Mazel Tov!
You are ready to start your Mitzvah Project!

Mitzvah/Tikkun Olam Project Guide

“A mitzvah occurs when, by acting on our Jewish values, something good happens for ourselves or others.”

Mitzvah Cards by Rabbi Goldie Milgram, copyright 2002

A wonderful quote from Rabbi Milgram to introduce the concept of “Mitzvah Projects”. Ideally, however, a Mitzvah/Tikkun Olam project when carefully planned and executed, will provide something good to happen for both the giver and the recipient.

Congregation Agudas Achim requires all students to participate in a Mitzvah Project during their Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparations. We STRONGLY suggest that these projects at least begin (we won’t say one should stop doing a mitzvah 😊) in 6th grade before regular meetings with the tutor, sponsor and rabbis become more regular occurrences on the student’s schedule. These projects are intended to provide an opportunity for each student to experience the importance of doing a mitzvah “ben adam l’chavayroh”, that is, a sacred obligation between one person and another. There are two key guidelines to structure the planning of your mitzvah project:

1) Projects should involve some direct connection with an organization or other beneficiary, beyond simply collecting and donating, although this may certainly be one aspect of the project. Although animals may be a part of the project, working directly with people in some way must also be a component.

2) Although there is no required number of hours that one must dedicate to the project, the expectation is that this is an opportunity to engage with a particular part of our world that needs repair in a deep way. Therefore, we ask that the project be something with which the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is engaged for at least 6 months.

These requirements show the importance of these mitzvot to Judaism. Such projects can also offer an important opportunity for families to work together, creating a meaningful experience while serving the community.

Please note that although CAA does not generally publicize mitzvah projects in the congregational emails or bulletin, information may be distributed through CAARS.

The Mitzvah Project Planning Sheet should be turned into Morah Stacey Glazer during class.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to reach out:
How to choose a Mitzvah/Tikkun Olam Project and some examples

Fill out the 6 Questions to Ask Yourself to Find Your Personal Mitzvah Project form handed out at the Mitzvah Project meeting. This will allow the family to determine not only the child’s interests and strengths in terms of what they can contribute to the world, but also the particular social issue that they would like to address. Please submit this and be ready to present on October 13th.

Example #1: if your child likes to cook and is troubled by the number of homeless people they’ve seen begging in Austin, Agudas Achim has been partnering with University Baptist Church downtown in their efforts to feed and clothe the poor. As part of Micah 6, a food pantry is open two days a week. Their “God’s Family Dinner” on Thursday nights provides a hot meal for anyone who walks in the door, from the working poor to the homeless. There is also a clothing closet to provide clean, used clothing for the needy.

To support the food pantry, a neighborhood food collection drive where a child can distribute grocery bags with a message attached telling about the food drive, collecting the food, then personally delivering it and working in the food pantry the day their collected items are distributed. A child learns to communicate the need to the neighborhood, use his/her personal time and efforts to collect and deliver, and then gets the personal experience of seeing the result of their hard work.

Likewise, working on one of the two Thursday nights each month that Agudas volunteers help with God’s Family Dinner. If it’s during the summer, the child could actually go in the kitchen and help cook the meal that will be served that evening. During the school year, shifts are from 4:30 until 6, when there are opportunities to serve, bus tables, and wash dishes. If the child is interested, there is a member of the congregation that can introduce them to a few of the people to put a face on the problem.

Example #2: If your child is a nature buff, perhaps a project linked to saving the environment, preserving an endangered species, or perhaps organizing and executing a project to clean up the banks of Shoal Creek several times a year with friends would be a good project.

Example #3: Is there something that has touched your family that may be suitable? For instance, if a relative or friend has had a serious disease such as cancer. To plan a project that supports a cure, a treatment phase, or even Hospice for caring in the final stages if the illness was terminal and Hospice was used. Perhaps sewing or purchasing caps for chemo patients and helping distribute them to
patient. Maybe soliciting caps signed by celebrities and having an auction whose proceeds are donated? Taking Hospice training and learning how to be a support person for someone terminally ill.

6 Questions to Ask Yourself To Find Your Personal Mitzvah Project

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.” Mahatma Ghandi

An opportunity, once again, to teach our children what is even more important than the tastiest caterer, the most eloquent dvar torah, and the most beautiful floral arrangements. That becoming a bat/bar mitzvah is to become a blessing, not only within one’s family, but for all.

1. What am I really good at? (Or what are you really bad at but might try if you knew it was a way to make a certain mitzvah happen?)

2. What do I really like to do?

3. What bothers me so much about what is wrong in the world that I get angry, really angry and want to do something about it?

4. What can I do right now, today, in the next week, in the period leading up to my Bar/Bat Mitzvah to make a difference?

