

Beit Mitzvah

Belsize Square Synagogue B'nei Mitzvah Programme

ושנתם לבניך

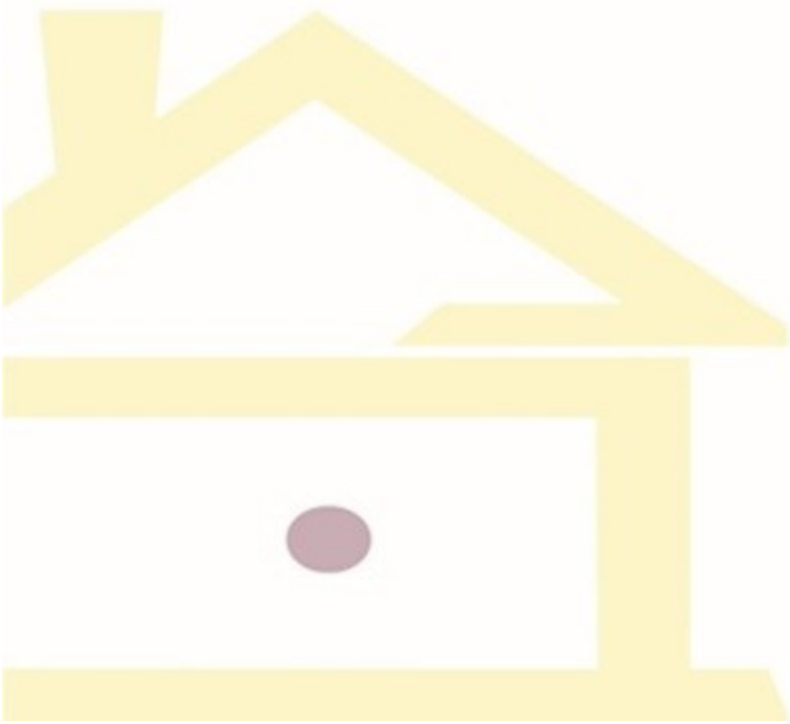
V'shinantam Levanecha

"And you shall teach them to your children..." (Devarim 6:7)



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The B'nei Mitzvah Team

Rabbi Gabriel Botnick – Rabbi of Belsize Square Synagogue
Overseeing and Teacher of the B' Mitzvah programme

Cantor Paul Heller – Cantor of Belsize Square Synagogue,
Coordinator and Teacher of the Beit Mitzvah programme
B' mitzvah tutor

Caroline Loison – Head of Cheder and Youth- B'Mitzvah tutor

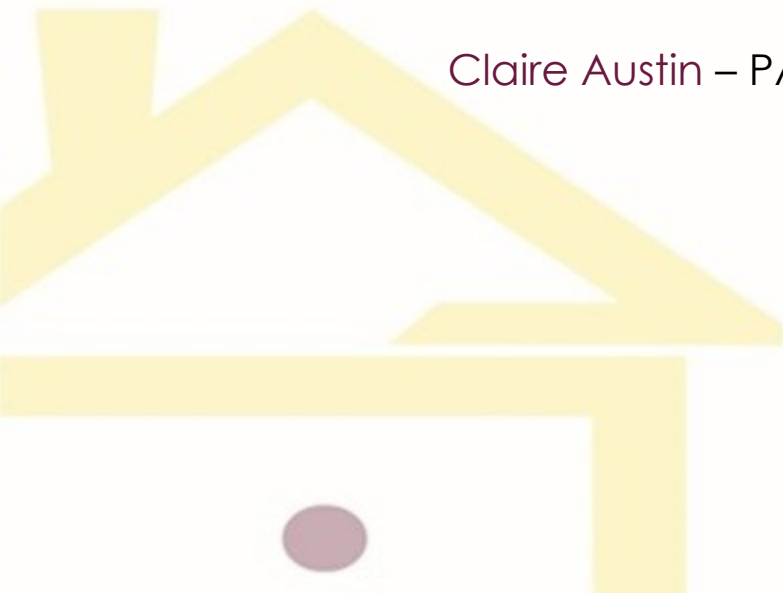
Jeannie Cohen – Projects Coordinator- Chair of Ed. Comm.

