



“*B’ Mitzvotav*” Learning Through Doing An Enrichment Program for B’nai Mitzvah*

Mitzvot (commandments) lie at the heart of Judaism. They are the commandments that teach us how to sanctify life: to take responsibility for our actions, challenge us to make the right decisions, to reach out to others in need, to continue Jewish learning, to lead a life imbued with Jewish values, and, ultimately to forge a personal relationship with God.

What is the *B’Mitzvotav* Program? The “*B’Mitzvotav*” program is a “learning through doing” program based on rabbinic teachings. We learn from the verse in Pirkei Avot (a book in the Mishnah): “The world rests on three things: on Torah, on Worship and on Acts of Loving Kindness.”

To help prepare students to become a B’nai Mitzvah (son or daughter responsible for the commandments) each is asked to fulfill a total of 13 mitzvot based on these three themes.

In each category - **Torah/Study, Avodah/Worship, and Gemilut Chasidim/Acts of Loving Kindness** - the students have one required mitzvah and three mitzvot they can choose from a list. That totals 12 mitzvot. The students can choose the 13th mitzvah from any of the categories.

By having the students “practice” the performance of mitzvot, the “*B’Mitzvotav*” program teaches our children the importance of doing mitzvot not only in preparation for the B’nai Mitzvah, but, hopefully as a life-long endeavor.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

“*B’Mitzvotav*” is a program that is managed by the student with assistance from family. It is best to start a year before the child’s service. The student should have a notebook or folder to keep track of his/her projects. As each mitzvah is completed, the students should keep a record and write-up of each one in their notebooks. Rabbi Moritt will ask to see these write-ups from time to time, especially during tutoring sessions. The notebook with all 13 mitzvot completed should be shared with the Rabbi one month before the date of the B’nai Mitzvah ceremony.

*B’nai Mitzvah is the gender-neutral term, similar to the use of “they” in English to include all.

TORAH/STUDY

Required: Study your Torah and Haftarah portions for your service, plus the additional readings (in your Torah booklet) about the meaning of your specific Torah and Haftarah verses. Discuss the themes and ideas of the portions with one or both parents. Write your questions and ideas about the portion in the devar Torah Google doc Rabbi Moritt establishes for you when you begin your meetings – about 6 months before the service.

Choose 3 of the following:

1. Read a Jewish book of interest to you and share your reactions to it (report, video, etc.)
2. Visit a Holocaust Center or Jewish museum with your family. How do your reactions compare to theirs? Write or make a video about the experience.
3. Gather 3 or more articles from various sources about a current event affecting the Jewish people or Israel. Summarize the problem and your ideas.
4. Pick a famous Jewish person from Jewish history. Read about this person (do not use Jews famous in non-Jewish areas like sports, science etc.). List ten questions you would like to ask the person if you could meet them face-to-face.
5. Pick a poem or two from the Psalms section of the Bible. Respond with a summary, artwork, song, or poem which expresses its meaning to you.
6. Make a video depicting a scene from your Torah portion.
7. Study a Jewish artist who works with Jewish themes. Write a short report.
8. Read a novel or biography about the Holocaust, or Israel, or Jews in America. (not one assigned in school.) Create a report on it.
9. Watch a movie with a Jewish theme and write a review of it.
10. Interview your parents or grandparents regarding their B'nai Mitzvah. What are some similarities and differences? Write or record the details of the interview.
11. Interview a person who had an adult B'nai Mitzvah ceremony or converted to Judaism. Why did they choose to do it? What did it mean to them? What did they learn from it? Include notes of your interview.
12. Interview a Jewish grandparent or someone two generations older than you, and find out what it was like to grow up Jewish in a different time. Write out or record the interview.
13. Interview a recent Jewish immigrant about the practice of Judaism in his or her native land and write it up.
14. Interview a Holocaust survivor and give your impressions of the effect of the Holocaust on this person's life.
15. Write a short story, poem, play or make a video about any topic related to Jewish life, B'nai Mitzvah, Jewish holidays.
16. Come to Torah Study on two Shabbat mornings at the temple (11:30am-12.30 pm).
17. Research the history of B'nai Mitzvah and write a brief report.
18. Choose you own project. O.K. it with the Rabbi before you start it.

AVODAH/WORSHIP

Required: In the 12 months before your B'nai Mitzvah, attend 5 Friday evening and at least 5 Shabbat morning worship services at Temple Beth-El, and attend at least one Rosh Hashanah and one Yom Kippur service at our temple or another temple. *You should plan on attending all the B'nai Mitzvah services of your class.* One must be the B'nai Mitzvah immediately preceding yours, during which you and your family will be the ushers. These may be included in the 5 mandatory Shabbat morning services above. We encourage you to choose our "First Friday" services on the first Friday of each month at 6.30pm for your Friday Service requirement. These services are designed for families and include a special cake in honor of the children during the oneg.

