

# B'NAI TORAH CONGREGATION LAUNCHES B'NAI MITZVAH PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN WITH DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS

*HaMakom Journey Will Tailor Bar and Bat Mitzvah Experiences to Those with Autism, ADHD, Down Syndrome, and Other Diverse Needs*

BOCA RATON, FL, UNITED STATES,  
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EINPresswire.com/ -- B'nai Torah

Congregation, the largest conservative

synagogue in Southeast Florida, announced the launch of its HaMakom program, which will offer B'nai Mitzvah journeys to children with diverse learning needs, including autism, ADHD, Down Syndrome, and others.



**B'NAI TORAH**  
CONGREGATION

B'nai Torah Congregation

“

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*Fred Berkowitz, Director of the  
HaMakom Program*

The Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a religious ceremony offered to Jewish boys and girls typically at the age of 13, which according to Jewish tradition, is when they enter adulthood and become fully responsible for their actions. The HaMakom program will specifically tailor the process of preparing for Bar and Bat Mitzvah to the needs and strengths of each child, while honoring tradition and embracing individuality.

The need for a B'nai Mitzvah program for children with special needs is more apparent than ever. According to the

South Palm Beach County Jewish Community Study, conducted in 2018 by the Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach County in collaboration with the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University, 28 percent of Jewish households include at least one person who has some sort of health issue, special need, or disability. Two percent of Jewish households include a member with a cognitive or developmental disability. According to the Palm Beach County School District, approximately 32,000 children in grades K-12 have a developmental or intellectual disability.

Meanwhile, the Broward County School District identified over 11,000 students as having a Specific Learning Disability.

“Through the HaMakom journey, we will provide support to ensure a meaningful and joyous milestone for both the child and their parents,” said Fred Berkowitz, Director of the HaMakom Program at B’nai Torah Congregation. Berkowitz, who has been preparing students for B’nai Mitzvah for over two decades, adds: “I am thrilled to be a part of this program and give all children the profound sense of belonging that they deserve, and which defines our inclusive community here at B’nai Torah.”

“One of the features we strive for is the creation of a community that is inclusive of all in need and all seekers, and that inclusivity includes all populations,” added Rabbi David Steinhardt, Senior Rabbi at B’nai Torah Congregation. “The need to include those with special needs is a defining quality of who we are as a synagogue and a community. I have wanted to offer this program for a very long time and am grateful to Fred Berkowitz for leading the effort, and Marsha Ruderman for making it possible.”

HaMakom is funded by the generous contribution of Marsha Ruderman. To learn more about the program, please contact Fred Berkowitz at [fred.berkowitz@bnai-torah.org](mailto:fred.berkowitz@bnai-torah.org).

#### About B’nai Torah Congregation

B’nai Torah Congregation is the largest conservative synagogue in Southeast Florida with over 1,300 membership families. It is a close-knit, multi-generational, modern, and egalitarian synagogue, which offers diverse services, programs of worship, learning, tzedakah, social action, and social activities. B’nai Torah Congregation creates a perfect outlet for arts, culture, and learning, and we are home to several schools of Jewish education. The synagogue, which offers a wide variety of volunteer opportunities that will enrich the synagogue experience, is a tremendous and vibrant center for tzedakah acts and projects that touch thousands of people.



HaMakom. Photo credit Nathan Anderson



HaMakom

Learn more at <https://btcbo.ca.org>.

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