



# Becoming B'nei Mitzvah at Temple Sinai

**GESHER GUIDE**



# Introduction



Becoming *B'nei Mitzvah* is about a lot of things. It's ...

- A moment that happens in front of your community when you lead friends and loved ones in prayer.
- A course of study to prepare you to lead the service, chant from the Torah, and present words of Torah with confidence.
- Forming relationships with your clergy, your tutor and educators, and the entire Sinai staff.
- Creating Jewish memories with your family.
- Deepening your connection to Temple Sinai.
- Forming and enhancing friendships with peers.
- Becoming a well-rounded young Jewish person who loves being Jewish and who will carry on Jewish traditions long past the age of 13.



At Temple Sinai, becoming *B'nei Mitzvah* means that you have learned a lot, questioned a lot, hopefully laughed a lot, and are ready to advance toward living a rich Jewish life.

Temple Sinai's *B'nei Mitzvah* program has two components, *Keva* and *Kavanah*. Everything related to your actual service, like the Hebrew prayers and chanting Torah, is the *Keva* (Hebrew word used when something is a bit more set in place or fixed) component. The *Kavanah* (intention) component includes the process of relationship building and personal experiences that lead up to your ceremony which inspires your continued involvement in Jewish life in the years to come.



# Introduction



The entire *B'nei Mitzvah* process focuses on three key relationships: the relationship between the student and their peers, the relationship between the student and their clergy, and the relationship between the student and Jewish living.

## **The relationship between the student and their peers**

A strength of being part of the synagogue is the community we build with our peers. That's why, in addition to youth and family programming that already exists at Temple Sinai, there are special *Shabbat* dinners throughout the year just for those who are in our *B'nei Mitzvah* program. Watch for additional experiences for both peers and parents to build community with one another.



## **The relationship between the student and their clergy**

The *B'nei Mitzvah* process provides a great opportunity to deepen relationships with the rabbis and the cantor. The process starts one year before the ceremony date with an introduction to the *B'nei Mitzvah* program and the values that will be highlighted throughout the year. As the process continues, you will meet with different rabbis to check in on your progress, study the meaning of your Torah portion and help craft your *Dvar Torah* (also known as your speech). Each member of our clergy team looks forward to spending some quality and, we hope, impactful time with you.



## **The relationship between the student and Jewish living**

This *B'nei Mitzvah* year is an important time for you to better understand and appreciate your place within the Jewish community. As a young adult, you have the opportunity to take more ownership of your Jewish identity and to make choices regarding your personal Jewish observance.



# Team You!



It takes a lot of effort to become *B'nei Mitzvah* at Sinai. During the year ahead (starting with today!), building off your years of learning and exposure to the Hebrew language and the prayers of Jewish tradition, you will not only study the Torah and become more comfortable with the prayers, but you will also gain more knowledge of Judaism's ideas about life. We have assembled a team to support you through this process. We call this team **TEAM YOU**, because we are all here for YOU, to help YOU navigate the challenges and celebrate the victories this year will bring. TEAM YOU is here to help YOU become the best YOU that you can be!

Your TEAM YOU is comprised of people who will help you through each stage of the *B'nei Mitzvah* process:





# Keva and Kavanah

**Keva**, which is the Hebrew word used when something is a bit more set in place or fixed, is everything related to your actual *B'nei Mitzvah* service. Throughout this next year, you will focus on learning and enhancing the skills needed, not only to lead your *B'nei Mitzvah* service but also to be able to participate in a Jewish worship service for the rest of your life.

In order to help you develop these skills and build your confidence, all students work closely with a *B'nei Mitzvah* tutor. Our tutors will assist you with the selected list of prayers, the Torah portion and, when appropriate, the Haftarah portion. Your tutor will support you to ensure you feel comfortable and confident to lead your *B'nei Mitzvah* service.

**Kavanah** We often think of the *B'nei Mitzvah* service as the most important part of the process. But really it is only the most visible. The most important part is the personal meaning piece, the *Kavanah* component. *Kavanah* is the intentional process of relationship building and the personal experiences that lead up to the ceremony which inspires your continued involvement in Jewish life in the years to come.





