



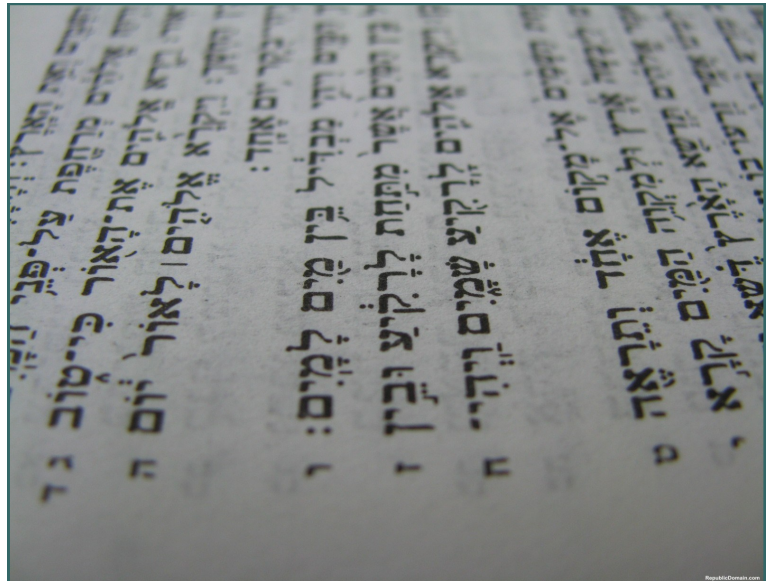
Adult B'nai Mitzvah @ TBI

Your introductory guide to joining the cohort of students
planning for adult b'nai mitzvahs to take place in 2013

What is adult bar/bat mitzvah?

In one sense, it's simply a process of study and preparation in which adults prepare to lead parts of a Shabbat service that a youth bar/bat mitzvah would typically lead. When the "big day" arrives, the adult (and others in his or her group) lead these parts of the service, and share in celebration of the achievement with family, friends and community.

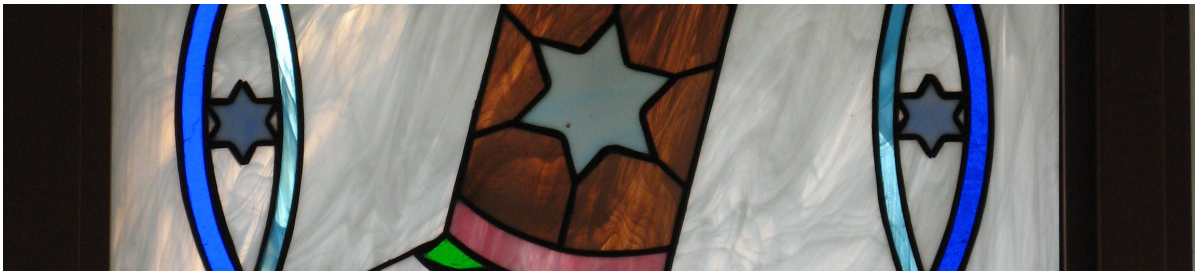
But, if we dig a little deeper... Adult bar/bat mitzvah is an opportunity to deepen your understanding of Judaism and your participation within a Jewish community. For some, especially women, it's a chance to reclaim an experience that may not have been available when they were youths. For many Jews by choice it's a chance to challenge themselves and strengthen their relationship with Judaism. For others, it's a chance to study and explore Jewish liturgy, ritual, and texts with adult eyes, and to take on a challenge that will become its own reward. And there are many other dimensions to this wonderful adventure.



Ironically, on one level there is no such thing as an "adult bar/bat mitzvah," because a person simply becomes a bar/bat mitzvah by reaching Judaism's age of maturity (traditionally 13 for boys, 12 for girls). One doesn't actually *have* a bar/bat mitzvah, one becomes a bar/bat mitzvah — a son/daughter of the mitzvot — the system of ethical and ritual practices that form the web of Jewish life. And yet, on another level — we recognize as a community that there is something transformative about the event of a bar/bat mitzvah, something that many adult Jews have missed out on. There's a claiming of one's Jewish identity that is strengthened when a person prepares diligently to lead the community in prayer, chant from the Torah, and offer a thoughtful interpretive talk on a Torah portion. To have loved ones and fellow congregants witness that achievement is profound, and in that sense there truly is such a thing as an adult bar/bat mitzvah.

What is the adult bar/bat mitzvah program like at TBI?

