmation does not mark the end of Religious School, but is another step along the way toward graduation from Kol Ami HS in 12th grade. Zoë Shannon, Director of Youth Engagement, teaches our 11th/12th grade class, "Jewish dilemmas and decisions." This course will focus on "hot topics" and different approaches Judaism has taken in trying to solve ethical dilemmas: How does Judaism view caring for our bodies, substance abuse and reproductive rights? What about Israel? This class aims to provide students with different perspectives on these hot-topics, helping them to make informed decisions as young Jewish adults.

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# JEWISH LIFE AT KOL AMI AFTER YOUR B'NAI MITZVAH

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## HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP

*Our Youth Group is an opportunity for our older kids to engage socially and meaningfully with each other through events, trips and social activities. Whether they are racing through the streets of NYC's midtown on an "Amazing Race Scavenger Hunt", laughing together at a Comedy Club, enjoying a movie, ice skating or bowling, we are always looking for new, fun activities for our teens.*

Our large high school Youth Group, led by Zoë Shannon, Director of Youth Engagement, enjoys a sense of community and explores their Jewish identity through a variety of engaging activities. Students keep coming back to Kol Ami year after year, not only to take advantage of our amazing programs, but because they make meaningful friendships that last a lifetime. In addition to the many cornerstone trips you'll read about below, our students have a lot of experiences to meet and have fun together or just to hang out in our Youth Group Lounge.

We invite you and your friends to join our community! Here are just a few of the opportunities you can participate in with the Kol Ami Youth Group:

### MIDNIGHT RUN

Interested in helping out right here, in the heart of New York? Then Midnight Run is the event for you. During this evening event, students join together to collect and sort food, clothing and provisions for the homeless and then take to the streets of New York City, in an act of tzedakah (charity) and outreach. In this program, students get the opportunity not only to provide for the homeless, but to meet homeless people and speak with them, becoming ambassadors of the community. This is always a meaningful experience for our teens, and leaves a lasting impact that they will carry into their lives.

### WEEKEND RELIGIOUS ACTION CENTER (RAC) TRIP TO WASHINGTON D.C.

Students join other temples from all over the country to lobby for their values and represent their community as they speak before Senators and Congressmen. The high school kids get to learn about key issues important to Reform Jews in the U.S., spend a weekend in beautiful Washington D.C., have havdallah at one of the famous memorials on the Mall, and take advantage of this unique opportunity to put your values into action.

### SOCIAL JUSTICE TRIPS TO PUERTO RICO

Every other year, students have an opportunity to travel with their peers to Puerto Rico to learn about and create social change in a local community. This unique trip allows students to learn the value of tikkun olam (repairing the world) while enjoying the amazing sites of Caribbean coastlines, active volcanoes and even zip-lining through the rainforest! Join your friends and earn community service credit as you help others build a school for a local community. This trip promises to be one of the most memorable experiences you can have, as you live the value of tikkun olam.

### NFTY ISRAEL TRIP

There is nothing that connects a student to their heritage and their community quite like a trip to Israel with their peers. Students are transformed after a six-week long journey that takes students from Europe, where they learn about the Jewish communities there and share powerful experiences surrounding the holocaust, to the breathtaking views of Israel, visiting all of the important sites. A certificate for \$3,250 from the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) and Kol Ami's \$250 match as part of your B'nai Mitzvah gifts are available to offset some of the costs of this trip.

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# JEWISH LIFE AT KOL AMI AFTER YOUR B'NAI MITZVAH

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## THE VA'AD— KOL AMI HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH LEADERSHIP BOARD

*Did you know that Kol Ami maintains meaningful contact with students after they graduate our Religious School? While they are away at College we send birthday greetings and goodies at Hanukkah and Purim and Rabbi Tom even makes some campus visits. Kol Ami publishes a student directory to help old friends keep in touch while away at school. Help us to stay in touch with your college or graduate school bound student by giving us their contact information.*

Are you interested in becoming a more active member of the community? Think you have a special skill to contribute? Are you a people-person? Then you might consider joining one of our teams on the Va'ad (Youth Leadership Board). Students who are interested can choose from a variety of different leadership positions on the board. The Va'ad's main goal is to create Kehillah (community) for our high school students. Zoë Shannon, Director of Youth Engagement, mentors the Va'ad.

