

## Confirmation, A Congregational Celebration



I would like you to make it your business to come to Confirmation this year. Wednesday morning, May 19.

Even if you don't know any of the confirmands.

I'll tell you why.

Each year on the first day of *Shavuot*, we celebrate Confirmation. Students completing the tenth grade in our religious school, or its equivalent, who have been in the Confirmation program join with the Hazzan and me in leading the service.

For families of the confirmands, it is a wonderful personal celebration as they take pride in their children.

For the congregation as a whole, Confirmation is an affirmation of these young people who have continued their Jewish education, and who will be helping to secure the future of our People.

That's why I want you to be there. Because these young people are our future. And we need to celebrate and affirm them; we need to encourage them and commend them.

As you probably know, Confirmation is not a native, Jewish ceremony. You won't find it in the Bible or *Talmud*. It migrated to Judaism through the Reform Movement as part of what they saw as the modernization of our faith. In the beginning, it was a substitute for *Bar Mitzvah* (*Bat Mitzvah* had not yet been considered). The group ceremony replaced the individual ceremony. It was set a few years later, in the hope that children at sixteen would be able to be more serious about their religious identity and commitment than when they were thirteen.

Today, Confirmation is ingrained in Conservative and Reform Judaism. What does it mean? And why is it celebrated on *Shavuot*?

Here's my take on this.

When a child becomes *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*, he or she is indicating a willingness to undertake seriously the obligations of being a Jew. It is a promise. A statement of intent.

When a teenager become confirmed at the end of tenth grade, it indicates that he or she has taken the first steps to fulfill that promise. They have studied for three years. They have been involved in social action projects. They have been part of the school community and made their mark on it in numerous ways. They have established lasting Jewish friendships that they cherish.

*Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* is the point of embarkation on the road of Jewish adulthood. Confirmation is one of the stations along the way that indicates that a person is continuing on the path.

*Shavuot* marks the time our ancestors stood at Sinai and received the *Torah* as our heritage, our constitution, our way of life. Study of *Torah* is a fundamental *mitzvah* because it leads to the observance of all the others. That is why Confirmation is held on *Shavuot*. Our young people have committed themselves to Jewish study and deed, just as our ancestors did at Sinai. They have demonstrated their commitment through action.

These young people are our congregational riches. They have each made the decision to continue. Sometimes at great sacrifice of time and energy in their busy schedules.

They are worthy of our honor and of celebration.

So, please come. Don't assume that just because you do not know any of them it's not your celebration too. All the more reason to be there. You will see our future in action. And you will be uplifted by their promise.

**So mark your calendars:** the First Day of *Shavuot*, the Festival of the Giving of the Torah at Sinai, May 19. Services begin at 9:00 AM and end around noon. Come at any point in the morning. You'll be surprised at how good, and how proud, you will feel. And the young people and their families will be so grateful and touched by your acknowledgment.

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