



## **BNEI MITZVAH POLICY**

### **Purpose**

1. To ensure equal access and opportunity for all ACTJC member families during the period leading up to and encompassing the age of bnei mitzvah, accounting for the diversity of needs, experience, and interests within the ACTJC's membership.
2. To ensure that all bnei mitzvah students are equipped with broad skills to participate as responsible, active members of their congregations, of the ACTJC, and of Jewish communities at large both now and in their futures.

### **Program structure and intent**

1. A bnei mitzvah program is offered to all students aged 11-14 on Sunday mornings. This is intended to serve as an educational and social continuation of cheder, as well as offering structured learning to new students. The program is open to all regardless of gender, denomination, learning background, etc.
2. Parents who have students outside of this age range may request individual consultation with the Rabbanit/Youth Education Manager to determine appropriateness of participation. In the first year of the program (2022) it is anticipated that exceptions will be made for older students.
3. The program's content is intended to offer educational, cultural, spiritual, and social content that serves as a foundation upon which individuals will craft a personal bnei mitzvah celebration to take place on Shabbat, Rosh Hodesh, or yom tov. The individual celebration may include giving a dvar Torah, reading from the Torah, leading services, taking on a mitzvah project, offering artistic representations of learning, and so forth. The program's content will ensure that all young people are able to find a meaningful point of connection through which they can create a highly personal ceremony which may be traditional or creative.

### **Program requirements**

1. Students who need accommodations, such as those with learning differences or physical differences, should communicate in advance with the Youth Education Manager at least one month prior to enrollment to ensure the student can be supported towards full participation.
2. Families may enroll students in the program by contacting the Youth Education Manager.
3. Absences should be communicated in advance to the Youth Education Manager.
4. Correspondence about the program should be addressed to the Youth Education Manager.

### **Individual ceremony structure and purpose**

1. Individual students should make contact with the Rabbi or Rabbanit at least six months prior to their intended ceremony date, ideally after at least six months of program participation. An initial family meeting will assist in determining an appropriate tutor, creating a ceremony plan, and setting a tentative date. Usually, orthodox girls will schedule a ceremony around their twelfth birthday; orthodox boys and all progressives will schedule a ceremony around their thirteenth birthday.
2. The tutor will be assigned according to family preference and tutor availability, with all efforts made to respect family preferences regarding gender and denomination.
3. Families are expected to support the individual learning process at home with regular preparation between sessions.
4. Families will arrange mutually convenient scheduling with their individual tutor. The tutor, in collaboration with the Rabbi and Rabbanit, will determine the final content and date of the individual ceremony.
5. Barring exceptional circumstances, the President and Rabbi/Rabbanit will attend and participate in the ceremony.
6. Correspondence about the individual ceremony should be addressed to the tutor and/or Rabbi and Rabbanit.

### **Individual ceremony requirements**

1. Only participants in the program whose families are members will be offered individualized ceremony tuition for free. The tutoring of non-participants, including members, is at the discretion of individual tutors in consultation with the Rabbi, Rabbanit, and Youth Education Manager. Non-participants in the program and non-members may incur substantial tutoring fees.
2. Families choosing to enlist an external tutor are responsible for any and all associated fees and must communicate their intentions with the Youth Education Manager in order to schedule a ceremony at the ACTJC.
3. All families intending to have an individual ceremony that occurs during synagogue prayer services should intend to attend the relevant services on a regular basis for at least six months prior to the ceremony. While this will not be enforced, it is a vital element of bnei mitzvah learning and will contribute to the success of the ceremony. The first Shabbat of each secular month will be particularly tailored to this age group's participation.
4. Program participants are strongly encouraged to attend all individual ceremonies of other program participants, regardless of ceremony content or denominational affiliation.
5. The ceremony is only one element of the bnei mitzvah process. Individuals are expected to continue participating in the program after their ceremony has occurred.

### **Fees**

1. Program participants whose families are ACTJC members are guaranteed individualized tuition towards a ceremony, which is included in the program fee. Non-participants and non-members may incur substantial tutoring fees and are not guaranteed tutor availability.
2. Fee structures will differ for members and non-members, broadly in line with cheder fees. Non-members will be strongly encouraged to join the ACTJC.
3. Additional fees may be required for special one-off outings that are offered by third party organizations, require transport outside of the ACT, or require the provision of specialist materials. Fees for outings will be structured such that families in financial need can

receive assistance. Outing participation will be encouraged, but not required as part of the program.

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