



Becoming a Jewish Adult at Holy Blossom Temple

Mazal Tov! This is an exciting time for you, your family, and your congregation. When a Jewish child is born, the community prays that they will be blessed with *Torah, Chuppah, u'Ma'asim tovim* (the study of *Torah*, the covenant of marriage and the performance of good deeds). *B'nei Mitzvah* marks the start of the transition from childhood to adulthood when children assume responsibilities and rewards for their own religious practice and learning. On becoming *B'nei Mitzvah (Bar/Bat/Perach)*, children can come to understand their place within our congregation and within the Jewish People.

Jewish learning is a life-long pursuit. It is Holy Blossom's hope and expectation that each student will honour this commitment by continuing his/her/their studies through Confirmation (Grade 10) and beyond.

This information is designed to help our *B'nei Mitzvah* students, and their families prepare, well in advance, for the upcoming simcha; to reflect on the meaning of *B'nei Mitzvah*; and to become acquainted with the customs and standards of Holy Blossom Temple, as developed by fellow congregants, the Board of Trustees, the Rabbis, Cantor(s) and Educators. Over the coming months, we will elaborate on this vision and work closely with you to make your simcha meaningful.

L'Shalom –

Cantor David Rosen, Co-ordinator, *B'nei Mitzvah* Program

Lisa Isen Baumal, Principal of Youth Education & Family Engagement

What is the history and meaning of *B'nei Mitzvah*?

'*B'nei Mitzvah*' is the status of a person, not an event in time. Traditionally in the reform movement, religious responsibility is assumed **at the age of 13 years for a Jewish child**. With or without the public reading of *Torah*, **one assumes the status of *B'nei Mitzvah*: 'a child of the mitzvot.'**

With or without a ceremony, one becomes responsible for the *mitzvot*, the commandments on their 13th birthday. (Accordingly, one is not '*B'nei Mitzvahed*.' One does not 'have a *B'nei Mitzvah*.') However, we should not let a life-cycle moment pass by without celebration and expressions of gratitude. And so, a ceremony marking this transition from childhood to adulthood developed over time. In the course of Jewish history, the ritual aspects of becoming *B'nei Mitzvah* are relatively new and were not regularly practiced until the late Middle Ages.

The basic elements remain the same today. **The community invites the *B'nei Mitzvah* to receive the highest honour and greatest responsibility – reading from the *Torah* on behalf of the congregation. The congregation honours the *B'nei Mitzvah* for bringing honour to the *Torah*.**



What course of study prepares a child for B'nei Mitzvah?

Reading from the *Torah* as a representative of the congregation is a joyful privilege, earned through regular study and involvement in the life of the congregation. We have a full staff of professionals ready to help our students succeed in meeting the high standards of our program. The following educational program must be completed to celebrate *B'nei Mitzvah* at Holy Blossom Temple:

Prior to B'nei Mitzvah Year

1. **Religious Studies** – our program requires that:
 - Students attend Holy Blossom Temple's Religious School from Grade 4 if not enrolled in Jewish Day School, or recognized program.
 - All students (including Jewish Day School students) attend Holy Blossom Temple's Senior School throughout the entire Grade 7 school year (and the following year if they are celebrating in their Grade 8 year).
2. **Hebrew Studies** – our program requires that:
 - Students complete four years of study in Holy Blossom Temple's Hebrew School, or a recognized Jewish Day School, or a program certified by Holy Blossom Temple.

Year of B'nei Mitzvah - Student Participation – our program requires that B'nei Mitzvah students participate in the following:

- Senior School from Grade 7 (Mondays from 6:30 – 8:30pm throughout the school year).
- *B'nei Mitzvah* tutorials: one of the Temple's tutors will meet individually with students on a weekly basis to help them master their *Torah* and *prayers* (*Lead Shema, Ve'ahavta, Kiddush, Hamotzi, Mourners Kaddish*).
- Weekend retreat in the fall when it occurs.
- Preparation of a *D'var Torah*: your child will choose a theme from the *Torah* portion and pursue it with serious study. We encourage students to share the *D'var Torah* with family and friends at your celebratory meal. A highlight can be shared with the congregation to introduce the *Torah* reading from the Bimah.
- Completion of *Sha'arei Kehillah*, our hands-on *mitzvah* workbook
- Family Education programs – (Monday evenings during Senior School) Parents are the most influential Jewish role models for their children and celebrating *B'nei Mitzvah* is a significant milestone in the life of the entire family.
- Regular service attendance (for appropriate service).

