

MITZVAH PROJECT

Becoming a בר/בת מצוה means that you are taking an important step toward adulthood. To be a Jewish adult means making a difference in the world, and being changed by your connection to something bigger than yourself. The “Mitzvah Project” is a reminder that there are many ways to be Jewish and feel those connections.

About 2200 years ago Simon the Just said “The world depends on three things - תורה (study), עבודה (prayer) and גמילות חסדים (deeds of kindness).”

Here at The Community Synagogue we add the מצוה of צדקה, which makes up our four-part מצוה project. These four parts include:

1. תלמוד תורה -- studying, learning and understanding your פרשה and הפטרה.
2. מצוה עבודה -- observing a new ceremonial מצוה.
3. גמילות חסדים -- doing something good for people in need.
4. צדקה -- giving actual financial help to those who need it.

You must choose *one* מצוה in *each* of the four categories.

The מצוה of תלמוד תורה (#1 above) you do by studying and learning your portion. For the other three, you have the choice of what to do. This booklet gives you the list of possibilities.

Additional options are on The Community Synagogue website. Please talk to your parents about which things you decide to do as they can give you advice and help about what to do - and may have fun joining you in making the world a little better!

עבודה *Avodah (Prayer or Ritual)*

Choose to do one of the following מצוות:

1. I will fast the full כפור day.
2. I will come to all the service of כפור, including יזכור and נעילה.
3. I will learn to blow the שופר and will come up to the *bima* for the final blast at the end of כפור.
4. I will put a מזוזה on the door of my room (with a proper parchment) and say the proper ברכה when I do it.
5. I will stay out of public school and come to Temple for תפילות on the morning of סוכות and/or פסח.
6. I will help build a סוכה, eat at least one meal in it and say the proper ברכות.
7. I will have a חנכיה of my own on חנכה and will light it myself for the full 8 days, with proper ברכות.
8. I will eat no bread or rolls at all during פסח.
9. I will say the מוציא before meals.
10. I will learn to sing the full Friday night קדוש and do it at home, whether my family is doing it or not.
11. I will have my own set of שבת candles and light them with the ברכה on שבת ערב whether my family is doing it or not.
12. I will say the שמע and ואהבת before going to sleep at night.
13. A different מצוה of עבודה observance/ceremony/ritual could also be OK - check your idea out with the rabbi with whom you are studying.

גמילות חסדים *G'milut Chasadim*

Being engaged in good deeds is part of our Religious School curriculum, but we also want you do something individually. Do any one of the following *with a parent or parents*:

- a. Help out with a “Mitzvah Corps” project. The Community Synagogue Mitzvah Corps sponsors a wide variety of programs helping congregants in need with which you can be involved. Contact one of the Mitzvah Corps coordinators to find out how to help: Alyssa Greenberg alyssagreenberg@aol.com, Carol Hanover chanover13@aol.com, Marcia Kirschenbaum mjkirsch@aol.com or Anne Nelson, anniesez3@aol.com.
- b. Help out at a food bank at least twice. Two food banks you might want to contact are:
 - The Interfaith Nutrition Network (INN)
148 Front Street, Hempstead, NY 11550
(516) 486-8506
Founded in 1983, the INN now operates 21 soup kitchens throughout Nassau and Suffolk, providing daily meals at various locations. Professional staff administers emergency shelters, long-term housing sites, and support programs.
 - HUC-JIR Soup Kitchen
1 West 4th Street, New York, NY 10012
(212) 674-5300
Every Monday evening, in every season, the student-run HUC-JIR Soup Kitchen welcomes over 200 homeless and hungry guests for a nutritious meal. Going with your class does not count for your “Mitzvah Project”.
- c. Volunteer to help at two “Community Dinners” sponsored by our Social Action Committee. These dinners help people who live in Port Washington by providing a no-cost night out with food and entertainment. There are opportunities to cook during the week before the dinner, set up, serve food and help with programming for younger children attending the dinner. Contact Jessica Wigdor, jhwigdor@gmail.com or Sandy Cobden, SCobden@christies.com to find out more information and upcoming dates for the dinners.
- d. “Twin” your Bar/Bat Mitzvah in some way, such as:
 - In memory of a child who died in the *Shoah* (Holocaust). In doing this you should learn something about the person who was killed and do something to help keep their memory alive. You should also interview someone who was in the *Shoah* (or who have a family member who was a “survivor” and hear their story). For more information to the website www.remember-us.org or phone (707) 570-2833.