# Gesher Personal Interest Program



To help you with these important decisions on the bridge between youth and Jewish adulthood, we have created the **Gesher** Personal Interest Program. The Gesher (Hebrew for "bridge") program presents students with various options of meaningful projects and/or experiences from which to choose according to your personal interests and passions. We want you to dream big and make choices as to which tracks you want to explore and that will be interesting and meaningful.

The Gesher personal interest program has three categories. Students are asked to **choose at least one track from each.**



## **Category 1: Tzedek (Justice)**

The Tzedek category will help students address something broken about our world to make it a better place:

### **1. Gemilut Chasadim (Acts of Loving Kindness) Track:**

Students who choose this track are interested in something action-oriented, like holding a drive to collect sports equipment or pet supplies to donate to a specific organization, or volunteering to help a specific organization of your choice. *-If interested in this track, students should **email Marisa Kaiser** ([mkaiser@templesinaiatlanta.org](mailto:mkaiser@templesinaiatlanta.org)) prior to getting started.*

### **2. Tzedakah (Philanthropy) Track:**

Students who choose this track are interested in becoming teen philanthropists to raise money for a cause about which they care. You will receive coaching to help set goals and create a plan to put in place. *-If interested in this track, students should **email Rabbi Brad** ([blevenberg@templesinaiatlanta.org](mailto:blevenberg@templesinaiatlanta.org)) prior to getting started.*

### **3. Temple Sinai Social Action Track:**

Students who choose this track will participate in social action programs and volunteer opportunities at Temple Sinai such as Family Promise, Second Helpings, Refugee Relief, the High Holy Day food drive, Backpack Buddies and more. *-If interested in this track, students should **email Carrie Bohn** ([cbohn@templesinaiatlanta.org](mailto:cbohn@templesinaiatlanta.org)) prior to getting started.*





## **Category 2: Dor l'Dor (Generation to Generation)**

The *Dor l'Dor* category will help students create personal and meaningful family connections.

### **1. Hiddur Mitzvah (Enhancing the B'nei Mitzvah service) Track:**

Students who choose this track will make their *B'nei Mitzvah* service even more meaningful by personalizing some of the ritual objects used in the ceremony. Examples could include making a *yad*, personalizing your *tallit*, baking challah and choosing other ritual objects to use in the service.

*-If interested in this track, students should **email Marisa Kaiser** ([mkaiser@templesinaiatlanta.org](mailto:mkaiser@templesinaiatlanta.org)) prior to getting started.*

### **2. Family Stories Track:**

Students who choose this track will tell the story of “me” and the story of “we” – their family – as they engage with the generations of those who make up their family. As each family is unique, you will determine which projects are best for you and your family. For example, you might compile a cookbook of family recipes and record traditions observed at holidays. You might complete more creative ritual projects such as creating a scrapbook/project telling a family story modeled in the spirit of the *Haggadah*, and you might even think about interviewing relatives to learn about their Jewish journeys and then documenting those stories.

*-If interested in this track, students should **email Rabbi Brad** ([blevenberg@templesinaiatlanta.org](mailto:blevenberg@templesinaiatlanta.org)) prior to getting started.*

### **3. Shabbat as a Family Track:**

Students who choose this track will find meaningful ways to observe Shabbat with their families. You and your family will participate regularly in Friday night and/or Saturday morning *Shabbat* services at Sinai, hold regular Shabbat dinners with family members and friends, and engage in other Shabbat traditions such as making *challah* and lighting Shabbat candles.

*-If interested in this track, students should **email Rabbi Brad** ([blevenberg@templesinaiatlanta.org](mailto:blevenberg@templesinaiatlanta.org)) prior to getting started.*





### **Category 3: Kehilah (Community)**

The *Kehilah* category will help students connect to the greater Jewish community.

#### **1.Jewish Travel Track:**

Students who choose this track will integrate Jewish learning into their family travel. Examples include visiting synagogues/Jewish sites when you go to another city, creating an Israel Pledge (a commitment to visit Israel as well as a plan to make it happen!), engaging around Israel, and making connections with Jewish people wherever you go.

