

**B'nai Mitzvah Handbook
5772 (2011-12)**



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1. Overview

*“On three things the world stands: On Torah, on Prayer, and on Acts of Love and Kindness”
-Talmud, Pirke Avot*

Jewish wisdom teaches that “on three things the world stands: on Torah, on prayer, and on acts of love and kindness.” The JCP B’nai Mitzvah curriculum is based on these three concepts and our hope is that by the time your child celebrates their simcha, they will have formed a fluid knowledge of these concepts to prepare the child for their life as an evolving Jewish adult.

The transition from child to adult is a very exciting time in the life of a young person and their family. We approach this transition in two ways. First, we expose and train the student in Torah, Prayer, and Acts of Love and Kindness (Mitzvot). Secondly, we draw upon a framework of stage development theory to help usher a young person into an independent, confident, and mature adult. This integrative approach will become apparent as the year progresses and through the framework of our curriculum.

Liturgy and Prayer Curriculum

Students will have a weekly session on Monday afternoons with music specialist and Holiday song leader, Jacob Stein. Students will learn the meaning and melodies of the major prayer rubrics of the Shabbat morning, Shabbat Evening, Havdalah, and the Shabbat Table blessings.

“Acts of Love and Kindness” = Jewish Ethics and Values Curriculum

How to draw upon Jewish thought to live as a Jew in the modern world is the focus of our Ethics curriculum. The ethics framework is based on the threefold relationship that a Jew has with self and society: *Ben Adam l’Atzmo*, *Ben Adam l’Chavero*, *Ben Adam l’Makom* – between person and self, between person and others, and between person and God. Jewish ethics meets on Wednesday afternoon with Rabbi Darren Levine and guest teachers.

Torah

“Taking hold of Torah” by helping each student find a personal connection to Torah, Jewish wisdom, and Jewish thought is our goal. Individual and family experiences help the student to see themselves on the continuum of Jewish tradition both as a member of K’lal Yisrael (Jewish People) and their own family of origin.

Hebrew Curriculum

All students will study Hebrew in two sessions per week in levels appropriate to their individual level. Students are divided into Hebrew learning sections based on a combination of proficiency among 5th and 6th graders. The goals are for students to be able to read Hebrew and to have some basic comprehension of prayer and conversational vocabulary.

Weekly Schedule September to June

Monday

Hebrew (4:00 - 4:40)

Jewish Liturgy and Prayer (4:45-5:35)

Shira – Song and Spirituality (5:40-6:00)

Wednesday

Hebrew (4:00-4:40)

Jewish Ethics and Values (4:45-6:00)

2. Curriculum: Liturgy and Prayer

"When you pray, don't make your prayer only a fixed form, make it of the heart."

Talmud, Pirke Avot 2:13

Students will be trained in the major prayer rubrics for the Shabbat Evening and Morning service, Havdalah Ceremony, and the Shabbat table blessings. Each student will have their own siddur and corresponding music CD for home use. By the end of the course, each student will demonstrate knowledge and comfort with the following prayers:

1. Blessings for Torah
2. Barchu
3. Shema
4. Vehavta
5. Shabbat Candle Blessing
6. Friday Night Kiddush
7. Hamotzi
8. Amida (Avot v'Imahot)
9. Mourners Kaddish
10. Aleinu
11. Blessing before haftarah
12. Blessing after haftarah
13. V'shamru
14. Mah Tov
15. Mi Chamocho
16. Baruch Sheamar
17. Birchot ha-Shachar
18. Adon Olam
19. Yigdal
20. Havdalah Blessings

3. Curriculum: Ethics and Values

*“If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
If I am only for myself alone, what am I?
And, if not now, when?”*

-Pirke Avot, 1:14

Jewish Ethics and Values

Students meet Wednesday afternoons from 5:00-6:00 for discussions about Jewish ethics and values. The program is focused on personal and social responsibility through a Progressive Jewish framework with the assumption that students live in a diverse world. Students use the Talmudic “Pirke Avot” ancient wisdom text as the background for discussions that take place in the JCP Library and on monthly field trips, social action and mitzvah projects and family sessions. The learning goal is to provide students with decision making tools about how to think about personal and social issues from a Jewish perspective – the perspective that they grow into during the year as they develop and discover their own Jewish voice.

