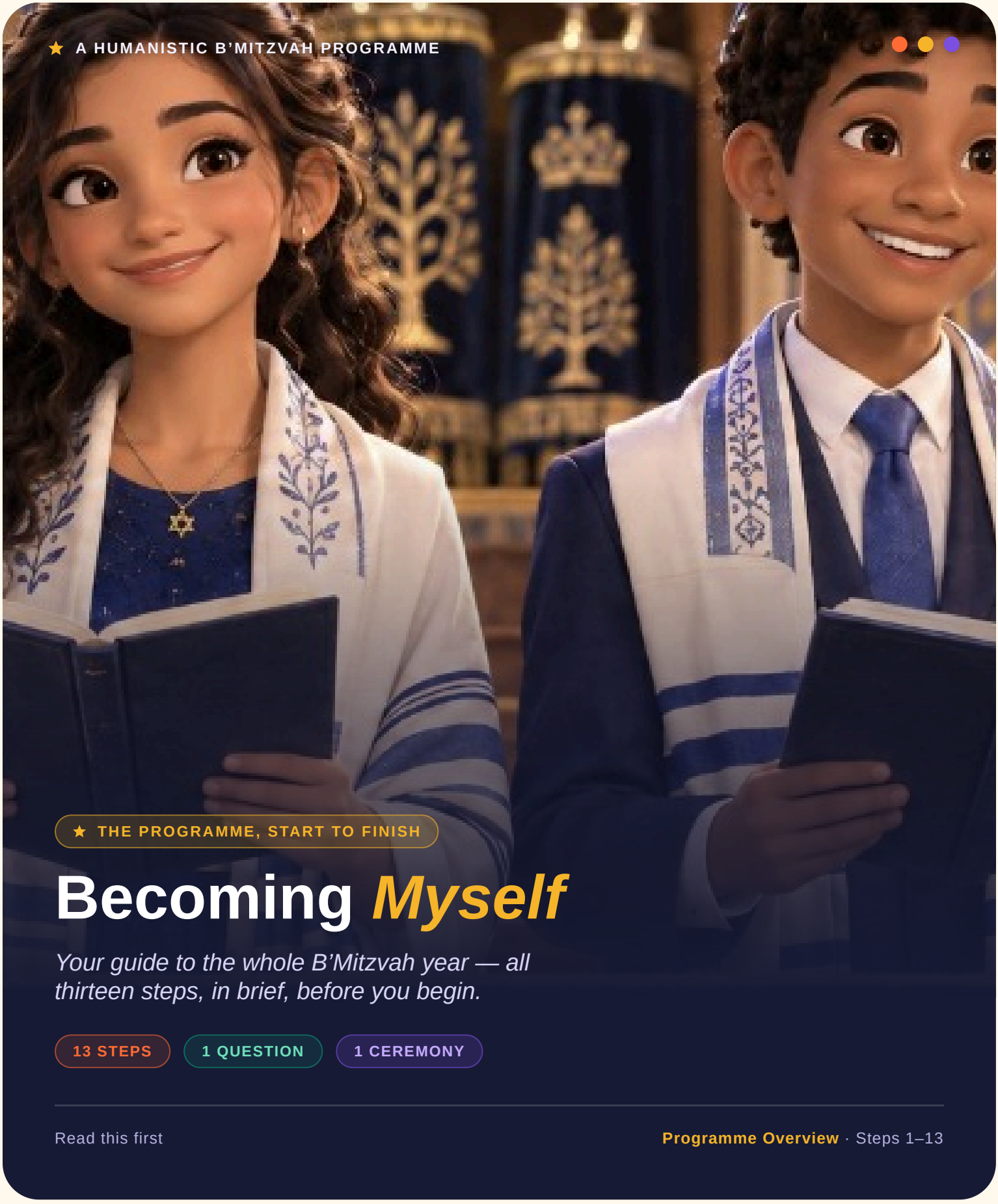


★ A HUMANISTIC B’MITZVAH PROGRAMME

★ THE PROGRAMME, START TO FINISH

Becoming *Myself*

Your guide to the whole B’Mitzvah year — all thirteen steps, in brief, before you begin.

13 STEPS · 1 QUESTION · 1 CEREMONY

Read this first

Programme Overview · Steps 1–13

→ WELCOME · BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Somewhere near the end of this year, you’re going to stand up in front of everyone who loves you and say something true about who you’re becoming. This booklet is your map for getting there — a quick look at all thirteen steps, so you know what’s coming and roughly what each one will ask of you.

