



B'NEI MITZVAH – MITZVAH PROJECTS

(March 2022)

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PREPARING FOR YOUR MITZVAH PROJECT

A mitzvah project is one of the first responsibilities we ask you to assume as you become an adult in our community. *Tikkun olam*, repairing the world, is central to who we are at Ohabei Shalom and to the B'nei Mitzvah process. It teaches our children that Torah "learning" and "doing" go hand in hand. As a Jewish adult, you are now responsible to help make the world a better place.

Before you begin your Mitzvah Project journey, here are a few questions to ask yourself.

1. **What am I good at?**
 - a. *Giving big hugs, playing soccer, baking chocolate chip cookies, talking on the phone for hours, being a computer whiz, or drawing or painting the most beautiful pictures*
2. **What do I like to do?**
 - a. *What activities give you the most pleasure? Can you sit and read for hours? Are you really excited about playing the guitar or keyboard?*
3. **What bothers me so much about what is wrong in the world?** (So much that I weep or scream in anger and frustration, or am speechless at the horror of it?)
 - a. *Are we 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?*
4. **What are the needs of the people I want to help?**
 - a. *It's important, however, to be sure that you're asking another question: WHAT ARE THE NEEDS of the people we want to help? If you don't know that answer, then your help might not be as helpful as you want it to be. In order to ensure that you're actually doing tikkun olam, you need to assess these needs first.*
5. **Whom do I know?**
 - a. *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? Or maybe 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?*
6. **What could my actual project be?**
 - a. *What ideas do I have about what I can do? How do I see implementing my project/ How long will it take? What are the steps?*

MITZVAH PROJECT REQUIREMENTS/TIMELINE

Your Mitzvah project should represent a substantial commitment of time and energy to a project of your choice.

Guidelines for completing a meaningful mitzvah project are as follows:

- Your project should involve at least 15 hours of community service.
- Projects can be done individually or as a small group.
- Be as creative as you like.
- Every project includes **at least three** of these key elements:
 - o Hands-on work (time spent working) with the organization
 - o Advocacy for the cause
 - o Educating others about the issue
 - o Collecting items or Tzedakah (money) for the cause

Step 1: During your 6th Grade Year

During your 6th grade year, either during class at ARS or during a B'nei Mitzvah Experience program, we begin the conversation about Mitzvah Projects. This is where you start thinking about what topics and organizations you would want to work with and support for your Project. Research on these organizations and the steps to complete your Project begin.

Step 2: Seven (7) Months Prior to B'nei Mitzvah

By this point, you should know which organization(s) you would like to support and have a sense of what you want your project to entail. Planning for each stage of your Project begins (if not already done so).

Step 3: Six (6) Months Prior to B'nei Mitzvah

Planning should be done for most if not all stages of the Project. Active involvement in the Mitzvah Project begins now (if not already done so).

- Do you need to advertise to the larger community? What support from TOS staff or members do you need?

Step 4: One (1) Month Prior to B'nei Mitzvah

Plan to conclude the Mitzvah Project. Any last minute gatherings or communications should happen during this stage.

Step 5: Presenting Your Mitzvah Project

Think about how you want to share your Mitzvah Project.

- Do you want to present your Project during your B'nei Mitzvah service or in the lobby?
- What/How do you want to share your work?
- Do you want it to be interactive?
- Is it part of your d'var torah?
- Who do you need to connect to in order to make this happen?
 - o Do you need ARS involvement? Send a community-wide email about your project? Repurpose one of the social halls for an exhibit?