The ethics framework is based on the threefold relationship that a Jew has with self and society: *Ben Adam l’Atzmo*, *Ben Adam l’Chavero*, *Ben Adam l’Makom* – between person and self, between person and others, and between person and God. (see curriculum by month below)

Month	Between a person and	Topic	Action/Activity
September	Others- Chavero	B’reishit - Introduction to the year and to each other	
October	Others- Chavero	Lashon HaRa, Lashon Hatov: the ethics of language, speaking, and the tongue	Family learning session
November	Others- Chavero	Chesed: Jewish Response to Hunger and Homelessness	Preparing and giving food to the homeless with the Midnight Run organization and parents (Saturday Night 8-12 PM)
December	Others- Chavero	Hachnasat Orchim: Welcoming the Stranger – Jewish ideas of having and open and optimistic view of the world and others	Family learning session. What does “light unto the nations” mean to you? (Sunday 3 PM)

January	Self- Atzmo	B'tzelem Elohim: Judaism and the body. Jewish perspectives on gender, drugs, alcohol, sex	Visit Niche Media Magazine: Stereotypes and false images in the media.
February	Self- Atzmo	Bikur Cholim: Caring for others as a personal value .	Visit to Hospital and bringing mishloach manot to the ill.
March	God - Makom	Gilgul HaChayim: Jewish Life-cycle: Birth, life, death	Visit to birthing center, visit to funeral home & cemetery with Family participation
April	God - Makom	Emet v'Emunah: Do I believe? What do I believe?	Visit to Ellis Island
May	God - Makom	Mi Ani: Different approaches to Judaism. Who am I Jewishly?	Visit to Congregation B'nai Jeshrun, Williamsburg Shtetle, Temple Emanu-El
June	Wrap-up	Siyum: Conclusions and preparations for leading the Erev Rosh Hashana Service	

Mitzvah Project - "Putting the Mitzvah in B'nai Mitzvah"

All B'nai Mitzvah students are invited to complete a mitzvah project consisting of thirteen hours of community service. The details on how to complete this project will be discussed at the B'nai Mitzvah Family Retreat in the Fall. Students are encouraged to speak about their mitzvah project in their D'var Torah or to present their experiences during their ceremony.

Tzedakah - Gifts of Time and Resources

Tzedakah, according to the Torah, is "equal to all other commandments combined." Giving of charitable gifts is basic to Jewish tradition and is one way for Jews to express their gratitude. Tzedakah— which literally means "justice"— is one of the basic tenets of living Judaism: helping to make the world better by helping others.

Mitzvah Checklist - A Family Affair

Students are expected to complete a mitzvah checklist which they will be given at the beginning of the school year. We expect that students will need their parents to be involved in their success at completing this section (see below).

4. B'nai Mitzvah Inventory Check List

Instructions

1. Complete the Mitzvah list by the end of the school year
2. Check each item upon completion and put the date next to the mitzvah
3. Sign your signature when complete and return to Rabbi Darren

Torah – Study and Learning

- Read the story of Genesis with your parents -
- Tell the story of Exodus at the Passover Seder
- Tell the story of Hannukah before the first night
- Teach somebody else how to light the Shabbat candles
- Teach somebody younger the “4 questions” at Passover
- Your Torah Mitzvah

Avodah – Prayer and Worship

- Lead Shabbat Table Blessings 10 different times -
- Read/Chant the “kiddush” at a Passover Seder
- Fix a mezuzah on a door in your home
- Light and bless all 8 Hannukah candles
- Recite the shema each night for two weeks
- Your Prayer Mitzvah

