

BNEI MITZVAH





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 @ 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
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 75 minute sessions, scheduled to fit the school year and the Jewish calendar, covering the following topics. Sessions are designed so that they are accessible to all participants, regardless of their Jewish educational background.

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.

Special sessions

We hope to hold a few sessions delivered by experts in our community on Jewish food, art, and music, to give the Bnei Mitzvah process a more colourful and experiential outlet.

Stand Up ABC (in partnership with Stand Up)

An innovative education experience for 11 and 12 year olds

Program Aims

- To empower participants to change the world inspired by Jewish principles and values.
- To engage participants and explore their role in addressing 21st century societal challenges.

- To empower participants to regard themselves as *changemakers* for a better world.
- To provide participants with tangible opportunities to make a difference.
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Program 1: Standing Up

What would I stand up for?

After getting to know their fellow participants, Stand Up-ers will explore the idea of *Modern Plagues*; injustices that afflict the modern world like homelessness, extreme poverty, racism and climate change. Stand Up-ers will be introduced to some of the inspiring people throughout history who realised their personal obligation to make a difference in the world. Inspired by Jewish concepts of *Tzedek* (*justice*) and *Chessed* (*kindness*), Stand Up-ers will learn what it means to be of Bar and Bat Mitzvah age.

Program 2: My universe of obligation

Who am I responsible to, and whose rights should I stand up for?

Stand Up-ers will be faced with the task of building their very own utopian communities, using special currency to purchase the features they would like to see in their communities. Stand Up-ers will then explore their universe of obligation. Who is in my "inner" circles of community, and who is on my "outer"? And how does this influence who I choose to help?

Program 3: Teach a person to fish

What does it mean to live on less than \$2 a day?

Stand Up-ers will consider the challenges of extreme poverty. After learning about the unequal distribution of wealth around the world, Stand Up-ers will be given the chance to discuss possible solutions to one of the world's greatest problems. Using the concept of *Tzedakah*, Stand Up-ers will learn that the Jewish approach to helping others is as relevant as ever.

Program 4: My Culture & identity

How does my culture shape my identity?

Stand Up-ers will learn about the features of Australia's varied

cultures, and the value of cultural diversity in our society. Stand Up-ers will then explore Jewish culture and how it shapes and informs our values and our identity.

Program 5: Engaging other cultures

Are we really that different?

In this cross cultural exchange Stand Up-ers will get to know kids from the Sudanese community through a fun and interactive activity.

Program 6: Indigenous Australia

What is Jewish about Reconciliation? Stand Up-ers will learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, their history, and their current-day disadvantage. Stand Up-ers will understand why we as a Jewish community are responsible to play an active role in reconciliation and leave with ideas and tools to keep Standing Up for indigenous rights, recognition and repair

Program 7: Think big, start small

At the age of 12, am I really expected to take responsibility for others?

In this session Stand Up-ers will learn about the amazing impact of ethical consumption on communities, and the transformative power Stand Up-ers hold with each dollar they spend. Stand Up-ers will then explore the meaning of responsibility within Judaism and revisit all the important messages of the Stand Up journey.

Program 8: Grand Finale

Parents and families are invited to this final session where Stand Up-ers will share their reflections from the Stand Up program. Each family will then create a project plan and begin their very own Stand Up And Be Counted (Stand Up ABC) projects.

Shira B'nei Mitzvah Program Cost

The cost of the program will be \$350 for the year, which is inclusive of the cost of the Stand Up Program.

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 sarakowal00@gmail.com.

When and Where:

Sessions will be held at Shira, 222 Balaclava 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 on **Monday 26th February 2017** at **5.30pm**. 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 any questions/concerns and for registration, please contact:

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OR

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