

## Dear Student and Parents

These projects are designed to not only help prepare you for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah, but to enhance the experience. The program is structured to include activities in the following areas: *TO-RAH/LEARNING, AVODAH/RITUALS AND GEMILUT CHASADIM/KINDNESS* both in the home and in the community. Students can choose mitzvot based on their interests and several activities include family participation.

To live as a Jew in this world involves learning and doing. May this Mitzvah program serve as a seed that flourishes into a lifetime commitment toward living Jewishly.

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Name

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Hebrew Name

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Date of Birth

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Date of Bar/Bat Mitzvah

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Torah Portion

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Haftarah Portion

*This program adapted from the Mitzvah Program at Congregation B'nai Chaim in Morrison, CO*



## The Mitzvot Program

### AN ENRICHMENT PROGRAM FOR BAR/BAT MITZVAH STUDENTS

- Mitzvah One: **First Encounter with the Torah**
- Mitzvah Two : **Connections**
- Mitzvah Three: **Jewish at Home**
- Mitzvah Four: **Customs and Life Cycle**
- Mitzvah Five: **Shabbat Worship**
- Mitzvah Six: **D'var Torah/A Word of Torah**
- Mitzvah Seven: **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Journey & Thank You Speech**
- Mitzvah Eight: **Tzedakah**
- Mitzvah Nine: **Gemilut Chasadim/Loving, Kind Deeds**
- Mitzvah Ten: **You Are Called to the Torah**

## Mitzvah One

# First Encounter with the Torah

Let's connect this to the Torah Workshop which takes place about one month into the Cantor's class. This will involve doing some reading of the English together before the workshop

At each Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony, a passage from the Torah is read to the congregation. The passage comes from the weekly portion, which is called the *Parshah*.



**Using your Torah booklet, read the entire portion together in English and make a list of the ideas or themes you encounter below. Bring that list with you to our meeting.**

We have completed the above activity.

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Student Signature

Parent Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Below are many opportunities to do loving, kind deeds in our community as you prepare to become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah! Just email Mrs. Blumenthal at [mitzvot@cbibpt.org](mailto:mitzvot@cbibpt.org)

### **Connecticut Food Bank – Kid's Backpack Program Fairfield Warehouse – 74 Linwood Avenue, Fairfield**

Participate in the Kids' Backpack Program. Help fill bags of "weekend food" for kids in need and for whom many it is their only source of nutrition.

- Wednesday, March 14, 3:30 pm – 5:30 pm
- Wednesday, May 2, 3:30 pm – 5:30 pm

### **Norma Pfriem Urban Outreach Initiatives Food Pantry Come to the United Congregational Church to help distribute food in the food pantry.**

877 Park Avenue, the corner of Park and State Street

- Wednesday, December 6, 4:30 pm – 6:30 pm
- Wednesday, March 21, 4:30 pm – 6:30 pm
- Wednesday, May 9, 4:30 pm – 6:30 pm

### **Norma Pfriem Urban Outreach Initiatives Feel the Warmth Community Supper**

877 Park Avenue, the corner of Park and State Street

The need for help at these is determined on a week to week basis. We need lots of hands to be on call. If you would like to be part of this team, we will call or email when you are needed! Contact Mrs. Blumenthal and let her know you would like to be contacted whenever we need someone. If you are available that week, come on down!

### **Help decorate Valentine's Day Cookies - St. John's Community Supper & Operation Hope**

Monday, February 12, 5:30 – 7:00 pm, B'nai Israel Kitchen

### **B'nai Israel Gift of Light Hanukkah Fundraiser Wrapping Party**

Thursday, November 16, 6:00 p.m.

- To purchase an Israel Bond as a sign of my connection to the land and people of Israel. (Genesis 17.8)
- To give tzedakah weekly. (Leviticus 19.9-10, Pirkei Avot 1.16)
- To do some private praying this year, either from the prayerbook or in my own words. (Deuteronomy 6.6-7)
- To spend some time each month reading from the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible). (Deuteronomy 6.6-7)
- To (YOU indicate a mitzvah of your own choosing)

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- To (YOU indicate a mitzvah of your own choosing)

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I/We, the parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_ will seek to encourage every worthy endeavor that he/she undertakes as an ongoing commitment upon becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent(s) Signature(s)

NOTE: Each Mitzvah lists a citation telling us where in our tradition we may find a statement of the values of each of these deeds

## Mitzvah Two Connections

Please have a family conversation. You can decide which family members participate. Discuss the following:

**Parents:** Why is your child becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah important to you?

**Students:** Why are you interested in becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

**All of you:** What are your expectations of one another during this preparation period?

**All of you:** What are your expectations of yourselves?

**All of you:** What do you hope to get out of the entire process of becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah?

