

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Monthly Activity

Cohort Meeting #2



Tikkun Olam: Part I: Putting the Mitzvah in Bar/Bat Mitzvah

This month, you'll explore the meaning of "mitzvah" and how it relates to you becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. This will help prepare you for the Month 8 group mitzvah project and help you think about your personal mitzvah project.

1. Defining Mitzvah

You probably already know that the word "mitzvah" means "commandment" and not "good deed". The system of mitzvot developed from the idea that we have a covenantal relationship with God. Mitzvot are part of defining what God wants from us. From a Reform perspective, we choose to do mitzvot that we find meaningful.

Which of the explanations below do you connect with the most?

Why?

We do mitzvot:

- a) to bring holiness into our lives and the world
- b) because the way we live matters to God
- c) to make the world a better place (tikkun olam)
- d) (fill in your own reason) _____

Student _____

Parent _____

2. Types of Mitzvot

There are many ways of dividing up our 613 mitzvot. Here is one meaningful way:

- a) between you and God (rituals – lighting candles, waving the lulav, etc.)
- b) between you and Creation (taking care of the natural world around you)
- c) between you and others (acts of kindness and love)
- d) between you and yourself (taking care of yourself!)

Which category do you most resonate with?

Student _____

Parent _____

3. Quotes on Making a Difference

Discuss at your table (or with your parents) and then share some of your responses:

- a) "Rabbi Shimon says: It is not what one says, but rather what one does, that makes all the difference in the world." (Pirke Avot 1:17)

-Why does Rabbi Shimon emphasize deed over word?

- b) "I would say to young people a number of things...

Let them know that every little deed counts, that every word has power, and that we can, everyone, do our share to redeem the world in spite of all absurdities and all the frustrations and all disappointments." (Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel)

-What is Rabbi Heschel saying about the ability of children?

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9 month activity continued...

c)“How wonderful it is that no one need wait a single moment to start to improve the world.”
(Anne Frank)

-How could/does your family work together to:

- alleviate hunger?
- help the environment?

4. Finding Meaning in Mitzvah - Create Your Own Top 10 List

A. What the Rabbis Chose

Two thousand years ago, in the Mishnah, the rabbis looked over the 613 mitzvot and created the world’s first “Top 10 List”. These verses are part of the warmup section in every morning service. Here’s what they selected:

1. Honoring one’s father and mother
2. Performing acts of loving-kindness
3. Engaging eagerly in Jewish study
4. Showing hospitality to guests
5. Visiting the sick
6. Providing for a wedding couple
7. Seeing to the needs of those who have died
8. Praying with meaning
9. Making peace between one person and another
10. but the study of Torah mirrors all the others.

Family/Table Questions:

- 1) What do you think the last line means? How could Torah study (Jewish learning) mirror/encompass/lead to the other mitzvot?
- 2) Why do you think they put “honoring father and mother” first?
- 3) What is a mitzvah on this list that surprises you? Why?

B. Make Your List!

On the next page is a selected list of mitzvot.

- 1) Students/Parents: Go through the list on p. 3 and put a “*” next to at least 10 that you find meaningful. (no maximum)
- 2) Go back through your list and identify your top three by numbering them.
- 3) Share, and discuss together why you chose those three.

5. Brainstorming towards a Mitzvah Project

a) Student/Parent: Choose one mitzvah among your top three: _____

b) At your table: Brainstorm for each family’s chosen mitzvah, help each other out – “How might we turn this mitzvah into a project?”

(Don’t edit or dismiss any ideas –make a list below, and work with it later to refine and choose a project that fits your interest/schedule, etc.)

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Selected Mitzvot List

Between You and God

Observing Shabbat – Shemirat Shabbat (lighting candles, Kiddush, etc)
Blessing after Eating – Birkat Hamazon (or saying ‘motzi’ before eating)
Wearing a Tallit or T’filin – Tallit U’t’filin
Observing Dietary Laws – Kashrut
Affixing a Mezuzah – Likboa Mezuzah
Fasting on Yom Kippur – Tzom
Hearing the Shofar – Lishmoa Kol Shofar
Dwelling in the Sukkah – Leisheiv BaSukah
Shaking the Lulav – N’tilat Lulav
Recalling the Exodus from Egypt – Zecher Litziyat Mitzrayim

Between You and Creation

Being Kind to Animals –Tzaar Baalei Chayim
Don’t Destroy – Bal Tashchit
Repairing the World – Tikun Olam
Observing Shabbat – Shemirat Shabbat (connecting with creation)
Observing Dietary Laws – Kashrut (from an ethical/sustainable/local viewpoint)

Between You and Others

Pursuing Peace - Rodef Shalom
Acts of Loving Kindness – G’milut Chassadim
Creating peace in your home – Sh’lom Bayit
Tzedakah (righteous giving)
Visiting the Sick – Bikur Cholim
Welcoming the Stranger – Hachnasat Orchim
Redeeming Captives – Pidyon Sevuyim
Feeding the Hungry – Mazon
Leaving the Gleanings (donating part of your food) – Peah, Leket, and Shich’chah
Honoring Parents – Kibud Av Va’eim
Loving One’s Neighbor – V’ahavta L’reiacha Kamocho
Esteeming the Elderly – Chidur P’nei Zaken
Not Placing a Stumbling Block Before the Blind (helping disabled) – Lo Titein Michshol
Honoring the Dead – Kavod haMeit
Comforting Mourners – Nachum Aveilim

Between You and Yourself

Taking Care of Yourself – Sh’mirat Habriut
Observing Shabbat – Shemirat Shabbat (taking time for rest, reflection, connection)
Keeping One’s Word – Nedarim
Not Gossiping – Lashon Hara
Not Coveting – Lo Tachmod
Jewish Learning - Talmud Torah
Prayer – Tefillah (finding personal meaning in prayer)
Reciting the Shema (at bedtime) – K’riat Shema
Honest Weights and Measures (honesty in your work) – Moznei Tzedek
Repentance – Teshuvah (saying sorry and changing your behavior)



Monthly Service Attendance



MACHBERET T'FILLAH: SERVICE JOURNAL

9 Months Before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah

This month you will be meeting with your cohort to discuss tzedakah. After your program, please join your cohort and the congregation for Shabbat services in the Sanctuary. Please connect with your partner and sit with him or her.

After the service, consider going out for a Shabbat lunch and discussing the service. What do you each think about what you saw? Write here how you felt talking to your partner. Are you sharing similar concerns and fears? What excitement do you think you each share?