

The **13 Mitzvot Program** @ Temple Sinai

The world depends on three things:

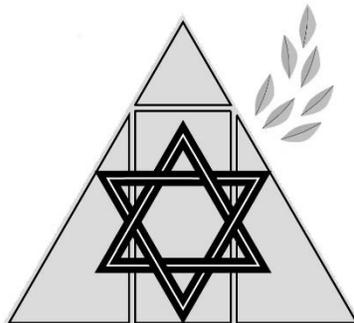
Torah (study...)

Avodah (prayer/rituals...)

and

Gemilut Hasadim (acts of lovingkindness,
interpersonal *mitzvot*)

~ *Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel*



Dear Bar or Bat Mitzvah Student:

You are about to embark on what may be the most important and fulfilling part of your Bar/Bat mitzvah studies—the practicing of *mitzvot*. For the Jewish people, for thousands of years, *mitzvot*, “commandments,” have been our way of connecting with God and with the community, and of continuing the unfinished work of God’s creation, trying to make the world a better place. We hope that the 13 Mitzvot program provides an opportunity to re-visit familiar *mitzvot* and try out new ones, which we hope will help set a foundation for a lifetime filled with Jewish values and action.

Here is what it entails:

1. Look through the suggested list of mitzvot, and try to pick at least one from each category, for a total of 13. Some may be ones you have done for years, but try to have some be new ones that you take on as well. Try to have a combination of some that are interpersonal (*Gemilut Hasadim*), some that are ritual/holiday based (*Avodah*), and some that are study-based (Torah). Some may be longterm commitments, and others may be one-time events.
2. For each mitzvah, you can categorize it (*Torah/Avodah/or Gemilut Hasadim*), and write a few sentences about your experience performing this mitzvah. You can write it out by hand in the attached pages, or just type it up and email it in. Your tutor will be your main point person for checking in about your projects during the year, and you can let Rabbi TelRav know what you have been doing as well when you meet with him to work on writing your *d’var Torah*.
3. If there is a mitzvah you would like to do that you are not sure how to categorize, check in with Morah Amy. There is almost always a way to include it.
4. Enjoy!

TO THE PARENT:

You play a central role in the success of the 13 Mitzvot Project. Although it is your child who will be doing most of the work, you will have four important areas of responsibility. Your first task is encouragement. Your second task is guidance, helping your child choose projects wisely and understand their meaning. Frequent home discussions can make the process of selecting mitzvot easier, and help clarify difficult concepts.

Your third task is involvement. Many of the mitzvot must be performed at home, and your participation is crucial. Religious practices in home or synagogue are above all family experiences, and cannot be done alone. You will also be called upon at times to drive your son or daughter to places where mitzvot can be performed and sometimes to do them together. Your willingness may make all the difference. Your final task – enthusiasm. We hope the 13 Mitzvot Project will be rewarding for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah and the family, and we hope your excitement will be contagious.

While your child is growing in mitzvot, we hope that you will decide to do so as well, perhaps with the same mitzvot and perhaps with different ones. Doing mitzvot is, of course, meant for adults at least as much as it is for children. By working with your children on their mitzvah projects, you will fulfill the mitzvah of teaching your children (Deut. 6:7—from the “*v’ahavta*” part of the Shma), by example as well as by instruction. The word for “parents” in Hebrew, *horim*, is based on the same root as the word Torah, and can mean “the ones who show,” or “the ones who pass on tradition.”

