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Choosing a mitzva project

Daniel Rothner

The time you've been waiting for has finally arrived — your bar/bat mitzva. You've sent out the invitations, picked out a menu, written your speech, and bought a new outfit. There's just one thing missing: your mitzva project.

Becoming a b'nei mitzva comes with a lot of responsibility. This time marks the milestone of entering adulthood as a Jew and becoming responsible for one's own actions. Preparing for your bar or bat mitzva creates the perfect opportunity to reflect on this transition, prompting you to think about who you are, what kind of person you want to be, and how you can impact those around you.

By participating in a mitzva project, you have the opportunity to find a meaningful cause that inspires you to step up to the plate and make a deep impact on the world.

But where do you start?

Step 1: Discover Your Passion

What do you enjoy doing during your free time? Uncovering your interests is a crucial step to take before putting together a mitzva project. Whether you're interested in art, reading, shopping, hiking, sports, video games, or traveling, there are endless project opportunities that lie ahead. Narrow your interests down to one or two so that you will be more focused as you continue on your journey to crafting the perfect project for you.

Step 2: Find a Meaningful Cause

Now that you've narrowed down your interests, how can you apply that to a mitzva project? It's time to choose a cause that you can partner with your passion. What do you think are the biggest problems in your community? In what way do you want to make the world a better place? Meaningful causes can include homelessness, literacy,

anti-Semitism, hunger, education, environment, healthcare, and children. If no causes come to mind, ask around. Asking your family and friends what causes are meaningful to them may spark some inspiration and help you on your way.

Step 3: Get Creative

Passion + Cause = Project! Now that you've finished the first two steps, think about how to combine your interests into a meaningful project. If you like sports and feel passionate about improving the lives of the poor, consider collecting sports equipment, decorating baseball caps, making baseballs and hacky sacks, and donating to poor families in your area. If you enjoy reading and want to bring a smile to senior citizens, grab your favorite book and some friends and organize a read-aloud event at your local senior center. With a little bit of creativity, you will always be able to combine your interests and meaningful causes into a successful project.

Step 4: Making it Happen

Now that you've chosen a project idea, it's time to put it into motion. Put together a flyer that highlights your project and share with friends and families. Getting your loved ones involved in your project will not only enrich your experience, but it may inspire them to look into kindness projects of their own. Take pictures and videos of your project in action so that you are able to share with friends and families.

Step 5: Make it Last

You facilitated and completed your mitzvah project — congratulations! But now you want to do

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more. There are a number of ways you can stay active with your mitzva project even after your bar or bat mitzva is over. For example, offer to speak on behalf of the organization you collected money/items for, make a poster of the project you completed and display it in your school for others to get inspired, donate part of your birthday money each year to continue to show your support, or join a young member's board to help guide the organization in the right direction.

Becoming a b'nei mitzva is so much more than your service and a party with balloons, food, and gifts. Your celebration reflects who you are and incorporating a mitzva project illustrates your newfound responsibility and connection to Judaism. Creating a personal, meaningful, and creative project will make your celebration unique, enrich your life, and help make the world a better place. ■

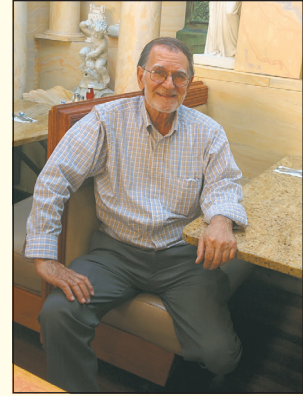
Daniel Rothner is founder and director of Areyvut, which is committed to providing young men and women with innovative opportunities to enhance their b'nei mitzva celebration; visit areyvut.org.

Advertising

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Livingston Diner, formerly known as Tod's, was established in the 1950s. George Apostolopoulos took over in 1972 and in the 2000s he changed the name to Livingston Diner. Apostolopoulos came to the United States in 1968 and worked in the restaurant and bakery business until he bought the former Tod's. Starting at a young age, Apostolopoulos worked for more than 10 years in the food and bakery industry, learning how to perfect pastry and sauces, before coming to the U.S.

He strives to make all his recipes superb. The diner's famous cheese Danish and house dressing is a world win. In addition to pastry and dressing, Apostolopoulos also creates one-of-a-kind sauces and gravies and his own blend of seasons to give the food a unique and distinct taste. Dressings and pastry are made in house and can't be bought or served anywhere else, they also recently started a new Greco buffalo dressing. Stop by for divine food, delicious desserts, and excellent service; ask for Apostolopoulos for great conversation. If ever unsatisfied with your experience, see Apostolopoulos and he will strive to make your experience as good as possible, even if it means walking you through the kitchen or bakery. With ample and convenient parking, Livingston Diner strives to be the best.



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