

APPENDIX

The Emanuel Synagogue Guide to Choosing a *Mitzvah* Project For Your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*

No one is lonely when doing a *mitzvah*, for a *mitzvah* is where God and man meet.
Rabbi Abraham J. Heschel

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Adaptations from:

Danny Siegel's Bar and Bat Mitzvah Mitzvah Book: A Practical Guide for Changing the World Through Your Simcha

By Danny Siegel
The Town House Press, Pittsboro, NC, 2004

Mitzvah Magic

By Danny Siegel and Naomi Eisenberger
Kar-Ben Publishing, Inc., 2002

It's a Mitzvah! Step-by-Step to Jewish Living

By Bradley Shavit Artson
Behrman House Rabbinical Assembly, 1995

The Ziv *Tzedakah* Fund Website: www.ziv.org

Additional help from:

B'Yadeynu/The Social Action Committee of the Emanuel Synagogue
The Emanuel Synagogue Religious School Staff

***To choose a mitzvah project,
ask yourself these questions:***

What do I really like to do? What activities give you the most pleasure? Can you sit and read for hours? Are you really excited about playing the guitar or keyboard?

What am I really good at doing? This may include: giving big hugs, playing soccer, baking chocolate chip cookies, talking on the phone for hours, being a computer whiz, or drawing or painting beautiful pictures.

What bothers me about the world so much I really need to change it? Are you tired of hearing that there are untold numbers of kids who go to bed hungry every night? Do you feel uncomfortable when you visit a nursing home and see so many people just sitting and staring into space? Turn what bothers you into *Tikkun Olam* and make a difference.

Whom do I know? You may have special connections with friends or family that can make it much easier for you to do *mitzvot*. Do you know someone who enjoys playing a musical instrument as much as you do and would like to join you in a concert at a local nursing home? Do you have a relative who is a dentist and is willing to give you dental supplies that can be donated to a dental clinic in Jerusalem? Are you and your friends ace soccer players who could teach kids at a homeless shelter how to play?

Why not? This is generally the easiest question of all: almost always the answer is, "There's no real reason why not. So, let's do it."

When do I start? Start now! To plan a *Tikkun Olam* project that will truly add meaning to your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* celebration, begin thinking about it 12 – 18 months ahead of the date of your event. This will give you plenty of time to find something meaningful to you, do some investigation and execute a good plan. This booklet has many ideas to start you on your way.

There is no such thing as a small mitzvah.

Any mitzvah, no matter how small, changes the entire world.

Using your event as the vehicle for *Mitzvah*:

There are so many “things” related to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* that are often taken for granted as ordinary which can be transformed into *mitzvah* objects.

Invitations: Instead of ordering expensive invitations, go down a level and donate the money you save to a favorite cause in honor of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Or insert into the invitation, a request for help with a collection or a donation of money to a designated *tzedakah* project.

Centerpieces: Brightly colored woolen scarves, socks, and mittens can be fashioned to look like flowers and put into a centerpiece. After the event, donate the winter wear to a child welfare organization. If you use flowers for your centerpieces, deliver them after the event to a nursing home, hospital or group home for those with handicaps.

Bima Decorations: As with centerpieces, these can be collections of clothes, food, books or other items to be donated.

Ritual Items: Items such as a *tallit*, *kippot*, *hallah* cover, *yad*, and hand washing cup can all be purchased from places which either support the Israeli economy or poor people throughout the world. Some suggestions are included below in the “ideas” section.

Food: As with the invitations, if you order a less expensive menu, you can donate the difference to a *tzedakah* in the child’s honor. You can also donate the left-over food to a soup kitchen. How to do this can be discussed with the caterer and the Emanuel staff. Another consideration concerns the people who set up and serve the food and those who provide the entertainment. The wait staff and entertainers should be allowed to eat before they work.

Speeches: While the congregation is listening to the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* child, he or she can make a plug for their favorite cause. This is a good opportunity to make people aware of injustices in the world and what can be done about them.

The Gifts: You may give all or part of your gift money to *tzedakah*. Be sure to have the checks sent to you rather than the organization so that you may personally send them all in together. You may ask your class to agree not to give each other presents but to all donate what you would have spent on presents to an agreed upon *tzedakah*.

