

Congregation Agudas Achim B'nei Mitzvah Family Program
November 2, 2025

1) Yehudah ben Teima used to say: Five years is the age for the study of scripture, Ten is the age for the study of Mishnah, Thirteen is the age for observing the mitzvot, Fifteen is the age for the study of Talmud, Eighteen is the age for the wedding canopy, Twenty is the age for pursuit, Thirty is the age for full strength, Forty is the age for understanding, Fifty is the age for giving counsel, Sixty is the age for mature age, Seventy is the age for a grey head, Eighty is the age for superadded strength, Ninety is the age for a bending stature, One hundred is the age at which one is as if dead, passed away, and ceased from the world.
(*Pirkei Avot 5:24*)

2) Pirkei Lanu—In Our Community:

We say: Five years is the age for _____.

Ten is the age for _____.

Thirteen is the age for _____.

Fifteen is the age for _____.

Eighteen is the age for _____.

Twenty is the age for _____.

Thirty is the age for _____.

Forty is the age for _____.

Fifty is the age for _____.

Sixty is the age for _____.

Seventy is the age for _____.

Activity: Getting to Know Your Values and Middot

Pre-teens and parents each do on your own (2 min.)

STEP 1: What Are My Most Important Values?

(Exercise adapted from Tracy Gary and Melissa Kohner, *Inspired Philanthropy*)

From the list below, choose three to five that are your own top values. (You don't have to rank them yet, and you can include something that is not on the list.) These should be things that you not only think are important, but that you see yourself living by or trying to live by. You might say that something is a "value" when it is an idea out there, and something is a "*middah*" when it has become a quality or a characteristic of a person.

<i>ahavta l'reiacha kaomcha</i> /Love your neighbor as yourself	<i>bikkur Cholim</i> /Visiting the sick
<i>ba'al taschit</i> /not destroying	<i>cherut</i> /freedom
communication	<i>chochmah</i> /wisdom
creativity	democracy
<i>daat</i> /knowledge	dignity
diversity	equality
<i>emunah</i> /faith	honesty
<i>hachnasat orchim</i> /welcoming people into your home and community	<i>lo ta'amod al dam re'eicha</i> /do not be passive in the face of violence
<i>hakarat hatov</i> /recognizing the good in others	<i>kehillah</i> /community
<i>hiddur pnai zaken</i> /respect for elders	<i>mishpacha</i> /family opportunity
integrity	<i>pikuach nefesh</i> /saving a life
<i>kibbud av va'em</i> /respect for parents	<i>refuah</i> /healing
<i>ometz Lev</i> /courage	service
<i>rachamim</i> /compassion	<i>shalom</i> /peace
<i>kavod</i> /respect	<i>shomer et haguf</i> /taking care of one's body
<i>shomrei ha'adamah</i> /Guard the earth	<i>simcha</i> /joy
<i>tzedek</i> /justice	simplicity
<i>tzelem elohim</i> /all people are created in God's image	<i>tikkun olam</i> /repairing the world

STEP 2: Getting to Know Your Values

Pick two of your top five--maybe your top two, if you know them. You are going to write a "*middah* biography" for each of them. (Each person writes for 5 minutes)

What does that mean? The idea is to explore how and why each *middah* has become important to the way you live. This isn't going to be a paper; it doesn't have to be organized carefully. What's important is to get your thoughts out.

How to do it? First, think and write about how this *middah* has shown up in your life. In other words, write about some experience, past or present, that shows this *middah* in you or that describes how it became important to you.

Second, try and figure out where you got this value. Write about family members, friends, other people, books, classes, teachers, movies, events, history that might have communicated this value to you--Jewish and not specifically Jewish. Also, interview your family members to see if the *middah* is in the family--in their own lives, or in someone who influenced them--and whether they can tell you more stories of how this *middah* describes you.

When done, each family will take 5 minutes to share their responses with one another.