PROJECT IDEAS – ANIMAL ADVOCACY AND CARE

(This is a non-exhaustive list)

ORGANIZATIONS

1. Greyhound Friends - <http://www.greyhound.org>

Greyhound Friends, Inc., located in Hopkington, MA is a small non-profit organization dedicated to saving racetrack greyhounds and placing them in loving homes. Since its inception in 1983, Greyhound Friends has found caring homes for over 9000 dogs! Greyhound Friends is supported by people who have adopted greyhounds and by people who love dogs and helping support animal welfare.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Host a drive to collect items from the Kennel Wish List

2. MSPCA - <https://www.mspca.org/get-involved/>

The MSPCA a national and international leader in animal protection and veterinary medicine and provide direct hands-on care for thousands of animals each year. Founded in 1868, we are the second-oldest humane society in the United States. The full name of our organization is the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals – Angell Animal Medical Center, or MSPCA–Angell. The MSPCA comprises our Animal Care and Adoption Centers, our Advocacy Department, and our Law Enforcement Department. Angell Animal Medical Center is our nonprofit veterinary hospital.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Raise money for the MSPCA shelter by leading a team in the Doggy 5K Run/Walk

3. Pets and People - <https://www.petsandpeoplefoundation.org/>

Pets & People offers pet-assisted therapy visits to people who could use some healing joy in their days. Our carefully tested and certified therapy teams can be found at nursing homes, assisted living homes, special needs facilities, schools, libraries and hospitals and many other places. Pets & People is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit volunteer organization. Our members share a belief that a visit with a four-footed friend can make a difference in the lives of those we serve. Pets & People therapy teams work mainly in eastern Massachusetts, Cape Cod, and southern New Hampshire.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Connect with Pets & People for sponsorship and partnership opportunities

4. The Humane League - <https://thehumaneleague.org/take-action>

We exist to end the abuse of animals raised for food. In partnership with activists across the northeast, we ran dozens of campaigns, from Baltimore to Boston, winning cage-free commitments at every stop. Restaurant by restaurant, and campus by campus, working our way up to the biggest national corporations.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Attend a meet-up, book club, or protest—or organize one yourself!
- Encourage people to go veg by writing Letters to the Editor or op-eds for your local newspaper
- Contact key decision makers in your town, city, or region

5. PetPals - <https://www.gopetpals.com/>

At Pet Pals we offer a number of services to exercise, socialize and care for your pet. We offer active playgroups at our huge private dog park as well as small group and individual visits for puppies or older dogs. We offer In-home

Pet Sitting services for Winchester Residents. Pet Pals has been the area's #1 Dog Walking & Pet Sitting service since 1994. We are members of Pet Sitters International (PSI) and we are Fully Insured and Bonded.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Contact PetPals for more information

OTHER MITZVAH PROJECT IDEAS – ANIMAL ADVOCACY AND CARE

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PROJECT IDEAS – ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

(This is a non-exhaustive list)

ORGANIZATIONS

1. Revision Urban Farm - <https://www.vpi.org/revision/>

Victory Programs' ReVision Urban Farm is an innovative community-based urban agriculture project that grows produce in its own fields and provides access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food to residents of our ReVision Family Home and our extended community. In association with ReVision Family Home, we also provide job training for youth and Boston's homeless.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Coordinate volunteers to farm at their location in Dorchester

2. Massachusetts Sierra Club - <https://www.sierraclub.org/massachusetts>

Founded by legendary conservationist John Muir in 1892, the Sierra Club is now the nation's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization - with more than 2.7 million members and supporters. Our successes range from protecting millions of acres of wilderness to helping pass the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and Endangered Species Act. More recently, we've made history by leading the charge to move away from the dirty fossil fuels that cause climate disruption and toward a clean energy economy. The Sierra Club is volunteer-driven with more than 60 chapters, spread across every U.S. state including here in Massachusetts.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Give presentations on environmental and energy issues
- Organize locally around climate issues

3. The Nature Conservancy - <https://www.nature.org/en-us/>

The Nature Conservancy is tackling the dual threats of accelerated climate change and unprecedented biodiversity loss. Science determines where we focus and equity guides how we achieve lasting results. Grounded by decades of local on-the-ground experience, we maximize our ability to affect change by bringing together real-world solutions, policy expertise, sustainable financing and collaborative partnerships.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Calculate your carbon footprint and find ways to decrease it
- Get signatures for a petition you care deeply about

OTHER MITZVAH PROJECT IDEAS – ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- Coordinate a beach/park/any community cleanup
- Join a rally
- Lobby your local /state/national representatives

PROJECT IDEAS – FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION (This is a non-exhaustive list)