Party Favors: Instead of party favors, you may choose to donate the money you would have spent. You can give each guest a note with his/her place card saying that a donation has been made in his/her honor.

Be a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Twin for Children with Special Needs: The *Masorti* Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel and the Hazzans Assembly invite you to participate in Operation *Mazal Tov*. By twinning with a special needs student in Israel, you will provide funds for him/her to participate fully as a Jew. Ask Hazzan Cohn for information.

Recognizing the Special Qualities of Others: Write a note to each guest invited to share in your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* celebration telling them why they are special to you and your family. Leave the note at each place setting and see what a joyous celebration you will have. Make a habit of telling at least one person a day that they have a special quality. Include your parents, siblings and teachers too!

More Ideas for *Mitzvah* projects:

Ethiopian Embroidery: www.nacoej.org, (212) 233-5200 Ethiopian Jewish men support their families by making and selling beautifully embroidered items such as *tallitot*, *matzah* and *hallah* covers and pillows. The North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry is a non-profit organization that handles the selling of their work. Purchase your *tallit* from this organization.

Maya Works: (773) 506-4905, www.mayaworks.org Guatemalan women in remote regions of the country are taught to develop the skill to create beautiful, colorful, crocheted *kippot*. They may be purchased in bulk for *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* guests at a very reasonable price. Each one is unique. The colors go very well with the *tallitot* from NACOEJ described above.

Buy or make a tz'daka box: Collect change from all over the house - the laundry room, under couch pillows, etc. When the box is full give it to a charity of your choosing. Giving even a little can go a long way in your favorite agency.

Collect unused cell phones (and re-chargers if possible): www.donateaphone.com Give them to organizations that reprogram them to make free calls to 911, the emergency phone number. Go to web site for information. Place collection boxes in places like libraries, school or synagogue lobby, neighborhood stores.

Collections for children: Bundles of storybooks, coloring books and crayons, school supplies, board games, sports equipment - can all be donated to children in shelters, hospitals and orphanages. Collect children's videos to give to children in a hospital.

Mitzvah plants: Give a plant to an elderly person and ask him/her to take care of it. Say that you will come back soon to see how the plant is doing. Research has shown that people who have plants to take care of live longer than those who don't. Ask a plant store which plants might be the best for elders to care for. Maybe they will donate some. Explain your project to a nursing home or assisted living facility or meals on wheels and get permission to give the plants. Make an announcement at school and/or your synagogue and get others to join you. Be sure and follow up on your promise to visit.

Help Israel: Locate products that are made in Israel. Find ways to make people aware of these products so that they will buy them, thus helping Israel's economy. For example, you can ask in the Crown Market for a list of their Israeli food products and make up a cookbook with ideas on how to use these products. Other markets sell Israeli tea, spices, chocolate, etc.

Send Pizza to Israeli Soldiers: <http://pizzaidf.org> Friends of Israel around the world are looking for tangible ways to share their feelings with our soldiers and also to support the Israeli economy. From this site you can send Pizza and Soda* and for the summer, ice cream and cold fruit soup, to active duty soldiers who, day after day, are fighting terror and protecting the Jewish people.

Conserve Water: Because water is a precious and limited resource, we must use it wisely and save as much as possible. Use your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* money to purchase sink-faucet aerators, low-flow shower head aerators, and a water-displacement device for the toilet. Install them in your home and encourage others to do the same.

Support Israel Guide Dogs for the Blind: We provide Guide Dogs for the blind in Israel. Many students have done meaningful *Mitzvah* projects to help raise awareness to support this worthy cause. Israel Guide Dog Center, 968 Easton Rd. - Suite H, Warrington, PA 18976
Michael Leventhal, Executive Director, mike@israelguidedog.org, 215-343-9100

Recycle: We are all used to recycling newspapers, glass and some plastic containers. Think of other ways to recycle. After shopping at the grocery store, keep the shopping bags in your car and reuse them again.