Fill out a "Shabbat Service Study Page" after each service and keep in your notebook.

Choose 3 of the following:

1. Write a prayer about the meaning and joy of becoming a B'nai Mitzvah.
2. Light Shabbat candles and lead your family in Kiddush and *HaMotzi* for at least four consecutive Shabbats.
3. Observe Havdalah with your family for four consecutive weeks.
4. On Sukkot, build a Sukkah at your home or participate in the building of the Temple Sukkah. Have at least one meal in it. Invite your friends and family to participate.
5. Lead your family in *HaMotzi* before dinner every day for at least two weeks.
6. Say the Shema (in Hebrew) and *V'ahavta* (in Hebrew or English) every night before going to sleep for at least two weeks.
7. Pick a prayer from the *Tefillah* section of your Siddur (prayerbook). Describe what it means in an essay, poem, song, visual collage, or drawing.
8. Join in the Simchat Torah service at the temple.
9. Make your own hamantaschen and send your own *Mishloach Manot* (Purim food gifts) to at least two friends.
10. Make a ritual item (Kippah, Tallit, Challah cover, Mezuzah case, etc.). Explain in writing why you chose this item and what it means.
11. Learn to chant the *V'ahavta* prayer that comes after the *Shema*.
12. Learn a new song from the Shabbat service. If appropriate, sing it at your service.
13. Learn to blow the Shofar and participate at a high holiday service.
14. Research the history and meaning of the tallit (the prayer shawl) and write it up.
15. Write a two-page essay about your belief/experience of God.
16. If offered by the temple, participate in the congregational Purim play in the year before your B'nai Mitzvah.
17. Keep the Pesach (Passover) rules of not eating chametz for the full week of Pesach. Choose your own way to enhance your understanding of worship.
18. Volunteer for one of the "clean the Torah" sessions at the temple and learn how to clean the Torah scroll.

Gemilut Chasadim/Acts of Loving Kindness

Required: Do at least 13 hours of volunteer work in the community¹ and write a report about it. Get approval for your project(s) from Rabbi Moritt before you begin.

Choose 3 of the following:

1. Plan to donate a portion of your B'nai Mitzvah gifts to a Jewish organization. Research it and write a description of its work and why you chose it.
2. Donate food, toys or clothing to a charity.
3. Plant trees in Israel. (Details at www.jnf.org)
4. Make a Tzedakah Box. Contribute to it before every Shabbat for at least ten weeks. When it is full, donate the money to a charity or cause important to you.
5. Visit a sick person, a homebound person or a person in a nursing home.
6. Do chores without pay for an elderly neighbor or homebound person.
7. Write your elected officials about an issue in the community or the world that is important to you.
8. Patch up a bad relationship by making peace with another person. Write about the experience.
9. Participate in a walkathon or similar fundraiser for a worthy charitable cause.
10. Tutor a younger child or volunteer at school to help younger children.
11. With your family, volunteer at a soup kitchen or food pantry one day.
12. Help a classmate who is ill. Bring homework, books, or class work between school and home.
13. Comfort a mourner by paying a "shiva call."
14. Take on a new chore at home to indicate your growing responsibility and maturity.
15. Have a food or clothing drive at temple or in your neighborhood as part of your B'nai Mitzvah Celebration. (You must make arrangements for food or clothing pickup/delivery if you have the collection at the temple.)
16. Instead of regular centerpieces at your B'nai Mitzvah, fill baskets with food, books or toys to be donated to a local project and use these instead. A note placed on the baskets should explain your project to your guests.
17. Commit to a year on Temple Beth-El's Tech Crew. As part of the crew you will work our livestream camera and equipment to livestream a Shabbat service to our homebound members once approximately every 6 weeks (on Friday evenings, 7.30-9.15p). This will also qualify for school required community service time, but will take place after your b'nai mitzvah.
18. Choose your own way to provide *Gemilut Chasadim*. Check with the Rabbi before starting your project.

PICK YOUR 13TH MITZVAH FROM ANY OF THE THREE CATEGORIES!

Originally created by Rabbi Debra Hachen for Temple Beth-El
Adapted 2018- 2023 by Rabbi Leana Moritt

¹ Especially consider TBE's Food Pantry (Thursdays) or our own Dylan Zajac's Computers 4 People: <https://www.computers4people.org>
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