It is early in the process to answer, but for each of you, what thoughts do you have about who you will be and what Jewish behaviors do you think you will engage in once you have become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

We have completed the above activity.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Mitzvah Three

# Jewish at Home

Part of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is actively participating in mitzvot (*commandments*). One kind of mitzvah involves Jewish rituals – the things we do to celebrate Jewish time and space. Please follow the instructions below to complete this Mitzvah.

Note, it will take a long time, so don't put it off!

- At a Friday night dinner, actively celebrate Shabbat by reciting or chanting the blessings over the candles, wine/juice and challah and have a dinner table conversation about the good things that happened during the past week for each of you at the table. Please do this on at least four Shabbatot during the year! (The actual blessings are in the blessing section at the end of the packet.) Write the dates you celebrated in the boxes below.

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**Depending on the date of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration do either or both of these:**

- Help to lead a Passover Seder. Afterwards, describe how it felt and what was the most interesting thing you noticed about the Seder as you led it. Write your answer below:

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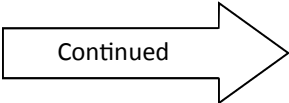


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- To attend Shabbat services at least once a month. (Exodus 20.8)
- To say the Kiddush and to light the Shabbat candles with and for my family on Friday evenings. (Exodus 20.8)
- To build a Sukkah (with my family or friends). (Leviticus 23.34-36)
- To participate in the B'nai Israel Mitzvah Mornings. (Leviticus 19.9-10)
- To say the Shema in the evening before I go to sleep and in the morning when I wake. (Deuteronomy 6.6-7)
- To deliberately do (or not do) things on Saturday to make that day feel like Shabbat. (Exodus 20.8)
- To celebrate Havdalah with my family and/or friends to mark the end of Shabbat. (Exodus 20.8)
- To fast during Yom Kippur. (Leviticus 16.29)
- To sit down before the High Holy Days, and take personal inventory of the times this year when I acted "like a mensch" and times when I failed to do so. (RaMBaM/Maimonides)
- To observe Chanukah this year as a religious holiday, lighting candles, singing songs & talking about what it means. (Talmud Shabbat 21b)
- To help conduct a family seder this Pesach, so I can help teach the story of the Exodus. (Exodus 13.6-8)
- To come to services (with my family) on Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Pesach and Shavuot. (Exodus 23.14ff)
- To plant a tree in Israel for Tu Bishvat. (Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 14a)
- To prepare and deliver shalach manot (food parcels) to the Jewish Home for the Elderly on Purim. (Esther 9.24)
- To observe dietary regulations during the seven days of Pesach. (Exodus 13.6-8, 34.18)
- To learn two new Hebrew words each week. (Deuteronomy 6.6-7, Pirkei Avot 1.15)
- To find one current event article regarding Israel each month and discuss it with my family. (Deuteronomy 6.6-7)
- To go out of my way to be particularly thoughtful and helpful to my parents and grandparents. (Exodus 20.12)
- To read a book regarding Jewish life to fulfill public/private school reading assignments or for pleasure. (Pirkei Avot 1.15)



## My Personal Ten Commandments

As I approach becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, I know and understand very clearly that this should be a time in my life for assuming responsibilities that are part of becoming a mature young Jewish person. Therefore, as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, I pledge myself, to the best of my ability, to take on the following Mitzvot (at least ten):

- To influence those around me to be good and loyal Jews, including younger members of my family and younger students in our congregation. (Deuteronomy 6.6-7, Haggadah, Pirke Avot)
- To become an active member of our Junior Youth Group. (Deuteronomy 31.12)
- To become Confirmed with my classmates. (Deuteronomy 6.6-7)
- To graduate from Merkaz, The Community High School for Jewish Studies with my classmates. (Deuteronomy 6.6-7)
- To become an active member of BIFTY, our Senior Youth Group, when I am in High School. (Deuteronomy 31.12)
- To make definite plans to visit Israel by opening a special savings account. (Genesis 17.8)
- To write letters and e-mail to national and local leaders about issues that concern me as a caring Jew. (Deuteronomy 23.24)
- To involve myself in an issue of social justice (e.g. hunger, the homeless, civil rights, AIDS, etc.). (Leviticus 19.16, Proverbs 22.22)
- To treat my body with respect. I will not abuse my body through over- or under- eating, alcohol or drugs. (And if it is a problem I cannot solve myself, to seek help this year.) (Deuteronomy 4.9)
- To go out of my way to visit the sick. (Deuteronomy 15.9)
- To go out of my way to make condolence calls and to remember bereaved friends in the weeks thereafter. (Isaiah 40.1)
- To help someone who needs me. (Deuteronomy 15.7)
- To respect those who are not like me. (Deuteronomy 15.7)
- To do something positive about saving the environment. (Psalms 24.1)
- To recite Hamotzi (aloud or silently) before each meal. (Talmud, Brachot 35a)
- To attend the Shabbat morning study group at least once during the next year. (Exodus 20.8)



3. On Chanukah, light the Chanukiah, chant the blessings and ask other family members what Chanukah means to them. Keep the conversation going until the candles burn out. If you run out of things to say, play dreidel! Write down the most interesting things you heard, or what Chanukah means to you. (The actual blessings are in the blessing section at the end of the packet.)

