



Machberet Mitzvah

A Notebook to Keep Track of your Mitzvah Project

מחברת מצוה



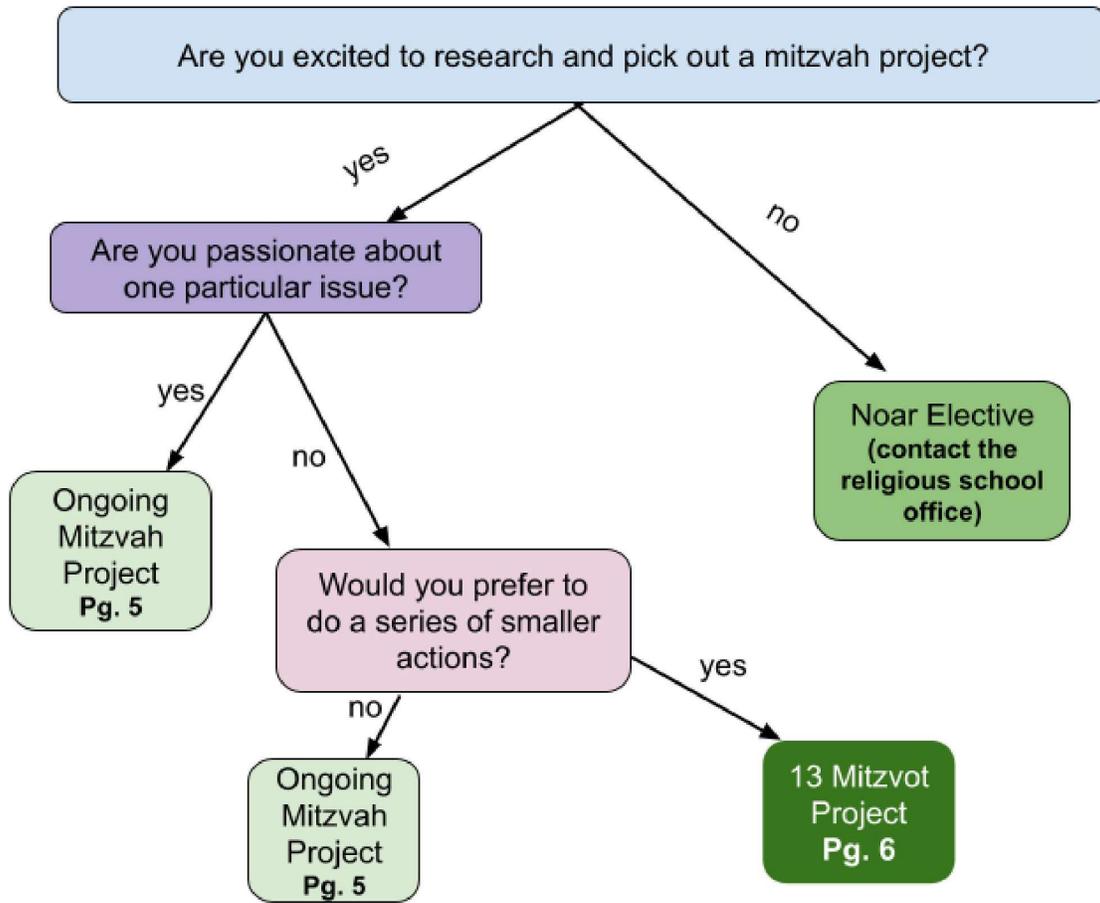
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The world is sustained by three things: by Torah, by worship, and by loving deeds.

-Pirkei Avot





Welcome to your Machberet Mitzvah: A notebook to introduce and keep track of your mitzvah project

Becoming a Bar/Bat/Bet Mitzvah is about more than reading from the Torah and Haftarah. It's about becoming a leader, taking your place in the Jewish community, and assuming more responsibility. These responsibilities include study, prayer and doing mitzvot.

There are three ways to fulfill the community service requirement for your Bar/Bat/Bet Mitzvah:

- **Focus your energy on one ongoing project**
- **Complete the 13 Mitzvot Plan**
- **Choose the social justice elective during Noar (ask religious school for more information)**

If you choose an ongoing project, you have many options. Start by thinking about causes that are important to you or your family. There is more guidance on page 4. For a list of organizations that are welcoming to 12- and 13-year-olds, please visit our website at daviscenter.org/mitzvah-projects.

For the 13 Mitzvot plan, the *Machberet Mitzvah* has a list of different types of projects you can engage in within each of 13 categories we have provided. These ideas are intended to help you understand how the range of Jewish values can be incorporated into your personal, family and community lives on a regular basis.

Please also note that you are not limited to the ideas listed in this *machberet*. Be creative!