ORGANIZATIONS

1. NewBridge on the Charles - <https://www.hebrewseniorlife.org/newbridge>

Built on the Jewish tradition of honoring and respecting our elders, Hebrew SeniorLife is a top provider of senior care in the Boston area and a national leader in redefining the experience of aging.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Participate in intergenerational programming
- Become a hospice volunteer
- Teach residents to use devices to stay connected with family and friends
- Gardening for the community
- Lead minyan and other activities for residents

2. West End House - <https://westendhouse.org/>

West End House is the largest youth development agency in the Allston-Brighton community providing high-impact programs that ensure that our young people are succeeding academically, exploring and mastering the arts, developing career readiness skills and adopting healthy lifestyles.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Coordinate volunteers to work with the Family Food Program

OTHER MITZVAH PROJECT IDEAS – FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

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PROJECT IDEAS – HELPING THE SICK (This is a non-exhaustive list)

ORGANIZATIONS

1. Boston Children’s Hospital - <https://www.childrenshospital.org/ways-to-help/volunteer-services>

Boston Children’s Hospital is dedicated to improving and advancing the health and well-being of children around the world through its life-changing work in clinical care, biomedical research, medical education and community engagement.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Inpatient/Clinic Volunteer (interact with patients, siblings and families, help with programming)
- Customer Service Volunteer (deliver flowers and balloons, assist patients and families at time of discharge)
- Host a blood drive

2. Project Linus - <https://www.projectlinus.org/>

At Project Linus, a non-profit organization, we provide new handmade blankets to children in need. Our blankets are lovingly made by adults and children from all walks of life and many different sources.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Host a drive to collect blankets
- Bring in a fiber artist to teach how to make blankets (yarn, weaving, knots, etc)

3. ROFEH International - <https://rofehintl.org/>

Reaching Out Furnishing Emergency Healthcare - is a humanitarian project dedicated to helping the sick from all walks of life. ROFEH supports patients and their families from around the world and throughout the United States when they are forced to leave their homes to seek emergency medical treatment at Boston’s prestigious medical centers.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Prepare welcome bags (hand cream, tooth brush and paste, bottle of water, snacks such as potato chips + a generic welcoming card)
- Assist in the kitchen at the ROFEH Boston location

4. Shasheret - <https://sharsheret.org/bnai-mitzvah-celebrations/>

Sharsheret, Hebrew for chain, is the only national organization supporting Jewish women and families, of all backgrounds, facing breast and ovarian cancer—those who are diagnosed and those at high risk. Sharsheret is accredited by the Better Business Bureau and has earned a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator for sound fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency. To date, we have served close to 70,000 women, families, health care professionals, community leaders, and students from all 50 states.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Create care packages
- Spread the word and raise health awareness
- Coordinate Pink Day in your school

OTHER MITZVAH PROJECT IDEAS – HELPING THE SICK

PROJECT IDEAS – HUNGER, UNHOUSED AND POVERTY RELIEF (This is a non-exhaustive list)

ORGANIZATIONS

1. Cradles to Crayons - <https://www.cradlestocrayons.org/boston/>

Founded in 2002, Cradles to Crayons provides children from birth through age 12, living in homeless or low-income situations, with the essential items they need to thrive - at home, at school and at play. We supply these items free of charge by engaging and connecting communities that have with communities that need.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Volunteer with friends/classmates at the Boston location
- Host a clothing drive and drop off donations

2. Brookline Food Pantry - <https://www.brooklinefoodpantry.org/>

Ensuring that none of our Brookline neighbors goes to bed hungry.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- host a food drive for the pantry with your neighbors, school, or friends.
- save all your paper handle bags from the grocery store and donate them to the pantry for them to reuse.
- make goodie bags for them to give out to their clients (homemade cookies, chocolates, toiletries, etc).
- encourage a local business to do a fundraiser for the pantry
- raise awareness about food insecurity at your school or in the community
- Make a Canstruction sculpture. Canstruction is a nationwide project by architects, engineers and others who raise money for the hungry by building fantastic sculptures with cans of needed food. They “feed the hungry, lift the spirits and change lives.”

