

JCP

downtown

B'nai Mitzvah
Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

Mazel Tov!

Becoming a B'nai Mitzvah is the beginning of your adult Jewish journey. We are so excited you have chosen to mark this milestone with us at JCP!

For over a thousand years, Jewish tradition has recognized the important transition from childhood to young adulthood. While bar or bat on its own means “son” or “daughter,” the phrase Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah means “age of responsibility.” B'nai Mitzvah, the plural and gender neutral form of the word, will be used in this guide.

As children become young adults, they take on an increased responsibility for their own actions, their relationship to Jewish tradition, and their connection with the larger community.



Philosophy

JCP's B'nai Mitzvah experience begins in sixth grade and puts tradition and creativity at its center, celebrating the individuality of each learner and the value of community. Our goal is for every learner to gain confidence and a sense of accomplishment while exploring their emerging identity. This experience serves as a springboard to encourage a deep, lifelong exploration into what it means to be Jewish.

Learners will examine Jewish texts in deeper ways, feel ownership over rituals and traditions, and explore what it means to become a teenager. The experience is also a communal one where all participants will ask: What does it mean to grow as a Jewish individual, friend, community member, and citizen?

PREPARATION

Introduction

The preparation for and details of every JCP B'nai Mitzvah ceremony are unique, built to support each learner and challenge them to grow. Officiated by one of JCP's clergy and our musician, each B'nai Mitzvah ceremony is personalized within the context of a Jewish traditional framework, ensuring that the ceremony suits your family's Jewish perspective and values. To guarantee that our community, Hebrew school, and clergy have the best support possible, a JCP membership is required to have a B'nai Mitzvah.

Preparation for a JCP B'nai Mitzvah ceremony puts the learner in the driver's seat of their Jewish journey. We encourage sixth, seventh, and eighth grade learners to feel ownership over their B'nai Mitzvah experience. Social and meaningful engagement with their cohort is balanced with one-on-one learning sessions that will prepare each learner in a personalized environment, suited to their learning preferences and needs. B'nai Mitzvah preparation is easily scheduled all under one roof. Tutoring, meeting with the clergy, working on a Mitzvah Project, preparing for the ceremony, and socializing with JCP friends are already carved into the week.

Cohort Meetings

- 6th Grade: Weekly on Mondays from 4 - 6:45 pm
- 7th Grade: Weekly on Mondays from 4 - 6:45 pm
- 8th Grade: Select Monthly Mondays from 6:30 - 8 pm

Core Components of a JCP B'nai Mitzvah

- Weekly one-on-one tutoring
- Relevant and meaningful Jewish learning with peers
- Torah study with one of JCP's clergy members*
- A group Mitzvah Project
- Fun and social youth programming

**These meetings will be scheduled according to the availability of the clergy and the learner.*

PREPARATION

One-on-One Tutoring

Learning Core Skills

Learners will be matched with a tutor at the beginning of their sixth grade year. Learners will work with their tutor one-on-one during weekly 45-minute sessions until the end of seventh grade, or, if the ceremony takes place in eighth grade, through their ceremony date.



Tutors will focus on:

- Hebrew decoding skills
- Torah reading
- Prayer leadership
- Individual goals leading up to the ceremony

PREPARATION

Hebrew School Project Classes

Core Curriculum

The middle school HSP curriculum is designed as a natural continuation of the grade school years, and also welcomes learners from different Jewish backgrounds to begin their Jewish learning in sixth grade. Jewish learning at HSP is hands-on, fun-focused, multi-sensory, and active, designed to engage the whole person.

Sixth and Seventh Grade

In sixth and seventh grade, learners tackle the big ideas of Jewish identity, culture, history, diversity of Jewish life, and interpretation of sacred texts in personal and meaningful ways through engaging and hands-on classes. The curriculum also integrates the concepts of responsibility for oneself and one's community through service.

Individual tutoring blocks are offered on Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:15-7pm, and will be shaped around the class electives schedule. Electives are 45 or 90 minutes long, and some past examples of electives include The Jewish Kitchen, Jewish Ritual Art, and Torah Textploration.

Eighth Grade

In eighth grade, the curriculum focuses on relevant and challenging issues for teens transitioning into their high school years through Jewish ideas, stories, and ethics. The curriculum covers topics including competition, academic stress, and body image.



PREPARATION

Jewish Day School

Learners attending Jewish day school have the option to participate in tutoring and/or classes, as well as youth group experiences.

Study with Clergy

Personalized Preparation

One-on-one time with a JCP clergy member is a hallmark of the JCP B'nai Mitzvah experience. We hope to empower each learner as a lifelong student of Judaism, to promote a closer relationship with an adult Jewish mentor, and to further personalize the preparation and ceremony.

