



romemu

JEWISH LIFE, ELEVATED

B Mitzvah

# HANDBOOK

# WELCOME TO ROMEMU'S B MITZVAH PROGRAM!

You and your family are on a meaningful, guided journey toward a sacred rite of passage.

A “B Mitzvah” is a gender-neutral term that refers to the process, the ceremony, and the student.

A B Mitzvah at Romemu is called to the Torah not only as a student of Judaism, but as a teacher. By leading the congregation in song, by chanting and interpreting Torah, and by engaging in tikkun olam, the B Mitzvah becomes a teacher, a leader, and a full member of the Romemu community and the larger Jewish community.

It goes without saying that this transformation does not happen overnight. The B Mitzvah experience is a journey, which takes hard work and dedication, and will typically span 6th and 7th grade. This handbook is meant to help guide you through this process. We want this experience to be a meaningful and joyous spiritual journey for your B Mitzvah and for the whole family. Mazal Tov!

# LEARNING REQUIREMENTS

## Seekers

Being part of Saturday morning Seekers, Romemu's Holistic Hebrew School, is essential for our B Mitzvahs to ensure an acceptable level of Hebrew reading and Judaic learning, and to truly be part of the Romemu community. In Seekers we discuss a range of topics from Jewish thought, philosophy, and values to festivals, Shabbat, and the life cycle. Debate and independent thought are encouraged, and a wide range of observance and practice are acknowledged.

## Family Workshops

Our family workshops, which we hold five times a year, are a fundamental part of the B Mitzvah program here at Romemu. We invite students and their families to come together to learn and reflect on what it means to become a mature member of their Jewish communities. Our curriculum focuses on facilitating family conversations about emerging adolescence through a Jewish lens. Some topics include, what it means to become an adult, mitzvot (commandments), tzedakah, and building community. The workshops take place on 5 Saturday afternoons after services.

## Leading and Leining

Music is the heart of the Shabbat services at Romemu, and it's important that our B Mitzvah students take on a significant role in leading the prayers on the day of their simcha. In addition, each week a parsha (section) of the Torah is leined (chanted) during the Torah service. Our tutors will teach the students to lein a significant portion of the weekly parsha as well as Romemu's beautiful tunes so that the community can join in and sing along with them.

# LEARNING REQUIREMENTS

## D'var Torah

B Mitzvah students will deliver a short d'var Torah (a speech explaining the meaning of the Torah portion) after their Torah reading. Through this process, students will learn about their Torah portion with Romemu clergy, understand their connection to their history and values, and find ways in which it is relevant to their lives and the modern world.

## Tzedakah

In the world of Jewish traditions and coming-of-age celebrations, Mitzvah Projects hold a special place. The term “Mitzvah” translates to “commandment” or “good deed” in Hebrew, and Mitzvah Projects are all about putting that commandment into action. A Mitzvah Project is a meaningful, community-oriented initiative undertaken by Jewish teenagers, often in preparation for their B Mitzvah ceremonies. All students are expected to take on a tzedakah (charity) project, whether this be raising money for a charity of their choice or donating time or other resources to a cause they care about. In this way, they take on the Jewish responsibility of tikkun olam (repairing the world). As part of their time in the B Mitzvah Cohort, students will work with Tzedek America's Mitzvah Project Central to choose and execute a project they are passionate about. Mitzvah Project Central will connect students to different organizations that they can work with to pursue a project that is meaningful to them.

# B MITZVAH STEPS

**2**

Years  
Prior

Family requests a date with the Y&F Coordinator and signs up for the B Mitzvah Cohort. Students continue their Seekers classes.

**12**

Months  
Prior

Student receives a B Mitzvah binder with tutoring materials and are matched with a tutor by the Y&F Coordinator.

**8**

Months  
Prior

Family meets with the Cantor to go over the program and discuss your journey.

**5**

Months  
Prior

Student is paired with a Romemu clergy member to write the d'var Torah and they begin regular meetings. Student begins working on their Mitzvah Project.

**3**

Months  
Prior

Family meets with the Cantor to discuss the structure of the B Mitzvah service.

The Y&F Coordinator reaches out to discuss your kiddush options.

**1**

Month  
Prior

The Y&F Coordinator provides you with a form to designate special roles during the ceremony and a template for the student's pamphlet.

Kiddush details are finalized.

**1.5**

Weeks  
Prior

Final B Mitzvah rehearsal with the Cantor or another lead clergy for the service.

# FAQS

- **How old should my child be when they have their B Mitzvah?**

At Romemu, B Mitzvahs typically happen at 13 years old and preparation begins at 11 and 12 years old. There are plenty of circumstances where a child isn't ready at 13 and Romemu is dedicated to ensuring the B Mitzvah process is accessible to everyone.