Marion Godfrey – Beit Mitzvah Jewish Studies Teacher

Joe Hacker – B Mitzvah Tutor

Adam Rynhold – B'Mitzvah Tutor- Admin.

Claire Austin – PA to Ministers- Admin.



What does it mean to become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah at Belsize Square Synagogue?

Becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a momentous step in Jewish life, reflecting more than 3000 years of tradition: Bar or Bat Mitzvah means son or daughter of the commandment. Young people become Bar or Bat Mitzvah (collectively B'nei Mitzvah) at the age of thirteen. The Talmud, the principal compilation of Jewish law, describes this rite of passage as the age at which they become personally responsible for their religious observance. At Belsize Square Synagogue, we mark this special moment with a Bar or Bat Mitzvah service, where your children are called to read from the Torah for the first time (to leyn) and from the Prophets scriptures (the Haftarah), and give a Dvar Torah, a teaching from their Torah portion (Parasha).

A Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a chance to continue along an enlightening path of Jewish learning and to develop a meaningful connection with our community. The B'nei Mitzvah programme at Belsize Square supports young people throughout the experience, and encompasses study, attendance at Synagogue and family involvement at home.

As your children prepare to embrace the Torah on the day of their Bar or Bat Mitzvah service, the Rabbi, Cantor, teachers, tutors and lay leaders work closely with them to guide them through the process and to foster a sense of belonging and camaraderie with each other. We look forward to sharing the journey with you all.

What is expected of a Bar or Bat Mitzvah?

Our vibrant B'nei Mitzvah experience offers an enriching blend of study, worship and spiritual pursuits, and students are expected to fulfil all elements of the programme.

Ideally, students will have attended our Religion school (Cheder) for a number of years, leading up to the compulsory Beit Mitzvah Sunday morning sessions as part of the B'nei Mitzvah programme for Years 7 and 8, with regular attendance expected throughout. For students who have not regularly attended Cheder prior to Year 7, parents may wish to arrange additional private tutoring in Hebrew via the Synagogue.

Students are expected to attend Shabbat services regularly. Worship is part of Jewish life and it is especially important that B'nei Mitzvah families become accustomed to the flow of Shabbat services as students prepare to lead from the bimah.

OUR B'NEI MITZVAH PROGRAMME

The Sunday Morning Beit Mitzvah Programme

Students are expected to attend our term-time Sunday morning sessions for the two academic years before their Bar or Bat Mitzvah (Years 7 and 8). There, they will study with our Rabbi, Cantor and our experienced teachers.

Personal Tutoring

We have a number of experienced tutors who work with our students over a period of about a year to help them prepare for reading the Torah and Haftarah.

Support from our Rabbi and Cantor

Students will meet Rabbi Botnick and Cantor Heller at regular intervals in the run up to their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Together, they will prepare the student for the occasion and to write a Dvar Torah.

Shabbat Services

Students are expected to attend a Shabbat service (either Saturday morning or Friday evening) at least once a month in Year 7 and twice a month in the year leading up to their Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

'Shabbat Chat' and 'Joe and the Jews'

These sessions take place around once a month on Friday night or Shabbat morning and provide a chance for our students to attend services, meet their friends and learn in an informal setting.