Each learner will meet with a JCP clergy member during the months leading up to the ceremony for approximately six sessions. They will also have the opportunity to learn with clergy in a small-group peer setting. This opportunity encourages each learner to think deeply and personally, not only about the text of their Torah portion itself, but also about Jewish traditions of interpretation, storytelling, and civil debate, and how these values shape the way we think, communicate, and act.

It is at the discretion of JCP to assign a clergy member and other staff to each ceremony. Ceremonies will be assigned to a clergy member approximately one year in advance of the ceremony date. JCP will do its best to ensure that families complete the entire b'nai mitzvah preparation process with the clergy member who will be officiating their ceremony.



PREPARATION

Mitzvah Project

As part of becoming B'nai Mitzvah at JCP, learners complete a Mitzvah Project to reflect their increasing responsibility in society and power to make impactful change in the world.

While we should all strive to do *mitzvot* (deeds of justice), this project helps learners create a deep and lifelong habit of giving back and engaging in *tikkun olam* (acts of repairing our world).

There are two parts of the social justice experience:

1. Seventh graders will be exposed to different types of justice work, including philanthropy, volunteering, and community organizing. They will then work as a class to lead a Day of Service for their peers.
2. Using the skills and tools they have learned through the HSP curriculum, learners also have the option to complete their own Mitzvah Project in honor of becoming B'nai Mitzvah. This individual Mitzvah Project is the responsibility of the learner. Family participation is strongly encouraged in the planning and execution of the individual Mitzvah Project.



COMMUNAL EXPERIENCE

The Family Experience

Family is central to the B'nai Mitzvah experience. From setting a customized learning path, to choosing a ceremony date that might include a Torah portion particularly meaningful to your child, JCP clergy will work from the outset to involve the entire family at various touch points along the journey.



COMMUNAL EXPERIENCE

We also expect that all families will help keep their child on track with their studies between sessions with the B'nai Mitzvah tutor and JCP clergy, and support their child as they write their D'var Torah (speech about their Torah portion). Conversations with clergy will give participants in the program the opportunity to explore Jewish values and customs together with their family.

Families may plan to be involved in the ceremony in a number of ways. They may choose to lead portions of the service, or to read from the Torah. There are also opportunities to honor loved ones who will be present at the ceremony.

Youth Group Program

In addition to time in classes, sixth, seventh, and eighth graders are invited to participate in youth programming outside the hours of HSP. Learners explore ideas relevant to Jewish teens through unique social activities and leadership opportunities.

The youth group is staffed by professional youth group leaders and teachers. In addition to developing relationships with one another, learners develop relationships with Jewish adult role models.

SETTING A DATE

Membership/Lifecycle Policy

We are honored to offer B'nai Mitzvah training and services to all eligible members of JCP. If you are not yet members, [you can join as members of JCP here](#). Membership is required in order to reserve a date.

When to Choose a Date

B'nai Mitzvah can take place for students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. Most of JCP's B'nai Mitzvah ceremonies take place shortly after the child's thirteenth birthday. The date must be chosen at least one year in advance. It is up to your family to choose what works best for you.

B'nai Mitzvah ceremonies take place either Shabbat morning (Saturday, 9:30-11:30) or Shabbat afternoon (Saturday 4:30-6:30).

How to Choose a Date

Once you have joined as a member of JCP, you can request access to the B'nai Mitzvah date selection Calendly link, and select any ceremony date that is open.

Date selection is first come, first serve. Families can choose a date beginning when their child is in 3rd grade, but no later than a year before the ceremony will take place. When selecting a date in the Calendly link, families must also select the timing of the service. Families should select only one date and time slot.

Once you select your date and time, you will not be able to change it, so please carefully review the options, as well as any potential school or family conflicts, before making a selection on the Calendly. If you have extenuating circumstances, please be in touch. The first part of the B'nai Mitzvah fee will be due upon reserving the date.

For more information on the B'nai Mitzvah fee structure, please see page 13.

JCP IN ISRAEL

JCP B'nai Mitzvah in Israel Program

Some JCP families choose to celebrate their child's B'nai Mitzvah in Israel. Learners should still be enrolled in the sixth and seventh grade years of HSP in order to ensure they are properly prepared for their ceremony.

While participating in our B'nai Mitzvah in Israel Program, families will work with both Rabbi Deena and JCP's Israel-based partner, Rabbi Galit Cohen-Kedem of Congregation Kodesh v'Chol, in Holon, Israel.

With two years advance notice, JCP's rabbi can plan to be in Israel to officiate a B'nai Mitzvah ceremony. If there are multiple ceremonies within the same year, it is likely we will coordinate dates so more than one ceremony happens in a single trip for the rabbi. Additional fees will apply. In the past, when JCP's rabbi has traveled to Israel to officiate a B'nai Mitzvah, it has taken place at the egalitarian section of the Western Wall or a hotel.