In Humanistic Judaism, a B’Mitzvah isn’t about reciting an ancient script perfectly. It’s about **you**: your family, your questions, your values, and your place in a people whose story is thousands of years old and still being written — by people like you.

> **What “B’Mitzvah” means here**
>
> The word points to *mitzvah* — a good, worthy deed you choose freely because you understand why it matters, not because someone above you commanded it. Your B’Mitzvah is the moment you show that you can choose well.

THE QUESTION YOU CARRY

Early in Step 1, you’ll name something in the world that bothers you — and turn it into a question. That question travels with you through every step that follows. Sometimes the link will be obvious; sometimes you’ll have to argue for it, or admit there isn’t one. Both are useful.

By Step 10 it’s usually what your mitzvah project is about. By Step 11 it’s usually what your talk is about. You’re not being asked to pick a topic — you’re being asked to find out what you actually think.

HOW THE YEAR WORKS · THREE PHASES

The thirteen steps fall into three phases. Steps 1–9 are about **discovering** yourself, your family, and your people. Step 10 is about **doing** — a real project that matches your behaviour to your values. Steps 11–13 are about **sharing** — your talk, your ceremony, and the day itself.

Your journal

Before Step 1, get yourself a notebook, binder, or folder — paper or digital. Almost every step asks you to record something in it: stories, values, questions, drafts. By the end it's the raw material your talk grows out of.

Your tutor

Your tutor talks things through with you, connects you with people worth interviewing, and helps turn all of this into a ceremony. Some activities specifically ask you to arrange something through them — give plenty of notice.

EVERY STEP GIVES YOU

- **A Learning Goal** — what the step is for, in one box
- **Things to read & watch** — collected on one resources page
- **People to talk to** — family, tutor, community
- **Questions to answer** — for your journal, not for a test

There's more here than anyone could finish, and that's deliberate — different people are gripped by different things. Doing three activities properly beats doing all of them badly. "I don't know" is also a perfectly good answer.

THE PATH AT A GLANCE · ALL THIRTEEN STEPS

Orange = discover · gold = do · purple = share.

1	**Family Values & Identity** Where your family came from, what they believed mattered	DISCOVER
2	**Being Jewish, Being Humanistic** Philosophy, ethics & culture — and where you stand	DISCOVER
3	**Jewish History** From desert nomads to an international people	DISCOVER
4	**Jewish Holidays** What a people rehearses, and your own Shabbat practice	DISCOVER
5	**Life Cycle Celebrations** Baby naming, B'Mitzvah, marriage & death	DISCOVER
6	**The History of B'Mitzvah** Where the ceremony came from, and what yours will ask of you	DISCOVER
7	**Experiencing Jewish Heritage** Out of the workbook — visit, interview, listen	DISCOVER
8	**Jewish Literature** What's worth reading, and how to read against the grain	DISCOVER
9	**Jewish Languages** Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino & who decides what counts	DISCOVER
10	**My Mitzvah Project** Matching your behaviour to your values	DO
11	**Writing & Giving Your Talk** A year of thinking, turned into fifteen minutes	SHARE
12	**Planning Your Ceremony** Running order, rehearsal, until it stops being frightening	SHARE
13	**The Big Day** Almost nothing left to do. That's deliberate	SHARE

★ STEPS 1–9 · DISCOVER

Finding Out Who You Are & Where You Come From

Family, identity, history, holidays, life cycles, heritage, literature and language — the raw material for everything that follows.

1 Family Values & Identity

Where your family came from, what they believed mattered — and what you have decided matters to you.

LEARNING GOAL

Discover your family stories, learn about what they valued, and identify the things in life that are important to you.

EXPECTED OF YOU · Interview your family, write your own values, name “the thing that bothers you” and turn it into your question, and choose your Torah portion (parshah).

2 Being Jewish, Being Humanistic

Philosophy, ethics and culture — and where you personally stand in relation to all three.

LEARNING GOAL

Be able to explain what it means to be Jewish and a Humanistic Jew in a few sentences. Examine your own beliefs.

EXPECTED OF YOU · Put your own beliefs into words — not the textbook answer, your answer.

3 Jewish History

From desert nomads to city dwellers to an international people — and the question of who gets to tell the story.

LEARNING GOAL

Travel through the history of the Jewish people, from nomads of the desert to city dwellers and an international people, and find out just how similar — yet how diverse — Jews have been.

EXPECTED OF YOU · Follow the thread from ancient history to the present, and notice where your own family fits into it.

4 Jewish Holidays

How a people rehearses what it thinks matters — and how to build a Shabbat practice that is genuinely your own.

LEARNING GOAL

Learn about many Jewish holidays and explore how Humanistic Jews honour their heritage and enjoy celebrating holidays in a way that is meaningful to them.