Project

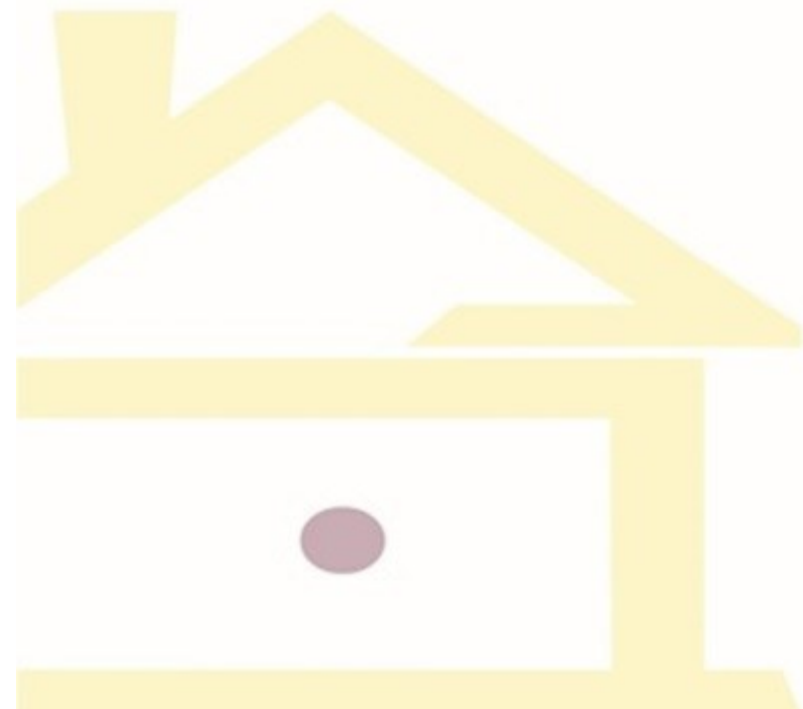
In the year leading up to their Bar or Bat Mitzvah, students are expected to undertake a personal or communal project of particular meaning to them. Students will meet on Wednesday evenings on Zoom to discuss their projects with our Projects Coordinator, Jeannie Cohen.

Peer Families and Students

The families of our students will be assigned a peer family and/or student who have recently celebrated a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, to guide and support them through the process.

Shabbaton and Weekend Away

We hope to organise regular Friday night get-togethers for our B'nei Mitzvah families. We are also planning two annual social weekends away for our students, to foster friendships and mutual support as they share the experience of preparing for their special milestone.



PROJECT IDEAS

As part of becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah, students complete a short project with the support of their families and the synagogue. Students are free to develop their own ideas, but projects should be centred around the idea of Tzedek, often translated as righteousness in English. A few suggestions are listed below.

Genealogy Project

Research the genealogical roots of a family member, friend or member of the community.

Interview a member of our community and discover their story

Get to know an older member of our community and find out about their life story. Perhaps write a piece or make a video to share with others in the community.

Volunteer with a local charity

Help to make changes to the lives of those less fortunate than themselves.

Raise funds for charity

Get sponsored for an activity or event. This could be a sports activity or undertaking a hobby or interest. Other ideas including raising money by offering a service to members of the community. Examples may include car washing, baking or helping with young children.

Support friends and family

Offer to do chores around your house or babysit for family, friends and neighbours.

Visit older or isolated people

This could be a relative, family friend or a member of our community.

Work with young children

Perhaps support younger children such as siblings or cousins with their reading or maths.

Raise awareness of a particular issue

This could be writing an article or making a video that could be shared with others - on subjects like climate change or social justice.

Please visit the following website for more project ideas:
<https://www.synagogue.org.uk/jewish-life-events/bnei-mitzvah/>

PREPARATION TIMELINE

We look forward to marking these key occasions on the journey to becoming a B'nei Mitzvah.