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

לֹא עָלֶיךָ הַמְּלָאכָה לְגַמֵּר וְלֹא אַתָּה בֶּן חוֹרִין לְהִבָּטֵל מִמֶּנָּה

You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it. ~
Pirkei Avot 2:21

As part of becoming a B'nei Mitzvah and Jewish adult, Congregation Agudas Achim has developed a mitzvah project program through which our teens become active members of our larger community, giving back and directly making a difference in people's lives. 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 frequent 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 is what differentiates the Mitzvah Project from other community service opportunities.
- 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 guidelines 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.

Students are encouraged to finish their planning sheets by November 30th. Any questions may be directed to Rabbi Swedroe.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to reach out:

Rabbi Neil Blumofe Rabbi Gail Swedroe Tammy Stone	neil.blumofe@caa-austin.org gail.swedroe@caa-austin.org tammy.stone@caa-austin.org
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How to choose a Mitzvah Project

We've provided two different activities to help you determine a project that both addresses an issue that you are passionate about improving while also utilizing your skills. We've compiled a suggested list of projects that we suggest you look at AFTER you've thought about how you want to improve the world and what you have to offer.

Once you've thought about what you'd like to do, we've included a worksheet where you can compile all the relevant information to do your project (contact info, times available, etc).

The projects that we have included are suggestions, places we have done the legwork to confirm will allow for 11 year olds (sometimes a chaperone is required) to volunteer, at least at the time of this printing. Other projects are certainly possibilities as well. If you have questions, please be in touch with Rabbi Swedroe - gail.swedroe@caa-austin.org.

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?!

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. **Students are encouraged to fill out these sheets by November 30th. Questions may be directed to Rabbi Swedroe.**

Putting Thoughts Into Action

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Name:			
Project will benefit:			
I have confirmed that I can volunteer here)	Yes	No	
Contact Person at organization (if working with different orgs, please list contact info - name, phone #, email - for each one):	Organization 1:	Organization 2:	Organization 3:
Dates/Times the organization accepts volunteers:			
Dates I plant to volunteer (specific dates or how often):			
Supplies Needed (if any):			
The way I will raise \$/collect items for supplies (if any) is:			
The way I will get the supplies where I need them to be is:			
If advertising is needed, the way I will let people know about it is:			
Contact info for people I may need to get in touch with to help me advertise:			
This Mitzvah Project Embodies the Middah (Value) of: (See chart on next page for examples)			

Mitzvah Project Ideas

B'nei Mitzvah Project Ideas Updated Nov 2025

As always, these are suggestions and not the only project options. We encourage our B'nei Mitzvah to find projects that allow them to directly impact the lives of others by giving of their own time and talents (If there is a collection element that one wishes to include as well, that is great! We do want the primary impact to be coming from our B'nei Mitzvah directly as much as possible.)

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'nei 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.

Patio Pals

Contact Joan Maniere at Joan.Maniere@shalomaustin.org or (512) 735.8129

B'nei Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Volunteers will be matched with senior members of the Jewish community who are homebound or feeling lonely and could use a friend. Visits can be weekly or biweekly and will last about an hour on the patio or in the front yard of the homebound individual. Mask wearing and social distancing may be required, in addition to other precautions.

Kabbalat Shabbat in Retirement Living Communities

Kabbalat Shabbat in Retirement Living Communities (in partnership with The Shuk) is a volunteer led program with an intergenerational focus. While a Shabbat program is provided, volunteers have the option of creating their own program that best fits their style. Kabbalat Shabbat takes place once a month and with the goal of making recurring visits at the same retirement living community. The Kabbalat Shabbat boxes are supplied (and replenished) by Shalom Austin JFS and The Shuk and contain candlesticks, candles, matches, grape juice, cups, and Shabbat program printouts.

Angel House Soup Kitchen

<https://www.austinbaptistchapel.com>

angelhouse@austinbaptistchapel.com or (512)987-6621 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'nei 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. Must be 12 or older.

Caritas of Austin

<https://app.vomo.org/org/caritas-of-austin>, code CARITASOFAUSTIN if necessary.