Temple Sinai Thirteen Mitzvot Project

A. Mitzvot in Your Home – Ethical/ Environmental (Choose 1-3 mitzvot)

1. Assume a special new job or responsibility in your home that will be continued. (Ex. 20:9)
The Shabbat Commandment not only tells us to rest on Shabbat, but it also instructs us: “Six days shall you labor and do all your work.” This is a commandment to spend the other six days of the week, excluding Shabbat, productively and creatively.
2. Show special honor or consideration for your parents. (Ex. 20:12)
3. Assume a new and ongoing responsibility to free your home of a harmful or polluting practice (start recycling, carpooling, walking/biking, convince someone to quit smoking...). (Ex. 23:2)
“You shall not follow after a multitude to do evil.” Even if there are many people who allow an unhealthy practice to become commonplace, the Torah instructs us not to follow their example, but to forge our own path.
4. Plant and care for a garden or trees through one season. (Deut. 20:19)
5. Care for your pet animal by taking on a new responsibility. (Deut. 22:4, 6)
If a mother bird watches as her young or her eggs are taken from her, it causes her much grief. We are therefore commanded to treat her with kindness and let her go before taking them. The other verse tells us to treat a fallen donkey or ox with kindness. These verses apply to all animals that are in our care.
6. Work out a technique or plan to make your home a safer place (a fire escape route...?) (Deut. 22:8)
7. Introduce themes and ideas of Jewish interest to be discussed by your family at the Sabbath evening meal on several occasions. (Deut. 6:7)

B. Mitzvot in Your Home – Ritual (Choose 1-3 mitzvot)

1. Try observing the laws of *kashrut*, at home and/or outside. (Lev. 11:3 (actually, all of Lev. Chapter 11, verses 1-47))
2. Build a sukkah and dwell in it (i.e. eat in it). (Lev. 23:42)
3. Recite blessings before eating: (*hamotzi* before meals with bread, “*borei minei m’zonot*” for snacks with grain, “*borei p’ri ha’eitz*” for fruit... (Deut. 8:10)
The Torah tells us that we should eat and be satisfied, but we must not do so without blessing and thanking God for the good land from which the food grew.
4. Take on a major role in preparing for or leading a Passover Seder. (Ex. 13:8)
5. Remove and sell all leaven in your home before Passover. (Ex. 12:15)
6. Observe the Passover food restrictions during the entire festival. (Ex. 13:3, 7)
7. Recite the Shabbat *kiddush* regularly on Friday night. (Ex. 20:8)
8. Learn and recite the Havdalah regularly at the end of Shabbat. (Ex. 20:8)

9. Light the candles regularly on Shabbat and Festivals. (Ex. 20:8)
The Torah contains no direct instructions to light candles on Shabbat, or say *Kiddush*, or make *Havdala*, but these have been ways that we have tried to make Shabbat holy and mark sacred time for two thousand years.
10. Make a mezuzah and affix it on the doorpost of your home – include a kosher scroll. (Deut. 6:9) Kiss the Mezuzah, or let it kiss you (touch the Mezuzah and kiss your hand) when you go in or out. If you already have a Mezuzah on the doorpost of your home, you can put one up on your bedroom doorpost.
11. Learn to bake challah and practice this skill (Num. 15:20)

C. Mitzvot in Your Community – Jewish or Secular (Choose 1-3 mitzvot)

1. Work on a project that helps produce better government or civic improvement. (Ex. 22:28)
We are to bring the best of our produce to support the community, and give to God (or the Jewish leaders) the service of our children. The Rabbis tell us that supporting our government/community is a way to do God's work.
2. Work on the campaign of someone who you believe is a worthy political candidate. (Ex. 22:27)
We are not to curse a leader of our people. Instead, we should choose and support leaders who are worthy of our respect and whose goal is to bring about a better community and society.
3. Work to preserve the natural beauty of your neighborhood or area. (Collect litter; beautify a park, etc.) Or help with recycling efforts at Temple Sinai or your school. Or promote an environmental cause... (Deut. 20:19)
4. Work for or help support a charitable cause. (Deut. 15:7-8)
5. Serve as a volunteer at an organization serving older people, offer an elderly person a seat on a bus or subway.... (Lev. 19:32)
6. Organize a drive for food or clothing and deliver the goods to a charitable institution. (Lev. 19:9-10)
7. Tutor a student. (Lev. 19:17)
We are to refrain from criticizing others, or do so only in a gentle and constructive way, when it seems like it would be appreciated. One of the best ways to approach this command in a positive manner is to help others to learn a skill or master a subject.

