Temple Beth Hillel – Beth El

Mitzvah Project Handbook

For

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Students
THE MITZVAH PROJECT

Becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a very important time in a young Jewish person’s life. It is a rite of passage marking the coming of age as a Jewish adult. The day on which you are called to the Torah is a joyful religious occasion you will share with your family and friends. Our rabbis teach that the world is upheld by three things – Torah (study), Avodah (worship), and Gemilut Chasadim (acts of loving-kindness). Almost all the mitzvot (God’s commandments) can be categorized in one of these three areas. When you become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, you gain certain rights and responsibilities in Jewish law and, from that time forward, you become responsible for fulfilling the mitzvot.

In preparing for the ceremony marking your Bar/Bat Mitzvah, we expect all our students to take part as leaders in all three of these areas. You spend months studying your Torah portion preparing both to give a teaching (study) and to read from the Torah (worship). It is also important to start taking on the responsibility for making our world a better place, through acts of gemilut chasadim. This is the goal of participating in the Mitzvah Project. We ask that you pick one Mitzvah that you find meaningful and create a project through which you will demonstrate your new responsibilities as a member of the Jewish people.

WHAT IS THE MITZVAH PROJECT?

You will choose a particular mitzvah that you find meaningful and design an ongoing project that you will participate in for a minimum of 13 hours. You may choose any mitzvah that appeals to you and find a way in which to perform it. Giving tzedakah (monetary donations) can be a part of your project, but it should also include hands-on participation in the mitzvah itself. Your Mitzvah Project can be in the area of social action, education and/or Jewish observance and should reflect a new practice for you and/or demonstrably benefit other people.

HOW DO I CHOOSE WHAT KIND OF PROJECT TO DO?

It helps to start by thinking about what you like to do and whom you want to help. For example, if you like baseball and are interested in helping children, you may want to collect baseball equipment for children in low-income areas. If you are a talented musician, you may want to organize a concert at a home for older adults. The possibilities are endless! By choosing a project that involves something you like doing, our hope is that you will find ways to continue your involvement even after you have fulfilled the requirements for this Mitzvah Project. It’s a good idea to talk with your parents, teachers and rabbis to help figure out the best way to do your project.

HOW DO I LET YOU KNOW WHAT I AM DOING?

Enclosed you will find a form in which you describe the project that you are planning to do. We ask for those forms to be turned in by October 31, 2019. The Associate Rabbi and/or Education Director will review the project and let you know if there are any concerns. In addition to the initial form, we also ask you to keep a journal and a time log so that you will have a keepsake for your own memories and to provide us with a record of your work. Your journal will also serve as a helpful reference if you choose to discuss your project as part of your speech at your Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

WHEN IS IT DUE?

We ask you to make every effort to complete the 13 hour requirement for the project by the end of 6th grade. However, we understand that certain projects may not be able to be fulfilled in this time frame. All projects must be completed at least one month before your Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration. Knowing everything that you must do in the final weeks before your celebration, we strongly recommend that you don’t leave this for the last minute.
Mitzvah Project Ideas

The list of mitzvot and projects below are intended to help you brainstorm ideas – they are not a limit of what you can do, but some suggestions to help you decide what you want to do.

**Bal Tashchit-Do Not Destroy**
Adopt a Highway
Start a Recycling Program
Help Neighbors Bag Leaves in Correct Bags

**Tzar Ba’alei Chayim – Be Kind to Animals**
Volunteer at a Pet Grooming Salon
Be a Volunteer Dog Walker/Sitter
Become a Foster Family for Seeing Eye Puppies
Volunteer at an Animal Hospital or Veterinarian

**Hiddur P’nei Zaken – Respect the Elderly**
Visit with a Home-Bound Person
Go Food Shopping with a Person who May Need Help
Rake Leaves for Elderly Neighbors
Perform at Nursing Homes
Interview a Person on their Life
Help an Older Neighbor Build their Sukkah (or Mow their Lawn or Shovel their Drive & Sidewalk)

**V’ahavta L’reyachach Kamocha**
Love Your Neighbor - Homelessness
Start & Organize a Drive in Your School/ Synagogue for: Blankets, Clothing, Food, Toiletries, etc.
Volunteer in a Soup Kitchen
Volunteer at the Jewish Food Bank

**Bikkur Cholim – Visit the Sick**
Collect Old Posters for Children’s Wards
Send Get-Well Cards to Sick Congregants
Make Blankets to Distribute to Children’s Wards at a Local Hospital

**V’ahavta L’reyachach Kamocha**
Love Your Neighbor – Disabilities
Start a Campaign to Make a Building Accessible for People with Physical Disabilities
Tutor a Learning Disabled Child
Help to Create Large Print Siddurim
Raise Money for Assisted Listening Devices

**Tefillin & Tallit**
Commit to Wearing Tallit and Tefillin Each Morning and Say the Sh’ma

**Geniza: Respectfully Disposing of Texts With God’s Name**
Volunteer to Assist with the Burial of Geniza Material
Create Geniza Boxes
Repair Old Lightly Damaged Siddurim
Sort Geniza Boxes

**Kashrut - Keeping Kosher**
Try Keeping Kosher for 2 Months
Kasher your Kitchen for Passover
Help a Neighbor to Clean for Passover