EXPECTED OF YOU · Try out a weekly Shabbat practice of your own design, and keep a short journal entry each time you mark a holiday.

5 Life Cycle Celebrations

Baby naming, B'Mitzvah, marriage and death — and what each ceremony decides about who counts as family.

LEARNING GOAL

Learn how life cycle events connect us with our heritage, our communities, and the larger Jewish family. Investigate ways that Humanistic Jews have adapted some of the practices.

EXPECTED OF YOU · Look at how your own family has marked these moments, and how a Humanistic version might differ.

6 The History of B'Mitzvah

Where the ceremony came from, how it changed — and what yours will ask of the person at the centre of it.

LEARNING GOAL

Become acquainted with how B'Mitzvah originated and changed over time.

EXPECTED OF YOU · Start forming your own opinion on who a coming-of-age ceremony is really for.

7 Experiencing Jewish Heritage

Get out of the workbook. Visit, interview, listen — and find the people already working on the thing that bothers you.

LEARNING GOAL

Discover new and different ways to learn about being Jewish.

EXPECTED OF YOU · Go somewhere, talk to someone, or watch something — learning that happens outside the pages of this book.

8

Jewish Literature

What counts as Jewish literature, why it is worth reading — and how to read anything against the grain.

LEARNING GOAL

Learn what Jewish literature is and why it is important to read it, and become familiar with some Jewish authors and important Jewish books written for your age group.

EXPECTED OF YOU · Choose two or three books — not all on the same subject — and actually read them.

9

Jewish Languages

Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, Haketia, Judeo-Arabic — and the question of who decides what counts as a real language.

LEARNING GOAL

Become familiar with Jewish languages and learn some words in a Jewish language of your choice.

EXPECTED OF YOU · Learn a handful of words or phrases in a Jewish language — useful if you're reading from your parshah.

★ STEP 10 · DO

My Mitzvah Project

The one step where you stop reading about values and start acting on them.

10

Doing a Community Mitzvah Project

Matching your behaviour to your values — and the difference between helping that changes something and helping that does not.

LEARNING GOAL

Discover how matching your behaviour to your values makes a difference in people's lives.

EXPECTED OF YOU · Design and carry out a real project connected to your question — then do it again, if there's time. This is where the whole year starts paying off in the real world.

★ STEPS 11–13 · SHARE

Writing It, Building It, Living It

Everything you've learned, turned into a talk, a ceremony, and one unforgettable day.

11

Writing & Giving Your Talk

Turning a year of thinking into fifteen minutes that a room full of people will actually listen to.

LEARNING GOAL

Choose what you are going to talk about, build an argument out of what you have learned, and be able to deliver it out loud to a room of people who care about you.

EXPECTED OF YOU · Write a 15–20 minute talk built around your question, and practise saying it out loud — over and over — until it's yours.

12

Planning & Rehearsing Your Ceremony

The gear change: everything so far has been learning. This is production — running order, rehearsal, and doing the thing until it stops being frightening.

LEARNING GOAL

Build the ceremony — who does what, in what order — and rehearse until you could do it without the notes, in the room where it will happen.

EXPECTED OF YOU · Design the running order with your tutor and officiant, then rehearse — standing up, using your real notes — until the first thirty seconds feel automatic.

13 The Big Day

There is almost nothing left to do. That is deliberate.

LEARNING GOAL

Get through the day, thank the people who got you here, and work out what happens next.

EXPECTED OF YOU · Show up, eat something, say thank you to the people who got you here — and enjoy it. You've already done the hard part.

WHAT'S IN THE APPENDICES

Reference material your tutor will point you to along the way — you don't need to read these in order.

- **A · Torah reading suggestions** — forty-seven parshiyot to choose from for Step 1.
- **B · Blessings for the Torah reading** — including a Humanistic alternative to the traditional chain of names.
- **C · Resources for holidays** — kits, manuals and services for every festival.
- **D · Resources for life cycles** — ceremonies and readings for birth, coming of age, marriage and death.
- **E · Jewish literature reading list** — the fuller list behind Step 8's suggestions.
- **F · Mitzvah role models** — Jewish philosophers, scientists, artists and campaigners many students choose to talk about.
- **G · Materials for your service & programme** — outlines, templates and past examples you can borrow from freely.

BEFORE YOU TURN TO STEP 1

Get your journal. Read the Learning Goal at the top of every step. Keep asking for evidence, and keep changing your mind when the evidence changes. Tzedek tzedek tirdof — justice, justice shall you pursue. Mazal tov on starting.

R. Martin Hasan Di Maggio