5. Whom do I know?
6. Why not!

**Putting Thoughts Into Action**

Once you’ve decided what you’re passionate about and good at, it’s time to get this mitzvah started. Use the worksheet below to help you in planning how you’re going to make your vision a reality. Please bring this to class on **October 13th**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bar/Bat Mitzvah Name:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project will benefit:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have confirmed that I (as a 12/13 year old can volunteer here):</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Person at organization (if working with different organizations, please list contact info - name, phone #, email - for each one):</td>
<td>Organization 1:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates/Times the organization accepts volunteers:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates I plan to volunteer (either specific dates or how often):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies Needed (if any):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way I will raise $/collect items for supplies (if any) is:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way I will get the supplies where I need them to be is:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If advertising is needed to inform others of my project, the way I will let people know about it is:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact info for people I may need to get in touch with to help me advertise:</td>
<td>Person 1:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This Mitzvah Project Embodies the Middah (Value) of: (See chart on next page for examples)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**List of Jewish Values (Middot) to Consider for Mitzvah Projects**

- Don’t Place a Stumbling Block — גמיות תסדים
- Generosity — רעמים
- Taking Care of One’s Body — שמירת גוף
- Being a Good Listener — שמיעה ה minced
- Welcoming Guests — הכניסת אורחים
- Not Destroying — בל תשחית
- Guarding the Earth — שומרי אדמה
- Not Embarrassing — לא לביש
- Being Kind to Animals — צער בעלי חיים
- Don’t Stand Idly By — לא إنهמד על-דמ רעך
- Acts of Loving Kindness — חסדים גמילות
- Compassion
- Gratitude
- Hope
- In the image of God
- Learning
- Love of all God’s creations
- Love your neighbor as yourself
- Redemption of captives
- Repairing the world
Saving a life
Visiting the sick
Courage
Do not be passive in the face of violence
Mitzvah Project Ideas

On the following pages we have listed some ideas from organizations that could really use your help. We hope that this will help you get started on your Mitzvah Project. Most have website addresses as well as contact information to give you more information.

The ideas and organizations listed here are only suggestions. If you have other ideas, we would love to include them for next year’s B’nai Mitzvah students; please share these with Rabbi Swedroe. Once you know what you might like to do, it is important to make sure your project is manageable, making sure you have the time, resources, effort, and commitment available to making your mitzvah project work. Talk with your parents to make sure your mitzvah project idea can be completed from a logistics perspective.

Helping others is a great feeling and an important Jewish value. We hope that some of these suggestions will start you on your way to finding the perfect Mitzvah Project that’s right for you.
Generation Serve (Formerly Little Helping Hands)

https://www.generationserve.org/

Phone: 512-358-6943

Little Helping Hands is a nonprofit organization that facilitates family volunteering by creating and organizing monthly volunteer opportunities suitable for children as young as 3 years of age.

B’nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Through their website, families can view a wide variety of hands-on volunteer opportunities supporting numerous nonprofits/groups and sign up for them directly, making it simple for parents/caregivers and their children to experience the value and importance of community service together in a fun and positive learning environment.

United Way

www.handsoncentraltexas.org

United Way for Greater Austin is a local nonprofit & community service organization providing resources and volunteer opportunities with local Austin charities since 1924

B’nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities: To get involved, individuals can sign up through Hands On Central Texas (www.handsoncentraltexas.org).

Nursing Homes

Jewish Family Services can provide a list of residencies looking for volunteers.

Contact Denise Kleinman at Denise.Kleinman@shalomaustin.org or (512) 250.1043 x14

B’nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Visit, play musical instrument, sing, act, serve meals, help with craft projects. Usually residents in a retirement home or nursing home love attention from others, as do their visiting families.
Angel House Soup Kitchen

https://www.austinbaptistchapel.com

angelhouse@austinbaptistchapel.com (no phone) to volunteer

The Soup Kitchen serves the poor who suffer from the lack of basic human needs: material needs, such as food, clothing, and household necessities; psychological needs, such as motivation, self-esteem, and rehabilitation; and social needs, such as support systems and meaningful relationships.

B’nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Volunteers are needed to serve lunch on a daily basis from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. Weekends are booked 3 months in advance. Weekdays are booked a month to 2 months in advance. Please email to schedule a time to serve.

Austin Yellow Bike Project

www.austinyellowbike.org

512-524-5299 or austinyellowbike@gmail.com

Yellow Bike Project is a volunteer-powered initiative to put bicycles on the streets of Austin and Central Texas by operating community bike shops, teaching bike mechanics and maintenance, and acting as a local bike advocacy group.