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We have completed the above activity.

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mitzvah Four**  
**Customs and Life Cycle**

Do seven of the following:\*

	Date Completed
Fast at least ½ day on Yom Kippur	
Help build or decorate a Sukkah (You can join us at Temple)	
Dance alongside the Torah at Simchat Torah services	
Light the <i>Chanukiah</i> ( <i>menorah</i> ) and recite the blessings	
Plant a tree and/or purchase a tree in Israel on Tu B'Shevat	
Hear the Megillah reading on Purim	
Help prepare a Seder	
Participate in a community Israel celebration	
Attend our congregational Shavuot celebration	
Attend a Jewish wedding	
Attend a Brit/Baby Naming	
Attend a Jewish funeral or make a Shiva call	
Attend another life cycle event, such as a Consecration or Confirmation	

\*At least one of the seven should be #9, 10, 11 or 12 if possible.

We have completed the above activity.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

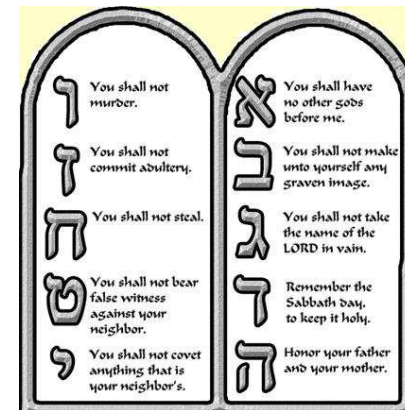
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Parent Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mitzvah Ten**  
**You Are Called to the Torah**

We will have a final family workshop in April or May. Sometime before that, take a look at the "My Personal Ten Commandments" page that follows this one with a parent. Put a  in the box next to every mitzvah you already do with some regularity. Next, put an  in the box next to every mitzvah you think you might like to try doing once you become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, or later.

Bring the completed sheet (and this entire notebook) to our workshop – we will need it there!



We have completed the above activity.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mitzvah Five**  
**Shabbat Worship**

Before you can lead a service, you should be comfortable with adult Shabbat worship at B'nai Israel.

1. Attend at least six (6) Kabbalat Shabbat (evening) services at B'nai Israel in the year leading up to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
2. Attend at least four (4) Shabbat morning services at *either* 8:00 a.m. or 11:00 a.m.

Friday Nights						
Dates →						
Saturday Mornings						
Dates →						

Please write down some of the things you thought about during or after participating in one or more services:

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We have completed the above activity.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

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Parent Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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We have completed the above activity.

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Student Signature

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Parent Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_





Mitzvah Eight  
**Tzedakah**

Charity and *Tzedakah* are a bit different. Jews promote *Tzedakah* which means "justice" or "righteousness." The two acts – giving money and caring for those in need are the same. The difference is that we believe we must give *tzedakah*, even if we don't feel like it.

At B'nai Israel, it is expected that each Bar or Bat Mitzvah will donate a portion of the money they receive as gifts as *tzedakah*.

1. Decide on an organization that cares for others in our world to whom you would like to donate your funds. Mrs. Blumenthal has a lot of resources that can help you find an organization that does the kind of work you would like to support. [mitzvot@cbibpt.org](mailto:mitzvot@cbibpt.org).
2. Write up a brief report about the organization you have chosen and how your money will be used.
3. Decide what percentage of the gifts you receive, you will choose to share. See the section at the back of this packet for some ideas that can help you decide.
4. Write a letter to the organization to accompany your donation. Explain why you have chosen this organization.
5. Send it in!

We have completed the above activity.

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Student Signature

Parent Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mitzvah Seven

**Bar/Bat Mitzvah Journey  
& Thank You Speech**

Think about your Bar/Bat Mitzvah journey and write a speech explaining what it all means to you and how you plan to pursue your Jewish involvement at the Temple, in the Jewish community and in the world at large. Thank all the people (past and present) who have helped you complete your Bar/Bat Mitzvah journey. This speech is for you to deliver at your celebration following the service, if you wish.

Judy Blumenthal is available if you need some help figuring this out. You can reach her at [mitzvot@cbibpt.org](mailto:mitzvot@cbibpt.org).

E-mail Mrs. Blumenthal the typed Bar/Bat Mitzvah Journey and Thank You speech in an MS Word compatible document. This should be completed no later than 3 months before your ceremony.

Place your typed Bar/Bat Mitzvah Journey and Thank You speech behind in your notebook.

We have completed the above activity.

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Student Signature

Parent Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_