



Matan

Matan *B'nai Mitzvah* Inclusion Guide

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Before you begin...

Dear Facilitator:

Welcome to the Matan's *B'nai Mitzvah* Inclusion Guide, a program designed for an Education Director, clergy member or teacher to guide *b'nai mitzvah* tutors through varied approaches in order to help students of all abilities successfully prepare for their *b'nai mitzvah* milestone. Participants will expand their toolbox, add to their “bag of tricks”, and gain a more comprehensive understanding of working with children with diverse learning needs and their families.

Matan's *B'nai Mitzvah* Inclusion Guide is divided into **8 units**. Each unit should take approximately **30-45 minutes** to complete. The pages that follow serve as the facilitator's guide as you lead your participants through each unit's corresponding slide deck. The guide includes handouts and clear instructions for what you will need for each lesson. Please be sure to familiarize yourself with each unit before teaching the lesson!

While the curriculum is intended to be implemented sequentially and in full,

we understand that you may not have the opportunity to spend that much time working as a group with your *b'nai mitzvah* tutors. Feel free to start with the elements you feel will be most relevant to your specific tutors, and then share additional information with them, as a group or individually, as time permits.

Every session follows the same format:

Big Ideas: These are listed so that you, the trainer, can familiarize yourself with the overall theme of the session.

Objectives: As a best practice, you may want to write down the objectives for the participants to see as you begin each session. This will prepare them with what to expect, and will allow all of you to evaluate whether or not the objectives were achieved.

Materials: Here you will find a list of everything you will need during the session, including which handouts need to be copied in advance.

Accessibility Considerations: It is likely that some of the participating *b'nai mitzvah* tutors will have disabilities themselves, whether or not you are aware of them. It is always important to think about the barriers that might exist, so that you can make modifications in advance of the session. If you find that nobody requires the modifications, it is still important to model advance thinking about accessibility considerations.

Facilitator Considerations: This is where we added some notes to further guide you through each lesson. You may also refer to the “presenter’s notes” on each slide for more information.

Everything you need for Matan’s *B’nai Mitzvah* Inclusion Guide is contained in the following pages and the accompanying slide deck. Of course, one curriculum cannot possibly address every potential challenge or diverse need that tutors may encounter! We encourage you to check out the resource list at the end of this guide in order to learn more from our colleagues and partners in the field of Jewish disability inclusion. Each one provides different examples, varying perspectives and unique ideas. We are grateful to Hidden Sparks, Keshet, Gateways, Jewish Learning Venture and Howard Blas, and are honored to contribute to this landscape.

Wishing you a successful and inclusive year!

Unit 1

Relationship-Building: The Key to Success



Unit 1: Relationship-Building: The Key to Success

BIG IDEAS:

- Each family has their own unique goals for their child's *b'nai mitzvah*
- The process for achieving those goals is different for each family
- Every child is an individual with their own set of learning styles, needs, and strengths

OBJECTIVES:

- Participants will be able to develop goals with each family in an appropriate and realistic way.

- Participants will complete their own learning style inventory in order to better understand themselves as learners and as teachers.
- Participants will recognize a variety of learning styles and understand best practices to match those needs.
- Participants will explore learning style inventories to share with their students and families in order to tailor their *b'nai mitzvah* instruction.
- Participants will identify their own expectations and best practices for the *b'nai mitzvah* process.

MATERIALS:

- [Handout 1: Goal Setting: Student](#)
- [Handout 2: Goal Setting: Family](#)
- [Handout 3: Learning Styles Assessment](#)
- [Alternate Handout 3 - Identifying our Learning Styles](#)
- [Slides: Unit 1](#)

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Can all the participants write?
 - If they cannot write, can they dictate their information into their phone or to a scribe?
- Do any participants have vision impairments?
 - Handouts can be provided in larger print or in braille
 - If they cannot see the slides or read the information, please read the information aloud

FACILITATOR CONSIDERATIONS:

- There are many different learning style inventories and checklists online. Tutors might consider doing a search on Pinterest, Teachers Pay Teachers, or Google images for more ideas.
- It is important for *b'nai mitzvah* tutors to facilitate a conversation with the family before they begin any instruction. Encourage tutors to meet with each family, together with the student, to talk about the goals for the *b'nai mitzvah*. Writing down goals together can be very helpful and may be used as a reference point as the tutoring process continues.
 - Please refer to the handouts on goal setting and review them with the tutors.
 - When thinking about the role plays in slides 10-12, some possible considerations are:
 - **Scenario 1:**
 - Promote the student's independence. Show the student how to set a

reminder on their phone.

