

***Bnei Mitzvah** Guidelines** (Dec 2016)

Kadima aims to honor tradition while working to create an inclusive community. As such, we propose these guidelines as guidelines only, and acknowledge that the Board-School Liaison and the Rabbi and/or Education Director will consult on a case-by-case basis for every family wishing to enter a process of a Kadima *Bnei Mitzvah***.

The *Bnei Mitzvah* is a [relatively new tradition](#) coming out of Europe in the 1500s and mostly seems to have replaced an older ceremony that usually occurred at a young person's *entry* into Jewish learning at the age of 4 or 5. Today, most likely, a *bnei mitzvah* is a ceremony of *leaving* Jewish education, and we at Kadima would like this not to be the case, for we see Jewish identity development and values choices only increasing after this turning point in one's life.

As such, we honor the now-traditional model of having a celebration of Jewish adulthood (as our legal tradition ends the status of "minor" at age 12 for women and 13 for men) and think of the *bnei mitzvah* as a chance to reflect on one's Jewish journey - family and individual - up to that point, with a re-envisioning of where one desires it go from there.

To honor the power of Torah and the Kadima Women's Torah Project, we ask that a *bnei mitzvah* include the Torah scroll somehow. Most traditionally, this would mean chanting from it directly. We are open to other interpretations. We ask that the emerging Jewish adult lead a Jewish ritual of some kind - to be created by the family in conjunction with the Rabbi and/or Education Director. This could be the classic version: a shabbat morning service with torah reading, or something more out of the box: a *mikveh* ritual at Lake Washington and torah study report, or a performance of a play based on and in torah.

As such, we ask families to meet with the Kadima Rabbi and/or Education Director at least one year prior to the ceremony to work toward envisioning the ritual and setting a timeline. From this vision, the path toward achieving the ritual's goals and needs will be created and figured out, laying out a path for education guided perhaps by the rabbi in conjunction with the emerging adult and family, or perhaps with a hired *madrich/a* who will help guide the emerging adult and their family toward the ritual and its leadership.

As part of the proposal, there should be a balance of the following:

- 1) **Honoring the individual emerging adult** - their interests, talents, strengths, values, and growing edges.
- 2) **Honoring the family** - their history, identities, struggles, strengths, and growing edges.
- 3) **Honoring the Kadima Community** - figuring out how to add to the community's resources: knowledge, connections, fun, etc; as much as using it for support, strength, and wisdom. The process should result in the family and the larger community more connected and honoring the other than even when it began.
- 4) **Honoring Jewishness and Judaism** - the ritual/ceremony/teaching/process should build upon the evolving civilization of the Jewish people and thus what you learn and create in the process should honor past incarnations of Judaism (without needing to replicate it) and add to a more liberatory future for Judaism and Jews.
- 5) **Honoring All Peoples and the Earth/Creation** - we ask that this process and ceremony/ritual have a component that involves the liberation of an intersecting group to Jews as well as advancing our relationship to honoring the earth and our existence on it - the home for all of creation.

We wish each family the time, space, and ability to reflect upon values, reasons, and struggles that might advance or hold up this process and we do not seek to rush anyone through it. While one can have a *bonei mitzvah* beginning at age 12 or 13, there is no age limit for one to have one. We honor your process as a family and allow it to take the time it needs to fulfill the goals you set.

L'hatzliha - to your success!

*We will use the term "*bonei mitzvah*" throughout this document as an act of gender liberation. By using "*bar or bat mitzvah*" we are complicit in the continuation of a gender binary which leaves out gender non-conforming individuals. As an act of becoming a Jewish adult, we do not want to force young people into a "girl" or "boy" box. Judaism has classically honored the [existence of 6 genders](#), and we'd like to be traditional, in this regard. :)

**By Kadima *Bnei Mitzvah*, we mean a ceremony and preparation that is based in the Kadima calendar and utilizes staff resources to create and help the family prepare for.