



JEWISH COMMUNITY OF GREATER STOWE

MITZVAH FAMILY HANDBOOK

5784 | 2023-2024



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CONTACT INFO

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INTRODUCTION

In Jewish tradition, a child becomes an adult at the age of age 13, earning the title *bar* or *bat* mitzvah. Hebrew being a gendered language, *bar* refers to a boy and *bat* refers to a girl who "has acquired the status of being able to do mitzvahs". At JCOGS we refer to all simply as mitzvah celebrations so as not to assume a particular gender identity.

The mitzvah ceremony is not just a celebration or "coming of age" event, but also the beginning of a lifelong commitment to a Jewish way of life, to Jewish community and our people, and to becoming greater citizens of the world. As such, choosing to prepare for a mitzvah ceremony takes a commitment of time and attention to a course of study that can tax an otherwise busy schedule. While time consuming, the preparation process provides the perfect opportunity for students to learn about the importance of setting priorities and making personal sacrifices on behalf of something bigger than themselves, as well as exploring who they are as members of the Jewish community. The skills mastered during this process will allow each student to continue to participate and contribute on many levels throughout their lives to Jewish communities and beyond.

Through Participation in Mitzvah Students Will

1. Build a strong sense of Jewish **identity**
2. Gain a deep understanding of **mitzvot** and create a **practice** of doing them
3. Become lifelong Jewish **learners**
4. Develop a sense of **community** with the Mitzvah cohort, larger JCOGS community, and Jewish Vermont, and with *Am Yisrael*, the wider Jewish world
5. Prepare to be **leaders** in the community: as spiritual prayer leaders, doing *tikkun olam*(social justice to heal the world), and more.

MITZVAH PROGRAM

- **Saturday #1** - A learner's Community Shabbat morning service + kiddush (the whole family is welcome and invited to attend) which will focus on:
 - Prayer literacy
 - Torah study
 - Community engagement - meeting leaders in the Jewish community
- **Saturday #2** - touchpoints of the Mitzvah curriculum
 - The 13 Mitzvot Challenge
 - How to write a d'var Torah/sermon
 - Let's unpack some prayers
 - Trope/Cantillation - how to sing from the Torah
 - What it means to be Jewish - identity, culture, tzedakah, and more
- **Hebrew pod** - weekly half hour session online as a group to strengthen Hebrew sight reading and pronunciation and unpack prayer meaning. Time/day TBD
- **Monthly Friday evening Shabbat service and oneg** - Dates TBD 6-8 pm- Come to Friday night service, stay for *oneg*/light meal, and meet as a cohort after

EXPECTATIONS

Students will be expected to:

- Attend the Mitzvah program two Saturdays a month from 10am-12noon
- Participate in weekly hour-long individual tutoring sessions for 8-12 months and engage in daily practice as assigned
- Attend 30-minute weekly online Hebrew lessons in a small pod
- Complete *The 13 Mitzvot Challenge*, a program of good deeds designed to help you develop skills, intentions, and goals in preparation for becoming an adult in Jewish the community
- Create a display about your mitzvah project to be presented at your ceremony
- Read/chant between nine and twelve or more verses of Torah
- Discuss topics from the Torah and write and deliver a well-researched *d'var Torah*/sermon that focuses on the meaning of their Torah portion
- Read the prayers in Hebrew and co-lead portions of the service with the rabbi
- Attend one another's Mitzvah ceremonies
- Participate in Ateed, the JCOGS teen program, beginning in the spring

During this time parents are expected to:

- Participate in meetings with the director of education, rabbi, and Mitzvah coordinator. Expectations of the mitzvah class, requirements, and potential mitzvah ceremony dates will be discussed
- Be members in good standing of JCOGS; enroll your child in Mitzvah; pay all membership dues, mitzvah fees, and building use fees; and make a contribution to the rabbi's discretionary fund (finances should never be an obstacle to participation)
- Receive assignment to a tutor and schedule regular meetings with them beginning in September at the latest

- Facilitate your child's regular attendance in the Mitzvah program: individual tutoring sessions, required services and classes, and ensure that your child attends all scheduled meetings with the rabbi
- Support your child during this time by encouraging them to engage in their own process of mastering the prayers and their Torah portion
- Be a Mitzvah Buddy to another Mitzvah family on the day of their mitzvah celebration
- Fill out [event survey](#) and meet with director of education to discuss celebration elements that may be on site at JCOGS
- Meet with the rabbi along with your child to discuss dreams and wishes for the ceremony
- Assign "ceremony honors" to family members or friends, and provide the rabbi with the Hebrew names of all members of the family/friends who will be receiving an aliyah
- Prepare a personal blessing for your child that will be offered to them on the day of the mitzvah ceremony
- Order or make a tallit (prayer shawl) and be prepared to present it to your child at the beginning of the service

PRICING & FEES 2023-24

REQUIRED

MITZVAH TUITION \$2400

Includes the class and tutoring sessions for the school year

RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND \$500

Minimum Contribution

LEV SHALEM SIDDUR \$36

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP \$1225

Required to reserve mitzvah ceremony date at JCOGS

ONEG SPONSORSHIP *MINIMUM* \$180

Friday night kiddush sponsorship

(Cost covers the JCOGS community + 20 personal guests. For more personal guests, please contact the office to discuss)

OPTIONAL

BUILDING USAGE \$500

Cleaning and utilities fees for kitchen, tent and social hall usage for events

> Finances should never be a barrier to membership or education programming. If dues, tuition, or fees present financial hardship, please email finance@jcogs.org and we will be in touch to discuss confidentially.

STUDENT/PARENT AGREEMENT

I have reviewed the requirements for the mitzvah program and agree to participate.

Child's Name_____

Child's Signature_____

Parent's Name_____

Parent's Signature_____

Parent's Name_____

Parent's Signature_____

Date_____

[CLICK HERE TO FILL OUT THE EVENT SURVEY](#)