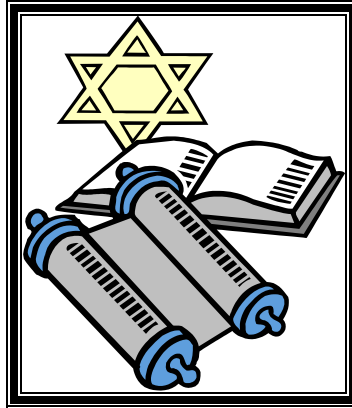


B'Mitzvotav



B'nei Mitzvah program
Temple Beth Israel



Introduction

Beginning your Bar/Bat Mitzvah journey is a time to think about what this means. Some of the answers might include:

- Becoming responsible for your actions.
- Deciding how you see yourself as part of your family, friends and community.
- Working out what is important to you
- Things you can do in your life to help make the world a better place.

It starts with **you**. How you behave, what you do and what you say.



In the Talmud we read:

These are the obligations without measure

Whose reward, too, is without measure:

To honour father and mother

To perform acts of loving kindness

To attend the house of study regularly

To welcome the stranger

To visit the sick

To rejoice with the bride and groom

To comfort the mourner

To pray with sincerity

To make peace where there is strife

And the study of Judaism is equal to the mitzvot

Because our study leads us to do the mitzvot.

This teaching from the Talmud (Shabbat 127a), represents Jewish values that shape our sense of joy and responsible Jewish living. These ten statements are responsibilities and obligations vital to our lives as Jews and are values that cannot be measured. Hopefully you will come to understand their rewards of joy, fulfillment and meaning.

Jewish life is a lifelong experience of both responsibility and joy.

What is a Mitzvah?

The Hebrew for which we will describe Jewish responsibility will be *mitzvah* or *mitzvot*. Mitzvot are part of our Covenant. For some, mitzvot are known as an obligations and for others, commandments.

It can have any of these meanings depending on how we want to see it. But from any perspective, *mitzvah* means approaching the world with willing or joyous responsible Jewish living.

What are Middot?

The work we do to become both a good Jew and a good person is referred to as *middot*, Jewish virtues (values). You will develop an appreciation and understanding of how *middot* can make you feel responsible for your own Jewish life. You have something extra to add to those around you in your everyday life. In terms of your relationship with God you will learn to enrich that connection as you explore *middot*.

As you prepare for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah it is important that you begin to participate in all the different activities which are so much a part of being Jewish and leading a good and meaningful life. These make being Jewish so relevant to the way we live.

Now, as you prepare to take your place as a responsible Jew, this program allows you to experience new levels of understandings.

STEP ONE

Share this time with your family as you read through this booklet together.

You will notice that the booklet is divided into three sections.

SECTION 1: PERSONAL CHOICE MITZVOT ACTIVITIES



SECTION 2: MITZVOT ACTIVITIES



SECTION 3: MY MIDDOT PROJECT



STEP TWO

Be prepared to discuss or show your completed project with the rabbi at your meeting with the rabbi (12 weeks prior to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah). We are looking forward to hearing about what you have achieved, and what you have learned and how you feel about your experience. We will proudly display your project at Temple Beth Israel and share your achievements with the community in *Kol Israel* in the month leading up to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.



That's all there is to it!

Of course, as well as your project, you are welcome to do as many mitzvot activities as you like.

If you have any questions, just ask.



Your rabbis, family, tutor, and education director are here to help you.

Mazal Tov as you prepare for such a special experience and wonderful moment in your life — not only for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service itself, but the many moments of discovery and insight. These are the kind of moments of which great Jewish memories are made.



SECTION 1

PERSONAL CHOICE MITZVOT ACTIVITIES

This section contains all ten categories of *mitzvot*. In this section you will find suggestions on how you could make these mitzvot part of your daily life. Select one activity for each of the mitzvot. Think about the discussion questions so you can be prepared to chat with your family, tutor, teacher and your rabbis.

Discussion Questions for each of the Mitzvot:

What made you choose this *mitzvah*?

