

Gender Queer Identities and B'nai Mitzvah

The community and leadership team at Congregation B'nai Israel affirm all gender identities, and we affirm the gender identities of all who participate in the life of our community, adults and children alike.

To that end, we refer to Jewish coming of age as "B'nai Mitzvah," an inclusive plural, rather than the traditionally binary terms "bar" or "bat" mitzvah. We welcome all opportunities to raise awareness and affirm the diversity of gender identities, including both the educational process as well as the Shabbat service in which we celebrate becoming b'nai mitzvah.

Most recently, Jewish communities around the world have been searching for language to call people to the Torah in a way that creates space for multiple gender identities. One practice, now adopted by the Rabbinical Assembly, is to introduce new language alongside the traditional manner of calling one to the Torah.

In addition to inviting people to "rise" to the Torah with "ya'amod" for males and "ta'amod" for females, we now say "na la'amod" for anyone who wishes to be called to the Torah in gender neutral and inclusive language.

In addition, we give everyone the option of having their full Hebrew name called as (first name in Hebrew) "m'beit" (parent or parents). The gender neutral phrase, "m'beit," literally "from the house of" can replace the traditional "ben" or "bat," meaning son or daughter, of one's parents.

For a full discussion of this change, please feel free to read the teshuvah, the rabbinic responsum, approved by the Committee of Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement—link on B'nai Mitzvah webpage..

As you meet with Rabbi David, Rabbi Rosen, or anyone involved in helping you in the b'nei mitzvah process, please feel free to raise any questions you have about incorporating your child's gender identity into the celebration of this milestone in their journey of Torah.