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'nei Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Community Kitchen: Help prepare sack lunches and pass out to individuals in need of a meal and clean after service. Volunteer Session from 8:45am-12:30pm. Volunteers between the ages of 13-17 must be accompanied by an adult volunteer scheduled for the same day. Youth groups can volunteer with a ratio of 4 youth to 1 adult. (Please note, Caritas used to allow volunteers as young as 12).

Special Olympics of Texas

www.sotx.org

Contact: Kimberly Davis, kndavis@sotx.org, 512-491-2942

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'nei Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Volunteer at different competitions: Help set-up and breakdown the facility, scorekeepers, skill officials, athlete escort, runners, awards. Sign up at: <https://www.sotx.org/calendar?display=1> 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'nei Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Make and deliver meals to the cottages, yard work, and house cleaning are 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'nei 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

<https://www.ubcaustin.org/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 – 3pm. 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.

The Jewish Music Foundation

Contact Samantha Goldberg at mazeltovcocktailhour@gmail.com

Help this local treasure transform their newly purchased workspace by helping organize music and/or assisting with painting the space. The Austin Klezmer Bund is a project of the Foundation, and directors Samantha Goldberg and Dylan Blackthorn are long-time members of our community.

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'nei 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

<https://www.unitedwayaustin.org/get-involved/volunteer/>

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

B'nei Mitzvah Project Opportunities: To get involved, individuals can sign up through their website.

Mobile Loaves & Fishes

<https://mlf.org/volunteer/> and <https://mlf.org/remote-volunteer-opportunities/>

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'nei Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Prepare & deliver meals to homeless in their communities. If you are looking for a remote volunteer opportunity, specifically, fill out the interest form and they will be in touch about what projects match your skill set.

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'nei Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Work in the garden, work with animals, set up a home for a resident, volunteer at the community inn in person or create something to beautify the spaces of Community First Village remotely.

Yad Ezra – A Helping Hand (Through CAA!)

Contact: [Wendy Tomlinson - yadezra@caa-austin.org](mailto:yadezra@caa-austin.org)

B'nei Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Prepare a meal or dessert for a member of our community who has recently experienced a life-cycle moment. Depending on the particular circumstances, there may be an opportunity to deliver it immediately or freeze it for a future need. Let Wendy know that you are interested in being on our list of volunteers to contact when there is a need in our community.

Nursing Homes

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

Contact Joan Maniere at Joan.Maniere@shalomaustin.org or (512) 735.8129

B'nei 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.

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: Babysitting children while their mothers participate in classes (parental waiver required and parents will need to stay on site with their teen), 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!

Ronald McDonald House

www.rmhc-ctx.org

Contact: info@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'nei Mitzvah Project Opportunities: Volunteers over 8 years old can volunteer here as long as they are accompanied by a guardian. 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.

Hungry Souls

<https://www.hungry-souls.org/>

Contact Amy Greer at info@hungry-souls.org or 512.963.4909

Hungry Souls is an Austin-based non-profit that partners with schools across Central Texas to provide weekend and school break meals for students and their families. We provide opportunities for food-insecure children to succeed, thrive, and break the cycle of poverty. See <https://www.hungry-souls.org/volunteer> for a volunteer opportunity that works for you; we encourage parents to register their children for Dry Goods Bag Packing shifts as those are most appropriate for children and students.

Must be able to lift 30 lbs. Guardian not required, but encouraged. Waivers required.

Miracle Buddies

<https://www.austinmiracleleague.org/buddyinfo>

Contact Miracle League at Town and Country at 512-940-8749

Baseball league for kids between the ages of 4 and 19 that do not fit into “regular” recreational leagues. Games are 2 innings, lasting no more than 1 hour, 7 games per season (fall & spring). No practices, during the week. Players may come up to 30 minutes prior to the actual game, for warmup. Players will be paired with a “Buddy” to assist them on the field as well as at bat. These Buddies may or may not be the same each week. Buddies will protect the players at all times and give only the amount of assistance needed so that the player can be as independent on the field as possible. Must be at least 12 years old by start of the season.