- With a child in a Reform (Progressive or Liberal) synagogue overseas. Contact the World Union for Progressive Judaism at www.wupj.org for more information.

- e. Volunteer at a local nursing home or long term care facility. If you play a musical instrument, you can offer to give a “concert”. Many older people enjoy visits from younger people who just want to take some time to talk to them. Just a caring visit can make a difference in someone’s life.
You can also visit older members who are “shut in” at home and love visitors.

- f. Volunteer to help special needs children play sports. You will need to be involved on an ongoing basis as it builds wonderful bonds with the young people you are working with. One place you can do this is at “Be The Best Sports” (see their website www.bethebestsport.org to learn how to contact them to help.

- g. If you are still not sure what you can do, check out Teens Take Charge. Teens Take Charge was created by a Long Island high school student, who discovered through her own experience that many teenagers want to get involved in their local communities but do not know where to start. Teens Take Charge helps teenagers find places to help. You can call them or (even better) look at what you can do to help at www.TeensTakeCharge.org.

- h. Do something else for someone who especially needs it, and who might otherwise be forgotten. Your own ideas can be the best. Please check out your idea with the rabbi working with you on your Bat/Bar Mitzvah.

צדקה Tzedakah

We encourage you to make your gift to cause with some connection to Jewish life or Israel since this is for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Some choose to donate a percentage or amount from their Bar/Bat Mitzvah gifts, while others just use their own money. A nice idea is to put money away weekly in a *tz'dakah* box, just putting in spare change. You will be amazed how quickly it can add up!

To find out more about giving money to righteous causes (and background information about the various places you can give to, look at <http://www.just-tzedakah.org>. There are many other ideas that you can find by looking here: www.dannysiegel.com/2011pilgrimagesresources.pdf

Animals

- CHAI - Concern for Helping Animals in Israel (http://www.chai-online.org/en/home/e_index.htm)
CHAI animals directly - wild and domestic - and also teach Israelis about the important *mitzvah* of showing compassion for animals.
- Israel National Therapeutic Riding Association (www.intra.org.il, then push "English")
"Challenged- learners' come here for therapy through learning how to ride and provide proper, loving care for horses.

Elderly

- Lifeline for the Old (<http://www.lifeline.org.il>)
This is a marvelous workshop for the elderly in Jerusalem (with a wonderful store you can visit when you are there!) Lifeline gives older people jobs, sells their products, sends meals on wheels to shut-ins and provides the elderly with the dignity of worthwhile work and the companionship of others.

Hunger

- Hatzilu Rescue Organization (www.hatzilurescue.org)
There are Jews in Nassau County who are in need emotionally and financially. *Hatzilu* maintains the largest kosher food warehouse in the county, providing food, financial aid, social work intervention and assistance, and emotional support to Jews locally.

- Mazon (www.mazon.org)
This Jewish response to the terrible plight of hunger is the second largest North American organization giving money in this area. Mazon suggests a 3% voluntary tax on all catered Jewish affairs (including Bar/Bat Mitzvah parties), but also can benefit from your personal gift.
- Met Council on Jewish Poverty (www.metcouncil.org)
With over 100,000 Jews in greater New York in need, Met Council is a defender and advocate for New Yorkers in need, and raises awareness around the growing problem of Jewish poverty. With services ranging from domestic violence counseling to kosher food pantries to career training, Met Council helps individuals find lasting solutions to complex problems.
- M'Yad L'Yad: Long Island's Helping Hands (www.myadlyad.org)
This fund serves the disabled, the elderly, and others most in need on Long Island. In keeping with one of the highest ideals of charitable giving within Judaism, our sponsors' and recipients' identities remain anonymous, thus maintaining the privacy and dignity of those participating.