Please note:

Parents of students with special needs, which may make it difficult to fulfill these requirements, and if you are a new member of our congregation, please contact Lisa Isen Bauman, our Principal of Youth Education to make arrangements for your child's schooling.



When do we celebrate B'nei Mitzvah?

While becoming *B'nei Mitzvah* has great personal and familial significance, the life-cycle event gains lasting meaning because it takes place in the presence of one's synagogue community. At Holy Blossom Temple, children are invited, at the age of 13 years, to celebrate becoming *B'nei Mitzvah* in the context of any of our congregational services at which *Torah* is read:

- Shabbat mornings – at our main Congregational Service or at our *Family Service selected dates 4 times within a year
- *Rosh Chodesh* mornings
- Any other special day when *Torah* is read (Festivals)
- Monday and Thursday mornings (with permission)

Each service setting has its own flavour. We are happy to help you choose the best service setting for your *simcha* and explain the relevant details. We suggest you attend these services prior to booking your *simcha* date. *Family Service is held in the Youth Chapel requires a limiting of your guest list to allow space for the attendance of Family Service regulars.

Service Descriptions

Shabbat Morning – Main Sanctuary:

- The service starts at 10:30am and ends at 12:30pm.
- The capacity for seating is over 500 people.
- The service is led by our Cantors and Rabbis accompanied by our Temple Singers.
- The service is livestreamed and available in HD with sponsorship of \$500 or more.
- Our maximum number of B'nei Mitzvah in the Main Sanctuary is two. (This in no way changes the number of Aliyot or Honours per family -2 Additional Aliyot, 3 Honours.)
- A Shabbat Service may include the addition of other lifecycle events including baby-namings, *aufrufs*, honouring members, guest speakers and other special events.
- The end of service is followed by a congregational kiddush in our Atrium with the choice of sponsoring the Kiddush and/or having your own private luncheon or dinner.

Shabbat Morning – Family Service (4 Times a year on pre-selected dates - dates to be determined)*:

- The service commences at 10:45am and ends at 12:15pm.
- The service takes place in the Youth Chapel.
- There is only one Bar/Bat/Perach Mitzvah in the service
- There are no additional aliyot for family members, 3 honours (opening/closing ark, undressing Torah)
- No Haftarah reading
- Your guest list should not exceed 70 people to accommodate and make room for our regular attendees.
- The service is led by clergy and a song leader.
- The atmosphere is more informal and relaxed, with a “camp” like feel.
- Breakout rooms are provided for young children – with singalong, story-time, and snacks
- The end of service is followed by a congregational kiddush for the family service attendees with the choice to sponsor the Kiddush and/or have your own private luncheon.

*email ispitz@holyblossom.org if you wish to select a Family Service for your child



Rosh Chodesh/Festival Service Weekday Service

- Day of the week depends on the Rosh Chodesh or Festival date.
- The service starts at 7:30am (or 9:00am if on Sunday or Holiday Monday) with a duration of approximately 45 minutes to an hour.
- The service takes place in the Youth Chapel.
- There is one aliyah for the celebrant, with no additional aliyot for family members.
- Three honours are available (undress/dress the Torah, open/close the ark)
- No haftarah reading
- The service is led by a Lay Leader, clergy is only present to assist with the Torah Reading
- The capacity for seating is approximately 150.
- The service is available on zoom, to receive a recording, sponsorship of \$360 will be required.
- There is a light breakfast after the service for congregational attendees, however, to accommodate your guests sponsorship would be required and/or you can hold a private event and sponsor the breakfast for congregational attendees.

How are dates determined?

The ideal date to celebrate B'nei Mitzvah is the first Shabbat immediately following your child's thirteenth birthday. There are times, however, when the calendar dictates otherwise, or you may have special circumstances and wish to propose an alternative. It is preferable the date **should not precede your child's 13th birthday by more than four weeks** nor follow it by more than twelve weeks. However, should your selected date not fall within these parameters, we will look at your requests on a case-by-case basis. In allocating dates, the Temple will give priority to children whose birth dates are closest to the dates requested.

The number of children becoming B'nei Mitzvah per service:

- 1 or 2 in Shabbat Main Sanctuary Service,*
- 1 in Family Service (only on designated dates in a given year)
- 1 Rosh Chodesh/Festival weekday.

*While your child may not be sharing their date after selection, this may change as the date approaches, and you will be informed of the change.

Bat/Bar/Perach Mitzvah date selection form: Through an on-line form parents are given the opportunity to indicate 3 date choices (1st, 2nd & 3rd). If the first choice falls within the given parameters above, we try to honour the first request. In the event there are multiple requests for the same date, we select the child whose birth date is closest to the request. If you wish to select a Family Service, please still fill out the form with your preferred dates for Main Sanctuary/Rosh Chodesh/Festival dates. Family Service dates will be very limited with no flexibility. Please contact Iris Spitz to indicate your interest in a Family Service date (ispitz@holyblossom.org)

Changes to date: Once your child's date is confirmed, you are allowed to change the date once; however, any subsequent date changes may be subject to an administration fee of \$100.



What makes your simcha sacred?

The months leading up to becoming *B'nei Mitzvah* are filled with tailor-made experiences and challenges designed to train our children for adult Jewish responsibility. All of Jewish living falls into three broad categories: *Torah* (the study of sacred texts and ideas); *Avodah* (prayer); and *Gemilut Chassadim* (acts of mutual social responsibility). These are the basic building blocks of a Jewish life.

Torah

It is a mitzvah for parents to teach Torah to their children. The more enthusiastically engaged the parents are in the learning process, the better. Parents should listen to their children practice their *Torah Portions* and *Prayers* (*Lead Shema & Ve'ahavta*, *Kiddush*, *Hamotzi & Mourners Kaddish*), as well as accompany their children to the library for *D'var Torah* research. Parents can model this Mitzvah and chant Torah in our community. Parents can help their children to ask questions of the *Torah* text, to express their own thoughts on its themes and to consider how the *Torah* portion relates to life today.

Preparing a *D'var Torah* introduces the student to the skills required for adult *Torah* study and provides the student with a deeper understanding of the words they will chant from the *bimah*. We encourage each student to share the *D'var Torah* with family and friends at your celebratory meal. A highlight can be shared with the congregation to introduce the Torah reading from the Bimah

Avodah

The more prayer and *Torah* study are an integrated part of our children's upbringing, the more meaningful will be the time when they become *B'nei Mitzvah*. We encourage families to make *Shabbat* and Festival Services a regular part of all stages of life. This becomes even more significant as the children approach becoming *B'nei Mitzvah*. Parents, as well, will feel more 'at home' on the *bimah*, when worship is a regular part of their own Jewish practice. The Temple has two daily Weekday Services as well as *Shabbat* Evening and Morning Services. Family Services for families with young children are held in the Youth Chapel once a month on pre-designated *Shabbat* mornings throughout the school year. It is our expectation that you and your child attend at least 1 service per month in the year leading up to their becoming Bar/Bat/Perach Mitzvah. It is strongly recommended this increase to weekly in the month of your simcha.

Wearing *tzitzit*, the knotted fringes at the corners of the *tallit*, is a *mitzvah* described in the *Torah*. Wearing a *tallit* is a privilege only enjoyed by Jewish adults. Tallit and Kippah are ritual objects that men and woman are both encouraged to wear at Holy Blossom Temple. The Rabbis will discuss with you the meaning of the ritual objects and their development in Jewish history and in the history of our congregation.

In addition to such ritual garb, families should select clothing that is appropriate for the bimah and the occasion for reading *Torah*. Modesty is a Jewish virtue, and respectful attire should be worn for sacred occasions.



Gemilut Chassadim

In Jewish life, every *simcha* provides an opportunity to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, righteous behaviour. To teach our *B'nei Mitzvah* that acts of social responsibility are at the centre of Jewish life, and to bring greater meaning to the occasion, families should discuss how and what to give of time and resources to those in need. *Sha'arei Kehillah*, our *mitzvah* workbook, will help our students put into action what becoming *B'nei Mitzvah* – Jewish adults, responsible for the commandments – is all about. This is another area where parent involvement can make all the difference.

Don't hold back on your ideas about how to make our world a better place. Though we ask children in *Sha'arei Kehillah*, to do a minimum of ten small Mitzvot in preparation (or 'training') for their journey to Jewish adulthood, you may want to focus on making one project more memorable and more impactful than the others. Please do not feel like you have to hold back on your creativity and impulse to teach your children to bring Justice to our world.

Some *B'nei Mitzvah* ask their guests to make contributions in their honour instead of purchasing gifts. Such donations can be made to a particular cause here or in Israel. Other families have chosen to make direct contributions to Holy Blossom's youth Awards, Library, Out of the Cold or other Temple funds. Often times parents and grandparents fulfill the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* by making a donation to the Temple in honour of their child's accomplishments. Please call the Temple Foundation office to discuss the possibilities.

All families celebrating life-cycle events are encouraged to make a donation to the Congregational *Kiddush* fund and to the Floral fund, which provide for the *Oneg Shabbat* and *bimah* flowers throughout the year. In this way, families can share their joy with the community.

What if we plan to celebrate in Israel?

So long as your child fulfills Holy Blossom Temple's education requirements, we are happy to provide the tutor and training for your celebration in Israel. In advance of your trip, a Rabbi will help your child prepare a *d'var Torah*. *Sha'arei Kehillah* hands-on mitzvah projects may be integrated in your travels.

On the *Shabbat* just before or after your trip to Israel, we would like to call the *B'nei Mitzvah* for an *aliyah*, to recite the *Torah* blessings and celebrate your milestone in the midst of the congregation, local family and friends.

A word about celebrations

While becoming *B'nei Mitzvah* is a *simcha* very worthy of celebration, it should be celebrated in modesty. Throughout Jewish history, those who were well-off were encouraged by the community to simplify their celebrations so as not to shame those with less. Moreover, the value of *tzedakah* has always taken precedence over extraordinary or lavish parties. The *B'nei Mitzvah* celebration should reflect the religious significance of the day. For example, family members and friends can be honoured by leading the blessings before the meal and *Birkat HaMazon* afterwards; the *B'nei Mitzvah* can share his/her *D'var Torah* when the family gathers; *Havdallah* can precede a Saturday evening celebration, etc.



A word about membership

Three years before your child becomes *Bar/Bat/Perach Mitzvah*, date selection information are emailed to our members. Good standing in membership and education is necessary to maintain the confirmed *B'nei Mitzvah* date. Please contact our Director of Membership if you have concerns about your membership status, or the Principal of Youth Education if you have concerns about your child's educational requirements.

Special circumstances

If your family is facing a special challenge, our Rabbis, Principal and Director of Membership will gladly discuss, in confidence, any concerns – educational, emotional or financial. We will help to make this occasion a joy and a blessing for you, your family and the entire congregation.

Timetable for preparation – what happens when?

Please note for those celebrating on a weekday or family service, the same basic outline applies, but some specific times will vary around the rehearsal.

- **Grade 7 Enrollment:** Each child must be enrolled in YEC for their grade 7 year regardless of whether they are enrolled in another program or part of a religious day school program
- **11 months prior:** each child is assigned a Torah portion. Each family will receive an email from Iris Spitz our B'nei Mitzvah Coordinator, to introduce your parashat, and the tutoring process. **Note:** To commence tutoring B'nei Mitzvah fee payment must be arranged.
- **8-11 months prior:** tutoring begins and continues up to the week of celebrating becoming B'nei Mitzvah.
- About **8 months prior** the Cantor and Rabbi will meet with you and your child to start building a relationship.
- **Approx. 4 to 6 months prior:** you and your child receive an email from Iris Spitz reconfirming your date and providing you with a schedule of appointments with the Rabbi and Cantors.
 - The first is for the family to meet with the Rabbi to answer any questions, talk about the significance of becoming B'nei Mitzvah, and to discuss the D'var Torah and Sha'arei Kehillah.
 - The next three or four appointments are for your child to meet individually with the Rabbi to go over his/her completed Sha'arei Kehillah and finalize the D'var Torah.
- **2 to 8 weeks prior:** Cantor appointments will begin. During these meetings, the Cantor further prepares the student to read the Torah, and additional Hebrew prayers in the service and Torah introduction from the bimah.
- **Wednesday prior:** at 4:30pm, the Cantor holds a 'walk-through' rehearsal with the B'nei mitzvah, their parents and everyone who has been given an honour. All details of 'choreography' are reviewed to orient everyone on the bimah.
- **Friday night service:** each family is required to attend the Kabbalat Shabbat service (6 pm), when we invite the family of each B'nei Mitzvah to light the Shabbat candles on behalf of the congregation. We invite each student to recite the Kiddush over the wine and the Hamotzi over the challah.



An example of Shabbat morning in the Main Sanctuary

- **10:15 am:** the B'nei Mitzvah families gather with the Senior Rabbi to discuss the significance of the day. Each student is presented with a B'nei Mitzvah certificate, and a gift towards both the Holy Blossom Confirmation Israel Trip, and a NFTY Israel trip. Parents can present a tallit and kippah to their child, to recite the blessings for the first time. Those with honours meet with the Gabbai at the Bimah.
- **10:30 am:** As the Service begins, the B'nei Mitzvah sit with their families at the front of the Sanctuary/Chapel. At the Torah Service, the B'nei Mitzvah are called up to the bimah with their parents. It would be helpful to our ushers if you would arrange for some adults to sit together with the 12- and 13-year-old friends, to provide appropriate supervision and guidance. After the Haftarah reading and the Rabbi's charge, the B'nei Mitzvah return to their seats next to their parents.
- **12:30 pm:** all are invited to a congregational Kiddush Lunch to share your joy with the synagogue community. * Family Service ends at 12:00pm. In the case of private luncheon your guests will be directed accordingly.

Your Rabbis, Cantors, teachers and Temple leadership look forward to guiding you and your child through this exciting time of preparation for B'nei Mitzvah on the path to Grade 10 Confirmation. May it bring much joy and blessing to you and to the sacred congregation of which you are a part. *Maza! Tov!*

Main Holy Blossom Number: 416-789-3291

If you have questions about the B'nei Mitzvah Journey and our guiding principles?

Cantor David Rosen ext. 269 drosen@holyblossom.org

Do you have questions concerning booking a date, clergy appointments, honour forms, B'nei Mitzvah fee or sponsorship?

Iris Spitz, B'nei Mitzvah Coordinator (Booking Dates) 224, ispitz@holyblossom.org

Do you have questions or concerns about your child's Jewish education?

Lisa Isen Bauml, Principal of Youth Education & Family Engagement ext. 242 lbaumal@holyblossom.org

Do you have questions concerning booking facilities, caterers, Kiddush ?

Calvin Wong, Simcha & Venue Manager ext. 255
cwong@holyblossom.org

If you would like to make a donation or have questions about your membership?

Abigail Nemzer, Director of Membership and Development Associate ext. 227
anemzer@holyblossom.org



Introduction to the B'nei Mitzvah Journey for all students

Activities

Student activities will be planned for the whole group, and some activities and programs will be grade specific. The concept is to allow the participation of parents in some cases and to enable the children to socialize with one and other to enhance the B'nei Mitzvah journey experience. The specific programs below in the earlier years include all families who plan to celebrate at Holy Blossom Temple regardless of whether they attend our Religious School. Described below are just a few highlights .

Grade 4 – Date Selection

In January Grade 4 Parents are presented with a calendar of available dates 3 years in advance of their child turning 13. After selecting 3 possible choices, the final date is revealed during a Sunday morning breakfast, when families given an to opportunity to meet and celebrate the start of the journey with the entire cohort.

Grade 5 – Jewish Journey

Led by Cantor David Rosen, this program is an essential part of your child's B'nei Mitzvah planning and will cover the steps leading up to their day on the bimah, as well as what comes after. Grade 5 students will also be invited to a Shabbat Service to coincide with a scheduled B'nei Mitzvah in the early spring.

Grade 6 – Shabbat Morning

Grade 6 children and their parents will be invited to two Shabbat Services (1 in the fall and 1 in the spring). Each will be timed to coincide with a scheduled B'nei Mitzvah. After the Torah Service, you and your child will be invited to discuss what they've experienced and go over the expectations for the upcoming year. You will meet other families in your cohort building an important bond as you all work towards the same objective.

Grade 6 & 7 Programming

In grades 6 and 7, there will be 'extra-curricular' programs/experiences which focus on Mitzvot from Shaarei Kehillah each year. Programs will focus on community building amongst students and parents in each cohort and will include hands on experiential mitzvot experiences. (Note the composition of these programs will be determined at the beginning of each year.)

Grade 6 & 7 Shabbat Dinner - Spring

The grade 6 and 7 cohort will have a family Shabbat dinner experience, when families come to Kabbalat Shabbat services, followed by dinner and a program. Exploring themes that include Sha'arei Kehillah, beyond the party, logistics for the Grade 6 families and for Grade 7 families, what comes next after becoming B'nei Mitzvah. Grade 6 students will receive a personalized Plaut Commentary, donated by Holy Blossom Temple Brotherhood.

For more information contact Lisa Isen Bauman: lbaumal@holyblossom.org