Whether you choose to do an ongoing project, the 13 Mitzvot Plan, or the Noar class, we hope that fulfilling these mitzvot will enhance your year of preparation and that you will continue to fulfill mitzvot throughout your life.

And remember, if you need anything along the way, we are ALWAYS here to help!

בהצלחה

B'hatzlacha – to your success!

Ongoing Mitzvah Projects

Choosing to do an ongoing mitzvah project is a meaningful way to engage in one of the most important values in Judaism – *tikkun olam*, repairing the world.

Deciding what you want to do for a mitzvah project can be a daunting task. It can connect to your parsha or to your interests. More than anything, you should truly care about the work you are doing.

Questions to ask yourself when choosing how best to give back include:

- ***What am I good at?***
- ***What do I like to do?***
- ***What bothers me so much about the world that I feel I want to do something to change it?***
- ***Does my family have a connection with an organization or a cause?***

Mitzvah projects typically (but not always!) fall into one of two categories: volunteering or fundraising.

Volunteering: If you plan on becoming a volunteer, you must first speak to your organization about their policies. Keep in mind that some organizations have a minimum age for volunteers. (Visit daviscenter.org, More Opportunities, Mitzvah Projects) for a list of organizations that are welcoming to 12- and 13-year-olds.) Volunteering may involve stacking canned foods at a food bank, teaching kids to play a sport, or playing chess with the elderly. Volunteering is a great way for you to use your passion to change the world!

Fundraising: If you plan on fundraising, you must first decide what you are collecting. Fundraising does not necessarily mean raising money. It can also involve collecting items that would benefit an organization's mission. For example, if you want to help eliminate hunger, you can collect canned food. If you want to help children in need, you can collect school supplies or backpacks.

Whatever you choose, keep in mind that this is a wonderful tradition that many others have participated in before you. It's an amazing opportunity and you can make a real difference in your community. In the end, you should enjoy your time doing mitzvot and repairing the world. Be proud of the action you're taking and have fun!

13 Mitzvot Plan: Categories and Project Examples

Below is a list of the 13 categories of mitzvot along with examples of ways to fulfill that particular mitzvah. We know it's possible that many of the mitzvot listed here are things you already do in your home and community, which is awesome! But just in case, we've provided some ideas below. We hope that you will continue to fulfill these mitzvot beyond your b'nai mitzvah date, and that the experience of becoming a Bar/Bat/Bet Mitzvah teaches you the value of these deeds and how you can incorporate them into your daily life.

תלמוד תורה

I. **Talmud Torah – Jewish Learning**

Torah study is a commandment emphasized in Jewish tradition not only to sharpen our minds, but also to help guide us. The idea is that when we take Torah study seriously, we will most likely choose the right path for our lives. This is why Torah study outweighs all other commandments.

- Go with your family or friends to a local place of Jewish interest, like the Jewish Historical Society or the Capital Jewish Museum.
- Research and document your family tree.
- Come to Torah study at Temple Sinai on Shabbat mornings.
- Read three articles from a Jewish website like *URJ.org*, *Washington Jewish Week*, or *Tabletmag.com*.
- See a Washington Jewish Film Festival movie with your friends or family and have a discussion about it.

גמילות חסדים

II. **Gemilut Chasadim – Acts of Loving-Kindness**

Personal daily acts of loving-kindness show that we care and are concerned about the well-being and feelings of those with whom we share our days. We perform these unselfishly and our reward is the feeling of satisfaction we receive as a result.

- Volunteer to work with someone who is physically or developmentally challenged.
- Organize a collection of canned goods, blankets, or toiletries in your neighborhood, and donate them to local homeless shelters or food banks.
- Help a homebound neighbor or relative with shopping, cleaning, or other tasks.

חיים בעלי צער

III. **Tzaar Baalei Chayim – Being Kind to Animals**

The Torah is filled with stories teaching us compassion for animals because we believe that God's wisdom is extended to all living creatures.

- Offer to walk, feed and/or care for pets in your neighborhood.
- Donate your time, pet supplies, or money to an organization that cares for animals.

ביקור חולים

IV. **Bikkur Cholim – Visiting the Sick**

We all know that it's no fun to be sick. It's even more difficult to be sick when you are alone. We visit the sick to demonstrate our love and concern for those who are not well, with hope that our presence will make them feel better.

- Create an activity kit that includes puzzles, stories, projects, etc. and give it to a friend or relative when they are ill.
- Design, create and distribute your own get-well cards.
- Go to a nursing home and volunteer to give a performance or organize a concert for the residents.

הכנסת אורחים

V. **Hachnasat Orchim – Hospitality**

Throughout history, Jews knew first hand what it meant to be a traveler and a stranger. Performing this mitzvah demonstrates our personal and community concern for travelers, guests, family and friends.