Start

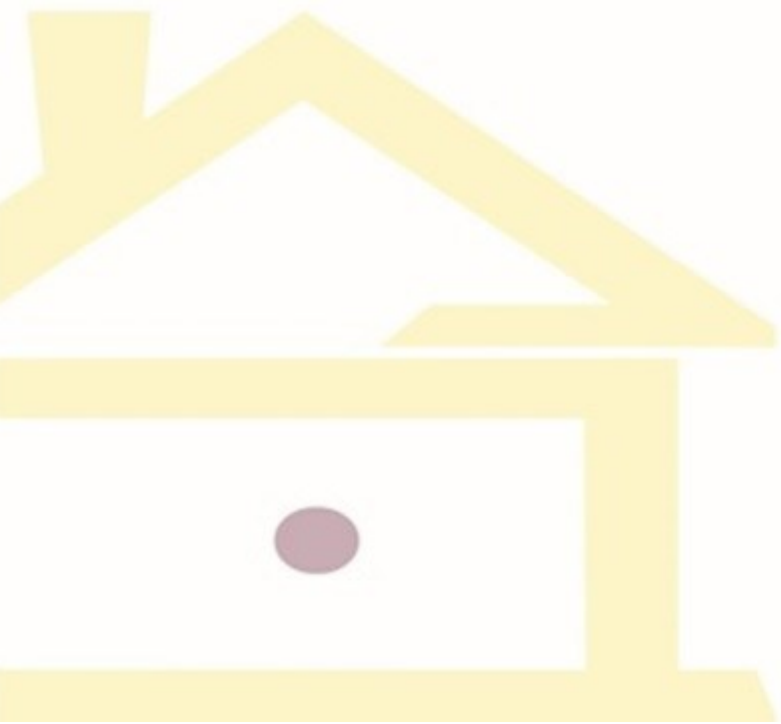
Year 6 (January)	Meeting to receive B'nei Mitzvah date and discuss programme
From Year 7	Attend Sunday morning sessions, attend Shabbat Services (monthly)
14 months before	First family meeting with Rabbi Botnick and Cantor Heller
12 months before	Private tuition begins
9-6-3 months	Progress meetings with Cantor Heller
4-3-2 months before	Dvar Torah study with Rabbi Botnick
2 months before	Bimah Practice Session with B'nei Mitzvah Tutor
1 month before	Final family meeting with Rabbi, rehearsal with tutor/Cantor
1 week before	Rehearsal with Rabbi & Cantor

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Day

SUNDAY SESSIONS

THE FIVE T'S

- **T**ORAH – RABBI BOTNICK WILL EXPLORE THE WEEKLY PORTIONS ON ALTERNATE SUNDAYS FROM 10-11
- **T**EFILAH – CANTOR HELLER WILL GO OVER RELEVANT LITURGICAL PIECES AND HOW THEY ARE CHANTED ON ALTERNATE SUNDAYS FROM 10-11
- **T**ARBUT (CULTURE), **T**ZIONUT (ISRAEL) AND **T**ZEDAKA (ACTS OF KINDNESS) –MARION GODFREY WILL COVER ONE OF THESE SUBJECTS EVERY SUNDAY FROM 11-12



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How will my child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah date be assigned?

We make every attempt to assign a date close to your child's birthday. As we don't hold B'nei Mitzvah services at Belsize in July or August, children with summer birthdays will be assigned a date in the spring or autumn, as close to their birthday as possible.

What if we are assigned a date that does not work for our family?

After all dates are assigned at the Year 6 meeting, you will be notified of the process for requesting a date change. Although we cannot guarantee a specific date, we will do our best to find a date that works for your family. We ask that you do not request a specific date for your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. However, if there are certain dates that you know will not work for your family, please contact the Synagogue office.

When will I need to start preparing?

The first meeting with the Rabbi and Cantor takes place 14 months before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Tutoring for leyning Torah and Haftarah begins about 12 months before. The Beit Mitzvah programme outlined above starts when the students complete Cheder and move into Year 7.

Does my child have to have attended Cheder before starting the B'nei Mitzvah programme?

Ideally yes, but we welcome young people joining the programme in Year 7, on condition that they attend the Beit Mitzvah Sunday morning sessions regularly. See below about Hebrew requirements.

What happens if I don't read Hebrew well?

Should your child need some extra help with reading Hebrew, Cheder will provide one-to-one online Hebrew reading lessons with one of our teachers for extra practice.

What happens if I have never learnt to read Hebrew?

Parents will need to find a private Hebrew tutor at the start of the Beit Mitzvah programme for more intensive practice. The Synagogue can provide recommendations for Hebrew tutors.

What is the cost of the B'nei Mitzvah programme?

The basic cost of the programme is included in Synagogue membership. There is a small administrative charge for the Sunday morning Beit Mitzvah programme, similar to the charge for younger children in Cheder. Private tuition for students to learn their Maffir and Haftarah is a direct financial arrangement with the tutor. Parents would be expected to pay for weekends away, but the synagogue will always consider the financial situation of families.

If you would like to speak with a clergy member about your child's needs, please contact our B'nei Mitzvah Programme Coordinator, Cantor Heller, at cantor@synagogue.org.uk

Contact details:

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