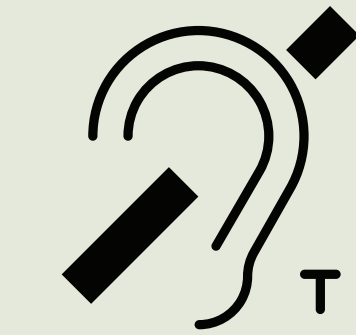


Mazel Tov! Bar and Bat Mitzvahs on Television

17 min., 2 sec., continuous loop



The Wonder Years “Birthday Boy”

Season 2, Episode 13
ABC, 1989
Carol Black and Neal Marlens, creators
David M. Stern, writer
Steve Miner, director
Fred Savage and Josh Saviano, cast
2 min., 31 sec.

Kevin plans to celebrate his birthday with his best friend Paul, as he has every year that he can remember. Paul has other plans though: his bar mitzvah. He tries to brag about the event on the school bus, to a mostly chilly reception; a religious ritual holds little appeal for the teenagers. First earnestly bringing up traditional aspects of the event, such as prayers and the speech, Paul finally has a breakthrough with his buddies when he speaks in a more universal language: presents and money. This episode of the now-classic coming-of-age drama ends on a sincere and poignant note.

The Dick Van Dyke Show “Buddy Sorrell: Man and Boy”

Season 5, Episode 22
CBS, 1966
Carl Reiner, creator
Art Baer and Ben Joelson, writers
Richard Erdman, director
Morey Amsterdam, Rose Marie, Mary Tyler Moore, and Dick Van Dyke, cast
51 sec.

Adult, rather than adolescent, bar and bat mitzvahs have been common practice in the United States since the 1970s. In 1966, when this episode of *The Dick Van Dyke Show* aired, however, the idea of an adult bar mitzvah would have been less familiar and perhaps even considered radical. Buddy also dons a *yarmulke* (skullcap) and *tallit* (prayer shawl) at a time when Jewish religious practices were not commonly represented in American popular media. Buddy’s ceremony shows that some aspects of the rite, including telling corny jokes during the bar mitzvah speech, never change.

Saturday Night Live “Jacob the Bar Mitzvah Boy Teaches the Story of Hanukkah”

Season 38, Episode 10
NBC, 2012
Lorne Michaels, creator
Vanessa Bayer, Zach Kanin, and Marika Sawyer, writers
Don Roy King, director
Vanessa Bayer and Seth Meyers, cast
2 min., 24 sec.

The character Jacob the Bar Mitzvah Boy periodically joins *Saturday Night Live*’s “Weekend Update” crew to share his wisdom on a Jewish topic. Jacob’s clothes and his demeanor evoke his recent bar mitzvah. Acting as though he is performing bar mitzvah rituals, Jacob places his finger on the text as if it were a Torah pointer on a Torah scroll and thanks relatives as he would have done in his speech. Whenever the host Seth Meyers suggests Jacob speak spontaneously, he further exhibits adolescent awkwardness.

Black-ish Pilot

Season 1, Episode 1
ABC, 2014
Kenya Barris, creator and writer
James Griffiths, director
Anthony Anderson, Tracee Ellis Ross, and Marcus Scribner, cast
1 min., 39 sec.

When Andre Jr. says he is converting to Judaism in order to have a bar mitzvah bash for his thirteenth birthday, his father, Andre, is scandalized. He worries that his children are too influenced by the white kids at school and are not being raised “Black enough.” Andre refuses to allow the bar mitzvah and instead insists on giving Andre Jr. a traditional African coming-of-age ceremony. Ultimately realizing his son is exploring his identity, Andre compromises, throwing his son a “hip-hop bro mitzvah” that incorporates elements from both traditions.

Younger “Hot Mitzvah”

Season 1, Episode 11
TV Land, 2015
Darren Star, creator for television
Dottie Dartland Zicklin and Eric Zicklin, writers
Tricia Brock, director
Molly Bernard, Sutton Foster, and Debi Mazar, cast
37 sec.

The series *Younger* follows Liza Miller, a forty-year-old woman pretending to be twenty-six, but this episode focuses on her Jewish friend Lauren. She returns to youth in her own way through a do-over of her bat mitzvah. Lauren enthusiastically seizes upon the ceremony as an opportunity to be in the spotlight, at a time when she is no longer as socially awkward as she was the first time around in her early teens.

Bob’s Burgers “Mazel-Tina”

Season 4, Episode 13
FOX, 2014
Loren Bouchard, creator
Holly Schlesinger, writer
Bernard Derriman and Brian LoSchiavo, directors
H. Jon Benjamin, Dan Mintz, and Jenny Slate, cast
1 min., 7 sec.

When Tina does not receive a highly coveted invitation to her classmate Tammy’s bat mitzvah, she finds another way in, landing the catering gig for her family’s burger restaurant. Tammy’s reception features classic elements of a bat mitzvah party taken to the extreme: an absurd number of food options, ubiquitous DJs, and a signature cocktail (the “Tammy-tini”). The theme of the event is just “Tammy,” preposterously perfect for the spoiled and narcissistic tween. She is introduced with much fanfare as “the star of the evening.”

The Simpsons “Today I Am a Clown”

Season 15, Episode 6
Fox, 2003
Matt Groening, creator
Joel H. Cohen, writer
Nancy Kruse, director
Dan Castellaneta, Julie Kavner, Jackie Mason, and Harry Shearer, cast
1 min., 40 sec.