- Create a system where the tutor reminds the student twice a week to review their materials either through email, text, or another method.
- Suggest that a sibling, grandparent, aunt/uncle step in to help

○ **Scenario 2:**

- Educate the family on the expectations of your synagogue and what is expected of the student. It is possible they do not realize that it is not required for each student to read the same amount of *Torah* or lead the same amount of prayers.
- Share personal examples of other students who have been successful by doing “less” than what the family is used to
- Collaborate with the student’s social/emotional support team at school. Ask: what strategies work best to help the student navigate this extra pressure?
- Educate yourself on how to teach a student with a language based disability. What strategies will make the student feel comfortable?

○ **Scenario 3:**

- Educate the student on the legal Jewish requirements of becoming a *bar/bat mitzvah*
- Educate the family on the expectations of your synagogue and what is expected of the student. It is possible they do not realize that it is not required for each student to read the same amount of *Torah* or lead the same amount of prayers.
- Get the child on board- give them choices, empower them to be involved in the planning process, give them a voice to express what it is they want to achieve.
- If the opportunity is available, facilitate a meeting between the student and another student in the community with a similar learning profile. The current student can learn from someone else about their experience and why it was successful for them.

Unit 2

Teaching Trope and Hebrew to Diverse Learners



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Unit 2: Teaching Trope and Hebrew to Diverse Learners

BIG IDEAS:

- There is more than one way to teach Hebrew and *trope* to a student
- Exploring various options will allow you to meet the needs of each student

OBJECTIVES:

- Participants will be exposed to multi-sensory strategies for teaching Hebrew and *trope*.
- Participants will begin to identify which strategy might be best for their students.

MATERIALS:

- [Slides: Unit 2](#)

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Can all the participants write?
 - If they cannot write, can they dictate their information into their phone or to a scribe?
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FACILITATOR CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Slides 4-9** take you through one *pasuk* (verse) from the *Torah*. You will see how you can apply multiple methods of multi-sensory instruction to the same verse.
- **Slide 4:** The “traditional” approach is what most tutors utilize. Typically, tutors teach the *trope* with the corresponding names and symbols of each *trope*. Then, students transfer their knowledge of the *trope* to the text and learn the tune of each word. Finally, students learn how to chant their portion without the symbols of the *trope* to guide them.
- **Slide 5:** Color-coding can be a helpful tool for visual learners. Each color corresponds with a different *trope* symbol. Students can even choose which color they want to correspond with each *trope*.
- **Slide 6:** Cantor Arianne Brown has a 3 part video lesson on YouTube called “Tricks of the Trope” in which she demonstrates hand symbols for each *trope*. This is a particularly useful method for kinesthetic learners.
- **Slide 7:** Mapping out the tune can be useful to visual learners who hear the tune and visualize it in a certain pattern. They might hear the trope sounds going up and down or being longer or shorter notes.
- **Slide 8:** Not all students can read Hebrew or have the ability to learn Hebrew. Transliteration is a more accessible method for non-Hebrew readers. Traditional transliterations can be found on Bible.ort or Sefaria. A student might prefer to transliterate the text in a way that makes more sense to them. There are no right or wrong spelling choices for transliterated texts.
- **Slide 9:** Auditory learners may prefer to learn their *Torah* portion through voice recordings. There is a sample recording on this slide. Many smartphones have pre-installed, user-friendly recording apps.

Unit 3

Tackling the *D'var Torah*



Unit 3: Tackling the D'var Torah

BIG IDEAS:

- A *d'var Torah* can manifest in many different ways; it does not need to only be a written speech.
- Understanding your students' strengths, interests, and learning styles will help you and your students establish the kind of *d'var Torah* that will make their learning most meaningful.