Visiting the Sick: When you discover someone is sick, send a brief card or a note. Follow-up the note with a short visit. Prepare carefully and thoughtfully for your visit. Don't wear perfume or after-shave lotion. Don't bring bad news. Prepare one or two topics for discussion that the sick person might enjoy. Bring a small practical gift. Be a good listener. Offer to say a *mi sheberach* (a prayer for healing) for the person at synagogue. Ask permission to make a contribution to the synagogue or a charitable cause in honor of the sick person. Offer to help the sick person's family. Let the synagogue office know about the person so that the clergy can call on him/her.

Feeding the Hungry: Volunteer your time at a soup kitchen on a non-Jewish holiday. Collect kosher food items for the Jewish Food Pantry or non-kosher items for Foodshare which distributes food in the greater Hartford area. Or check with your town to see if you can give to a local food pantry.

Honoring Parents: One of the Ten Commandments is to honor your parents. Think carefully about how you act toward your parents. Do you speak respectfully to them even when you are angry? Be sure to speak with respect to your parents. Don't sit in their special chair. Only use their things after asking. Forgive your parents for not being perfect. Honor them with a gift to their favorite charity.

Helping Special Needs Children Learn to Play: Children with special learning needs are certainly different from the ordinary child. Did it ever occur to you that they need playmates? Ordinary kids can be role models for special needs kids just by playing with them. Look around for a child that is "different" and may need some help learning how to play. Make a commitment to play with that child once a week or once a month. Speak with Mrs. Fox about children in our community who would enjoy a "playmate."

The American Red Cross: 860-678-2700, www.redcross.org/local/connecticut.html
This organization runs blood drives, gives health care instruction and helps victims of disaster. Ask about their volunteer opportunities.

Greater Hartford Jewish Federation: 860-727-6100, www.JewishHartford.org Visit their web site or call for volunteer opportunities within the Jewish and larger communities.

Hebrew Health Care: 860-523-3818, Alex Giorgio, Volunteer Coordinator, agjorgio@nathealthcare.com. Many elderly residents need friendly visitors. This is just one of the possible ways you can volunteer at this nursing home.

Monthly Friday Evening Services at the Hebrew Home and Hospital: 523-5254, pgarry@comcast.net, Pam Garry Each month, Emanuel members conduct an abbreviated *Shabbat* service for those at the Hebrew Home from 3:15 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. All are welcome to participate in a single service or on a regular basis. The residents enjoy attending and socializing with our members, especially the children.

Hartford Jewish Coalition for Literacy: 236-7323, Gale Shapiro Volunteers can help a child learn to read by working one-to-one, or collect books to give to children who have no books in their homes.

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Collecting shoes for the Homeless: <http://solepurpose.com> Homeless people wear out their shoes every 6 – 8 weeks. This site tells you how to collect used shoes and get them to people who need them.

Volunteer Solutions – 493-6800:

www.uwcact.org/howyoucanhelp/youth_opps.htm This web site maintained by the United Way of the Capitol Area has many volunteer opportunities to explore.

Jewish Family Service: 236-1927, www.jfshartford.org, Volunteers are needed to help with a variety of projects from organizing a *Purim* party for adoptive families, distributing Passover food baskets and tutoring a New American, to helping with a kosher food pantry.

Board of Education and Services for the Blind: 602-4144, Anita Gagnon This agency, which provides services to visually impaired and blind adults and children throughout the state, seeks volunteers to make story boxes and touch books for blind children. Volunteers of all ages, whether groups, families or individuals, are welcome. No experience necessary. Training will be provided.

Zichron Chana Baila: Kids for Chesed - <http://www.zcb613.org> The organization prepares packages for sick children from items that are made by school groups or children's parties. School groups or parties order kits, pay for them and work on multiples of one item such as pillow cases, hospital gowns, clipboards, boxes for stationery, washing cups and basins, or games to be played on Shabbat The organization prepares packages with many of these items for each child. They also take requests of people who know a sick child who would benefit from this Chesed.

Music for the home-bound If you and perhaps a few friends are musicians, you may want to entertain some home-bound people. Patients in residential facilities have organized recreation activities, but those unable to get out of their homes miss out on this.

Covenant To Care: 243-1806, covenanttocare.org This is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of Connecticut's abused and neglected children through such projects as buying holiday gifts and buying and filling school back packs for the abused/neglected children who move into foster homes.