Gimilut Chasadim – Acts of Love and Kindness

- Give tzedaka to the poor
- Try and stop another person from gossiping
- Help an elderly person
- Improve your neighborhood
- Attend one public rally to stand up for a cause you are passionate about
- Your Act of Love and Kindness

When this is complete, please sign and submit it to one of your teachers

B'nai Mitzvah Student Name:

Parent Signature

Rabbi Darren Levine

5. Torah and Haftarah Training

Torah and Haftarah

Four to six months prior to the child's ceremony, depending on skill levels, private tutors will begin training students in their Torah and Haftarah portions where appropriate, reviewing all prayers, and preparing child for their individual celebration. While some Bar/Bat mitzvah students read their entire Torah portion, there are sometimes readings available for other family members who would like the opportunity to read from the Torah at the ceremony. If a member of your family is proficient at reading Torah, please encourage them to participate.

Studying with Private Tutors

4-6 Months prior to your child's b'nai mitzvah ceremony, students will begin work with private tutors to focus on their Torah and Haftarah portions. This will be arranged with the b'nai mitzvah coordinator.

The tutor will be responsible for teaching the student how to chant Torah and Haftarah, how to chant his/her specific Torah and Haftarah readings, and how to write a meaningful d'var Torah (short teaching on the Torah or Haftarah reading). Should the tutoring period span a summer vacation, an adjustment will be made so that there will be enough time for preparations. Although we encourage you to work with a JCP tutor, if your family would like to hire a private tutor, please coordinate this with the JCP staff. JCP will also help match private tutors with families and students who wish to plan an alternative B'nai Mitzvah celebration outside of the above program.

6. Family Tree Project

Taking hold of Torah: My Family Tree Project

*“In order to know where you are going,
you must first know from where you came”*

–Pirke Avot

Project overview

Each student is asked to learn about their personal history through the creation of a family tree and by recording two interviews with a family elder. This project is done in the Spring.

Part I - Family Tree

Students are invited to identify, create, and design any family tree template they would like. Students can use computer generated family trees OR create and design theirs by hand.

Students are asked to place into their family tree the following information if appropriate:

- Siblings, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents to the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc degree. (great grandparents, great uncles, great-great grandparents, etc)
- Birth and (death) dates and
- location for as many possible people on your tree

Example: Albert Shanfield

B. Nov 6, 1912 Radam, Poland.

D. Dec 6, 1987 Portland, Maine

Part II – Recording Personal History with two family elders

Students are asked to choose one elder from each family line (parent A and parent B) and interview and record the conversation. The recording can be audio or video but it must be transcribed in written form when submitted on the due date. Examples of questions include:

- Where were you born?
- Where did you go to school?
- What was it like to grow up in your home?
- What did you do with your friends when you were 11 years old?
- Did you have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah?
- What did your parents do to make a living?
- What do you remember about your parents?
- What do you remember about my parents?
- What is your biggest hope for me?
- Five more additional questions of your own

7. B'Yachad Experiences - Children and Parents together **(Final Dates will be determined in June)**

Sept/October

Learning commences for general Bar/Bat Mitzvah skills including prayers, ethics curriculum, the Torah service, critical reading of texts, and introduction to Torah and Haftarah. Learning takes place during the regular Keshet meeting hours on Monday and Wednesday afternoons from 4:00-6:00 PM thru the end of May. During the course of the year, students will be expected to complete approximately 30 minutes of prayer review each week using their MP3 players or Ipod's.

Family Retreat (mid/late October)

A special and mandatory B'nai Mitzvah mini-retreat for families will take place on a Sunday in October. Celebration dates and locations will be finalized at this time.

Good Works Experience: October/November (depending on scheduling)

Serve the Homeless with Midnight Run. Midnight Run is an organization that delivers food and clothing to the homeless in New York City and is made possible through the help of volunteers. JCP B'nai Mitzvah students and families will volunteer one evening to put the learning of Jewish ethics into practice.

Family Shabbat Pot-luck (December, March)

B'nai Mitzvah Families gather twice during the year to celebrate and study Shabbat together.

