

B-Mitzvah at The Shul of New York

Welcome to your b-mitzvah journey!

The b-mitzvah, or bar or bat mitzvah, is a Jewish coming-of-age ceremony typically occurring at age 13 – although a ceremony can take place at any age. Along with an increasing number of synagogues and Jewish organizations, The Shul of New York uses the inclusive term *b-mitzvah* along with, or instead of, *bar* or *bat* mitzvah to recognize gender plurality.

The Shul of New York's b-mitzvah program is designed to meet the diverse needs of each child and their family. We embrace each student as an individual with their own strengths, and truly believe that flexibility and creativity go hand-in-hand with learning the basics of Torah, prayer, and Jewish values.

Our primary goal is to have each b-mitzvah feel pride in their many accomplishments on the day of their ceremony, and to feel proud of being Jewish.

The Basics: Getting Started

The Shul's b-mitzvah program involves instruction and support from our Co-Spiritual Leaders, Rabbi Susan Falk and Adam Feder. The process begins with an initial meeting with the student and family to determine the student's needs and to discuss the family's preferences and expectations.

Students who cannot read Hebrew will start by working with a Hebrew tutor so they can learn to read from Torah, learn Torah trope or chanting, and master some basic prayers. The Shul can put families in touch with tutors who have worked with us before and understand the aims and goals of the Shul. Families may also choose their own tutor.

Rabbi Susan and Adam will communicate with the tutor on a regular basis to monitor progress, re-evaluate achievable goals and tweak the schedule as needed. They will also regularly check in with the family.

The Program: Learning Jewish Values

The cornerstone of our b-mitzvah preparation is our **Learning Jewish Values** program.

The program begins with monthly meetings with Adam Feder during which the prospective b-mitzvah will learn about Jewish history, holidays, prayers, and how these key aspects of Judaism have shaped Jewish values from ancient times to today.

In addition, each student will meet weekly with Rabbi Susan beginning 3-5 months in advance of their b-mitzvah ceremony to study and discuss the relevant Torah portion and plan the b-mitzvah's d'var-Torah.

“D’var-Torah”, meaning “word of Torah”, is a term used for a b-mitzvah’s speech or talk. This talk has traditionally been based on the Torah portion for the week of the ceremony. As part of our mission to help families create a ceremony that draws on each student’s strengths, the d’var-Torah can range from a formal interpretation of the Torah portion to a play, poem, short story – or even a sculpture or piece of music – that in an individualized manner “brings the Torah portion to life”.

The Learning Jewish Values portion of the b-mitzvah program is tailored to each student’s strengths and needs. When possible, students may also have opportunities to engage in class or special enrichment sessions with each other. Access to, and recommendations for, study materials are provided to each student by Rabbi Susan or Adam Feder.

Students and families who are not already Shul congregants will be strongly encouraged to attend Shabbat services, and to participate in Shul holiday or other programs, so they can experience the warm welcome and loving embrace of The Shul of New York family.

Mitzvah Project: Jewish Values in Action

Social justice is a core Jewish value and a central aspect of the Shul’s mission. As part of that mission and to promote Jewish values, each student will complete a **mitzvah project** that in some way contributes to the work of social justice (working in a soup kitchen, doing a clothing drive, creating a care package, cleaning up an area of a park, etc.). Rabbi Susan or Adam Feder will help each student match a project with their interests.

The Ceremony: Prayer Service Options

Families may choose to have a b-mitzvah ceremony at the Shul on Friday evenings, Saturday mornings, or Saturday afternoons/Havdalah. Each service has its own unique rhythm and beauty. The Rabbi and Adam Feder are available to help the family make this decision.

What will a Shul of New York B-Mitzvah cost?

The fee for the b-mitzvah program is \$3,400. Tutoring fees are not included and are paid directly to tutors. Additional fees apply if a family chooses to hold their b-mitzvah ceremony at the Shul as described in the Ceremony section. After the initial meeting as described in the Getting Started section, a Board member will contact the family to discuss fees and payment options.