What was your reaction and the reaction of others as you performed this *mitzvah*?

What did you learn about yourself, about your family and about Judaism while doing this *mitzvah*?

These *mitzvot* are relevant to the ways in which we connect to our family, our friends, as a student, a citizen and to being a good human being. These are *mitzvot* we perform all the time, and as we become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, we see these acts are part of our Jewish life, which is our everyday life. These mitzvot are part of our Covenant, our personal relationship with ourselves, our community and our God.



1. HONOUR MOTHER AND FATHER

Honouring Father and Mother is not only among the Ten Commandments, it is an essential Jewish value. Judaism has always emphasized the importance of family. The home and the family is known as the *mikdash me-at*, a miniature sanctuary to give us strength, love, understanding, and a sense of purpose in life. For that reason, working toward wholeness in the circle of family is not only an important and good thing, it is a Jewish responsibility too. Activities to consider for this *mitzvah*:

- a. Do something that you would not ordinarily do to be helpful to a member of your family.
- b. Call, write or visit with a grandparent whom you do not ordinarily see.
- c. Create a family history or genealogy.
- d. Ask your parent(s) to teach you something you do not know about your family.
- e. Go through a family album or video with your parent(s) and have them share stories about the people you do not know.

2. PERFORMING ACTS OF LOVING KINDNESS



This *mitzvah* is about caring for others beyond the circles of ourselves, our friends, and our family. It is about our caring involvement in our world. Often these deeds of loving kindness are things for which we cannot be 'repaid'. We often get more out of our acts for others than they receive from us, because of the 'reward that is without measure'. This is the sense of fulfillment and goodness that we feel for giving something of ourselves to others beyond our own narrow circles.

Suggestions:

- a. Volunteer at a homeless shelter, hospital, retirement home or animal shelter.
- b. Ask your Bar or Bat Mitzvah guests to bring canned goods to the service, which you and your family will deliver to a local hunger shelter.
- c. Donate your floral centrepieces to a senior citizen's home.
- d. Clean out your drawers and closets and donate the old clothing, toys, books or games
- e. Organise your family or friends to bring Chanukah and/or Purim gifts for those less fortunate.

3. ATTEND THE HOUSE OF STUDY REGULARLY



This *mitzvah* is about the many reasons we come to the synagogue to nourish our Jewish lives beyond those that you might already understand such as prayer and religion school. The synagogue has three essential purposes: it is a 'House of Study', a 'House of Prayer', and a 'House of Assembly or Community'. Participation in all three of these areas of synagogue life is what enriches us as Jews: intellectually (study), spiritually (prayer), and emotionally (friendship and community). Activities to consider for this *mitzvah* can

relate to reasons you may not usually come to TBI. This will help you have a better understanding of the synagogue as the centre of your Jewish life now and through your adult years.

Suggestions:

- a. Come to a festival service you have never attended (Sukkot, Passover, Shavuot, Selichot, etc.)
- b. Fast for a full day on Yom Kippur.
- c. Participate in at a few TBI events such as a 'Shabbat Alive' Service.
- d. Participate in Netzer activities.
- e. Volunteer to help at Mishpacha service for young children.

4. WELCOME THE STRANGER



This *mitzvah* is about our hospitality and the way we welcome others. The Torah teaches that all human beings are created in the image of God. Therefore, we show respect to God through this religious responsibility of welcoming even those whom we may not know. Abraham was a model for this in his hospitality to the strangers he greeted at his tent. And as Jews have often been considered 'the strangers' in different lands and ages throughout history, we know what it means to feel the loneliness of exclusion by others. Our tradition teaches: 'Remember, you were strangers in the land of Egypt'. For that reason, Jews should be welcoming, warm, and hospitable to individuals in our homes and in our synagogue. We should help other groups of people who feel like outsiders in this land or in any land. That is why Jews have always been involved protecting rights for others, as well as for ourselves.

