Tzedakah Resources & Ideas

How to Involve the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Student in the Act of Tzedakah

1). Choosing which form of tzedakah to give.
   It is wonderful if the items to be donated have meaning to the young person who is becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah. For example, children who love to read might want to donate books; children who love sports might want to donate sports equipment; children who feel strongly about the issue of hunger might want to donate food. In addition, to goods, students are encouraged to consider donating a portion of his/her gift money to a cause he/she would like to support.

2). Choosing where to donate the tzedakah
   There are so many worthy places to donate tzedakah (many of which are listed in the Tzedakah Resource hand-out). Your family may have a particular connection to an organization or your child may have a cause that is of particular concern or interest. Explore the options together so that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student is an active participant in the both planning and implementing the act of tzedakah.

Tzedakah at your celebration: Donations of Goods and Funds Prepared by Naomi Eisenberger
   Executive Director of the Good People Fund.

When it comes to your party, there are so many things you can do for centerpieces.

1. Books, books, and books! An arrangement of kids’ books, CDs, DVD’s can then be given away to a deserving organization in your area.

2. Food, food, and food! An arrangement of canned and boxed foods in a basket can then be donated to a local pantry or shelter.

3. Want to go the traditional route with flowers or plants? Arrangements of individual plants and flowers can be broken up and distributed to the local hospital, shelter, or nursing home, or you can ask your rabbi or synagogue office to give you the names of congregants who might enjoy some. You can do this with balloons and bimah [pulpit] arrangements, too.

4. Speaking of bimah arrangements, don't forget that you can make attractive baskets of toys and stuffed animals and distribute them as well.

5. Are you a sports fanatic? Try collecting sports equipment and arrange it as centerpieces. After the party? Give it away to local shelters where kids may not have their own equipment.

Use your imagination! There are hundreds of ways to do this!
Donations of Funds: Mazon

Temple Isaiah encourages you to consider Mazon: A Jewish Response To Hunger http://mazon.org/. MAZON is a national nonprofit organization that allocates donations from the Jewish community to prevent and alleviate hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds. They will provide table cards that you can use to let your guests know that you are sharing a portion of your celebration with those in need.

Local Organizations to consider when donating goods

Jewish Family Table
Contact: 781 693-5593, Waltham, MA
Baskets of non-perishable Kosher foods for Jewish Family Table which provides food monthly to over 100 needy Jewish families in the Boston area. If the family would prefer to donate money in advance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Family Table will provide donor cards.

The Reach out and Read Program
Contact: www.reachoutandread.org - (617) 629-8042
This organization promotes literacy in a variety of ways throughout Boston. They will accept new and very gently used books. Books are donated to Boston Medical Center, Children’s Hospital as well as to various pediatric clinics around the Boston area.

Cradles to Crayons
Contact: http://cradlestocrayons.org/C2C/
Accepts new and gently-used clothing, books, toys, baby items and school supplies for children ages 0-12. Local warehouse with opportunities to drop-off and sort goods.

More than Words
Contact: mtwyouth.Org
More Than Words is a non-profit social enterprise that empowers at-risk youth to run their own bookstore cafe in Waltham, MA. Contact: mtwyouth.Org
Accepts gently used and better books.

Local Food Pantry in your Town

Left Over Food from your Celebration

Many caterers donate their leftovers to food banks and soup kitchens. You may want to make that one of your pre-requisites in choosing a caterer. In addition, caterers who already donate items can be helpful in getting your food baskets donated to appropriate places. To learn about the Good Samaritan Food
Supporting A Needy Child’s Bar/Bat Mitzvah

The Bar and Bat Mitzvah twinning experience is a unique opportunity designed to carry on the tradition of uniting Jews around the world. In some cases the student is paired with a child of bar/bat mitvah age and the tzedakah helps less fortunate families afford the cost of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Twining with an Ethiopian Jewish child-North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry

http://www.nacoej.org/get-involved/be-a-twin

This organization which supports Ethiopian Jews in Israel can match your child up with an Ethiopian child who is about to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The tzedakah will help pay for the celebration.

Action for Post Soviet Jewry: Twining with a child in the Former Soviet Union

B'nai and B'not Mitzvah are paired with their peers in the former Soviet Union (FSU). Information about background, interests and family is exchanged in letters sent to your "twin." The organization encourages Bar and Bat Mitzvah twins to send a financial donation to Action for Post-Soviet Jewry, to help us continue their work.

Contact: http://www.actionpsj.org/

Remember Us: The Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Project

This is a simple offer to participate in an act of memory- to remember one child who was lost in the holocaust before having a chance to be called to the Torah. Contact:The Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Project remember@sonic.net or www.remember-us.org.

Twinning with a Rescuer: The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous

The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous provides financial support to some 800 who rescued Jews in the Holocaust. The twinning program is a simple way to make a significant impact—in the daily life of a rescuer.

Contact: www.jfr.org/site/PageNavigator/edu_bar_bat_mitzvah.html

Tzedakah Requests As part of the Invitation

If students don't have a specific charity in mind DonorsChoose.org is an easy way for kids to find a project that is meaningful to them. They can even suggest it in lieu of gifts, if that's the way they want to make their tzedakah donation, and then they can choose which classroom projects to fund, and they get the thank you notes from the class.

http://www.donorschoose.org/

Some students choose to collect items for a selected cause at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration and include the request in their Bar-Bat Mitzvah Invitations.
### Tzedakah Centerpieces

There are many ways to make beautiful and festive centerpieces that become items to donate after the bar/bat Mitzvah celebration. The following ideas were recorded by Temple Isaiah members in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Resource Book found in the Temple library:

- We bought “teen” books and put them in see through fabric with balloons attached and donated them to hospitals and shelters.
- We used the hand knit scarves our daughter made for a homeless shelter
- We used menorahs which were donated to The Golda Meir House
- Centerpiece balls were donated to Lawrence Boys and Girls Club
- We represented our daughter’s mitzvah project for Good Sports with centerpieces made up of brightly colored soccer balls in a net as an anchor for balloons. The balls as well as the funds she raised were donated to Good Sports. [www.goodsports.org](http://www.goodsports.org/)
- We put art supplies for Horizons or Homeless Children in boxes [http://www.horizonsforhomelesschildren.org/](http://www.horizonsforhomelesschildren.org/
- We made up winter gift baskets for Bristol lodge- wool hats, socks, gloves, toiletries, wrapped food, candies..
- We made up tzedakah certificates rolled into scrolls and tied with ribbon. Each certificate indicated where tzedakah had been donated in honor of the occasion. The scroll also included a write-up by the Bat Mitzvah explaining why she had chosen this organization.
- We planted a tree in Israel (through Jewish National Fund) in honor of each guest and we gave each guest a tree certificate, [http://www.jnf.org/](http://www.jnf.org/)
- We had potted plants which were delivered to shut ins through the Home Care Program at Emerson Hospital.
- We made up baskets of food decorated with cellophane, ribbons and balloons and donated them to the Lexington Food Pantry.
- We made up baskets full of gently used children’s books and teddy bears and decorated them with balloons to the Reach Out and Read Program.
- We used decorative wire baskets filled with school supplied and attached each basket to a bouquet of balloons. We sent the supplies to a child in Africa who is sponsored by our family to share with his classmates.