OBJECTIVES:

- Participants will understand how to use graphic organizers for writing a *d'var Torah*
- Participants will learn about alternative options to writing a traditional *d'var Torah*
- Participants will begin to identify which option they will use with their students

MATERIALS:

- [Handout 4: D'var Torah Graphic Organizer - Outline](#)
- [Handout 4A: D'var Torah Graphic Organizer- Bubble Map](#)
- [Handout 4B: D'var Torah Graphic Organizer- Sentence Prompts](#)
- [Handout 4C: D'var Torah Graphic Organizer- Sequencing](#)
- [Slides: Unit 3](#)

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Can all the participants write?
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- Handouts can be provided in larger print or in braille
- Do any participants have vision impairments?
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FACILITATOR CONSIDERATIONS:

- The slides in this unit will not take the full 45 minutes. Please use the handouts as additional resources for this unit.
- The *d'var Torah* graphic organizers are meant to be samples of graphic organizers that can be used. We recommend using Pinterest and Google to find more samples that might work better for your student.
- Sample search terms may include: "*d'var Torah* graphic organizer", "*bar/bat mitzvah* assistance", "writing a *d'var Torah*", "how to write a *d'var Torah*".

Unit 4

The Main Event



Unit 4: The Main Event

BIG IDEAS:

- The “typical” *b’nai mitzvah* ceremony is not for everyone
- Shifting your mindset and attitude about a “typical” *b’nai mitzvah* will allow for “out of the box” thinking and a meaningful experience for each student
- It is important to keep in mind the student’s and family’s needs, individual strengths, learning styles, and necessary accommodations while creating an individualized ceremony

OBJECTIVES:

- Participants will identify *why* and *when* alternative ceremonies are important to consider

- Participants will learn about a variety of service and ceremony options

MATERIALS:

- [Slides: Unit 4](#)

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Do any participants have vision impairments?
 - If they cannot see the slides or read the information, please read the information aloud
 - Slides can be provided in larger print or in braille

FACILITATOR CONSIDERATIONS:

- In order for this unit to be most successful, the facilitator should introduce their own community's set of expectations for a *b'nai mitzvah*. The tutors might not be aware that accommodations and modifications have been made in the past or might not know that this is a possibility.
- This unit allows for a lot of participant discussion and sharing of personal experiences.
- The facilitator should prepare 3-4 examples of alternative *b'nai mitzvah* they have helped coordinate or have attended. If you have not attended service, please reference Howard Blas's website for articles and short clips about successful alternatives.
(<https://howardblas.com/bar-bat-mitzvah-tutoring/>)
- Some ideas for alternative services:
 - Creating art related to Judaism or the *Torah* portion and creating an art gallery display
 - Weekday or *Rosh Chodesh* morning service
 - Friday night dinner- the student leads the prayers for wine, hand washing, and *hamotzi* while celebrating *Shabbat* with friends and family
 - The student creates a movie or skit related to their *Torah* portion and has a "movie screening" at their celebration
 - Virtual service. This allows the student to be in the comfort of their own home and family can include guests who might not have otherwise been able to attend. Lends itself to the many benefits of a technological platform.

Unit 5

Mitzvah Projects



Unit 5: *Mitzvah* Projects

BIG IDEAS:

- A *mitzvah* project is meant to be personal and motivating to each student
- A *mitzvah* project can be done in a variety of ways and should be tailored to meet the interests and needs of each student
- Forming a personal connection to a *mitzvah* project allows for more creativity, passion, and motivation from the student

OBJECTIVES:

- Participants will learn how to identify each student's interests and preferences.
- Participants will learn about possible *mitzvah* projects.

MATERIALS:

- [Slides: Unit 5](#)

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Do any participants have vision impairments?
 - If they cannot see the slides or read the information, please read the information aloud
 - Handouts/slides can be provided in larger print or in braille

FACILITATOR CONSIDERATIONS:

- Before presenting this unit, make a list of examples of *mitzvah* projects that you have found to be the most meaningful or interesting.
- Allow participants to share their own experiences from their work with former students. One virtual sharing tool is [Mentimeter](#). Participants can type their ideas on a shared screen and read suggestions from one another. (In person, ideas can be shared using an easel with markers or post-it notes.)

Unit 6

Case Studies



Unit 6: Case Studies

BIG IDEAS:

- You will meet many different types of learners as a *b'nai mitzvah* tutor. Being intentional with your instruction will help you match your teaching to the learner in front of you.
- It is important to be aware of and understand a range of disabilities, learning types, and student profiles so that you can meet the needs of each student you tutor.
- Not all students learn in the same way and not all students need the same accommodations in the *b'nai mitzvah* process. Learning about a variety of methods will help make the *b'nai mitzvah* experience meaningful for each child.