**Shabbat - Keeping Shabbat**
Make Shabbat Dinner for Your Family
Make Candlesticks & Light Weekly
Keep Shabbat Each Week
Make Challah from Scratch (Bonus Idea: Distribute Them to People in Need)

**Kibud Av v’Em - Honor Your Parents**
Make Dinner Once a Week
Wash the Cars Once a Week
Research Your Family History
Create a Special Family Tree

**Shalom Bayit/Rodef Shalom**
Keeping Peace in the Home
Keep Your Room Clean
Don’t Fight with Your Siblings
Create and Keep a Schedule to Help with Simple Chores Around the House

**Hachnasat Orchim - Welcoming Guests**
Make a Dinner for:
A Friend and Their Family, Your Relatives, A New Kid in Your Class
Host a Welcome Party for a New Synagogue Family

**Gemilut Chasadim**
Acts of LovingKindness
Take Younger Sibling on an Outing
Organize a Family Night
Volunteer as a Baby Sitter
Give Your Time to Someone who Needs Help
## Recent B’nai Mitzvah Projects

Please note that the following list is a partial list of recent projects to give you a sense of the range of projects that you can do. Most students are happy to speak to you about their project if you would like more information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Project Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ella Abramovitz</td>
<td>Clothes Pin Project — Encouraging Acts of Kindness Among Her Peers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brynn Adler</td>
<td>The Dinner Club of JFCS — Cooking with adults with disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ben Brecher</td>
<td>Abu Tor Good Neighbor Project — Raised funds for joint Palestinian/Jewish Israeli soccer program; Partnered with Philadelphia Union to donate portion of sales.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lia Cohen</td>
<td>Friendship Circle — Working with children with disabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lila Elkins</td>
<td>Made a family cookbook with grandmother.</td>
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<td>Abby Frisch</td>
<td>Pillows for Patients — Made pillows to distribute for American Heart Association.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lindsay Gillston</td>
<td>Upward Basketball — Played basketball with children who have disabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leena Greenberg</td>
<td>Child’s Play Charity — Provided toys, games and books to children’s hospitals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naomi Gross</td>
<td>Main Line Meals on Wheels — Delivered meals to people who are homebound.</td>
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<td>Shayna Gross</td>
<td>Helped elderly neighbor clean out home/hold a yard sale to raise $2000.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nathan Grunfeld</td>
<td>Upward Basketball — Played basketball with children who have disabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sidney Grunfeld</td>
<td>Upward Basketball — Played basketball with children who have disabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jordana Harwitz</td>
<td>Castle Home — Ran clothing drive to help people with mental health issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oren Israel</td>
<td>Friendship Circle — Working with children with disabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maxwell Kanefsky</td>
<td>Hungry for Music — Collected Instruments to distribute to low-income schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edwin Kohn</td>
<td>Ada Mutch (Eldernet) — Collected cereal boxes for Food Pantry in Bryn Mawr.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethan Laby</td>
<td>Best Buddies — BCMS program working with children with disabilities.</td>
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<td>Fallon Rocker</td>
<td>Vermont Adaptive — Helped people with mental/physical disabilities play sports.</td>
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<td>Mori Rothman</td>
<td>LMSC’s Challenger League Soccer — Worked with children with disabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gabi Thomas</td>
<td>Shabbat Challah delivery to individuals to brighten their day.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matt Thomas</td>
<td>Taught swimming for children to participate in Special Olympics.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ava Thur</td>
<td>Penn Hillel — Gave out food to homeless people.</td>
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<td>Jesse Ufberg</td>
<td>Abramson Center — Participated in activities with the elderly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gideon Wolf</td>
<td>MVP/Friendship Circle — Buddied/had fun with children with disabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haley Zabusky</td>
<td>Providence Animal Shelter — Worked with animals; donated money/pet supplies.</td>
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Bar/Bat Mitzvah Project Log

Name________________________________ Phone number __________________

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date __________________

The 13 hour requirement of the Mitzvah project should ideally be completed during sixth grade, and absolutely no later than one month before becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Please remember that 13 hours is a minimum—we hope your project will be meaningful to you and that you will continue with it. You may either do one project or several different projects to fulfill the 13 hour requirement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Mitzvah Performed/Name of Organization</th>
<th># of hours that day</th>
<th>Reflection/Thoughts</th>
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Supervisor’s signature: ________________________________________________

Parent’s signature: ____________________________________________________

Student’s signature: ___________________________________________________

Upon completion, please submit this completed form to the Assistant Rabbi or Education Director.
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Project Proposal

Name: ____________________________  Home #: ____________________________
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date ____________  Student’s email: __________________________
School (as of 09/19) ____________________________

Ideally, the 13 hour requirement for the Mitzvah Project should be completed during sixth grade — and at least one month prior to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah date. You should spend a minimum of 13 hours participating in your project; you are encouraged to continue beyond the required hours. Use the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Project Log to track and reflect on your time.

Name of Mitzvah Project: ____________________________
Place or Organization: ____________________________
Phone # and contact person: ____________________________
Describe what you will do for your project: ____________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________

Supervisor’s signature ____________________________

Parent’s signature ____________________________

Bar/Bat Mitzvah child’s signature ____________________________

Please submit this completed form to the Assistant Rabbi and/or Education Director prior to the start of the project, but no later than October 31, 2019. Unless you hear otherwise, you may assume the project is approved.