B’nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Volunteer tasks include fixing up adult and kid bikes, sorting parts, organizing and cleaning the shop, and more. You don’t have to know anything about bikes to volunteer! If you are interested in volunteering to learn or generally contribute, simply show up during open hours and talk to a shop coordinator to get started. No need to commit to a set schedule—just come in whenever you can and we’ll put you to work.
Jeremiah Program

www.jeremiahprogram.org/austin

(512) 770-9036

Jeremiah Program offers one of the nation’s most successful strategies for transforming families from poverty to prosperity two generations at a time. Our two-generation programming provides the support necessary for low-income single mothers and their children to move into a life of economic independence.

Our proven, holistic approach begins with establishing a supportive community for determined young women to pursue a career-track college education. Through a combination of quality early childhood education, a safe and affordable place to live, and empowerment and life skills training, families find stability and a path out of poverty.

B’nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Volunteer to “Cook For Kids” - Purchase, prepare, and serve a meal for families on the evenings when mothers attend Life Skills programming. Also, sign up to help at Special Events. You can volunteer for the Epic Battle or other special events to support Jeremiah Program in Austin. No experience necessary, just a willingness to dive in, work with others and have fun!

Caritas of Austin

www.caritasofaustin.org

Hector Sloss at hsloss@caritasofaustin.org

Caritas of Austin is a non-profit organization that currently serves 20,000 homeless, working poor and documented refugees in Travis County.

B’nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Serve in our community kitchen. Every weekday, our kitchen staff and dedicated volunteers serve lunch to our neighbors in need. Community Kitchen volunteers help prepare and serve lunch for over 300 people. Must be 12 years or older to volunteer.
Mobile Loaves & Fishes

www.mlf.org

512-328-7299

MLF empowers communities into a lifestyle of service with the homeless. We provide food, clothing, and promote dignity for our homeless brothers and sisters.

B’nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Prepare & deliver meals to homeless in their communities.

Community First

https://mlf.org/volunteer-community-first/

Contact Anna Campbell at anna@mlf.org or 512-551-5417

Mobile Loaves & Fishes believes that the single greatest cause of homelessness is a profound, catastrophic loss of family. That’s why our focus at Community First! Village is to do more than just provide adequate housing. We have developed a community with supportive services and amenities to help address an individual’s relational needs at a fraction of the cost of traditional housing initiatives. We seek to empower our residents to build relationships with others, and to experience healing and restoration as part of engaging with a broader community.

B’nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Work in the garden, work with animals, set up a home for a resident, volunteer at the community inn
Ronald McDonald House

www.rmhc-ctx.org

Contact: Rene Carlin at rcarlin@rmhc-austin.org or 512-472-9844

The Central Texas Ronald McDonald House and Ronald McDonald Family Rooms provide a comforting “home-away-from-home” for families to stay so they can fight their child’s illness or injury together. RMHC CTX also supports families who have lost a child through the Healing Hearts program, which provides burial assistance and bereavement support.

B’nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Volunteers under 18 years can volunteer here as long as they are chaperoned. A great opportunity is providing a meal for the families who stay with us. Groups of up to 15 provide breakfast, lunch or dinner for the families. Please see our Meal Provider page on our website for more details about this program and the guidelines that must be followed.

Special Olympics of Texas

www.sotx.org

Contact: Davis Johnson at 512-491-2937

Special Olympics provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

B’nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Volunteer at different competitions: Help set-up and breakdown the facility, scorekeepers, skill officials, athlete escort, runners, awards. Sign up at: www.sotx.org/news-events/calendar. No experience required; however, you must be at least 15 years of age, unless accompanied by an adult. Volunteers participate in an orientation prior to working with our athletes.
Texas Baptist Children's Home

www.childrenatheartministries.org

Contact Brenda Gilbert at brenda.gilbert@tbch.org or 512-246-4244

We provide a haven of hope for children and families in crisis through residential programs for children and single-mother families, as well as community-based outreach and prevention programs.

B’nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Make and deliver meals to the cottages, yard work, and house cleaning are a just a few ways you can help out. Visit www.tbch.cahgift.volunteerhub.com to sign up for volunteer opportunities.

Urban Roots

www.urbanrootsatx.org

512-750-8019 or volunteer@urbanrootsatx.org

Urban Roots is a youth development organization that uses food and farming to transform the lives of young people and inspire, engage, and nourish the community.

B’nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities: We rely on volunteer support to help us maintain our farm. Volunteers help us with planting, harvesting, preparing produce for market, and whatever else needs to be done. All volunteers must be 10 years of age or older. For volunteers under the age of 14, we ask that they are accompanied by an adult.
God’s Family Dinner

www.ubcaustin.org/missions/gods-family-dinner/

contact Lea Isgur at 512-740-2187 or leaisgur@earthlink.net.

We need additional people to help prepare dinner on Thursdays at the University Baptist Church at 21st and Guadalupe. We meet from about 12:30 - 3. The work is not difficult, and is very rewarding. The need is particularly critical over the summer, as "regulars" go on vacation or are dealing with health issues. You do not have to commit to coming every week, but we could use additional help whenever you are available.