OBJECTIVES:

- Participants will learn background information about disabilities.
- Participants will learn about a variety of students.
- Participants will begin to identify accommodations that could be made for each type of learner.

MATERIALS:

- [Slides: Unit 6](#)
- [Common Disabilities Slide Deck](#)

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Do any participants have vision impairments?
 - If they cannot see the slides or read the information, please read the information aloud
 - Handouts/slides can be provided in larger print or in braille

FACILITATOR CONSIDERATIONS:

- The slides provide three case studies and possible strategies for each type of student. An alternative to this section is to use case studies of students you have personal experience with. You can type up your own slides to share or you can describe the student profile to the participants.
- You can allow participants to share their own experiences about specific challenges and how they have overcome those challenges.
- You can allow participants to share their own challenges and workshop together how the tutor might help that student going forward.

Unit 7

Navigating the “Big Day”



Unit 7: Navigating the “Big Day”

BIG IDEAS:

- Preparing for the day of the *b’nai mitzvah* is just as important as the rest of the process; creating a plan together will lead to higher levels of comfort for both the student and the family
- Preparing for the logistics of the ceremony is crucial to the success of the student and family

OBJECTIVES:

- Participants will be able to create a plan for and with the family
- Participants will be able to identify possible accommodations needed for each child

MATERIALS:

- [Handout 5: Day of Organizer](#)
- [Slides: Unit 7](#)

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Can all the participants write?
 - If they cannot write, can they dictate their information into their phone or to a scribe?
- Do any participants have vision impairments?
 - If they cannot see the slides or read the information, please read the information aloud
 - Handouts can be provided in larger print or in braille

FACILITATOR CONSIDERATIONS:

- This unit allows for discussion and sharing of experiences.
- In addition to the slides, please review the “Day of Organizer”. Use one of the case studies from the previous unit and complete the handout either as a group or independently.
 - Alternatively, assign each participant a different case study from the previous unit.
 - Have them use the handout to create a successful plan for that family.
 - Come back together and share a plan for each type of student.

Unit 8

Technology, Virtual Learning, and Additional Resources



Unit 8: Technology, Virtual Learning, and Additional Resources

BIG IDEAS:

- Participants will expose themselves to a variety of technology and additional resources that will help them and their students in the *B'nai Mitzvah* education process.

OBJECTIVES:

- Participants will experience multiple options for incorporating technology into learning.

- Participants will receive additional resources available for this process.

MATERIALS:

- Resource guide (page 20 of this guide)
- [Slides: Unit 8](#)

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Handouts can be provided in larger print or in braille
- Do any participants have vision impairments?
 - If they cannot see the slides or read the information, please read the information aloud

FACILITATOR CONSIDERATIONS:

- As the facilitator, you should have some background knowledge in these technology tools. Familiarize yourself with other suggested platforms listed below. Plan to share your screen or project your screen to walk participants through these various platforms.
- In advance of this unit, the facilitator should ask that the tutors bring a device to the session.
- Allow 10-15 minutes for participants to explore the various technology platforms. During this time, allow participants to share any successes they have seen or experienced using these platforms in the past.
- Allow 10-15 minutes for participants to join together as a group and share one new piece of technology and how they are going to use it in their tutoring sessions going forward. Allow participants to share any additional resources that they have utilized successfully in the past with the group.

Additional Resources

Technology platforms to explore:

- [Sefaria](#)
- [Pocket Torah](#)
- [Mentimeter](#)
- [Flip Grid](#)
- [Google Workspace](#)

Colleagues in the field:

- Howard Blas, a Special Educator and *B'nai Mitzvah* teacher, has many helpful resources on his website about teaching *trope* and Hebrew. Consider watching some of his videos [here](#).
- Cantor Arianne Brown, experienced cantor and educator, creator of “Tricks of the Trope” series on YouTube. Her 3 part series can be found [here](#).
- [Gateways for Jewish Education](#)
- [Jewish Learning Venture](#)
- [JBI Library](#)
- [Jewish Deaf Resource Center](#)