- Invite friends or neighbors over for Shabbat dinner.
- Reach out to new students in your school; invite them to hang out with you and your friends.

צדקה

VI. **Tzedakah – Righteous Giving**

The word *tzedakah* is often mistranslated to mean "charity." The actual word comes from the root *tzedek* meaning "righteous" or "just." This teaches us that charitable giving is not only the right thing to do, but it also helps fight injustice in the world.

- Create your own tzedakah box, keep it in a visible place in your house, and encourage your family to use it. Remember that a great time to give tzedakah is before you light the Shabbat candles on Friday night.
- Donate a percentage of your Bar/Bat/Bet Mitzvah monetary gifts to your favorite organization.
- Run or walk the Tricia Davis Sinai House 5k in May.
- In your B'nei Mitzvah invitation, ask your guests to bring a non-perishable food item or toiletries, and donate them to a local food bank or shelter. IMPORTANT: Check with food banks and shelters before you collect items since some may have specific needs.
- Arrange to have the leftover food from your reception picked up by DC Central Kitchen.

כבוד אב ואם

VII. **Kibud Av V'Em – Honoring Your Parents**

With the support of our parents, we have reached this moment; that's why it's so important to honor them. This mitzvah is included in the list of the 10 Commandments and is one that we can perform every day.

- Prepare a meal for your family.
- Write a letter of thank you to your parents.

בל תשחית

VIII. **Bal Tashchit – Do Not Destroy or Waste**

There is a midrash that God spoke to Adam and Eve asking them to recognize and appreciate the beauty of creation and to take care not to destroy God's world. (Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:13) It is our responsibility to protect the earth and the environment.

- Take charge of the recycling in your household. Contact your local department of sanitation to get information about good recycling habits and educate your family about how you can reduce, re-use, and recycle at home.
- Learn about composting and help promote responsible composting at Temple Sinai.
- Consider using potted plants instead of cut flowers or balloons when decorating for your reception.

חסד של אמת

IX. Chesed Shel Emet – Honoring the Dead and Comforting Mourners

This is one of the more difficult, yet more important mitzvot. Honoring the dead enables us to remember loved ones and keep their memory with us after they are gone. We can remember them by learning about their lives and following their ways.

- Visit a cemetery and place stones on the gravesite of deceased relatives.
- Have a family discussion about relatives who have died or your ancestors.
- Write a story or create a memory book about them.

הידור פני זקן

X. Hiddur P'nai Zaken – Honoring our Elders

We learn much about our history from our elders. We can learn simply by being with them, and we can learn from their life experiences.

- Visit an older person and learn their story.
- Contact Sinai Cares to see if someone is looking for a friendly visitor.
- Volunteer to help an older person in your neighborhood by helping around the house, shopping for them, or spending time with them.

ואהבת לרעך

XI. V'ahavta L'rayecha – Loving One's Neighbor

This mitzvah can be taken literally to mean the neighbor who lives next door, but more often refers to the importance of caring for our neighbors world-wide.

- Volunteer to rake leaves or shovel driveways in your neighborhood.
- Volunteer to babysit for a neighbor or work as a mother's helper.
- Take part in Praying with Our Feet at A Wider Circle or another organization.

שמירת שבת

XII. Sh'mirat Shabbat – Observing Shabbat

Shabbat is the most important holiday in the Jewish calendar, and we are fortunate that it comes every week. We are taught to “remember” and to “observe” the Sabbath. There are many ways to do this at home and at the Temple.

- Make Shabbat more meaningful in your home by adding something to your observance (e.g. light candles, say Kiddush, eat a meal with your family and discuss what you did that week.)
- Choose a Shabbat daytime activity (e.g. attend services, take a nature walk with your family, or reach out to family members who aren't local.)
- Experience Shabbat *m'nucha* (rest) by turning off your smart devices (phone, iPod, tablet, etc.)

אהבת ישראל

XIII. Ahavat Yisrael – The Love of Israel

This mitzvah not only refers to our love for the land and people of Israel, but also the Jewish community worldwide.

- Read a book or articles about Israel.
- Consider a donation to a Jewish community outside of the US.
- Cook a food from a Jewish culture different from your own.

Project Reflection

Time to step back and take a look at how your mitzvah project has gone. Describe the project here and reflect on your experience by answering the questions below.

Name: _____

Time Spent: _____

Type of project: **Ongoing project** **13 mitzvot plan** **Noar elective**

Briefly describe what you did during this particular volunteer experience.

Was your experience harder or easier than you expected? What surprised you about the project? What parts were fun? Which parts were not?

What did you learn from this experience?

How does this relate to your Bar/Bat/Bet mitzvah?