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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 6<sup>th</sup> 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'reyacha 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'reyacha 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 Siddurs
- 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 Loving Kindness**

- 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

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



# Temple Beth Hillel-Beth El

## 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 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.

Date	Mitzvah Performed/ Name of Organization	# of hours that day	Reflection/Thoughts

Supervisor's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Upon completion, please submit this completed form to the Assistant Rabbi or Education Director.



**Temple Beth Hillel-Beth El**  
1001 Remington Road  
Wynnewood, PA 19096

## **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.