

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Projects at Am Yisrael

As B'nai Mitzvah, sons and daughters of the Commandments, our Am Yisrael Congregation Bar/Bat Mitzvah students are expected to perform at least three Mitzvah Projects as part of the process of becoming B'nai Mitzvah. Selecting mitzvah projects should be done in partnership with your family and the synagogue. We are happy to guide you to various resources to help select your Mitzvah Projects.

1. In addition to the students writing about the Mitzvah projects that will be distributed or delivered as part of a *D'var Torah* at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah, our Am Yisrael students will present their Mitzvah projects to the SJS community at the Mitzvah Projects Presentations. This year's group presentations will take place on Sunday, February 24, 2019 from 9:50 a.m.-10:30 a.m. and Sunday, April 14, 2019 from 9:50 a.m.-10:30 a.m. Both presentations will take place in our Sanctuary and families will be notified which of the two dates their Bar/Bat Mitzvah students will be presenting well in advance. Mr. Sherman, SJS Teachers and selected Madrichim work with our Zayin students on the process of preparing to share these mitzvah projects.
2. There are three categories of Mitzvah projects that are required of Am Yisrael Bar/Bat Mitzvah students:
 - **Am Yisrael-Based Mitzvah Project**
 - **Israel-Based Mitzvah Project**
 - **Chicago-Based Mitzvah Project OR Mitzvah based purely on student's passion**

3. Am Yisrael Based Mitzvah Project

Suggested activities:

- Regularly attend our Shabbat morning services
- Regularly attend our Friday night services
- Regularly attend our Sunday morning minyan
- Commit to attend our daily minyan during your school breaks
- Commit to attend holiday services (Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Purim, Shavuot, Passover, etc.)
- Become a regular Torah or Haftarah reader
- Chant from *Megillat Esther* on Purim
- Begin wearing *tefillin* upon reaching Bar or Bat Mitzvah
- Teach students at SJS how to put on *tefillin* on Sunday mornings
- Make a commitment to become a *madrich* or *madricha* (teaching assistant) in our School of Jewish Studies (SJS)

- Donate a portion of the money you receive in gifts for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah to Am Yisrael
- Volunteer to supervise composting at synagogue events
- Volunteer to deliver food for the Rosh Hashanah and Passover Maot Chitim program
- Volunteer with your family for Family Promise
- Take part in ongoing Tikkun Olam food, clothing, toy or book drives and/or help to spearhead one

4. **Israel Based Mitzvah Project**

Identify an organization or cause in Israel that inspires you. It should be a place that you will visit and volunteer when you make your first or next trip to Israel. For the time being, if you will need be going to Israel between now and your Bar or Bat Mitzvah please consider donating to the organization that you choose and/or and contact someone at the organization to find out if there is a specific way that you can offer your assistance now. You will also be asked to share why you are inspired by the organization and/or project that you have chosen. Learn about the organization and see if there are other ways you can support the organization.

5. **Chicago Based Mitzvah Project or one based on student's passions**

Select an organization or cause where you can volunteer your time. This can either be a local organization whose work appeals to you, or one that resonates with your own interests (i.e. an animal shelter, working with the elderly, helping people with special needs with sports and/or the arts, a hospital, child care center, etc.)

6. We ask each student to choose at least one verse from the *Tanakh* (Hebrew Bible), Rabbis or modern commentators that inspires him/her to perform *mitzvot*. Here is a fantastic link to access the verses in both Hebrew and English:

<https://www.sefaria.org/texts>.

7. **Mitzvah Project Trifolds:** In addition to the verbal presentation on March 18, each Bar/Bat Mitzvah student created a trifold that includes a written description and pictures of each mitzvah project. The following information should help each Bar/Bat Mitzvah student thoroughly complete their trifolds: Please include the following in the Mitzvah Project Trifolds.

- Near the top of the trifold, please include Bar/Bat Mitzvah student's first and last name in English and their Hebrew name.
- We ask each Bar/Bat Mitzvah student to take their mitzvah project write-ups, enlarge them and place them on the trifold in three distinct sections.
- Please include a "word cloud," using websites such as <http://www.wordle.net/>

or <https://wordart.com/create>.

- Most students put background contact paper on their boards to give it color.
- These trifolds are mostly put together at home and we devote a few sessions to peers helping their classmates leading up to the mitzvah projects presentation.
- The most optimal size board is Eimers Trifold Corrugate Project Display Board 28x40. We have extras at Am Yisrael or you can get one on your own at Target, Walgreens, Amazon, CVS, etc. Amazon only sells that size in packs of 12 which we have. An online link to purchasing one trifold board is here: <https://www.target.com/p/elmers-trifold-corrugate-project-display-board-28x40/-/A-15058100>

Some additional Resources:

1. Here is a link to the JUF teen mitzvah projects “B’nai Mitzvah Tikkun Olam Manual.” Many of these mitzvah projects can be done locally within Chicagoland: <https://jufwebfiles.org/pdf/teens/bnai-mitzvah-2017.pdf> . Here is a general link to Tov Teens Volunteering page: <https://www.juf.org/teens/BM-Projects.aspx>
2. Here is the link to an organization called JChoice that has 256 causes that we encourage you to look at if you are trying to figure out a mitzvah project: <https://www.jchoice.org>
3. We have most of the tri-fold boards created over the past few years, lining the hallway on the second floor in the SJS building. We highly recommend that you take a look at them. In addition, we have a spreadsheet of mitzvah projects from many of our students since the beginning of 2013. We are confident that these mitzvah projects will spark ideas when you brainstorm with your families, classmates and our Am Yisrael faculty and staff.
4. Liz Suneby and Diane Heiman published a book that we recommend called *The Mitzvah Project Book: Making Mitzvah Part of Your Bar/Bat Mitzvah..and Your Life*.

Our Am Yisrael SJS B’nai Mitzvah Projects team is available to assist with questions or concerns: Head of School, Mr. Sherman csherman@amyisrael.org or 847-708-1805 (mobile) or SJS Teachers Morah Sandra Mieli Kamm smielikamm@amyisrael.org, Mr. Arnet aarnet@amyisrael.org or Hazzan Szenes-Strauss (Mr. S.) lszenesstrauss@amyisrael.org.