The process of adult b'nai mitzvah at TBI has taken a variety of shapes over the years. Some have completed an individual course of preparation while others have joined together as a group for the process of study, culminating in their sharing the leadership of different parts of the Shabbat service on the day of their b'nai mitzvah. This packet is an introduction that describes a more formal adult b'nai mitzvah program that TBI is offering beginning in the winter of 2011, with the intention of participants celebrating b'nai mitzvahs in 2013. We are calling the group of adults who come together for this program a "cohort." Joining this cohort means that you'll be participating in a structured process of learning and preparation that will include the other members of the cohort, and possibly a smaller group within the cohort that will share your bar/bat mitzvah date with you.



Igor Oshansky

What do I study and prepare for adult b'nai mitzvah at TBI?

The preparation involves group study and at-home practice so that you can do the following three things during a Shabbat service:

- ✧ DAVENNING (leading some of the prayers during Shabbat services)
- ✧ LEYNING (chanting from the Torah during Shabbat services)
- ✧ D'VAR TORAH (giving a talk in which you offer thoughts and reflections on the weekly Torah portion)

TBI's program also stresses personal and spiritual growth through the process of study. Students also commit to the following over an 18 month to 2 year period:

- ✧ TORAH STUDY (attend an "Overview of the Torah" class and 12 Torah study sessions)
- ✧ SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE ATTENDANCE (attend a minimum of 18 Shabbat morning services)
- ✧ A NEW MITZVAH PRACTICE (with rabbinic help, identify a Jewish ritual practice that you haven't been practicing recently, or ever, and commit to practicing it for an extended period of time, sharing with others in your cohort what you are learning from the experience)
- ✧ SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY (reflect on your own spiritual life, from childhood to the present, and write a narrative or other form of personal sharing describing your spiritual experience as it has evolved over the years. Sharing this document is optional.)

How often do we meet to learn and prepare?

This isn't quite so simple to answer. At different times of year, you may be giving more or less time to this process. There are a couple of classes we strongly encourage students to take: "Learning Tefillah (Jewish Prayer)" and "A Quick Overview of the Torah." Once you form a small group with a shared b'nai mitzvah date, you'll probably meet with each other to study and practice every other week, and then, in the final months, every week. In order to fulfill the Torah study and Shabbat service attendance requirements, you'll have to work some Saturday mornings at TBI into your schedule. And there are opportunities for enrichment that you may want to take advantage of, even through they're not required.

Do I need to be able to read Hebrew?

In order to be able to lead prayers and chant from the Torah, you will need to be able to phonetically read the Hebrew of those texts. If this poses a challenge, there are several possible strategies available. You can contact the office to ask about possible ongoing Hebrew classes. You can also partner with others in your cohort who are in the same boat, and purchase a Hebrew reading primer. Yedida Bessemer, our Talmud Torah Principal, can speak with you and recommend one for your needs.



Igor Oshansky

How do I sign up and what does it cost?

There is no specific charge for joining an adult b'nai mitzvah cohort. However, there are some other financial costs involved in the process. There are b'nai mitzvah fees associated with the event, which when divided up among a small group should be well less than \$200 per person. There are some books and religious materials you'll need to acquire, and there are modest fees for the specific classes students are strongly encouraged to take through TBI's community education program. Participants are also encouraged to make a donation to TBI to support the work of the synagogue and to help sustain the life of the congregation.

What books and materials do I need to acquire?

The following are available for purchase at the TBI gift shop or elsewhere, and are required:

- ✧ *Kol Haneshamah Siddur*—Shabbat v’Hagim (Shabbat prayerbook)
- ✧ A *chumash* (a Hebrew-English book of the Torah with commentary. Chose any one of several editions available.)
- ✧ A tallit

The following are suggested materials that can be purchased in some cases through our gift shop, or from other vendors:

- ✧ *Jewish Literacy* by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin
- ✧ *Torah Journeys* by Rabbi Shefa Gold
- ✧ *Essential Judaism* by George Robinson
- ✧ *Climbing Jacob’s Ladder* by Alan Morinis
- ✧ A private journal to document your experience



Shonna Husbands-Hankin

How do I get started?

Call the main office at 541-485-7218 and tell our Executive Director, Nina Korican, that you would like to take part in the 2013 cohort. We’ll collect the names of people who are ready to begin, and then organize an initial meeting. Meanwhile, if possible, sign up for the Learning Tefillah (Jewish Prayer) course that’s being offered every other Sunday afternoon beginning January 23, 2011, by registering and making payment for the class. Visit www.tbieugene.org/community_education.html and scroll through the course offerings until you find the Learning Tefillah class. Then click on the “register online” link. Or, you can call Randy at the number above and register by phone. Not sure if you’re ready to start? Call to make an appointment with one of our rabbis and talk it over!