- **Is the B Mitzvah process accessible to students with different learning needs?**

Romemu is committed to finding a way for everyone to engage in Jewish practice and ritual. If your child needs additional support or accommodations throughout their B Mitzvah journey, please reach out to the Youth & Family Coordinator so we can work together to best support your family.

- **Do I have to be a Romemu member to enroll my child in the B Mitzvah Cohort?**

Families must be members of Romemu in order to participate in Romemu's B Mitzvah program. The current year's membership dues and any outstanding balance must be paid in full prior to the B Mitzvah.

- **Does my child need to be enrolled in Seekers to have a B Mitzvah at Romemu?**

We expect all B Mitzvah students to be a part of Seekers. Please reach out to the Youth & Family Coordinator to discuss any special circumstances.

- **Who will be officiating my child's B Mitzvah?**

At Romemu we have a fantastic clergy team, composed of Rabbi David Ingber, Rabbi Dianne Cohler-Esses, and Cantor Shimon Smith. At the point at which we confirm your child's B Mitzvah date, we will not be able to guarantee which member of the clergy will officiate on the day. Please be assured that each of them leads beautiful, melodious, spiritual and uplifting services, and that they will each do their utmost to provide for your family the experience which you hope for. We will confirm which clergy member will officiate approximately three months before the B Mitzvah.

- **How is my child assigned a tutor?**

Romemu has two approved tutors who know the Romemu service and B Mitzvah process very well. We will assign you one of our tutors based on their availability. Please reach out to the Youth & Family Coordinator if you would like to work with an outside tutor. All tutoring arrangements must be approved by the Romemu staff before beginning the learning process.

- **What is the cost of the B Mitzvah Cohort?**

The B Mitzvah Cohort is a 2 year program that costs \$2575 per year. The program includes Seekers Holistic Hebrew School, Hebrew, B Mitzvah Cohort Family Workshops, meetings and support from Romemu's clergy, logistical support from Romemu's staff, and a professional Zoom livestream of your child's ceremony.

The cost of B Mitzvah tutoring and a kiddush are not included in the cost of the program.

# FAQS

- **What if I can't afford the cost of the B Mitzvah program?**

Romemu is committed to ensuring inclusion for all students, regardless of financial status. If you require tuition assistance, please contact us.

- **Do I have to host a kiddush after my child's B Mitzvah?**

A pleasant tradition is for B Mitzvah families to host and sponsor a community kiddush (after-service snacks/meal) for their simcha. You are not required to host a kiddush. You may also choose to host a private kiddush.

If you would like to host a kiddush for the community but cannot afford to do so, Romemu has a fund that can help subsidize kiddush costs.

- **Can I take pictures or videos during the service?**

You and your guests should have phones switched off throughout the service. Although we run a 'hybrid' in person and online service, and there may be screens and other AV equipment visible, as a congregation we feel it is important for attendees to be fully present during the service, so phones are a significant distraction. Please tell your guests they cannot take photos during the service. If you would like to have photographs taken on the morning of the service, you may arrange for a photographer to come from 8:30-9:30am. They may continue to take photos during the service on the balcony without flash.

- **What honors can I give my family and friends?**

There are a number of opportunities for you to give honors to your family and friends at your child's B Mitzvah. Each Saturday, there are 7 aliyot leined (chanted) from the torah. Before each aliyah, there is a blessing recited. Your child will be given the blessing for the 7th aliyah and we invite the parents to have the 6th so that you can stand at the bimah with your child while they receive their first aliyah. We invite you to give the other aliyot (1-5) to Jewish relatives or friends.

In addition to the aliyot blessings, you may invite relatives or friends to open and/or close the ark, lift the torah (hagbah), dress the torah (gelilah), or pass out candy to your guests to be thrown at the B Mitzvah after they've completed the ceremony (this is optional).

You will be given a form to delegate these roles a month ahead of the ceremony.

- **How can I support my child throughout the B Mitzvah process?**

Be an active participant in the B Mitzvah journey; participate in our family workshops, bring your child to services, ask them about their parsha, build relationships with the other B Mitzvah families. We don't expect parents to know every step of the process, but we do expect you to be engaged and excited to learn.

Romemu staff and tutors are here to guide you through every step of the journey!

# CONTACTS

**Cantor Shimon Smith** *Director of Music and Family*  
shimon@romemu.org

**Natasha Marder** *Youth and Family Coordinator*  
natasha@romemu.org

**Lauren Greenhall** *Program Manager*  
lauren@romemu.org

**Victor Ramirez** *Facilities Director*  
victor@romemu.org

**Rabbi David** *Founding Rabbi*  
david@romemu.org

**Rabbi Dianne** *Rabbi and Director of Lifelong Learning*  
dianne@romemu.org

**Jeff Cahn** *Executive Director*  
jeff@romemu.org

*Romemu Support Center*  
support@romemu.org