

## **Becoming B'nai Mitzvah: Reframing the B'nai mitzvah experience:** Students will have the opportunity to explore many of these themes

### **Today You Are An Adult: What Does It Mean To Become A Teen?**

The session covers the basic stresses that come with preparation for the *b'nai mitzvah*—and it encourages parents and students to have empathy for one another.

Topics include mapping the transitions that take place from childhood to teen years, exploring risks and responsibilities, and making sense of the spoken and unspoken rituals of entry into Jewish adulthood.

*Jewish text: Mishnah*

### **B'nai Mitzvah: Why am I doing this?**

This session provides some history and context to *b'nai mitzvah* in the United States and grapples with the question in the title – why have a *b'nai mitzvah*? Students explore this question from different points of view and are given the chance to share what they have discovered.

*Jewish texts: Modern Rabbinical thought, Kohelet*

### **Repairing the World: What's a Mitzvah?**

In this session, participants will make a connection between the b'nai 'mitzvah, 'mitzvah' projects, and the world of interpersonal mitzvot. and explore different ways of doing a "mitzvah project." Participants will also examine the differences between Chesed, Tzedakah and Tzedek and consider what aspects of *Tikkun Olam*, repairing the world, are most meaningful to them.

*Jewish text: 16th century kabbalist*

### **Beyond Thank You: What Does It Mean To Be A Host? A Guest?**

This session takes a close look at the social and ethical obligations of being a host and being a guest. What are the best ways to honor the efforts of a host? What are our priorities when we are planning to host an event? The session has students and families practicing communication skills and etiquette skills related to both being a guest and hosting.

*Jewish texts: Yiddish folktales, Mussar*

### **Fitting in and Standing Out: How Will I Navigate The Teen Years?**

This session looks at today's teens and the pressure they face to define their identities both in-person and in digital environments. This session explores gender codes and the ways that digital interaction shapes those codes, with particular attention paid to the context of the b'nai mitzvah celebration.

*Jewish texts: Chassidic thought, Tanach*

### **"You Just Don't Understand": How Do Parents and Teens Talk To Each Other?**

As teens grow towards independence, it is typical to experience tension and communication breakdown with parents. How is communicating with a teen different than communicating with a child? What are the best ways for teens and parents to give each other constructive feedback about their communication styles? This session looks at the Jewish values of honoring parents, the ethics of speech, and the importance of critical feedback in a parent-teen relationship.

*Jewish text: Midrash*

## Now What? Deepening Friendships and Finding Community

This session examines how society is constantly sending messages to our teens about who they are based on their gender identity. What are the expectations placed on a female-identified teen? Male-identified? Non-Binary? This session also gives parents and teens a window into how these topics are explored and addressed in the Moving Traditions teen programs, Rosh Hodesh, Shevet, and Tzelem.

*Jewish text: Tanach*

## Growing Up

This session is connected to the idea of the *b'nai mitzvah* photo montage. It has each student looking back at childhood to ask: What were some of the events and memories that shaped childhood? What choices did they make? What were moments of deep learning? The session reflects on the transition inherent in the life cycle of *b'nai mitzvah* and exploring what it means to transition out of childhood and into becoming more self-aware.

*Jewish text: Midrash*

## Center of Attention

This session focuses on the upside and downside of being at the center of attention and outlines the many ways that a *b'nai mitzvah* celebration can put someone at the center of attention. Introversion and extroversion are explored as well as Jewish concepts of responsibility and humility.

*Jewish text: Liturgy*

## Why Get Dressed?

This session is an in-depth exploration of how choices regarding clothing—particularly during a pandemic—are impacted by ideas about tradition, modesty, beauty, attraction, and social convention. Students will explore their feelings around clothes for everything from virtual school to zoom *b'nai mitzvah*.

*Jewish texts: Talmud*

## Celebrate!

This session is specifically for communities where it is typical for pre-teens to have a social event with DJs, food, music, and games. Preteens explore the peer pressures around *b'nai mitzvah* celebrations and reflect on values that can guide them in how they experience, plan, and participate in celebrations.

*Jewish texts: Talmud*

## Simcha: Where's your joy?

This session focuses on how “Simcha, ” one of the core values of celebration in the Jewish community, might be in conflict with the average preteen’s *b’nai mitzvah* experience. The preteens are helped to identify and embrace the variety of feelings that they might associate with elements of their *b’nai mitzvah* celebration

*Jewish text: Pre-Modern Torah Commentary*

## Teen Stuff

This session asks: How are teens treated by adults? What expectations do teens place on each other? What unique challenges do teens face as they undergo physical growth? What are the ways that teens are judged based on gender stereotypes or other social codes? These questions animate this session and help teens to gain awareness of the social pressures that different teens face as they journey to young adulthood. The session also helps teens relate to Jewish wisdom on self-reflection and personal growth.

*Jewish text: Pirkei Avot*

## Making Friends

This session looks at how ideas of friendship are shaped and how unrealistic expectations of friendships can cause social tension. In particular, the session looks at the ways that *b’nai mitzvah*s can put stress on friendships or help to support them. Topics include the challenges of being a “best friend,” the role of friends at celebrations, and expectations regarding invitation within the *b’nai mitzvah* class.

*Jewish text: Maimonides*

## Posting

This session looks at the ways that students use online and smartphone posts across platforms and discusses how each platform changes communication with friends. It includes a discussion of Jewish values of privacy, respect, and honesty.

*Jewish text: Talmud*

## Money and Gifts

This session looks at some of the traditional gifts given to a *b’nai mitzvah*, including money, as well as the role of “gift bags” and giveaways that people feature at their celebrations. The discussion reflects family expectations around saving, spending, and *tzedaka*, and the role of non-monetary gifts. Topics include communal gifts and ritual items.

*Jewish text: Maimonides*