D. Mitzvot in Relations with People (Choose 1-3 mitzvot)

1. Demonstrate honesty when it would be to your advantage to lie. (Ex. 20:13)
2. Treat someone with respect who you feel is not highly thought of by most people. (Lev. 19:17-18)
3. Make amends to someone you have harmed. (Ex. 21:18-19, Ex. 21:33-4)
We are obliged to compensate anyone we have harmed or injured, not only to the extent of the injury, but also to make amends for the wrong we have done. The mitzvah is not only to pay for the cost of the injury, but also to make sure the person is healed, both physically and emotionally.
4. Help someone without expecting or accepting any reward or payment. (Ex. 22:6) *(as the guardian is attempting to do with someone else's money or goods)*
5. Make a special effort to be helpful to someone you don't like. (Ex.23:4-5)
6. Don't jump to conclusions about someone else. (Ex. 23:7, Lev. 19:15)
7. Don't stand idly by when you see injustice happening (could be an incident at school, or something happening in the world...). (Lev. 19:16)
8. Return a lost article to its owner at some inconvenience and without reward. (Deut. 22:1)
9. Treat a stranger (visitor) with special kindness and helpfulness. (Deut. 10:19, Deut. 24:17)
10. Pay a shiva call. (Deut. 14:1, Deut. 21:23)
11. Visit a friend or relative who is sick, either at home or in the hospital. (Deut. 26:17, based on Gen. 18:1, where God is said to be "visiting the sick" by sending an angel to Abraham when he was recovering from circumcising himself)
12. Don't take advantage of people's disabilities. Rather, go out of your way to help people with special needs. (Lev. 19: 14)

E. Mitzvot in Your Synagogue (Choose 1-3 mitzvot)

1. Attend Shabbat services with at least one parent, at least 13 times between your Bar/Bat Mitzvah Orientation (when you receive this) and your Bar/Bat Mitzvah. (Lev. 19:30) This should include at least three Saturday morning services as well as ten Friday evening services in the sanctuary.
2. Help in building, repairing, or beautifying something in the synagogue. (Ex. 25:8)
3. Take a special role in the synagogue service such as becoming a regular Torah reader or learning to lead part of the weekday school services. (Deut. 31:12)
4. Learn to blow the shofar. Bring your shofar to Neila services at the end of Yom Kippur and help mark the end of the fast. Ask the cantor or rabbi about other opportunities for you to blow shofar on the High Holidays. (Lev. 25:9)
5. Attend Festival services (besides Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur).
6. Buy a lulav and etrog and use them at services on Sukkot. (Lev. 23:40)

F. Personal Study Mitzvot. (Choose 1-3 mitzvot)

1. Set aside a regular time for the study of some Jewish subject, and/or commit to attending Schiff Tichon Sinai. (Deut. 6:7)
2. Read a book of Jewish interest. Write a brief summary and explain whether you would recommend it. (Deut. 6:7)
3. Learn the meaning and origin of three different Jewish rituals that you practice in the home. Describe them in writing. (Deut. 31:12; Deut. 31:19)
4. Make a tallit, including tying your own fringes, and learn their significance. (Num. 15:38-39)
5. Learn the meaning of several Shabbat restrictions and practice them for a month. (Ex. 20:10) (no writing, no using money...) Find Shabbat-friendly activities to replace them with—like Shabbat meals, visiting with family and friends, games...
6. Go on, or plan a trip to Israel for the future, keep a journal of your trip or write an itinerary for your future trip. (Deut. 16:16)
7. Study the Torah portion of the week and come up with several questions to discuss with your family, including the lessons you can learn from the portion. (Deut. 6:7).