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Our 9th-12th Grades meet together at "Kehillah" community meetings on Wednesday nights as part of their Religious School time where our Va'ad teens have a chance to design and lead activities for the entire Upper School. The teens make closer friendships and "really get to know each other". Va'ad members also meet and plan retreats and fun activities from Midnight Run, to NYC scavenger hunts, Escape the Room and Comedy Club events. In all of these activities, students get to choose what they are interested in doing with their friends and are developing the skills it takes to be leaders in their community.

### VA'AD (YOUTH LEADERSHIP BOARD ) POSITIONS

#### Youth Board President

Leads the youth group, attends and helps coordinate all youth group events, runs meetings and oversees other Va'ad members and teams.

#### Tikkun Olam Team

Creates opportunities for Tikkun Olam (repairing the world) and social justice events, such as soup kitchens, Midnight Runs and more.

#### Kehillah Community Organizing Team

Oversees weekly sessions of "kehillah" time, and creates an inclusive, thoughtful community.

#### Social Programming Team

Creates opportunities for fun, informal get-togethers, and all social events.

#### PR and Facebook Team

The face and voice of the Va'ad on Social Media, this team is responsible for marketing and spreading the word about youth group events.

#### Chaplains Team

Designs and coordinates opportunities for ritual and prayer, especially during retreats and trips.

#### Treasury and Tzedakah Team

Oversees the Va'ad's funds and raises money for youth group/charity events.

#### 9th Grade Reps

Represent the Freshmen who are starting out in the teen community, reach out to them and make them feel welcome.

# GLOSSARY

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<b>ALIYAH</b>	Being called up to the Torah to recite the blessings before and after the Torah reading
<b>ARON HAKODESH</b>	The Ark that holds the Torah (Sifrei Torah, pl.)
<b>BAR/BAT MITZVAH</b>	Son or daughter of the mitzvot, meaning one who, like an adult, is able to fulfill Jewish obligations
<b>BIMAH</b>	The platform on which the Torah is read and from which the service is led
<b>D'VAR TORAH</b>	B'nai Mitzvah speech, teaching about and personalizing a particular Torah portion, written with guidance from the Rabbi
<b>G'LILAH</b>	The honor of dressing the Torah after it is lifted
<b>HAFTARAH</b>	The portion of the Shabbat service taken from the Prophets, the second section of the Bible; it means “finishing” and it is the portion that “finishes” or ends, the Torah service
<b>HAGBA'AH</b>	The honor of lifting the Torah at the conclusion of the Torah reading
<b>HAVDALLAH</b>	The ceremony that celebrates the end of Shabbat after the sun has set; this is a part of the 5:30pm service during fall and winter
<b>KADDISH</b>	The prayer that praises God and is recited to remember those who have died
<b>KIDDUSH</b>	The prayer over wine that celebrates Shabbat
<b>MITZVAH</b>	Literally “commandment;” a Jewish obligation; all mitzvot (pl.) are considered pathways to holiness – to becoming a better person and for creating a better world
<b>PARASHA</b>	The weekly portion of the Torah
<b>SIDDUR</b>	Prayer book (comes from the same Hebrew root as Seder; it means “order”)
<b>TANAKH</b>	The Hebrew word for Bible, made up of these three parts: T=Torah N=Nevi'im (prophets) K(KH)=Ketuvim (writings)
<b>TIKKUN OLAM</b>	Literally “repair the world;” acts of social justice or kindness for the betterment of the world
<b>TORAH</b>	Contains the Five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy; may be printed in a book or hand-written in a scroll.
<b>TZEDAKAH</b>	Means “justice, righteousness;” refers to the Jewish obligation to give money or other resources to help create a better world
<b>YAD</b>	Means “hand;” refers to the pointer used for reading the Torah