Family Field Trips (April/May)

Students and parents are expected to attend our late-April group tour of Museum of Jewish Heritage – Living Memorial to the Holocaust - in honor of Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day). At the end of May, families join together for a half-day experience at Ellis Island.

Group B'nai Mitzvah (Sept/early Oct)

Students who successfully completed the year of study during the previous year, will lead the JCP Evening Rosh Hashanah Service as a celebration of their group B'nai Mitzvah. A large communal meal will follow services. Each family will have the opportunity to invite up to 30 guests. Incoming students are invited to attend with their families as the beginning to their preparation year.

8. Your B'nai Mitzvah Ceremony

Types of Ceremonies

You are invited to be as creative as you possibly know how to celebrate your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Your child is unique and the ceremony should reflect that uniqueness. Think BIG! Be BOLD! Be UNIQUE!

Group B'nai Mitzvah

The JCP Erev Rosh Hashanah service will be group led by seventh grade students and those who plan to celebrate their ceremony in the ensuing twelve months. Even if your child intends to have their own personal ceremony around the time of their birthday, each student is still expected to attend the group B'nai Mitzvah and celebrate as a class of students.

Shabbat Morning

Many B'nai Mitzvah ceremonies are marked by participation in the Shabbat morning service. The Bar/Bat mitzvah stands before the entire community to mark his/her transition to maturity and responsibility under Jewish law.

Shachrit/Mincha/Maariv

The three daily services (morning, noon, evening) where a B'nai Mitzvah ceremony can be celebrated – most appropriate for Saturday, Monday, and Thursday when the Torah is read publicly.

Havdalah

The Havdalah service marks the conclusion of Shabbat when the spices, wine, and havdalah candle are raised.

Alternative Ceremonies

There are other sacred moments for a child to celebrate their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. You are invited to be as creative as possible in dreaming up a ceremony that speaks to your family. B'nai Mitzvah trips to Israel can also be very popular.

Making Your Ceremony Unique and Involving loved ones

Hakafah

When the Torah Scroll is removed from the Ark, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's immediate family – parents and siblings – are invited join in the procession around the sanctuary. Following the procession, siblings will retake their seats, and grandparents and great grandparents will join the parents and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah for the Torah Passing Ceremony.

Torah Passing Ceremony

Family members and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah can participate in the "chain of tradition," where the Torah is symbolically passed down from one generation to the next by holding the Sefer Torah (Torah Scroll) in front of each member of the family as they stand on the bimah. Grandparents, great grandparents, parents, and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah will form a line along which the Torah Scroll is 'passed' from generation to generation. Once the Bar/Bat Mitzvah has received the Torah Scroll, it will be brought to the lectern to be prepared for reading.

Aliyot

There are three Torah honors called Aliyot. Each Aliyah involves honorees chanting the blessings before and

after the Torah reading. Aliyot may go to anyone over the age of thirteen the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family seeks to honor. Honorees often include, but are not limited to: grandparents, parents, older siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Parents Blessing

Parents are encouraged to share words of wisdom, a prayer, and good wishes with their child during the service.

Music and Performance

During the ceremony, some students may elect to perform a Jewish piece of music, display art which they created that relates to their Jewish identity, or sing a song that is appropriate to the B'nai Mitzvah experience. Each student is encouraged to bring their full selves to their ceremony.

9. Frequently Asked Questions?

Does my child need to read Hebrew to join the B'nai Mitzvah Program?

Yes, all entering students must be able to read the Hebrew letters and make letter and vowel combinations. Private tutoring can be arranged before the academic year begins to prepare the student.

Can JCP accommodate students with Special Learning Needs?

Yes. All children are welcome to participate in the B'nai Mitzvah program at JCP. If your child has a learning challenge that affects his or her ability to learn in a communal setting, please contact us so that we can discuss educational alternatives. If your child has a special learning need, we are committed to helping you find the best way to prepare for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Special arrangements can be made to allow students and/or other family members with disabilities to participate fully in the ceremony.