Suggestions:

- a. Work with Aboriginal Affairs Victoria to plan a program for TBI.
- b. Help the Friendship Club members to create welcome baskets for new Temple members.
- c. Join with a friend to create a welcome present/greeting for new students to Matan.
- d. With your parents' permission, invite a new Temple member or someone new to Victoria to join you and your family for Shabbat /festival meal and services. Contact the TBI office for names.
- e. Invite a person or family who has no place to go for Passover Seder to join your family for Seder.

5. VISIT THE SICK



This *mitzvah* is about what we can do to help someone who is suffering an illness. Often such times are not only about the physical problems a patient experiences, but also the feelings of loneliness and isolation from friends to name a few. Our ancient rabbis teach us that taking the time to visit those who are sick, telling them about the news of the world, of friends, of school, etc. is important part of the healing and recovery process. It helps them look forward to reconnecting with their community when they are better, and helps lift their spirits and can speed their return to health. *Bikur Cholim*, visiting the sick, is an essential recognition of how important it is to connect our lives to those around us.

Suggestions:

- a. Entertain at a hospital-help set up an opportunity for your class to do so. You may play instrument and may like to visit a hospital with your family.
- b. Cook meals for someone who is ill.

- c. Help a classmate who is ill. Bring homework, library books, messages, etc., between home and school.
- d. Make cards or bring a game for patient at The Royal Children's Hospital.
- e. Write a prayer for someone who is ill, and visit them to read the prayer you have made. You can also contact the rabbi's office and ask that their name be read that week for the prayer for recovery, the *Mishebeirach* that we offer each Shabbat morning.

6. REJOICE WITH BRIDE AND GROOM



This *mitzvah* is about the importance of celebrating life's happiest moments. More than about the wedding, it is about the responsibility of recognizing those special times in people's lives and giving thanks to God. Living with joy is a *mitzvah*, a holy expression of gratitude. In Judaism, we understand that life comes with its difficulties, but it also comes with its deepest moments of happiness, goodness, and wonder. It is our responsibility to embrace these moments as something sacred, and therefore to celebrate them with family, friends and community. In many ways, becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is an expression of that religious obligation to mark the passage of time with celebration, to give thanks for the joy of living and of growth. Activities for this *mitzvah* should focus on ways that we can share someone's celebration.

Suggestions:

- a. Write a paragraph on what you remember from a family or a friend's wedding.
- b. Discuss with your parents or grandparents the kind of marriage ceremony that they had.
- c. Look at the wedding album or DVD of a friend or family member. Ask the couple to talk about their memories and impressions of their special day.
- d. Interview an older sibling, relative or Jewish friend about their memories of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Ask them what they felt like with everybody they loved being present at the service to celebrate with them.

7. COMFORT THE MOURNER



This *mitzvah* is about the religious responsibility to be with someone in their time of sadness. For it is often at times of loss that people feel most lonely, and the need is great for friends to show them the way back to the circles of life and living. In fact, mourning is all about learning to accept loss of someone we love, and yet find the way to live again without them. Mourning is not something we do alone. Judaism teaches that we need people around us to help us find the path of life again. It is difficult to know what to say or do when we are with someone who is mourning. But it is not what we say that matters, but simply that we are there to listen, to hold a hand, to reassure them they are not alone. Activities for this *mitzvah* should focus on things you can do to help someone who has lost someone they love.

Suggestions:

- a. Attend a minyan service at the house of mourning.
- b. Help cook a meal for a family in mourning.
- c. Write a condolence note to someone your family knows who recently lost a love one. Discuss with your parents or with the rabbis, what one says in offering condolences.
- d. Make a contribution to TBI in memory of someone you knew who is no longer living, as a meaningful way of expressing your

condolences to the deceased's family.

- e. Ask your parent(s) if they have a ritual object passed down to your family. Ask your parent(s) to talk about the object and the person who passed it down.

8. PRAY WITH SINCERITY



This *mitzvah* is about making prayer meaningful to us. Prayer is not only the words on the pages of the prayer book. It is about the ways in which we connect the deep feelings of our heart and our souls to the presence of God in our lives. Prayer can be words of thanksgiving and gratitude when we realise just how fortunate we are, even for the little things. Prayer can be an expression of our need for strength, when we realise that we need help, when we are unsure of ourselves. Prayer can be the realisation that we need a new perspective, a change in the way we see things, a time to think about people we love. Prayer is the first step to growing beyond ourselves, and growing toward God. It is something we need regularly, even daily. It begins, however, with learning to feel the words we say in prayer, and to have those words come from meaning within the soul.