The Jewish Association for Community Living (JCL), www.jcl-ct.org Denis Geary, Executive Director, (860) 522-5225 This agency responds to the needs of persons with developmental disabilities and their families in our community by providing group homes, apartments, a day program and other support and services. They would very much like to have help bringing Jewish holiday and *Shabbat* celebrations to their residents.

Foodshare: 688-6500, <http://www.foodshare.org> A regional food bank, Foodshare distributes over 12 tons of food per day to more than 300 local programs that feed hungry people in Hartford and Tolland Counties. They welcome the donation of non-perishable food items.

B'Yadeynu--The Emanuel Synagogue Social Action Committee: Risa Davidson, 236-8889, risagdavidson@gmail.com Become an active member of the synagogue social action committee. Our committee name means both "in our hands" and "with our hands." We get involved. Among our projects are the Kol Nidre Food Drive, the Thanksgiving Turkey Drive, Covenant to Care gifts for foster children, and others.

Connecticut Humane Society: Alicia Wright, 594-4502, ext. 6309, www.cthumane.org

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The Humane Society looks for short term foster families to house animals until they are ready to be put up for permanent adoption. For another of their projects, they will train you to do pet therapy visits to nursing homes, special education classrooms, group homes, etc. You can take a Humane Society pet or, your own pet if it has the right temperament and passes a test. You can visit once per month or more often. At least a year's commitment is necessary.

Our Companions: Susan Linker, 242-9999, SusanL@OurCompanions.org.

www.ourcompanions.org Our Companions has many opportunities for volunteer activities in animal welfare. You can get involved with research projects about animals, bake dog cookies to sell and raise money for animal rescues, help with mailings, etc. Kids can work on a volunteer project with a friend/friends or go solo. This organization hopes to build a sanctuary for domestic animals. They plan to offer pet adoption and animal behavior training as well as a community education and recreational center. Our Companions is presently providing low cost training for rescued dogs and their owners in group classes @Tails-U-Win as well as privately in people's homes.

Out To Pasture Farm & Rescue, Inc.: Carrie Haggart, carrie@outtopasture.org

This is a family-run, non-profit animal rescue/rehabilitation organization that cares for animals in need. Their goal is to give these animals which are elderly, abused, terminally ill and/or physically challenged, a home where they can live out their natural lives with the physical and emotional support they deserve. They need monetary contributions as well as litter, diapers, food and paper towels. People can sponsor a particular animal of their choosing for any length of time.

Nike Reuse-A-Shoe Program www.nike.com/us/en_us/retail/?preFilter=RE Nike's shoe collection program takes used athletic shoes (all brands accepted) and grinds them up to give them new life as athletic surfaces. The end results are safe playing surfaces including football fields, running tracks, basketball and tennis courts, equestrian trails and playgrounds. Nike will not accept shoes delivered with postage due. No shoes containing metal, cleats or lights are accepted.

Jordan River Village, 7 Guber Street, Ra' anana, Lower Galilee 43728 Israel, 011.972.9.7717599, www.jordanrivervillage.org: One of Paul Newman's *Hole in the Wall* camps, Jordan River Village will be the first year-round, permanent site in the Middle East designed especially for children with life threatening, chronic or genetic diseases of all faiths and backgrounds. Monetary contributions are very much appreciated.

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The Emanuel Synagogue Mitzvah Project Report Form

Student Name

Project Name

A brief description of the project:

How will this project be executed?

When will this project be executed?

Why did you choose this project?

How does your project help repair the world?

What is the Hebrew term for this type of project? (example: *g'milut hasadim*--acts of loving kindness) If you are unsure of the Hebrew terms, please call the school office – we'll be happy to help.

Parent: I/we have reviewed this project plan with my/our child and give him/her permission to carry it out.

Please return to the religious school office **three months** before your child's *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.



Return to The Emanuel

2 months (___/___)

before Bar/Bat Mitzvah

***Mitzvah* Information for Emanuel Website**

Please return this information by email to: communications@emanuelsynagogue.org

two months before the *simcha* date.

You may also submit a digital photo of some part of the project.

Child's Name:

Names of Parents:

Date of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*:

Description of *Tikkun Olam* Project. Include how others can contribute or help you reach your project goal.