Who will officiate at my child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

Rabbi Darren is available to officiate and we are also happy to work with outside clergy or special friends of the family to help prepare the student and coordinate training and the relationship. Our goal is to make the experience as personal as possible.

Can we use the JCP Torah, Prayerbooks and Other Ritual Objects?

Yes. JCP will make the community Torah and ark available to you and your family. JCP owns 50 copies of the "Small Sanctuary" Siddur by Berman House and will be available to your family. The Kiddush cup needs to be provided by the family should they desire to make a communal Kiddush.

Can my child learn to Wrap/Lay Tefillin?

Yes. Translated as "phylacteries," tefillin are special ritual boxes containing passages from the Torah which are worn on the arm and on the head during weekday morning prayer. For some families, laying Tefillin and understanding its relevance is an important part of the B'nai Mitzvah experience. Boys and girls will be shown the process during the 6th grade year.

Who provides Kippot and Talitot?

You are invited to arrange for kippot which can be purchased easily from any Judaica store or website. Some families even like to personalize their kippot with the name and date of their child's ceremony on the color of your choice. Many parents like to give a Talis to their Bar/Bat Mitzvah on the day of the ceremony.

Jewish Spaces in Lower Manhattan that can be used to Celebrate B'nai Mitzvah

JCP On Reade (as of Fall 2011)

Seats 150

Angel Orensanz Center

172 Norfolk Street

212-529-7194

Ellis Island Immigration Museum for events

212-561-4588

Synagogue for the Arts

49 White Street

212-966-7141

10. Parent's Timeline and Checklist

1-2 years before your child's ceremony

- Set your date with the officiating rabbi
- Student enrolls in JCP B'nai Mitzvah Program meets M/W at JCP

4-6 months before your ceremony

- Meet with Rabbi to plan logistics and details
- Family Participation (aliyot, special readers) discussed
- Student and Tutor begin Torah/haftarah training
- Parents send invitation

3-6 weeks before the ceremony

- Student meets with Rabbi to discuss/plan/prepare speech
- Parents give names to rabbi of everyone who is participating in ceremony

1-2 weeks before the ceremony

- Student submits final speech to Rabbi
- Parents and rabbi meet in person or by phone to discuss any outstanding questions

Caring for the Torah and Prayerbooks

- Pick up Torah and Prayerbooks from JCP on Friday before your ceremony
- sign out items at JCP Welcome desk
- Prayerbooks: Can be handed out by family and friends upon arrival
- Torah: please leave in the travelling unit until rabbi/cantor/tutor arrive at ceremony to set up. Please do not take the Torah out of the unit as it protected in a special casing.
- Following ceremony, rabbi/cantor/tutor/jcp staff will return Torah to travelling case.
- Please pay extra attention and care to transporting the Torah
- Please return Torah and Prayerbooks on Monday to JCP

Check-list of what parents need to arrange at ceremony

On the Bema 30 minutes before the ceremony

- Torah (pick up on Friday at JCP)
- Prayerbooks (pick up on Friday at JCP)
- Kippot/Yarmulkes
- Kiddush Cup and wine/juice
- Talis for b'nai mitzvah student
- Challah (shabbat morning ceremony only)
- Havdalah Set: Kiddush Cup, Spice box, Havdalah Candle (Havdalah ceremony only)

Logistics/Equipment

- 3 microphones on stands or laviliers
- 6 foot table for Torah
- table or podiums for rabbi and cantor

11. Glossary and Bibliography

Glossary

We do not like to assume that every family is familiar with all the terms that may be used in this process. Therefore, we are listing some words below that are associated with the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony.

Aliyah: literally “going up;” the blessings before and after the Torah readings; it is an honor to be invited to recite these blessings.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah: literally translated as “Son/Daughter of the Commandment,” more accurately understood as “the Commanded One.” Figuratively, it means the age of responsibility.

B'nai Mitzvah: more than one *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Used when referring to more than one child.

Haftarah: the portion from the Prophets or writings that is read after the reading of the Torah.