3. Community Servings - <https://www.servings.org/>

Community Servings’ mission is to actively engage the community to provide scratch-made medically tailored meals to individuals and their families experiencing critical or chronic illness and nutrition insecurity. We commit, in all our programs and business practices, to prioritize racial and economic justice and health equity.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Coordinate volunteer trips to prepare food or pack “Blizzard Boxes”

4. Family Table - <https://www.jfcsboston.org/Volunteer/Mitzvah-Projects>

The mission of Family Table is to end hunger in the Greater Boston Jewish community while serving people who need our assistance regardless of religious affiliation. Family Table fulfills its mission by providing kosher food, creating a caring Jewish connection, and empowering people to make healthy eating a part of their daily lives.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Organize a Family Table collection bin at your school or synagogue
- Count and sort donations using Family Table’s sorting guidelines
- Make centerpieces for your B’nei Mitzvah: arrange shelf stable foods from our food request list to use.

OTHER MITZVAH PROJECT IDEAS – HUNGER, UNHOUSED AND POVERTY RELIEF

- Coordinate with the Social Action committee to collect food for the Community Fridge
- Coordinate for The Grow Clinic at Boston Medical Center (especially at Toy Drive season)

PROJECT IDEAS – ISRAEL BASED PROJECTS (This is a non-exhaustive list)

ORGANIZATIONS

1. IsraelGuideDog: Center for the Blind - <https://israelguidedog.org/your-mitzvah-project/>

The mission of the Israel Guide Dog Center for the Blind is to improve the quality of life of blind people by providing them with safe mobility, independence and self-confidence through the faithful assistance of guide dogs.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- See list of options via their website

2. Connections Israel - <https://www.connectionsisrael.com/>

Connections Israel is a non profit dedicated creating a unique and personalized connection between you and Israel through the Israeli Defense Forces.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- See website for different projects running throughout the year (Hanukkah, Purim, planting trees)

3. Jordan River Village - <https://www.afjrv.org/>

Jordan River Village is Israel's only free overnight camp for all children living with chronic, serious, or life-threatening illnesses as well as children with special needs.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Join a committee or partner with AFJRV staff to facilitate events that raise funds for the Village
- Host an event to help spread the word about Jordan River Village and introduce your local community to their programs
- Visit the Village in Israel

4. Save A Child's Heart - <https://saveachildsheart.org/>

Save A Child's Heart saves the lives of critically ill children suffering from heart disease in countries where access to pediatric heart care is limited or nonexistent. Through bringing children to Israel for medical care, performing missions abroad, and training medical personnel, we are bringing hope to families, communities, and countries. As Israel's preeminent humanitarian organization, we are transforming pediatric cardiac care around the world.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Fundraise

OTHER MITZVAH PROJECT IDEAS – ISRAEL BASED PROJECTS

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PROJECT IDEAS – SPORTS / SPECIAL NEEDS (This is a non-exhaustive list)

ORGANIZATIONS

1. Special Olympics Massachusetts - <https://www.specialolympicsma.org/>

To provide year-round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for all children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, prepare for entry into school and community programs, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills and friendships with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Volunteer at an event
- Hosted a bake sale to raise money for Multiple Sclerosis research

2. Women's Sport Foundation - <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/>

The Women's Sports Foundation was established in 1974 to advance the lives of women and girls through sports and physical activity. Our mission is to enable all girls and women to reach their potential in sports and life. We provide financial fuel to aspiring champion athletes. We fund groundbreaking research. We educate. We advocate. And we help communities get girls active. Sure, there's a long way to go but we're not going to stop until we get there.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Start a fundraising campaign

3. KleetzForKids - <https://www.kleetzforkids.org/>

Kleetz for Kids is a non-profit organization that serves kids from ages 6-18 years old. We are a growing organization that provides new and gently used sports footwear as well as sporting scholarships on a first come first serve basis.

MITZVAH PROJECT OPTIONS

- Start a fundraising campaign

OTHER MITZVAH PROJECT IDEAS – SPORTS/SPECIAL NEEDS

- Train your dog to be a certified therapy dog