*-If interested in this track, students should email **Marisa Kaiser** ([mkaiser@templesinaiatlanta.org](mailto:mkaiser@templesinaiatlanta.org)) prior to getting started.*

#### **2.Jewish Atlanta Track:**

Students who choose this track will engage with various Jewish experiences throughout Atlanta, such as: visiting MACoM (Atlanta's community mikveh) and immersing in a *mikveh*, watching an AJFF (Atlanta Jewish Film Festival) movie, attending a *Neranenah* (formerly Atlanta Jewish Music Festival) event, attending a MJCCA Book Festival program, going to the Kosher BBQ Cook off, marching together with Jewish Atlanta in the Pride Parade or other significant programs and events.

*-If interested in this track, students should email **Rabbi Brad** ([blevenberg@templesinaiatlanta.org](mailto:blevenberg@templesinaiatlanta.org)) prior to getting started.*

#### **3.Temple Sinai Track:**

Students who choose this track will attend youth group programs and Shabbat services, making each a priority this year. They will register with one of the clergy members for a Torah Tour to learn the stories behind our Torah scrolls, and spend time learning about areas of the Sinai campus as well as art and artifacts in our building.

*-If interested in this track, students should email **Rabbi Brad** ([blevenberg@templesinaiatlanta.org](mailto:blevenberg@templesinaiatlanta.org)) prior to getting started.*





# Planning Your Gesher Personal Interest Projects



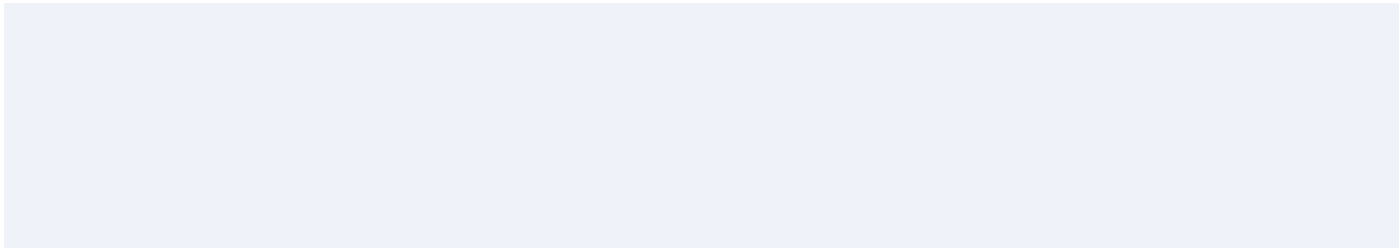
Once you decide which track from each category you want to choose, you should begin planning using your *Gesher* Planning Chart. There will be *Gesher* check-ins with your tutors, clergy members and coaches from your tracks, and Sharon will also periodically inquire about the progress you are making during the year.

Following the completion of the *Gesher* program, you will present a short essay to one of the rabbis that addresses what fills you with pride about your Jewish identity, how you demonstrate that pride, and what you learned throughout the *Gesher* process. This essay will be integrated into your speech as well.

One additional note: While it is possible to complete the Gesher tracks by yourself, we think this is a great opportunity to partner together as a family and make some – or even most - of these projects into family-centered activities. In this way, your *B'nei Mitzvah* experience will be even more of a family-based activity!

## Conclusion

The collective hope of our Temple Sinai staff and lay leaders is that our families enjoy the *B'nei Mitzvah* experience and that our young people find it meaningful and moving and look back upon the process with pride as they move into the next phase of their Jewish journey.



# Gesher Planning Chart

**Name:**

**Directions:** Students, please write your answers directly onto this document.

	Category 1: <i>Tzedek</i> (Justice)  The <i>Tzedek</i> category will help students address something broken about our world to make it a better place.	Category 2: <i>Dor L'Dor</i> (Generation to Generation)  The <i>Dor l'Dor</i> category will help students create personal and meaningful family connections.	Category 3: <i>Kehilah</i> (Community)  The <i>Kehilah</i> category will help students connect to the greater Jewish community.
What track did you choose?			
Why did you choose this track?			
Step 1 for making progress & deadline			
Step 2 for making progress & deadline			
Step 3 for making progress & deadline			