Kipah: yarmulke or head covering.

Parshat ha'Shavuah: the Torah portion of the week.

Seder K'riat ha'Torah: the portion of the service when the Torah and Haftarah are read.

Shacharit: the morning service.

Tallit: a Jewish prayer shawl once only worn by men and boys from the age of Bar Mitzvah. Today, girls and women wear them also. A *tallit* must have *tzitzit* on the corners.

Torah: also known as the Five Books of Moses. The Torah is the first section of the Hebrew Bible.

Tzitzit: specially tied fringes on the corners of the *tallit* that are meant to be symbolic of the *Mitzvot*.

Yad: the pointer used when reading from the Torah.

Hebrew name: a Hebrew name is used for ritual purposes. It is composed of your Hebrew name and the Hebrew name of both your parents. The word “*ben*” or “*bat*” is inserted to mean “son of” or “daughter of,” and the letter *vav* is used to mean “and,” e.g. Yoseif Tzvi ben Mordechai v'Esther; Sara Rivka bat Hannah v'Shalom.

Bibliography

Each student who becomes Bar/Bat mitzvah at JCP should begin to build their Jewish library. The following resources belong to JCP and may be borrowed with permission. They are also wonderful items to have in your Jewish library, and we encourage families to mark the occasion of a bar/bat mitzvah by adding to their home resources.

Adolescence

- All Grown up and no place to go: Teenagers in crisis, Elkind
- A Fine Young Man: What Parents and Mentors can do to shape boys into exceptional men, Guran

- See Jane Win: How 1,000 girls became successful women, Rimm

Torah

- The Torah: A Modern Commentary (URJ Press)
- Etz Hayim Torah and Commentary, edited by David Lieber
- A Torah Commentary For Our Times, Harvey J. Fields
- Sparks Beneath the Surface: A Spiritual Commentary on Torah, Kushner and Olitzky

Jewish Life

- Putting God on the Guest list: How to Reclaim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah, Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin
- Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know about the Jewish Religion, Joseph Telushkin
- Living a Jewish Life, Anita Diamant

A parents blessing for their children

"May you live to see your world fulfilled,
 May your destiny be for worlds still to come,
 And may you trust in generations past and yet to be.

May your heart be filled with intuition
 And your words be filled with insight.
 May songs of praise ever be upon your tongue
 And your vision be on a straight path before you.
 May your eyes shine with the light of holy words
 And your face reflect the brightness of the heavens.
 May your lips ever speak wisdom
 And your fulfillment be in righteousness
 Even as you ever yearn to hear the words of the Holy Ancient One of Old."

Talmud, Berachot 17a

12. Fees and Contributions

In addition to Kesher Tuition, there is an approximate fee of \$2,500.00 (subject to change) that covers the expenses related to your child's Bar/Bat mitzvah experience: tutoring, preparation materials, administrative costs, and rabbinic officiation at your ceremony. If you pay a tutor privately and make private arrangements with non-JCP clergy for your ceremony, the fee is reduced to \$500.00.

When a person becomes Bar/Bat Mitzvah, he or she is counted as a fully participating member of the Jewish community for the first time. The time surrounding Bar/Bat mitzvah is a wonderful opportunity for your child to contribute to his or her community and to see themselves as being able to change the world and make a difference. Giving tzedakah (the commandment of monetary donations) is one way in which Jews sustain their communities - both the Jewish community and the community of humankind.

Some children request that their families and friends make donations in their honor in lieu of gifts, and some children choose to donate all or part of the money they receive as gifts. In addition, many families choose to mark this special occasion by making a donation to JCP in their child's honor. If your child wishes to direct tzedakah to JCP, the following are a few suggestions of where donations can be directed: Yachad Scholarship Fund or the JCP Tikkum Olam Fund.

For More Information

Please let us know how we can be helpful to you at every step of the way. Visit the JCP website or contact the JCP Hebrew School office or Rabbi Darren Levine for more information: 212 -334 – 3522

Thank you and Mazel tov!