



Bnei Mitzvah Program 2021



SHIRA BNEI MITZVAH PROGRAM 2021

Information Booklet

Who are we?

Shira, the shul of song, is an inclusive Orthodox community in Melbourne that embraces a commitment to Jewish law (halacha) and social action (tikkun olam).

We have sought out the opportunities afforded by traditional Jewish sources for increasing the inclusion of women in our liturgical practices. This enables the participation and leadership of women in certain parts of the prayer service, including Torah reading. Our singing in prayer is not only about aesthetics but it is our primary religious medium of avodah shebalev (service of the heart).

Our social action programs aim to engage us with our religious obligations to fight injustice and oppression. Our community strives to seek a meaningful balance between all aspects of the rabbinic aphorism, "If I am not for myself, who am I; but if I am only for myself, what am I?"

Everyone is welcome at Shira. We are a dynamic, growing community that values the participation of all its members.

Bnei Mitzvah at Shira

Shira offers a Bnei Mitzvah program different to others in Melbourne in its focus on child-centered learning. Our course is all about finding the ways in which each individual young adult best connects to their Judaism and their Bar or Bat-Mitzvah process.

Our program has 4 key aims:

1. To give a grounding of basic Jewish knowledge and skills including an ability to approach Jewish text and to engage in Tefillah;
2. To foster a positive group learning environment in which each Bnei Mitzvah can explore their own connection to Judaism by engaging together and taking ownership over their experience;
3. To provide a meaningful Bnei Mitzvah experience within an inclusive framework that is engaged with both tradition and the modern world; and
4. To explore the meaning of growing up in Judaism and the application of Jewish values, notably, Tikkun Olam.

The Curriculum

The program will comprise weekly hour long sessions, scheduled to fit the school year and the Jewish calendar. Sessions are designed so that they are accessible to all participants, regardless of their Jewish educational background. We cover the following topics:

Introduction

We will discuss the concept of becoming bar/bat mitzvah. We will talk about the relevance of Judaism and tradition in the lives of our participants with a focus on choices and autonomy.

Tikkun Olam (Social Action)

In this section of the program we will look at Jewish texts relating to tikkun olam and other social action mitzvot. The focus here will be on youth empowerment and responsibility.

Jewish egalitarianism

This section is designed to help our participants grasp and approach halacha and halachic innovation. We will explore some of the halachot surrounding women reading from the torah as well as looking at the development of Jewish egalitarianism. We will learn about both secular and Jewish feminism. We will also talk about what it means to celebrate our Bar or Bat Mitzvah at Shira, the only Orthodox egalitarian minyan in Melbourne.

Torah

We will explore the historical timeline of the Oral Torah as well as learn to understand the structure and practical implications of the various texts. This section will include a familiarisation with the Talmud, the Mishnah and later commentators. We will look at some key halachic and philosophical thinkers throughout Jewish history.

Chaggim

We will talk about some of the halachot (laws) surrounding the chaggim and Shabbat as well as some of the special texts such as the megillot associated with these chaggim.

Tefilla (Prayer)

This section will include an understanding of tefilla as well as an individual exploration of what prayer means and how to connect to it. We will also go through some key tefillot and familiarise ourselves with the texts as well as exploring their meanings.

Jewish History

We will explore some of the major events that make up what we call Jewish history. The aim is to allow chanichim to think about Jewish history as a narrative of which they are a part and to place themselves inside events.

'Step Up' program

In partnership with Stand Up

One term of Shira's program is run in partnership with Stand Up, to deliver their 'Step Up' program (formerly called Stand Up ABC- *and be counted*).

Aims

- Engage participants in 21st century challenges, equipping them with the tools to effect positive social change.
- Provide an interactive social justice journey for Bnei Mitzvah- aged youth through education and action-based experiences.
- Empower young Jewish Australians to be educated, active and accountable members of the Jewish and wider community

Sessions

- **Social justice challenges** - Participants will discuss what they consider to be the most pressing societal issues. Participants will establish an awareness of their role as Jewish adults, to take responsibility for local, national, and global issues in the world today.
- **Poverty cycle**- Exploring the causes of social inequality, participants will uncover the complexities of poverty. Participants will connect the dots between the poverty cycle and the Jewish value of Tzedakah.
- **Refugee awareness**- Participants will investigate their own family histories, discussing the answer to the question 'Who are we responsible for?' Discovering the similarities between the plight of refugees and our Jewish history, participants will be joined by a refugee guest speaker who will share their story of coming to Australia.
- **Indigenous reconciliation**- Challenging participants' understanding of responsibility within Australia, participants will learn the historical disadvantage of Indigenous Australians. Participants will look through the lens of Chessed (kindness), to broaden their awareness of how to generate knowledge and action.

- **Changing the world, where do I start?**- Participants will gain a broader understanding of social justice issues that exist in the world and discover innovative ways to solve the issue of their choice. Participants will explore a social justice issue that they are passionate about, consider how to tackle these issues, and discuss actionable ways to effect positive social change.
- **Leadership and action** - Participants to grapple with what the true definition of leadership is and the role leaders and followers have in societal issues. Inspired by the phrase Think Big, Start Small, participants will gain the necessary tools to create their own plan of action that can be carried out.

Shira Bnei Mitzvah Program Cost

The cost of the program will be \$300, including three terms of weekly program and a number of weeks in the term that the Stand Up Program runs. If you are holding a bar or bat mitzvah at shul, the \$300 educational levy covers this cost.

The Stand Up component is billed separately and we are waiting to confirm the 2021 fees. To give an indication, previously this program cost \$185.

Please note, Shira does not wish to exclude any Bnei Mitzvah candidate due to financial concerns. Please let us know if these costs are prohibitive to your child's participation. For all related concerns/questions in relation to payment, please contact Penelle Stern via email: ellenep@live.com.au.

When and Where:

Sessions will be held at **Shira, 222 Balacclava Road Caulfield North**. This excludes the Stand Up portion, which will be held at Stand Up, 128A Wattletree Rd, Malvern.

We aim to begin the program in February. In the past sessions have typically been held on Mondays, however if your child would like to participate but is unable to attend on this day/time, we will revisit the scheduling to find a time/day that suits as many participants as possible.

For questions or information on how to enrol or any other aspect of the Bnei Mitzvah program, please email us at admin@shira.org.au or contact Penelle on **0421989009**.

For information on booking your child's Bar/Bat Mitvah at Shira, please email admin@shira.org.au