WORKSHEETS FOR 13 MITZVOT PROJECT

1. Category _____ Mitzvah Title _____

Torah Source _____

Check one or more: Torah Avodah Gemilut Hasadim

Date _____ / _____ / _____

Description of project and its relationship to Torah Source:

Completed on _____ / _____ / _____ Approved by (final) _____

2. Category _____ Mitzvah Title _____

Torah Source _____

Check one or more: Torah Avodah Gemilut Hasadim

Date _____ / _____ / _____

Description of project and its relationship to Torah Source:

Completed on _____ / _____ / _____ Approved by (final) _____

3. Category _____ Mitzvah Title _____

Torah Source _____

Check one or more: Torah Avodah Gemilut Hasadim

Date _____ / _____ / _____

Description of project and its relationship to Torah Source:

Completed on _____ / _____ / _____ Approved by (final) _____

4. Category _____ Mitzvah Title _____

Torah Source _____

Check one or more: Torah Avodah Gemilut Hasadim

Date _____ / _____ / _____

Description of project and its relationship to Torah Source:

Completed on _____ / _____ / _____ Approved by (final) _____

5. Category _____ Mitzvah Title _____

Torah Source _____

Check one or more: Torah Avodah Gemilut Hasadim

Date _____ / _____ / _____

Description of project and its relationship to Torah Source:

Completed on _____ / _____ / _____ Approved by (final) _____

6. Category _____ Mitzvah Title _____

Torah Source _____

Check one or more: Torah Avodah Gemilut Hasadim

Date _____ / _____ / _____

Description of project and its relationship to Torah Source:

Completed on _____ / _____ / _____ Approved by (final) _____

7. Category _____ Mitzvah Title _____

Torah Source _____

Check one or more: Torah Avodah Gemilut Hasadim

Date _____ / _____ / _____

Description of project and its relationship to Torah Source:

Completed on _____ / _____ / _____ Approved by (final) _____

8. Category _____ Mitzvah Title _____

Torah Source _____

Check one or more: Torah Avodah Gemilut Hasadim

Date _____ / _____ / _____

Description of project and its relationship to Torah Source:

Completed on _____ / _____ / _____ Approved by (final) _____

9. Category _____ Mitzvah Title _____

Torah Source _____

Check one or more: Torah Avodah Gemilut Hasadim

Date _____ / _____ / _____

Description of project and its relationship to Torah Source:

Completed on _____ / _____ / _____ Approved by (final) _____

10. Category _____ Mitzvah Title _____

Torah Source _____

Check one or more: Torah Avodah Gemilut Hasadim

Date _____ / _____ / _____

Description of project and its relationship to Torah Source:

Completed on _____ / _____ / _____ Approved by (final) _____

11. Category _____ Mitzvah Title _____

Torah Source _____

Check one or more: Torah Avodah Gemilut Hasadim

Date _____ / _____ / _____

Description of project and its relationship to Torah Source:

Completed on _____ / _____ / _____ Approved by (final) _____

12. Category _____ Mitzvah Title _____

Torah Source _____

Check one or more: Torah Avodah Gemilut Hasadim

Date _____ / _____ / _____

Description of project and its relationship to Torah Source:

Completed on _____ / _____ / _____ Approved by (final) _____

13. Category _____ Mitzvah Title _____

Torah Source _____

Check one or more: Torah Avodah Gemilut Hasadim

Date _____ / _____ / _____

Description of project and its relationship to Torah Source:

Completed on _____ / _____ / _____ Approved by (final) _____

Monday/Wednesday Afternoon School Service

Date		
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		
14.		
15.		
16.		
17.		
18.		
19.		
20.		
21.		
22.		
23.		
24.		

Between Now and Your Bar/Bat Mitzvah: Shabbat Attendance Record

(10 Shabbat evening services BEFORE your Bar/Bat Mitzvah and 3 Saturday Morning services)

Date	Bar/Bat Mitzvah's Signature	Parent's Signature
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		