Krusty the Clown feels lost and disappointed when he is (inaccurately) informed that, since he did not have a bar mitzvah, he is not truly a Jewish man. Krusty’s party, staged very much like his tacky variety show, is a parody of Jewish celebrations, with the emcee Sideshow Bob proclaiming “I can’t schmear you!” and a Beach Boys tribute band performing songs full of random Yiddish and Hebrew terms that rhyme. The party is supplemented with a more “traditional” ceremony during which Krusty speaks mostly nonsensical Hebrew words while pretending to read from the Torah.

Raising Hope “Burt Mitzvah: The Musical”

Season 3, Episode 21
Fox, 2013
Greg Garcia, creator
Paul A. Kaplan and Mark Torgove, writers
Eyal Gordin, director
Garret Dillahunt, Lucas Neff, Jason Kravits, and Martha Plimpton, cast
1 min., 16 sec.

When they reveal to Burt, falsely, that he is Jewish, Burt’s parents pressure him into having a bar mitzvah. The music-video pep talk about the ceremony borrows from 1970s glam rock and recalls bar mitzvah parties of that era. Burt is serenaded with details about the event, the musical number concluding “You ain’t no *shmendrik* [fool], you’re gonna rock the Torah!”

Crazy Ex-Girlfriend “Will Scarsdale Like Josh’s Shayna Punim?”

Season 2, Episode 10
The CW, 2017
Rachel Bloom and Aline Brosh McKenna, creators
Dan Gregor and Doug Mand, writers
Alex Hardcastle, director
Rachel Bloom, Tovah Feldshuh, Patti LuPone, and Vincent Rodriguez III, cast
2 min., 7 sec.

When Rebecca brings her boyfriend Josh to the East Coast for the bar mitzvah of one of her relatives, she gives him a tutorial on the darker undertones of the celebration. While Josh observes a fun party, Rebecca cautions, “It sounds like one thing, but means another.” She manifests an alternate universe in her mind, a vision that includes a traditional hora dance with the lyrics changed. Expertly delivered by the Broadway stars Tovah Feldshuh as Rebecca’s mother and Patti LuPone as the rabbi, the refrain—and the lesson—is, “Remember that we suffered!”

Difficult People “Fuzz Buddies”

Season 3, Episode 7
HULU, 2017
Julie Klausner, creator and writer
Jeffrey Walker, director
Julie Klausner and Andrea Martin, cast
25 sec.

In *Difficult People* Julie often has complicated exchanges with Marilyn, her opinionated and attention-craving Jewish mother. This episode, however, catches the two of them in a rare tender moment at Marilyn’s adult bat mitzvah. The event has not gone the way she had hoped. So, in a restroom away from the party, Julie comforts her mother, reassuring her that, no matter how the party turns out, the important thing at the end of the day is to be surrounded by loved ones.

BoJack Horseman “BoJack Kills”

Season 3, Episode 3
Netflix, 2016
Raphael Bob-Waksberg, creator
Kelly Galuska, writer
Amy Winfrey, director
Will Arnett and Alison Brie, cast
22 sec.

BoJack Horseman takes place in an alternate Hollywood populated with anthropomorphic animals. This episode is a humorous take on the bat mitzvah ceremony in which Tovah, a bat, has a “bat bat mitzvah.” Per human tradition, the animal party attendees dance to the classic song “Hava Nagillah,” while BoJack trots out some Yiddish phrases, announcing he is *kvelling* (bursting with pride) and *farklemp*t (choked up).

30 Rock “Jack Gets in the Game”

Season 2, Episode 2
NBC, 2007
Tina Fey, creator
Robert Carlock, writer
Michael Engler, director
Kevin Brown, Grizz Chapman, Tracy Morgan, and Sherri Shepherd, cast
12 sec.

Tracy Jordan sorts through some keepsakes and comes across the gold record for his novelty party song, “Werewolf Bar Mitzvah,” which harkens back to Bobby Pickett’s “Monster Mash” and Michael Jackson’s “Thriller.” In a case of life imitating art, this eight-second snippet became so popular that NBC later released a full version, featuring Tracy Morgan and Donald Glover, that is now played at many bar mitzvah parties.

Futurama “Future Stock”

Season 4, Episode 9
Fox, 2002
Matt Groening, creator
Aaron Ehasz, writer
Brian Sheesley, director
David Herman, Maurice LaMarche, and Billy West, cast
22 sec.

Futurama, set in “New New York” in the thirty-first century, uses an exaggerated imaginary future to comment on the present moment. In this episode, Judaism survives, as does the chair-lifting ritual at a “bot mitzvah.” The blue banner over the party reads, “Today you are a robot” in slightly askew Hebrew.

Sex and the City “Hot Child in the City”

Season 3, Episode 15
HBO, 2000
Darren Star, creator
Allan Heinberg, writer
Based on the book by Candace Bushnell
Michael Spiller, director
Kim Cattrall, Kat Dennings, and Sarah Jessica Parker (voice-over), cast
26 sec.

This episode of *Sex and the City* spotlights Jenny, a wealthy, privileged New York Jewish girl who hires publicist Samantha for her “money is no object” bat mitzvah bash. Jenny’s party comes complete with a red carpet, a bouncer, and screaming fans who wish they were on the guest list.