Suggestions:

- a. Write an article for *Kol Israel* on the meaning of your favorite prayer. Share it with the Rabbi during your study session.
- b. Make the *Brachot* (blessings) at every meal at home a daily routine (for at least two weeks). For copies of blessings, call TBI.
- c. Help Matan teachers and rabbis lead T'fillah services.
- d. Create a new melody for a favorite prayer.
- e. Make a *mezuzah* for your house. Obtain a copy of the prayer for hanging a mezuzah, and make it a family ritual.

9. MAKE PEACE WHERE THERE IS STRIFE



This *mitzvah* is about the larger meaning of peace, for peace is not merely the absence of war. *Shalom*, peace, comes from the word *Shalem* for wholeness or completeness. For us Jews, it is our responsibility to make things more complete, whether in our family, among our friends, our community, or in our world.

We are never content with the way things are, because they are not yet complete. Jews are involved in many causes, because making peace, or wholeness, is a religious mandate for us all. Making peace is not something for leaders of countries, it is a task for every person who is part of a family, who is a friend, who is part of a community, and who understands his/her role in being a partner with God in completing the work of Creation, by doing what we can to make things better.

Suggestions:

- a. For two days, work on only speaking well of others, avoiding gossip, and getting others to follow your example.
- b. Defend someone who is being teased.
- c. Include someone in your 'group' who is usually excluded.
- d. Learn about peer mediation. Look into becoming a peer mediator at your school.
- e. Write a letter to the Prime Minister of Israel and Australia about why peace in Israel is important to you.

10. AND THE STUDY OF JUDAISM IS EQUAL TO THE MITZVOT BECAUSE OUR STUDY LEADS US TO DO

THE MITZVOT



This *mitzvah* is about the deep Jewish value of learning. We are known as 'The People of the Book' because of our devotion to Torah and to learning more and more. For Jews, learning never ends. We are always learning from our heritage and gaining new understanding about meaningful, joyous, purposeful ways to live, to become better people, to become better partners with God. Therefore, lifelong study and learning is essential to what we do. We come to understand more about mitzvot, about how to live as Jews. Activities for this mitzvah should focus on helping yourself to understand that learning is not only about what happens in Matan and/or school, it is about the Jewish learning that we acquire in so many ways throughout all our lives.

Suggestions:

- a. Research a topic, relating to Judaism and design a power point presentation of what you have learned for your school. The rabbis can offer suggestions.
- b. Learn one new way of observing every festival during the year.
- c. Teach a non-Jewish friend about a Jewish festival.
- d. Read a Jewish magazine.

SECTION 2

REQUIRED MITZVOT



1. To Attend the House of Study Regularly

Your religious studies requirements include:

- A. Attend a Jewish Day School or Matan for two years prior to B'nei Mitzvah
- B. Attend individual B'nei Mitzvah tutoring beginning 12 months before your service and individual study with Rabbis before becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Consider the following:

What is the most important thing that you have learned so far at school- either at Matan or your Jewish Day school?

In what ways do you apply that learning to your life?

Why is the Hebrew language important for the Jewish people?

Why is it important for Jews to participate in their Jewish community?

What has this process taught you about yourself and the Jewish value of learning?

2. To Pray with Sincerity



Attend Shabbat services with a parent(s) and/or your whole family, paying careful attention to the prayers and their meaning, so that you can lead them with sincerity and better understanding. Discuss some of the ideas and themes in the prayer book with your family, tutor and or Rabbi following services.

Consider the following:

What did you expect to feel before you come to services?

How did you feel after services and what did you learn about yourself in services?

Why do you think prayer is important to the Jewish people?

3. To perform Acts of Loving kindness



Contributing money to the charity of your choice to the degree you nominate. In Judaism this is one of the acts known as *tzedakah*.