For more information about JCP in Israel, [visit www.jcpdowntown.org/hebrew-school-project/jcp-in-israel/](http://www.jcpdowntown.org/hebrew-school-project/jcp-in-israel/).



TIMELINE

Preparation for the Ceremony

Summer Before Entering 3rd-6th Grade

We will send around a survey to initiate the date selection process. After completed, we will offer three date options, from which you will choose your ceremony date and pay the deposit to reserve.

1.5-2 Years Before the Ceremony

Once you join as a member, you can receive our B'nai Mitzvah Date Selection Calendly, which lists available B'nai Mitzvah dates.

By 1 Year Before Ceremony

Begin meeting with a B'nai Mitzvah tutor! Start learning skills and preparing for the ceremony.

1 Year Before the Ceremony

Meet with the clergy as a family for an introduction to studying the Torah portion and to select the Torah verses that will be chanted at the ceremony.

6-8 Months Before the Ceremony

Learner begins individual meetings with a JCP clergy member for Torah study.

2 Months Before the Ceremony

Complete the B'nai Mitzvah Intake Form, which lists honors and opportunities for loved ones to participate in the service.

2 Weeks Before the Ceremony

Set final details for family participation. Family participates in one rehearsal with the officiating clergy member and musician. These rehearsals will all take place at JCP.

TIMELINE

Educational Experiences

6th grade

Weekly classes and tutoring, as well as regular youth programs, begin.

7th grade

Weekly classes and tutoring, and youth programs, continue.

8th grade

Monthly classes and monthly youth cohort continue. Eight graders are also eligible to begin integrating with HSP's high school program.



LOGISTICS

Tuition Payment Schedule

Below is the three-year tuition schedule for HSP. Fees include sixth, seventh, and eighth grade classes, one-on-one tutoring, and individual preparation with a JCP clergy member, and the logistics and coordination of the ceremony with the officiating clergy member and musician.

- Deposit when reserving a ceremony date: \$2,500 (refundable until two years before the date of the ceremony)
- Sixth Grade Tuition: \$4,500
- Seventh Grade Tuition: \$4,500
- B'nai Mitzvah Preparation Fee: \$2,500 (must be paid in advance of ceremony)
- Eighth Grade Tuition: \$1000

JCP strives to address barriers from participation. Please join us in conversation about the particular type of support from which your child or family could benefit.

Venues

Most families choose to host B'nai Mitzvah ceremonies in a variety of venues downtown, including sanctuaries. For families interested in holding the ceremony in a sanctuary space, we highly recommend the Minnie Petrie Synagogue at Hebrew Union College (1 West Fourth St.). Smaller ceremonies have taken place at JCP (visit www.jcpdowntown.org/about/rentals/ for more information about renting our space) and in community members' living rooms. Email JCP's Community Events Manager, Lara Kingstone, for our list of venues where JCP ceremonies have taken place at lkingstone@jcpdowntown.org.

Families who are preparing for a B'nai Mitzvah through JCP should be aware that JCP's policy does not allow families to host the ceremony at another synagogue or with another rabbi.

Day-Of Ceremony Needs

The Ceremony Logistics Fee covers the cost of coordinating and organizing the details and logistics of the ceremony. Our team will arrange for the transportation, setup, and breakdown of ritual objects, including our Torah scroll, prayer books, head coverings, prayer shawls, challah, wine, candy, and any other specific ritual item required for the ceremony. The fee also covers the presence of a clergy member as the main officiant, and the presence of musical accompaniment.

SPONSORING SHABBAT

Celebrating Your Child's B'nai Mitzvah during a Friday Evening Service

We invite you to kick off your child's B'nai Mitzvah weekend with a celebration of Friday evening services! As a wonderful way to commence the festivities, your child will have the opportunity to lead services along with JCP clergy (a lovely dress rehearsal opportunity for the big day!). Email rabbi@jcpdowntown.org for more information about sponsoring a Friday Evening Service in honor of your child.



CONTACT

Contact

For questions about ceremony logistics, contact our Community Events Manager:

Lara Kingstone

Community Events Manager

lkingstone@jcpdowntown.org

For questions about the Hebrew School Project, contact our Director of the Hebrew School Project:

Daphne Logan

HSP Director

dlogan@jcpdowntown.org

For questions about the content of service, contact our rabbi:

Rabbi Deena Silverstone

Rabbi and Director of Jewish Life

dsilverstone@jcpdowntown.org

For questions about D'var Torah tutoring, verse selections, and final rehearsal, reach our Rabbi's Assistant:

Lisa Lin

Assistant to Rabbi

llin@jcpdowntown.org



JCP Downtown
146 Duane Street, New York, NY 10013
212.334.3522
jcpdowntown@jcpdowntown.org