

# BECOMING **B'NEI MITZVAH**



TEMPLE  
SHAARAY  
TEFILA



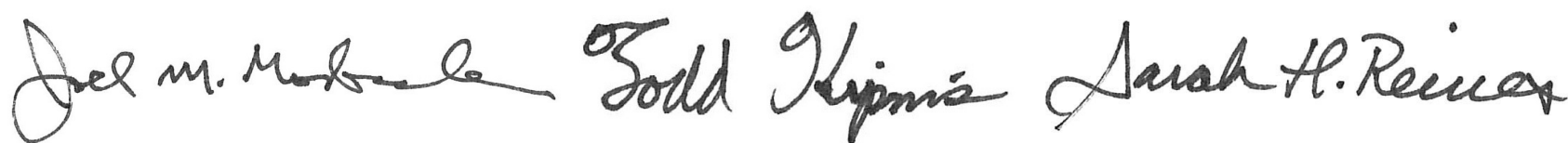
# Dear Friends,

In his last speech to the children of Israel, Moses said, “**May my teaching drip as the rain, my words flow as the dew, like showers on young growth, like droplets on the grass (Deuteronomy 32:2).**” Our goal at Shaaray Tefila is to offer Torah as water to soil, nourishing the minds and souls of our community’s children. Like seeds, they will sprout and flourish in their own time, in their own way, and we will always do our best to support their unique perspectives and individual needs as they learn, question and live the teachings of Torah.

At the age of thirteen, our children have the opportunity to become B'nei Mitzvah. With a strong foundation of Jewish education and emerging maturity, they will delve into the lush garden that is the combined interpretations of Torah throughout the generations, and consider their own role in adding to its wisdom. They will know the excitement of exploring the mysteries of texts both ancient and modern, protecting the world through tikkun olam, upholding our ethical principles by treating ourselves and others with dignity, and fulfilling the prophetic call to strive for justice and peace.

The process of developing Jewish identity begins long before our children become B'nei Mitzvah and continues for a lifetime. We appreciate the opportunity to support our families on this journey!

## L'Shalom,

Three handwritten signatures in black ink. From left to right: Rabbi Joel Mosbacher, Cantor Todd Kipnis, and Rabbi Sarah Reines. The signatures are fluid and cursive.

Rabbi Joel Mosbacher   Cantor Todd Kipnis   Rabbi Sarah Reines

# B'NEI MITZVAH TIMELINE

## FALL OF 4TH GRADE

Complete the B'nei Mitzvah date request form and receive date.

## 11 MONTHS BEFORE THE BIG DAY

Tutoring begins.

## 1 MONTH BEFORE THE BIG DAY

Students begin rehearsals with officiating clergy. There are two rehearsals for the students, and one for students and parents.

## A FEW WEEKS AFTER

Students meet with a member of our clergy team to reflect on the experience as well as to discuss ongoing learning and engagement.



## ONE YEAR BEFORE THE BIG DAY

Parents and students meet with Cantor Kipnis to receive the B'nei Mitzvah binder, Mitzvah Project Planning Guide, and learn more about the tutoring program.

## 5 MONTHS BEFORE THE BIG DAY

Students begin a series of meetings with the officiating rabbi to work on the D'var Torah (short teaching interpreting the Torah portion) and to discuss the Mitzvah Project. They will also have two progress check-in meetings with Cantor Kipnis.

## THE BIG DAY

Celebrate as our students become B'nei Mitzvah, leading Shabbat worship and teaching Torah for their family, friends, and Shaaray Tefila community.



# B'NEI MITZVAH FAQs

## Who will officiate at the service?

Officiating clergy is determined by a number of factors. Whomever officiates will partner with and guide families on their journey, ensuring a meaningful experience.

## Are students expected to attend Shabbat services before they become B'nei Mitzvah?

Yes! We ask students to attend at least three Friday evening services and six Shabbat morning services before becoming B'nei Mitzvah. It is also Shaaray Tefila's tradition that families serve as ushers at both an Erev Shabbat and a Shabbat morning service. This is an opportunity to meaningfully participate in the community and support fellow B'nei Mitzvah families.

## Can we take photos during the service?

Photography and videography are not allowed in the sanctuary during services. However, we do live stream the service and provide families with a recording. If you wish to take photos in the sanctuary, you may do so on a different day by making arrangements in advance with Rachel Kaplan, B'nei Mitzvah Administrator.

## Is it required to host a Kiddush luncheon after the service?

No. Kiddush luncheons are completely optional. Please speak with Rachel if you are interested in reserving space for a luncheon, and she can send you a list of our preferred vendors.

## What is expected of parents as students prepare?

Parents may be asked to attend meetings with clergy, and, as noted above, are invited to usher at Shabbat services. At Shaaray Tefila, we view this process as a family experience. The clergy and staff partner with families in making this simcha personally meaningful and a source of pride for our congregation.





## Are there any opportunities for family members to participate in the service?

There are honors appropriate for people of all ages and faiths. Family members and friends can participate in Erev Shabbat and Shabbat morning services through rituals (opening the Ark, dressing the Torah, etc.), as well as Hebrew or English readings.

## How can families commemorate this simcha or express appreciation to the clergy and congregation?

A meaningful way to celebrate children becoming B'nei Mitzvah is through a gift of tzedakah to Temple Shaaray Tefila. We ask that you consider an increased gift to our Annual Appeal, so that we can ensure that Shaaray Tefila remains a source of meaning, connection, and purpose, for every family and our entire congregation. Through our Annual Appeal, we are able to engage our members in exciting programs and can continue to develop fresh and unique opportunities for learning, worship, social gatherings, and more. This gift may be made in honor of one or more members of the clergy for the meaningful role they play in this important milestone for your family. If you have any questions about making a contribution in honor of your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah, please contact Joe Tutt, Assistant Director of Development, at [jtutt@tstnyc.org](mailto:jtutt@tstnyc.org) or 212-328-9393.

## What's next for students after becoming B'nei Mitzvah?

Becoming B'nei Mitzvah is not the end but a beginning in our children's Jewish journey. Pathways, our teen program beginning in the spring of 8th grade, is the next step. This comprehensive, choice-based program focuses on building Jewish identity, creating Jewish community, and improving the world around us. Teens are empowered to forge their own Jewish path by choosing from a variety of opportunities including participating in our youth group (TaSTY), serving as a Teaching Assistant (TA) in our Religious School, learning with our clergy and faculty in electives, traveling to Israel and across the US, interning with Shaaray Tefila staff mentors, or working with staff and clergy create "path" that works with their schedule and speaks to their interests.



# B'NEI MITZVAH TEAM



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