- A. If you receive money as Bar/ Bat Mitzvah presents you may want to contribute to *tzedakah* or you may decide to choose to use some amount of your own money. Then decide which cause(s) and organisations(s) mean the most to you.
and / or
- B. Contributing money to MAZON (website www.mazon.org.au or telephone 02-9328-7833). A percentage of the cost of the celebration as your Jewish responsibility to *tzedakah* may be made to other funds such a 'Nothing but Nets'
and / or
- C. A charity project of your choice as part of your 'Mitzvah Project'

Consider the following:

What activity did you participate for your act of *tzedakah*, or your personal deed of loving kindness?

How did you choose to perform this mitzvah: what led to your decision to choose this cause?

What was your reaction to performing this mitzvah? How did it make you feel?

How did others react to you as you performed this mitzvah?

What did you learn?

How could you could follow-up or continue your act of loving kindness?

4. Study of Judaism



The most important *mitzvah* is the study of Judaism, because our study leads us to do all the *mitzvot*. Studying can help you to grow to become a *mensch*, a person of goodness. Therefore, make a personal commitment to continue your lifelong learning as a Jew.

Consider the following:

What part of Judaism do you still want to learn about?

How will the decision to become Bar/Bat Mitzvah affect you and others?

Which aspect of Judaism do you feel proud enough to teach to someone else?

SECTION 3

YOUR MIDDOT PROJECT-

After a discussion with your family, tutor or Rabbi, select a middot project!

What are Middot?

The work we do to become both a good Jew and a good person is referred to as *middot*, Jewish virtues (values). You will develop an appreciation and understanding of how *middot* can make you feel responsible for your own Jewish life. This is an opportunity to develop a meaningful connection with your community before your Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. **You** can make a difference to others through caring, charity, education and support.

This is only the beginning of what you can achieve in your life.



A. Select one of the following project ideas OR come up with your own idea! You might like to work with a few friends from your B'nei Mitzvah group

1. Participate in *Clean up Australia Day* and get a group together to help
2. Organise a can or book drive at your school and donate the collected donations to a local shelter or charity organisation
3. Organise donations of books and/or sporting equipment for an indigenous school or community such as 'Djarragun College'
4. Volunteer to tutor or help Sudanese students through Jewish Aid Australia in their homework club
5. Research a topic relating to Judaism and design a power point presentation or poster of what you have learned.

You might like to find out about:

- Jewish ANZACs-
- Israel
- Australian Jews who are well known and have inspired others
- How Jewish festivals are celebrated around the world

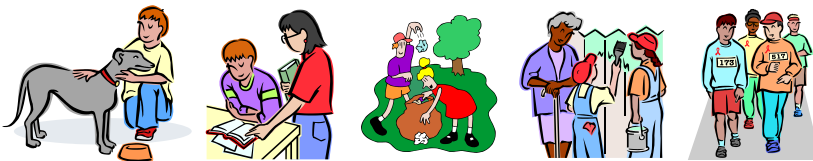
Discuss other ideas with your family, tutor or Rabbi)

You could present your work at TBI, school and/or Matan. Share what you have learned and inspire others.

OR

7. DESIGN YOUR OWN IDEA


Do you have a special interest or skill? How can you share it with others?



B. Complete 6 weeks prior to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Be prepared to discuss or show your completed project with the rabbi at your drash planning meeting with the rabbi (6 weeks prior to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah).

We are looking forward to hearing about what you have achieved, and what you have learned and how you feel about your experience. We will proudly display your project at Temple Beth Israel and share your achievements with the community in the *Kol Israel* in the month leading up to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.

So let's get started!  Got Questions? Not sure where to start? Need some ideas or help?

Call the Education Director at Temple Beth Israel 9510 1488



Your family, your tutor, your teachers, the education director, and your rabbis are here to help you.



Looking for Inspiration!!!!!!!Take a look at some of these web sites:

www.squidoo.com/kidswhomakeadifference

www.freethechildren.org

www.handsforhelp

www.ryanswell.ca/