Israel

- The Abraham Fund (www.abrahamfund.org)
This fund, founded by a rabbi who once served in Hamilton, is devoted to supporting Israeli organizations that focus on Jewish-Arab coexistence. They have published a directory that lists almost 300 projects and institutions in Israel devoted to this cause.
- The American Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (www.aspni.org)
This group helps support the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI), Israel's oldest and largest environmental organization.
- Good People Fund (www.goodpeoplefund.org)
This group identifies good people doing great work-on a personal scale, mostly in North America and Israel. Your support for the Good People Fund can really help small, grass-roots non-profits run by dedicated individuals.
- Hand in Hand: Center for Jewish-Arab Education in Israel (www.handinhandk12.org)
Supporting a network of integrated, bilingual schools and shared communities for Jews and Arabs, this group builds relationships through shared learning, peace education, coexistence and equality. "Hand in Hand" schools show that Jews and Arabs can study, work and live together in peace.
- New Israel Fund (www.newisraelfund.org)
This partnership of Israelis and Diaspora Jews supports projects that strengthen democracy and advance social justice in Israel. Among the many groups

supported by this fund are organizations working in Israel in the areas of civil rights, community action and intergroup (Jew to Jew, Jew to Arab) cooperation.

- A Package From Home (www.apackagefromhome.org)
This organization sends care packages to soldiers without family in Israel serving in the Israel Defense Force.

Jews Around the World

- Joint Distribution Committee (www.jdc.org)
The JDC support millions of Jews living in poverty and helps all victims of global emergencies. This organization also helps revitalize Jewish life in far flung countries, maintaining a link to those who might otherwise be isolated and alone.
- Kulanu (www.kulanu.org)
Kulanu helps dispersed remnants of the Jewish people that have long been disconnected from the worldwide Jewish community. It supports schools that educate Jews, Muslims and Christians who study together, provides backing for business ventures to help people become independent and helps connect Jews scattered around the world to the larger Jewish community.
- The North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry (www.nacoej.org)
This organization helps support the resettlement and education of Ethiopian Jews in Israel (a group of Jews struggling to be integrated into Israeli society). NACOEJ also runs a terrific Bar/Bat Mitzvah twinning program where you "twin" with an Ethiopian student in Israel.

Illness and Special Needs

- Beit Halochem (www.fidv-bh.com/)
This organization helps the more than 40,000 disabled veterans of Israel. These brave men and women have paid a high price for Israel's survival. As well as sports and activities related to individual disabilities, Beit Halochem provides social and creative activities for members and their families.
- Chai Lifeline (www.chailifeline.org)
This group's mission is to restore the light of childhood to children whose innocence ended when life-threatening or lifelong illness was diagnosed. Their programs address the emotional, social, and financial needs of seriously ill children and caregivers.

- Israel Guide Dog: Center for the Blind (www.israelguidedog.org)
You can help a visually impaired Israeli (including soldiers and victims of terror) receive a new 'leash' on life with a dog that helps them regain their sense of independence.
- Yad Sarah (www.yadsarah.org.il/english)
Yad Sarah is a marvelous Israeli organization that lends medical supplies, free of charge to thousands of Israelis who need the equipment. They give out wheelchairs, portable oxygen machines, respiration monitors for infants, and much more. They need help to keep this service going.

World Development

- American Jewish World Service (www.ajws.org)
AJWS is dedicated to alleviating poverty, hunger and disease among people across the globe. Their programs encourage critical thinking about global issues and promote meaningful and active engagement by American Jews in the pursuit of justice.
- Innovation: Africa (www.innoafrica.org)
This organization began from the idea of one young woman who felt that bringing solar power (which was so prevalent in Israel) could make a big difference in African villages. Not only would this cut the dependence on fossil fuels, but it would make electricity more readily available to people in far-flung settings.

You can also choose a cause or recipient you know about, which you consider worthwhile. Send them a contribution and mention that it is in honor of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

MITZVAH PROJECT DECISION REPORT

This is what I am going to do for my MITZVAH PROJECT. (Please make your decision and fill this out not later than 5 weeks after you begin your studies.)

תלמוד תורה TALMUD TORAH

I will study and understand my הפרשה and הפטרה.

עבודה AVODAH

צדקה TZ'DAKA

גמילות חסדים G'MILUT CHASADIM

The reason I chose to do the above are

SIGNED: